

The Making of Party History
History and Historiography of the Western Route Army

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This thesis is my own original work except where otherwise indicated.

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Abstract

This study examines the practice of how the Chinese Communist Party's history was written from the late 1930s to the present through the case study of the Western Route Army (1936-1937).

The CCP is a Leninist organization that has strict principles of confidentiality. In the Mao Era, the outside world had to rely greatly on the information that the Party revealed in order to gain understanding on intra-Party affairs. In this regard, before the 1980s, so-called Party History was in fact the official Party History authorized by the Party leadership. It has only been since the 1980s that other people besides Party theorists or Party historians started to write alternative versions of Party History, or as they could be called, unofficial versions of Party History. The first part of this thesis deals with the Party historiography of the Mao Era, exploring how the official interpretations of historical events were produced and where they were situated in the official historical framework. The second part examines the new interpretations of and the newly emerging ways to represent the history of the Party in the Post-Mao Era.

With seven chapters, this thesis investigates five watershed periods essential in the making of Party History and explores the role that four groups of people—the CCP leaders, senior cadres, historians and nonprofessional writers—played in each period. Concerning Party historiography in contemporary China, based on interviews and on-site investigation, this thesis not only focuses on the central level, revealing how state organs write and propagandize Party history, but also pays attention to the representation of Party history by local governments and institutions. In doing so, this research aims to establish a broad picture of Party historiography.

List of Maps, Tables and Figures

Maps

Map 1 Map of China (1936)	ix
Map 2 The Route of the Western Route Army	x

Tables

Table 1-1 The Right Route Army and the Left Route Army	58
Table 1-2 The First Front Army, the Second Front Army and the Fourth Front Army	59
Table 1-3 The Western Route Army	60
Table 3-1 Endnotes about the Party's history in <i>Selected Works of Mao Zedong</i> , Volume 1	124
Table 4-1 Comparison of the Four Interpretations of the WRA	165

Figures

Fig. 4-1 <i>Reference Materials for Party History</i>	166
Fig. 4-2 Xu Xiangqian's article on the <i>People's Daily</i>	166
Fig. 4-3 Cover of Li Xiannian's report	167
Fig. 4-4 Chen Yun's letter to Li Xiannian	167
Fig. 4-5 Deng Xiaoping's comment on Li Xiannian's report	167
Fig. 6-1 A screen shot of <i>Gongshi wang</i>	227
Fig. 6-2 The front cover and back cover of <i>Lantai gaocun</i>	227
Fig. 6-3, 6-4; 6-5 A privately printed pamphlet " <i>Bolao zazhi</i> "	227
	-28
Fig. 6-6; 6-7 Two monographs that respectively represent the points of view of the "pro-Mao faction" and the "Mao detractors"	228
Fig. 6-8; 6-9 Screen shots of <i>Feiyang junshi luntan</i>	229
Fig. 7-1, 7-2 A monument for the Liyuankou Battle built by locals	273
Fig. 7-3 The entrance of the Gaotai Cemetery for Martyrs	273
Fig. 7-4 "Fighting in Gaotai County" sculpture	273
Fig. 7-5 The museum in Gaotai Cemetery for Martyrs	274
Fig. 7-6 The memorial pavilion for Dong Zhentang	274
Fig. 7-7, 7-8 Entrance of GMW and reliefs	274
Fig. 7-9, 7-10 Path, monument and square in the GMW	275

Fig. 7-11 Museum in the GMW	275
Fig. 7-12 A multimedia device in the GMW	275
Fig. 7-13, 7-14 Inside the GMW	276
Fig. 7-15 A monument in Jingyuan County	276
Fig. 7-16 Visitors bowing to the monument in Gaotai WRA Memorial Hall	277
Fig. 7-17 A row of steles for martyrs in Liyuankou Battle Memorial Hall of Linze	277
Fig. 7-18, 7-19 Collective tomb at the old battlefield of Liyuankou battle	278
Fig. 7-20 Statues of commanders of the Fourth Front Army	278
Fig. 7-21 A sculpture in the Memorial Hall for Gao Jincheng	279
Fig. 7-22 A tree donated by offspring of the WRA soldiers	279
Fig. 7-23 An exhibition board in GMW	279
Fig. 7-24 Heads of three WRA commanders	280
Fig. 7-25; 7-26 A WRA soldier's body crucified on a tree	280
Fig. 7-27 WRA soldier Wu Qingxiang in the documentary "The WRA Female Soldiers"	281
Fig. 7-28 Wang Quanyuan interviewed by visitors	281
Fig. 7-29 <i>Wang jia dun</i>	282
Fig. 7-30 Narrator Zhang Yan is telling the story about the Little Sichuanese and Old Wang	282

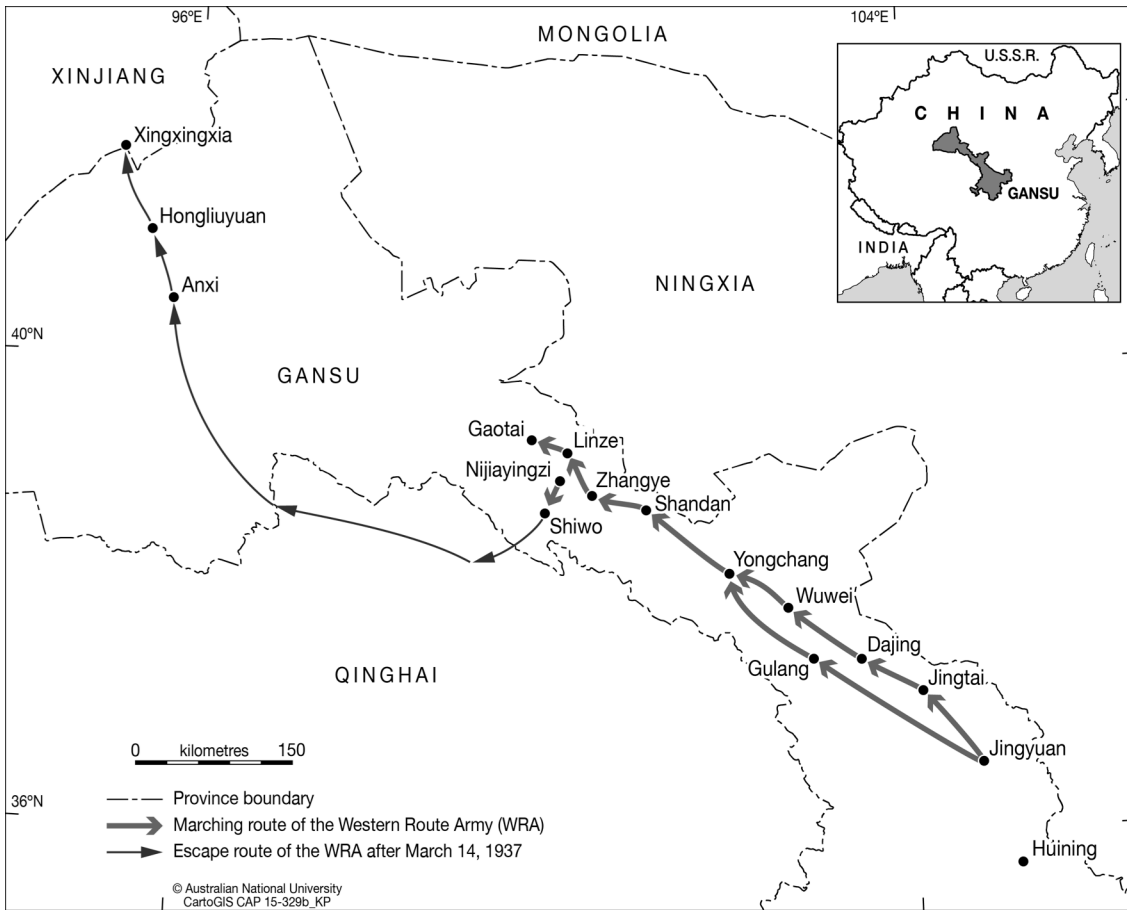
Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	i
Abstract.....	iii
List of Maps, Tables and Figures	v
Introduction	1
The History of the Party, Party History, and Party Historiography	2
Marxist Historiography, Historiography in Communist China and Party Historiography: A Literature Review	5
The Western Route Army as a Case Study	12
Significance.....	16
Sources and Outline of the Thesis.....	18
Part One: The Western Route Army in the Mao Era	21
Chapter 1: The Western Route Army in the History of the CCP	21
Introduction.....	21
1.1 The Split of the CCP and the Red Army in 1935 and 1936	22
1.2 The Western Route Army and the Party Center.....	34
1.3 The Failure of the WRA	43
Conclusion.....	56
Chapter 2: Constructing a Consensus on the Western Route Army’s History in the Yan’an Period.....	61
Introduction.....	61
2.1 Verdicts on the Western Route Army: “The Final Breakdown of the ‘Zhang Guotao Line”	62
2.2 Constructing a Consensus	73
Conclusion	85
Chapter 3: Finalizing the Western Route Army’s Historical Narratives in the 1950s	89
Introduction.....	89
3.1 The Western Route Army in the Party History Framework Created by the Top Leadership.....	89
3.2 A Chorus of Revolutionary Recollections of the WRA	101
3.3 The Western Route Army’s Narratives by Professional Historians.....	110
Conclusion.....	120
Part Two: Rewriting the Western Route Army’s History in the Reform Era	127
Chapter 4: The “New Interpretation” of the Western Route Army	127
Introduction.....	127
4.1 The New Party Center’s Concerns about “Historical Problems”	128
4.2 The Emergence and Resolution of the WRA Issue	141
4.3 The New Interpretation of the WRA in the Official Party History.....	158
Conclusion.....	162
Chapter 5: Professional Historians and Their Responses to the Historical Issue of the Western Route Army	169
Introduction.....	169
5.1 Serving the Post-Mao Party Leadership (1976 to the Early 1980s).....	170
5.2 Attempts to Balance Political Needs and Intellectual Pursuits (1980s)	178
5.3 Academic or Political? The Split between Historians (since the 1990s)	186
Conclusion.....	194
Chapter 6: Quasi-official Party Historiography and Debates on “Historical Nihilism”	

.....	197
Introduction.....	197
6.1 Quasi-official Party Historiography and the CCP's Political Perspectives	197
6.2 Genuine vs. Fake "Historical Nihilism"	215
Conclusion	225
Chapter 7: The Western Route Army at the Local Level: Commemoration and	
Propaganda.....	231
Introduction.....	231
7.1 From a Golden Era to a Crisis (the 1980s and the 1990s)	232
7.2 Building Local Memorial Sites.....	242
7.3 Creating Local Narratives.....	254
Conclusion	271
Conclusion.....	283
The Creation of Party History	283
A Transformation.....	289
To Take History Back.....	295
Appendix: Selected Telegrams.....	299
Bibliography.....	309



Map 1 Map of China (1936)



Map 2 The Route of the Western Route Army (October 25, 1936-April 30, 1937)

Introduction

In April 2013, the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) sent an order down through the Party hierarchy, asking all units to pay particular attention to certain issues concerning ideology. In this confidential document, known as “Document No. 9,” “attempts to deny the CCP’s and the People’s Republic of China’s (PRC) history,” was listed as one of the seven most serious erroneous trends of thought.¹ Two years later, in September 2015, before dozens of foreign politicians and scholars, Wang Qishan 王岐山 (1948-), a member of the standing committee of the politburo of the CCP, stated, “the CCP has gained its legitimacy from history” (中國共產黨的合法性源自於歷史).² This was the first time that a Chinese leader had spoken about the issue of legitimacy. That Wang attributed the Party’s legitimacy to history was unsurprising, as the combination of Chinese tradition and Marxist theory made history particularly important to the Chinese Communists.³ Nonetheless, the remark was thought provoking.

The two events above, and the continued debates among intellectuals, cadres, and ordinary readers over the past few years about various issues in the history of the CCP, indicate that we are now living in an era in which the way that we relate stories about the Party’s past is a key issue. This prompts the following questions: After nearly seven decades of firm control, why does the Party leadership feel so strongly that assessments and narratives of the Party’s history are still important? If the Party leadership has detected a certain vulnerability with respect to this issue, from where does this vulnerability come? These are the central questions that provoke this thesis.

The answers to these questions lie not only in the recent history of China and the Party, but are linked to the long, tortuous, and dramatic story of writing the history

¹ Zhonggong zhongyang bangongting 中共中央辦公廳 (The General Office of the CCP Central Committee), “Guanyu dangqian yishixingtai lingyu qingkuang de tongbao 關於當前意識形態領域情況的通報” (Notification on the current situation of ideology), *Mingjing* 明鏡, 2013(43), pp. 86-92.

² “Wang Qishan huijian chuxi ‘2015 Zhongguo gongchandang yu shijie duihua hui’ waifang daibiao 王岐山會見出席‘2015 中國共產黨與世界對話會’外方代表” (Wang Qishan met foreign delegates of “The Party and the World Dialogue 2015”), *Renmin ribao* 人民日報, September 10, 2015, p. 1.

³ As Raymond F. Wylie pointed out, for most of the Chinese people, the study of history was no less than the study of the universal laws that governed the rise and fall of civilizations, and the destiny of man himself. For a Marxist, history is the laboratory of the social scientist, the fundamental source to which one turns in the search for basic truths of individual and social behavior. Raymond F. Wylie, *The Emergence of Maoism: Mao Tse-tung, Ch'en Po-ta and the Search for Chinese Theory 1935-1945*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1980, p. 226.

of the Party. Through a case study of the Western Route Army (1936-1937), this work examines the way in which the CCP's history has been written from the late 1930s to the present.

The History of the Party, Party History, and Party Historiography

The Chinese phrase *Zhonggong dangshi* 中共黨史 has two meanings, “the history of the CCP,” and “the written history of the CCP.” These two meanings will be referred to in this thesis as “Party history” and “Party History,” respectively.⁴ The concept of “Party historiography”⁵ means at least three things. The first and primary meaning is the history of historical studies concerning the CCP's past. In addition to this basic meaning, the concept also refers to “historical theories,” or to the “philosophy of history,” in an applied form. Thus, it refers to the ways in which historians or writers look at the history of the CCP, and the ways in which they write Party History. The persons who participated in writing or disseminating Party History also must be included in any study of Party historiography.

The history of the CCP can be divided into two periods, in which 1949 was a watershed. From a historiographical perspective, pre-1949 Party history is an aspect of modern Chinese history, while post-1949 Party history overlaps largely with the history of the PRC. Immediately after the Red Army troops led by Mao Zedong 毛澤東 (1893-1976) finished their Long March in 1936, Mao urged propaganda workers to collect and promote stories of the Long March in order to present it as one of the Party's great triumphs.⁶ This point marks the beginning of the CCP's conscious attempts to write official Party History.⁷ As the CCP is a

⁴ When “history” refers to both of these two meanings, “history” with a lower case “h” will be used, such as “the writing of Party history”.

⁵ There are different opinions about the Chinese translation of “historiography”. Chinese scholars use “*Zhonggong dangshi xue shi* 中共黨史學史” and “*Zhonggong dangshi bianzuanxue* 中共黨史編纂學” to refer to the studies of Party historiography.

⁶ For more information about the CCP's project of collecting and writing the stories about the Long March, see Gao Hua 高華, “Hongjun changzheng de lishi xushi shi zenyang xingcheng de 紅軍長征的歷史敘事是怎麼形成的” (How were the narratives about the Long March created?), *Yan-Huang chunqiu* 炎黃春秋, 2006(10), pp. 27-32.

⁷ Before this point, there were some earlier works about the history of the Party, but none of them were officially authorized. For example, one of the founders of the CCP, Chen Gongbo 陳公博 (1892-1946), finished his Master's thesis at Columbia University in 1924 on the establishment of the CCP. See Ch'en Kung-po (Chen Gongbo), *The Communist Movement in China: An Essay Written in 1924 by Ch'en Kung-po*. Octagon Books, 1966. Cai Hesun 蔡和森 (1895-1931) had written about the CCP's history as early as in the mid-1920s. See Zhou Yiping 周一平, *Zhonggong dangshi yanjiu de kaituo zhe: Cai Hesun* 中共黨史研究的開拓者：蔡和森 (A pioneer of Party history research: Cai Hesun). Shanghai: Shanghai shehui kexue chubanshe, 1994. Some Chinese scholars mistakenly take Li Dazhao's writing of Chinese history as the starting point of Party historiography. Although Li was

Leninist organization that has strict principles of confidentiality, in order to learn about intra-Party affairs in the Mao era, the outside world had to rely greatly on information that the Party revealed, and Party History was written exclusively by, or under the supervision of, Party leaders. Therefore, before the 1980s, so-called Party History was, in fact, that which was authorized officially by the Party leadership. It has only been since the 1980s that people other than Party theorists or historians have begun to write other versions of Party History, or, as we should call them, unofficial versions of Party History. In summary, investigations of official Party History should cover the period from the late 1930s to the present, while surveys of unofficial Party History should include the period after the early 1980s.

Since the late 1930s, writing Party history has been one of the few issues over which the Party leadership has not dared to lose control. Party history is not only an indispensable tool for the leadership during intra-Party power struggles, but also for its function as a legitimizing device. As an inseparable part of the history of the CCP, Party historiography deserves systematic research, and the following questions should take center-stage: Who wrote the official version of Party History during the Mao era? During this period, how were the political needs of the Party Center reflected in official Party History? What changes took place in official historical narratives after 1976? To what extent was official Party History challenged by alternative versions that have emerged since the early 1980s? Currently, the CCP is believed to be losing control over its propaganda machine. If this is the case, then what is the real status of Party history propaganda in today's China? Recording, writing, and propagandizing Party history is an uninterrupted thread that runs through all of the CCP's history, and investigation of this thread will deepen our understanding of a political party that rules 1.3 billion Chinese people.

The Party leadership observes closely, and to a great degree, controls the writing of Party History. Nevertheless, since at least the early 1980s, Party history has also served as an academic field of inquiry in which historians have acted and debated according to academic rules rather than political pressure. As a result, there are more questions that should be resolved: What role did professional

one of the founders of the CCP, and advocated rewriting Chinese history according to Marxist criteria, he did not write anything about the history of the CCP. As a result, his writings marked the beginning of Marxist scientific analysis of Chinese historiography, rather than the beginning of Party historiography.

historians play in writing Party history during the Mao era? Did they ever intend to transform Party history into an academic discipline? How did the roles and self-identities of professional historians who wrote Party history change after 1976? What about after 1989? As will be discussed later, because of its close relationship to politics, Party historiography is considered to have a relatively special nature, and therefore, its political function has always been emphasized, while its academic aspects have been overlooked. The exploration of professional historians' works serves not only as another perspective to investigate Party historiography, but also helps to fill the gaps in the field of Chinese historiography.

The topic of the writing of the CCP's history leads naturally to a controversial theoretical problem, whether, or the extent to which, reality can be represented by the writing of history. Some historians used to believe that there was an objective reality that could be discovered through research. According to this reasoning, misinterpretations of the CCP's history can be removed and replaced, as long as historians use scientific methods in their studies. Nevertheless, few historians now still cling to this outdated theory of history. Recently, the idea that objective historical research is impossible because there is no objective reality, has gained increasing popularity. As Hayden White and other recent theorists of history have pointed out, to place facts or events that have been validated empirically in a coherent story necessarily requires imaginative steps. Therefore, history is connected more closely to literature than it is to science. This post-modern notion has challenged the very assumptions on which modern historical scholarship has rested, and appears especially compelling when it is applied to Party historiography. Post-modern theorists eliminate not only the boundary between historical discourse and fiction, but also that which lies between honest scholarship and propaganda.⁸ From this point of departure, looking at Party historiography, which has always been considered to be much more like propaganda than serious scholarship, the tension between its explicit political nature and its semi-academic appearance disappears. Thus, one question that this thesis discusses is whether the relationship between written Party History, regardless of whether the writers are Party officials or professional historians, and Party history, as the reality made and experienced by people, involves complete discontinuity, or whether some continuity exists. Is it true that the official version

⁸ Georg G. Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century: From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge*. Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1997, pp. 9-16.

of Party History is a complete fabrication that has nothing to do with what really did happen? Is unofficial Party History closer to historical reality than is official History?

Marxist Historiography, Historiography in Communist China and Party Historiography: A Literature Review

Marxism, the theoretical system that the CCP has claimed as its guiding principle for eighty-five years, offers a distinct framework and method to observe and analyze the past, present, and future of the world. From as early as the late 1910s, Chinese Marxists had begun to apply Marxist theories to rewrite Chinese and world history. Their historical interpretations in subsequent years not only played an important role in justifying the CCP's status as the ruling party in China, but also reflected the CCP's ability to shape the thinking of intellectuals and ordinary Chinese people. Thus, Western scholars have paid much attention to how Chinese history has been written and rewritten over the past one hundred years since Marxist historiography emerged in China.

There are several pieces of research on Chinese Marxist historiography during the period from the late 1910s to 1949. In his book, *Revolution and History*, Arif Dirlik demonstrated that the Nationalist revolution of 1924-1927 was the key to the origins of Marxist historiography. By examining the Social History Controversy (*shehuishi lunzhan* 社會史論戰) from 1929 to 1933, Dirlik showed the ways in which the question of the revolution's future inspired an upsurge in the controversy over China's social history.⁹ Mechthild Leutner investigated historians who played a decisive role in the process of developing Marxist historiography from the second half of the 1930s to the 1940s, arguing that the different opinions of some historians on the issue of the particularities of the Chinese revolution conveyed political nuances that were expressed by influential persons in the CCP.¹⁰ Much more research on Chinese historiography, however,

⁹ Arif Dirlik, *Revolution and History: Origins of Marxist Historiography of China 1919-1937*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1978.

¹⁰ Luo Meijun 羅梅君 (Mechthild Leutner), translated by Sun Lixin 孫立新, *Zhengzhi yu kexue zhijian de lishi bianzuan: 30 he 40 niandai Zhongguo Makesi zhuyi lishixue de xingcheng* 政治與科學之間的歷史編纂：30 和 40 年代中國馬克思主義歷史學的形成 (Historiography between politics and science: the formation of Chinese Marxist historiography in the 1930s and 1940s). Jinan: Shandong jiaoyu chubanshe 山東教育出版社, 1997. The German version of this book is: *Geschichtsschreibung zwischen Politik und Wissenschaft: Zur Herausbildung der chinesischen marxistischen Geschichtswissenschaft in den 30er und 40er Jahren*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1982.

has focused on the period after 1949, when the Marxist paradigm claimed the dominant position as the Communist Party assumed national power.

Historiography in Mao's China

From the 1960s to the early 1980s, a number of authors wrote on the topic of historiography in communist China.¹¹ Focusing on certain top historians' work during the new regime, as well as on historical curricula, scholars writing in English, German and Japanese examined the historiography of various significant events in Chinese history, such as the Xinhai Revolution (1911),¹² and the December 9 Movement (1935),¹³ as well as some essential historical issues, such as peasant rebellions,¹⁴ and the origins and founding of the Chinese empire.¹⁵ Although each of these studies focused only on one aspect of Chinese historiography, together they present a much more comprehensive landscape of how the Marxist regime rewrote history.

Western scholars have placed a major emphasis on the influence of Marxist thought on historical research and writing, but later found that historical writings in China deviated gradually from Marxist theories, and that Mao Zedong Thought had become increasingly influential in the practice of rewriting Chinese history.¹⁶ As James Harrison wrote in the 1960s, at the time, the majority of the PRC's historical profession was writing history "in a way which accords with current Chinese pronouncements but very little with traditional Marxist views of the

¹¹ When Franklin Parker in 1986 annotated books and journals articles that had examined the writing and teaching of history in China since 1949, 78 pieces of works in total were included. Franklin Parker, "Historiography in the People's Republic of China: Annotated Bibliography (Historians, History Teaching, History Writing)", 1986.

<http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED269307.pdf> (last visited on November 7, 2015). Several works edited by Albert Feuerwerker and others contain articles illustrating the interplay between ideology and the rewriting of Chinese history. For example: Albert Feuerwerker and S. Cheng, *Chinese Communist Studies of Modern Chinese History*. Harvard University Press, 1963. Albert Feuerwerker et al., *Approaches to Modern Chinese History*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967. Albert Feuerwerker, *History in Communist China*. M.I.T. Press, 1969.

¹² Winston Hsieh, *Chinese Historiography on the Revolution of 1911: A Critical Survey and a Selected Bibliography*. Hoover Institution Press, Stanford University, 1975. Edmund S. K. Fung, "Post-1949 Chinese Historiography on the 1911 Revolution", *Modern China*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (April 1978), pp. 181-214.

¹³ John Israel, "The December 9th Movement: A Case Study in Chinese Communist Historiography", *The China Quarterly*, Vol. 23 (July- September 1965), pp. 140-69.

¹⁴ James P. Harrison, *The Communists and Chinese Peasant Rebellions: A Study in the Rewriting of Chinese History*. New York: Atheneum, 1968. James P. Harrison, "Chinese Communist Interpretations of the Chinese Peasant Wars", in Albert Feuerwerker, ed., 1969, pp. 189-215.

¹⁵ A. F. P. Hulswé, "Chinese Communist Treatment of the Origins and the Foundation of the Chinese Empire", *The China Quarterly*, Vol. 23 (September 1965), pp. 78-105.

¹⁶ In the author's opinion, Party history is the field that has been most seriously influenced by Maoism. This point will be discussed in the Conclusion section.

subject.”¹⁷ Consequently, since the 1970s, more emphasis has been placed on exploring the correlation between scholarship in Chinese history and shifts in political policy, in order to determine how scholars’ motivations in narrating and explaining Chinese history derived from the urgent needs in domestic and international politics of the time. The enthusiasm for research on Chinese historiography from this perspective was stimulated further by Mao’s famous axiom “use the past to serve the present” (*guwei jinyong* 古為今用).¹⁸ In Jonathan Unger’s 1993 collection of the same title, the politically contentious historiography of the PRC was illustrated through case studies.¹⁹

Western scholars have done much to reveal the experiences of the Mao-era historians who produced these historical writings, as well as to analyze the political context in which they conducted their work. In the 1960s, some believed generally that Chinese historians lived under a reign of terror and were forbidden to think, work, or write freely.²⁰ This observation, however, was little more than a lament for their counterparts in a totalitarian state. Some scholars believe that intellectuals in Maoist China were highly dependent on patron-client relationships. In this relationship, Party leaders acted as patrons, while intellectuals responded to leaders’ demands and acted as their clients. In the early 1980s, Merle Goldman divided Chinese intellectuals of the Mao era into “liberal intellectuals” and “radical intellectuals,” with historians Jian Bozan 翦伯贊 (1898-1968), and Wu Han 吳晗 (1909-1969) among the first group, while Qi Benyu 戚本禹 (1931-) and the writing teams during the Cultural Revolution were placed in the second group.²¹ Goldman noted this distinction among Chinese historians, but her approach in characterizing the cooperation and tension between politics and academia as a simple patron-client relationship is questionable. A seemingly compromised, but more convincing, viewpoint about historians in Maoist China was favored only

¹⁷ Harrison, 1968, pp. 214.

¹⁸ For more information about the origin of the adaptation of this phrase to the study of history, see Geremie Barmé, “Using the Past to Save the Present: Dai Qing’s Historiographical Dissent”, *East Asian History*, Vol. 1 (June 1991), pp. 141-181. For Chinese scholars’ explanation of this phrase, see Li Shu 黎澍, “Zhengque lijie ‘gu wei jin yong’ 正確理解 ‘古為今用’ ” (The correct interpretation of ‘using the past to serve the present’), in *Zaisi ji* 再思集 (Essays on rethinking things). Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe 中國社會科學出版社, 1985, pp. 34-37.

¹⁹ Jonathan Unger ed., *Using the Past to Serve the Present: Historiography and Politics in Contemporary China*. Armonk, N. Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1993.

²⁰ Shee Sung, “The Study of History in Communist China”, *Chinese Culture*, Vol. X, No. 4 (December 1969), pp. 15-51.

²¹ Merle Goldman, *China’s Intellectuals, Advise and Dissent*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981.

after the 1990s; that is, the co-existence of an “academic interest in objectively recasting the past” and “political inclinations that tended to twist their interpretations.”²²

Historiography in Post-Mao China

After 1978, notable changes appeared in the field of history, especially modern Chinese history. Thus, comparisons between post-Mao interpretations and those created during the Mao era, and efforts to explain those changes in the context of political and social transformation became a popular subject of research. There are four important changes that scholars have emphasized.

First, and essentially, scholars noted that professional historians in China had moved from Marxist theoretical positions towards more empirical and textual work. Li Huaiyin’s research explored the competition between the “revolutionary paradigm” and the “modernization paradigm” of Chinese modern history studies and claimed that the latter had overtaken the former.²³

Second, concerning research subjects, scholars pointed out that some events that had scarcely been studied in the Mao era became popular in the post-Mao era. The Nanjing Massacre is an example.²⁴

Third, scholars noted that the Party’s position as the sole dispenser and interpreter of historical wisdom was undermined, as more and more unofficial narratives, in the forms of oral history, historical investigative journalism, and so forth, became popular among Chinese readers.²⁵

Fourth, and related to the above three points, some scholars claimed that “there is no longer a CCP-designed master narrative of modern Chinese history,” i.e., the CCP had lost its control over historiography.²⁶

Party Historiography

A survey of previous studies shows that there was a sustained interest in, and literature on, Chinese historiography throughout the Mao and post-Mao eras.

²² Li Huaiyin, *Reinventing Modern China: Imagination and Authenticity in Chinese Historical Writing*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2012, pp. 3.

²³ Li Huaiyin, 2012. Li Huaiyin, “From Revolution to Modernization: The Paradigmatic Transition in Chinese Historiography in the Reform Era”, *History and Theory*, No. 49 (October 2010), pp. 336–360.

²⁴ Mark Eykholt, “Aggression, Victimization, and Chinese Historiography of the Nanjing Massacre”, in Joshua A. Fogel ed., *The Nanjing Massacre in History and Historiography*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000, pp. 11-69.

²⁵ Geremie Barmé contributed a detailed case study on unofficial historiography: “Using the Party to Save the Present: Dai Qing’s Historiographical Dissent”, 1991.

²⁶ Susanne Weigelin-Schwiedrzik, “In Search of a Master Narrative for 20th Century Chinese History,” *The China Quarterly*, Vol. 188 (December 2006), pp. 1070-1091.

Regrettably, and surprisingly, however, research on Party historiography is sparse, if not rare.

In the early 1980s, Weigelin-Schwiedrzik wrote the only paper to date that focused on Party historiography, and provided a detailed exploration of the organization of Party historiography in the early post-Mao period.²⁷ This insightful paper, however, is some thirty years old, and its value has diminished as a result. Although Weigelin-Schwiedrzik has been committed to Chinese historiography since the early 1980s, she did not conduct further research on Party historiography. In addition to her paper, some existing research on the Chinese historiography of the post-Mao period also involves Chinese historians, official agencies, or writers' narratives and assessments of post-1949 Party history.²⁸ In contrast, little research has addressed the ways in which pre-1949 Party history was written.²⁹ With respect to Chinese scholars' research of Party historiography, there have been no in-depth studies until recent years.³⁰

²⁷ Susanne Weigelin-Schwiedrzik, "Party Historiography", in Jonathan Unger, ed., *Using the Past to Serve the Present*. Armonk, N. Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1993, pp. 151-173. This paper was a part of Weigelin-Schwiedrzik's PhD thesis, which was written in German.

²⁸ For example, since the early 2000s, some scholars started to examine the writings and narratives about the Great Famine, China's labor camps, the Cultural Revolution, etc. These topics can be considered as part of Party history in a broader sense. These studies not only focused on CCP leaders and professional historians, but also paid attention to grassroots-level historical writings. Klaus Mühlhahn, "Remembering a Bitter Past': The Trauma of China's Labor Camps, 1949-1978", *History and Memory*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (Fall/Winter 2004), pp. 104-139. Susanne Weigelin-Schwiedrzik, "Trauma and Memory: The Case of the Great Famine in the People's Republic of China (1958-1961)", in *Historiography East and West*. Leiden: Brill, 2003, pp. 39-67. Guo Wu, "Recalling Bitterness: Historiography, Memory, and Myth in Maoist China", *Twentieth-Century China*, Vol. 39, No. 3 (October 2014), pp. 245-268.

²⁹ The previously mentioned research about Dai Qing by Geremie Barmé includes cultural and intellectual purges in the 1940s. Both David Holm and Ishikawa Yoshihiro studied the case of novel *Liu Zhidan*, the key issue of which was the history of the Northwest Revolution Region in the 1930s. Their studies concern how the Party's pre-1949 history was written and rewritten. David Holm, "The Strange Case of Liu Zhidan", *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, No. 27 (January 1992), pp. 77-96. Ishikawa Yoshihiro 石川禎浩, "Shōsetsu 'Ryū Shidan' jiken no rekishiteki haikai" "小説『劉志丹』事件の歴史的背景" (The issue of the novel *Liu Zhidan* and its historical background), in Ishikawa Yoshihiro, ed., *Chūgoku shakaishugi bunka no kenkyū* 中国社会主义文化の研究 (*Research on socialist culture in China*). Kyoto: Institutes for Research in Humanities of Kyoto University, 2010, pp. 153-214.

³⁰ In China, the most authoritative work about Party historiography is a monograph that was published in 1990, written by Zhang Jingru 張靜如 and Tang Manzhen 唐曼珍, two scholars at the Beijing Normal University. (*Zhongguo dangshi xue shi* 中共黨史學史 Party Historiography. Beijing: Zhongguo renmin daxue chubanshe 中國人民大學出版社, 1990.) This book should be considered as an official piece of research on Party historiography, because it focuses on the development of official Party History and the contribution of Party leaders of different generations to it. In the past ten years, some Chinese scholars have started researching Party historiography from new perspectives. Wu Zhijun 吳志軍 (The Central Party History Research Office) and Geng Huamin 耿化敏 (School of Marxism Studies at Renmin University of China) are two representatives. Wu has published three papers on Party historiography of the period immediately after the end of the Cultural Revolution. Geng wrote a biography for one of the prominent Party historians in the Mao

Why have Western scholars invested great effort in exploring many aspects of Chinese historiography, but ignored Party historiography? The most obvious reason is the lack of resources. During the years when foreign scholars were limited severely by travel and research restrictions, and had to rely on Hong Kong refugees and scattered documentary sources to research Mainland China and the CCP, it was almost unimaginable to make a detailed examination of the way in which the Party wrote History. Only after 1978 did it become possible to access relevant materials, and interviews with Party historians, such as those that Weigelin-Schwiedrzik used in the early 1980s. The second, and more substantial reason, is that Party historiography has been readily dismissed as lies because of its obvious political intentions and ongoing entanglement in politics.

In recent years, as many new materials have been released, some previously inaccessible aspects of Party history are now ready to be explored, as is the issue of how official Party History was written. Access to officials and historians also is not as difficult as it was decades ago. At the same time, however, the potential to overemphasize the close relationship between Party historiography and politics is a more serious limitation that prevents scholars from delving deeper into Party historiography. If we deem the Party's past to be a malleable resource that could be manipulated rather freely by Party leaders for political purposes, then it is natural to focus on Party elites and overlook other groups of people who also played roles in writing Party history. It is also natural to interpret historiographical phenomena merely as "serving the legitimacy" of the Party.³¹ Such an overemphasis on political exigency is dubious, because it alone can scarcely capture the complexity of the issue.

To summarize, Party historiography is a serious blind spot in our understanding

Era, He Ganzhi, relying on internal archives and interviews. These works indicate that Chinese scholars have started looking at Party historiography from other perspectives than the Party leadership. In addition to the above-mentioned works on Party historiography, there are also several remarkable works on Party history that emerged in recent years. Some of them have been included in Bibliography of this thesis.

³¹ Since the 1950s, it has been common to attribute the motivation for writing historical narratives created by the Communist regime as serving to shore up the legitimacy of the Communist Party. A recent example is Diana Lary's paper "The Uses of the Past: History and Legitimacy" (in André Laliberté and Marc Lanteigne, eds., *Chinese Party-state in the 21st Century: Adaptation and the Reinvention of Legitimacy*. OX: Routledge, 2008, pp. 130-145.), which attributes many aspects of historiography in contemporary China, from the revival of Confucius to the official History of the Qing dynasty, from historical programs about Han Wudi 漢武帝 (BC.157-87) to the symbolization of Zheng Chenggong 鄭成功 (1624-1662), to the Chinese authorities' pursuit of legitimacy. Although it is undeniable that nowadays the exploration of the relationship between History and legitimacy is still valuable, it is not prudent to attribute historiography to such a single motivation.

of the history of the CCP and modern Chinese politics. It requires research from a broader perspective, other than that of establishing a relationship between certain historical narratives and political needs during a certain period. Of the many possible ways to fill this gap, a feasible and sufficient method is to examine Party historiography through case studies.

The issue of the Western Route Army (WRA: *Xilujun* 西路軍) is one of the few historical cases that allows a more nuanced and better-informed understanding of Party historiography. As this thesis is designed to investigate the Party historiography of different periods since the late 1930s, it is necessary to choose as its major subject a historical issue that occurred before the Yan'an Rectification Campaign—the campaign that led to the first official document about Party history. Although there are a number of historical issues that have been rewritten and reassessed after the Yan'an period, only a few remain attractive to both scholars and ordinary audiences in today's China. The construction and reconstruction of the WRA's history covers a long period from the late 1930s to the present, and sustained attention to this historical issue continues. Further, contributors to the WRA's History include Party leaders, senior cadres, ordinary commanders, Party historians, and nonprofessional writers. Due to the complexity of the case of the WRA, and the length of time over which its history stretched, some parts of its case are representative of aspects of other historical cases. The case of the WRA has allowed us to explore the writing of Party history in different periods during the past eighty years, and examine the various groups of people who participated in writing it. The historiographical significance of the case of the WRA is, after all, rooted in its important position in the CCP's history. Just like the Long March and the Xi'an Incident, two historical events that revolved around the operations of the WRA, the failure of the WRA was also one of the pivotal points in the CCP's history, and it was crucial in Mao's route to the highest level of leadership. Therefore, the important position of the WRA in history and historiography has made it the best candidate through which to study Party historiography.³²

³² In a list of the most popular topics in Party history made by Han Gang, professor at the Eastern China Normal University, among the twenty topics listed, there are only five that belong to the pre-1949 category, one of which is the Yan'an Rectification Campaign itself. Issues such as eliminating counterrevolutionaries in the Central Soviet Region, the secret cable during the Long March, and the Northwest Revolutionary Base, also are candidates for case studies of Party historiography. These issues, however, are not as good as is the case of the WRA, because although they remain controversial, they have not been used as propaganda or as subjects of commemoration. Those other cases that have been propagandized intensively in recent years, such

The Western Route Army as a Case Study

This thesis examines the construction of the official narratives of the WRA in the Mao era, as well as the various ways in which it was narrated and commemorated subsequently.

The WRA was a branch of the CCP's Chinese Red Army of Workers and Peasants (*Zhongguo gongnong hongjun* 中國工農紅軍, or in short, *Hongjun* 紅軍). It was established officially in November 1936, one month after the reunion of the three front armies (the First, Second, and Fourth Front Armies) in Gansu province following the Long March (1934-1936). The 22,000 troops in the WRA marched west along the Hexi Corridor in Gansu, fighting with local Muslim warlords. By April 1937, more than 15,000 troops had been killed or captured; only 400 soldiers finally arrived at their Xinjiang destination. In addition to the loss of personnel, the WRA was one of the most serious military defeats in the history of the CCP.

From the CCP's perspective, the establishment of the WRA and its march to Xinjiang was a significant military activity that resulted not only from power struggles within the Party, but also from a series of complicated relationships between the CCP and its allies, the Soviet Union and Zhang Xueliang 張學良 (1901-2001), as well as between the CCP and its enemy, the Nationalist Party (Kuomintang).

Equally complicated is the way in which the Party wrote and rewrote the history of the WRA over the following eighty years. From 1937 to the early 1940s, Mao and his supporters succeeded in making all cadres and soldiers accept the following extremely simplified story. The WRA was established according to Zhang Guotao's 張國燾 (1897-1979) personal orders rather than the Party Center's directive; the 22,000 troops crossed the Yellow River to build a new revolutionary base for Zhang in Gansu; the WRA was defeated because it carried out an erroneous political line, the "Zhang Guotao Line." After 1949, although the history of the WRA was included in official Party History, historians were forbidden to research the topic. Due to the extreme ambiguity and simplification of official narratives, few ordinary Chinese had knowledge of this issue. In this sense, the

as the Long March, are not as controversial as is the case of the WRA. It is for this reason that the WRA has been chosen to be the case of this thesis.

issue of the WRA was a “black hole” in official Party History.³³ In the early 1980s, there emerged within the Party leadership another interpretation of the WRA, according to which it had carried out Mao’s directions, and the purpose of its activity was to secure military assistance from the Soviet Union. The debates on this historical issue continue to be intense.

Existing English Literature about the WRA

Before explaining the significance and feasibility of this project, it is necessary to review the existing English literature about the WRA.³⁴ Because Chinese literature about the WRA forms the material that will be analyzed so that the subject of this thesis can be addressed, it is unnecessary to include Chinese literature in this section.

Among the branches of the CCP’s Red Army, the First Front Army (*Diyi fangmian jun* 第一方面軍, or the Central Red Army, *Zhongyang hongjun* 中央紅軍) has attracted the most attention from historians, both foreign and domestic. On the one hand, this is because Mao had led the First Front Army since 1935, and many of the First Front Army commanders later became high-ranking officials in the PRC. Thus, its history seems to be of more significance. On the other hand, this imbalance in historians’ attention also resulted from the CCP’s propaganda strategies. Before 1978, both the primary materials that the Party had released, and the Party’s propaganda about its revolutionary history, focused on the First Front Army. Hence, some researchers who were interested in the history of the Fourth Front Army (*Disi fangmianjun* 第四方面軍), a branch of the Red Army from which most of the WRA troops came, had no choice but to change their research topics.³⁵ There are only a few research works published before the mid-1980s that

³³ As Geremie Barmé noted in his paper about Dai Qing, when scholars mentioned historical lacunae created by shifts in policy and ideological struggles, they called them “black holes” or “memory holes”. Vera Tolz, as Barmé cited in his paper, offers the following summary of what she calls “blank spots”. They are: 1. historical events that are never written about in the Soviet Union or are mentioned in the press only once or twice without any details; 2. events that are treated with such bias that the facts are distorted; and 3. important historical documents whose publication is proscribed. (Geremie Barmé, 1991, pp. 141-181.)

³⁴ In these works “Xilujun” is variously translated as “the Western Legion”, “the West Route Army” or “the Western Route Army”.

³⁵ Strictly speaking, three separate armies were part of the Long March, which lasted from 1934 to 1936. The First Front Army left Jiangxi Province in October 1934 and reached Shaanxi Province in the north-west one year later. Zhang Guotao’s Fourth Front Army marched from Sichuan to join the First Front Army on the Tibetan border in 1935. A year later, the Second Front Army under He Long and Xiao Ke followed the same route as the First Front Army had, reaching Shaanxi in 1936. It should be pointed out that scholarship in English also omitted the history of the WRA for a long time. For example, in the most popular monograph on the CCP’s history, *A History of the Chinese*

mentioned the WRA. Almost all of these accept that Zhang led the troops to the other side of the Yellow River due to personal ambition.³⁶ By the mid-1980s, when the new interpretation of the WRA emerged among Party leaders, the related narratives in the English-speaking world changed as a consequence. An interesting example is the famous book published by Harrison Salisbury, *The Long March: the Untold Story*. A year after Li Xiannian 李先念 (1909-1992) submitted his report about the WRA to the Politburo of the CCP, Salisbury interviewed him and adopted Li's accounts about the WRA as his major resource to discuss this issue.³⁷ Salisbury consequently became the first foreign channel through which Li announced the new interpretation to the outside world, although Salisbury did not necessarily know that.³⁸ Following the argument of the new interpretation, some scholars also have suggested in their research that Mao took advantage of the WRA to eliminate Zhang's influence within the Party.³⁹

Because there were limited channels through which to obtain knowledge about the history of the CCP from the 1930s to the 1980s, other than the Party's official organs, it was quite understandable that Western scholars and writers on the WRA were, to a great degree, influenced by Mao Zedong's orthodox interpretation and Li

Communist Party 1921-1949 (Guillermaz, 1968), the chapter on the Long March ends with the Second and Fourth Front Armies gathering in North Shaanxi (Shaanbei 陝北) in October 1936 and the subject of the next chapter is the Anti-Japanese United Front (*Kangri tongyi zhanxian* 抗日統一戰線), with no mention of the WRA at all.

³⁶ For instance, Dick Wilson wrote: "But Chang Kuo-tao was not content to camp in Mao Tse-tung's new and enlarged compound. He decided to march on, still set on his old plan to establish a soviet base in the far north-west, in or near Sinkiang, in contact with his Russian friends and patrons." Dick Wilson, *The Long March 1935: the Epic of Chinese Communism's Survival*. New York: Penguin, 1982, p. 242.

³⁷ Salisbury interviewed Li Xiannian on June 15, 1984 and cited Li's following accounts in his book: "This was a different case from the earlier efforts by Zhang to split the Red Army forces. The crossing was in conformity with specific orders of the Central Committee." Harrison E. Salisbury, *The Long March: The Untold Story*. New York: Harper & Row, 1985, p. 319.

³⁸ There are also some non-academic works that included narratives about the WRA. For example: Sun Suyun, *The Long March: The True History of Communist China's Founding Myth*. New York: Doubleday, 2006, pp. 219-244. Among those English works about the Long March and the Red Army, there are several books that concentrate on female commanders and soldiers. In the following three most popular books that have female Red Army commanders and soldiers as their subjects, authors paid considerable attention to female figures in the WRA: (1) Lily Xiao Hong Lee and Sue Wiles, *Women of the Long March: the Never Before Told Story*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1999. (2) Dean King, *Unbound: A True Story of War, Love, and Survival*. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2010. (3) Helen Praeger Young, *Choosing Revolution: Chinese Women Soldiers on the Long March*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2007. One of the three female Communists, on whom Lee and Wiles' book is centered, is a WRA commander, Wang Quanyuan. The suffering of female WRA soldiers is a new theme in the CCP's propaganda of the WRA, and Wang Quanyuan is a typical example of someone who has been frequently praised (see Chapter 7).

³⁹ "After the Long March, Mao saw an opportunity to solve the problems between his and Zhang's troops." Li Xiaobing, *A History of the Modern Chinese Army*. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2007, p. 63.

Xiannian's new interpretation. Benjamin Yang's 1990 book, however, is an exception, as it provides, by far, the most detailed and precise analysis of the CCP's military operations and intraparty power struggles from 1934 to 1937. Also relying on materials released in the 1980s, most of which were in favor of the new interpretation of the WRA, Yang pointed out wisely that the establishment of the WRA "was not just a conspiracy Zhang [Guotao] framed in Mao's ignorance," and neither did it result from Mao's idea of sacrificing Zhang's troops. Instead, Yang argued that the WRA was a result of the selfish objectives of both men.⁴⁰

Concerning the CCP's assessment of the WRA, Western writers also have followed the popular explanation found in China, arguing that when Mao controlled everything, this subject was not a matter for discussion, and that it is only since the 1980s that "the truth is beginning to emerge."⁴¹ Searching in Chinese databases, we can find dozens of articles about the historiography of the WRA. The majority of these tell the same story: that the WRA had been misinterpreted since 1937, and was rehabilitated in the 1980s.⁴² These articles did not examine different interpretations of the WRA critically, nor did they frame the issue within the overarching narrative of Party historiography.

This thesis will chart the history of the WRA, and then examine its historiography comprehensively for the first time. The goal of this thesis, however, is not only to document the evolving historical evaluations and politicized debates about the WRA, but more importantly, by examining this case study, to show how Party History was written.

In the past eight decades, the history of the WRA has been used repeatedly to support political positions. Some contributors to the historiography of the WRA

⁴⁰ Benjamin Yang, *From Revolution to Politics: Chinese Communists on the Long March*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1990, pp. 228-237.

⁴¹ Sun Shuyun, 2006, p. 220.

⁴² A survey on Chinese literature database *Zhongguo zhiwang* 中國知網 (cnki.net) shows that there are dozens of articles about the rewriting of the history of the WRA in the 1980s. There is also a Master dissertation on this topic: Wang Qiang 王強, "Zhonggong lingdaoren yu Xilujun wenti de boluan fanzheng 中共領導人與西路軍問題的撥亂反正" (CCP leaders and the rehabilitation of the WRA). MA Dissertation, Tianjin University, 2010. By comparing these articles and dissertation, we can see that almost all the narratives about the rewriting of the history of the WRA emerged from the following two articles. The first was written by Cong Jin, a researcher who personally took part in rewriting the WRA's history. The other was written by an editor of *Beijing ribao* 北京日報 (Beijing Daily), who once interviewed some of the people involved in rewriting this history. Cong Jin 叢進, "Xilujun wenti de tichu he jiejué 西路軍問題的提出和解決" (The origin and resolving of the issue of WRA), *Yan-Huang chunqiu* 炎黃春秋, 2005(5), pp. 28-31. Li Qingying 李慶英, "Hong jun Xilujun lishi zhenxiang chengqing shimo 紅軍西路軍歷史真相澄清始末" (The whole story of how the historical truth of the WRA was clarified), *Dangshi wenyuan* 黨史文苑, 2005 (19), pp. 4-11.

were high-ranking officials themselves. Therefore, a considerable portion of the chapters in this thesis are devoted inevitably to explaining how historical interpretations were related to the power struggle of political factions within the CCP, and the Party leadership's needs during particular periods. This thesis, however, does not restrict itself to political elites, but investigates a variety of contributors to Party historiography. In this way, it steps outside of the perspective of understanding Party historiography by simply connecting it to political needs.

Significance

Clearly, a project about the writing and rewriting of the CCP's history over the past eighty years will broaden the scope of the study of modern Chinese historiography. Moreover, this thesis also is significant for other reasons.

Western scholars' main concerns about the CCP revolve around three basic questions: Why was the CCP able to take power in 1949? Why was the CCP able to continue its rule after the legitimacy crisis of 1989? What is the future of this Communist Party? It is disingenuous to claim that research about Party historiography will help answer the above three questions clearly—no research can. However, a project that explores the history of the writing of Party history helps us think deeply about these questions, because such a project not only provides new materials, but also offers new perspectives that will help readers decipher some of the CCP's mysteries and comprehend the past, present, and future of this party more clearly.

By exploring one of the least examined aspects of the history and politics of the CCP, Party historiography, this research will offer new perspectives on some essential historical questions about this Marxist political party, such as the emergence of "Mao Zedong Thought," the power struggles between Mao and his rivals, and the ideological transformation under Deng Xiaoping's 鄧小平 (1904-1997) rule, in all of which, the writing of Party history played significant roles. In short, this thesis helps explain why the CCP is what it is now. Because this project examines historical studies by specialists in Party history—a group of intellectuals about whom research is rare—it also will shed new light on the relationship between intellectuals and the Party, one of the keys to our understanding of the politics and culture of modern China.

More importantly, this research also helps deepen our understanding of China's

politics in recent years. This point can be explained from two perspectives. First, one of the greatest obstacles to China's political reform lies in the Party leadership's hesitation to reassess its history and that of former leaders. Only when we have a thorough understanding of the way in which Party History was written can we situate the current leadership's concern in the political context of contemporary China and capture the real import of many of the unique statements that were made. In this way, we will gain a better understanding of the prospects for China's political reform. Second, after 1989, the CCP's control over ideology has become quite confusing. While the Chinese word *xuanchuan* 宣傳 (propaganda) has been considered widely to be synonymous with fabrication, the official propaganda about the Party's glorious past still holds considerable currency. Further, while many myths about Party history that were popular in the Mao era now have been challenged seriously, it seems that the Party still occupies a central position in the story about China's recent past that the majority of Chinese people accept. These contradictions require research about the strategies and motivations of the CCP's propaganda in recent years. Many analysts have suggested that during the post-Tiananmen period, the CCP drew on nationalism and patriotism as an ideological replacement for communism in order to augment its support from disaffected members of the population. The patriotic sentiment of the Chinese people has become an increasingly important factor in China's international relations.⁴³ Another concept that related to, and sometimes overlapped with, the idea of patriotism is that of "loving the Party" (*ai Dang* 愛黨), which is also a focus of the Party's education and propaganda, but can be easily ignored. Mining the Party's revolutionary past has been part of the Party leadership's efforts to promote patriotism and conduct ideological reeducation. By examining the real process of the creation of the popular interpretations about the history of the CCP, this study will enhance our understanding of China's fascination with history, as well as Chinese people's attitudes about political issues and foreign affairs. In this sense, the significance of this project goes beyond elite politics, because it also helps explain some prominent aspects of social phenomena in contemporary China.

⁴³ Peter Hays Gries, *China's New Nationalism: Pride, Politics, and Diplomacy*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004. Zheng Yongnian, *Discovering Chinese Nationalism in China: Modernization, Identity, and International Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Sources and Outline of the Thesis

Sources

The nature of the CCP's historiography was a highly secret and sensitive matter in Mao's China. This characteristic has continued into the post-Mao era, and even continues today, because narratives that differ from official explanations are still considered as challenges to the Party's authority. The WRA is one of the most controversial issues in the history of the CCP, and hence, has been a difficult topic to research.

To collect the necessary materials, the completion of this project relied largely on three channels. First, I followed the same route as the WRA, from Jingyuan 靖遠 to Anxi 安西 (now Guazhou 瓜州) in Gansu, 1,100 kilometers along the Hexi Corridor,⁴⁴ visiting almost all of the counties in which the WRA was stationed or fought eighty years ago. I did so to discover as much as I could about the realities that lay behind the myths, as well as the way in which people have commemorated this history. There are not many extant primary materials, but the internal publications produced by local agencies have provided valuable help in conducting this research.

Second, I was fortunate early in this project to build relationships with some important figures involved in rewriting the WRA's history and, as a result, I managed to conduct interviews with historians, officials at different levels, and the families of some of the WRA commanders. These interviews helped me trace some of the main changes in Party historiography during the post-Mao era that had not been described fully before in English language materials. Moreover, these interviews also helped me target the key problems that I had to solve in this thesis, and enabled me to locate other sources of materials.

I used both primary and secondary materials intensively in this thesis, including memoirs, compilations of telegrams and documents of the Party and the Red Army, as well as previous research on Party history that was conducted by officials, scholars, and writers of various periods. These materials not only provided supplementary sources to examine the issue of the WRA, but also helped establish a foundation on which to understand Party historiography thoroughly during both

⁴⁴ Theoretically speaking, the WRA's route finished in Xingxingxia 星星峡 in Xinjiang, about 230 km northwestern to Guazhou. Furthermore, after the WRA was almost destroyed in Nijiayingzi 倪家营子, the remainders of the WRA hid in the Qilian Mountains for a couple of months. As a result, the distance that the WRA marched in 1936 and 1937 is much longer than that of my route.

the Mao and post-Mao eras.

In summary, this thesis is based on a previously unexplored genre of internal publications, interviews with various groups of people who have been involved in writing or propagandizing the history of the Party, on-site observations, and detailed secondary source research.

Thesis Outline

This thesis is divided into two sections: the first three chapters form Part One, and the other four form Part Two. These two parts deal with the historiography of WRA in the Mao and post-Mao eras, respectively.

The subject of Chapter 1 is the history of the WRA. The first reason to include the history of the WRA in this thesis is that only when we have an alternative (and factually more objective) account can we determine what has been omitted and what has been emphasized in official narratives. Moreover, it is necessary to examine the history of the WRA, because its evaluation began while it was still fighting on the battlefield.

Chapter 2 deals with the process by which Mao's explanation of the WRA was accorded intra-Party consensus in the period from the late 1930s to the early 1940s, emphasizing the role that Party history played in Mao's seizure of power, and analyzing the methods he used to achieve that goal.

Chapter 3 delves into the finalization of official Party History in the 1950s, when professional historians and Party theorists placed certain historical events, including that of the WRA, into the official historical framework.

Chapter 4 explores the rewriting of official Party History after 1978, analyzing the motivations of different groups of people who were involved in the issue of the WRA, and their attitudes on this issue.

Chapter 5 examines professional historians' research on the history of the CCP after 1976. It reveals the process that these historians underwent, from serving the Party leadership through solidarity, to finally splitting into two groups, one of which emphasized that Party History should be academic, while the other clung to the view that Party History should "serve politics."

Chapter 6 addresses the debates about the WRA in recent years, which took place among some nonprofessional historians, and examines, through this case, a part of Party historiography previously unexplored—"quasi-official Party historiography." This chapter then attempts to explain the motivation and purpose

of the Party leadership's criticism of "historical nihilism."

Chapter 7 examines the ways in which local officials and the populace of Gansu have narrated and commemorated the WRA since the early 1980s. By surveying Party historiography at the local level, this chapter provides a different lens through which to understand the CCP's ideology.

Part One: The Western Route Army in the Mao Era

Chapter 1: The Western Route Army in the History of the CCP

Introduction

This chapter is designed to reveal the entire course of the WRA, as well as to analyze its mission and the reasons for its failure.

The WRA was established in November 1936. However, there is an important prelude to this—the Party’s split in 1935. For this reason, the time spanned in this chapter is from June 1935, when the Fourth Front Army met the Party Center and the First Front Army in the Tibetan inhabited northwestern Sichuan frontiers, to April 1937, when the remnants of the defeated WRA troops escaped from their enemy’s territory and arrived at the Gansu-Xinjiang border. This chapter will reveal the subtlety of the power relationship between the Party Center controlled by Mao Zedong, and the Fourth Front Army led by Zhang Guotao after their separation in September 1935. This complexity is absent in the Party’s official historical narratives. Instead, the Party indicated simply that Zhang split with the Party from September 1935 to June 1936, and then surrendered and was obedient to the Party Center after June 1936. As this chapter will argue, during the period concerned, both Mao’s and Zhang’s camps considered each other to be useful in various ways, and cooperated with each other for their mutual benefit. The WRA’s establishment was due, largely, to this competitive, but nonetheless mutually beneficial, relationship. The foundation of their cooperation, however, was fragile. Changing situations on the battlefields provided both sides with opportunities to advance their self-interests at the expense of their intra-Party rivals. This rivalry had a negative effect on communication between the WRA and the Party Center, and led to the WRA’s defeat in Gansu. This chapter will also reveal that the competition in explaining the establishment, goals, and later, the defeat of the WRA, was an important factor that affected the relationship between the WRA and the Party Center.

In most cases, materials released by the CCP constitute the main source for research on the Party’s history. However, as will be discussed in the following chapters, the authenticity of these materials is questionable. In using these materials to study the WRA’s history, this chapter adopted two methods to minimize the negative influence of the less-than-reliable materials. First, to the

extent possible, the chapter employed primary materials. Although it also makes several references to memoirs and other secondary sources, all of the key conclusions of this chapter are drawn from original telegrams released by the CCP. Second, due to the limitations inherent in using telegrams as a primary source (this point will be detailed in Chapter 4), this chapter avoids over-interpreting single telegrams, but draws discrete conclusions on the basis of an understanding of the contradictions between them. The two points above lend this chapter greater fidelity to historical reality than do the four interpretations that will be introduced in the following chapters.

1.1 The Split of the CCP and the Red Army in 1935 and 1936

1.1.1 Two “Party Centers”

From the late 1920s to the early 1930s, the CCP and its Red Army established several revolutionary bases (Soviet regions) that were scattered in mountainous areas. When the Party Center began the Long March in October 1934, thousands of miles separated the two most powerful branches of the Chinese Red Army of Workers and Peasants. The First Front Army, composed of more than 100,000 troops, was located in the southeast province of Jiangxi, and was under the direct authority of the Party Center.¹ The Fourth Front Army, consisting of some 80,000 troops, had left its Er-yu-wan Revolutionary Base two years earlier and built a new base on the Sichuan-Shaanxi border.² Zhang Guotao had led the Er-yu-wan Bureau of the CCP and the Er-yu-wan Revolutionary Military Committee since 1931, when the Party Center dispatched him from Shanghai to Hubei. Although Zhang’s official title changed several times, he and his supporters held firm control of the Fourth Front Army for five years.³

The Party Center and the First Front Army met the Fourth Front Army in

¹ Junshi kexue yuan junshi lishi yanjiusuo 軍事科學院軍事歷史研究所 (Military History Institute of PLA Military Science Academy), ed., *Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun zhanshi* 中國人民解放軍戰史 (Military history of the PLA). Beijing: Junshi kexue chubanshe 軍事科學出版社, 1987, p. 243.

² *Zhongguo gongnong hongjun disi fangmianjun zhanshi bianji weiyuanhui* 中國工農紅軍第四方面軍戰史編輯委員會, *Zhongguo gongnong hongjun disi fangmianjun zhanshi* 中國工農紅軍第四方面軍戰史 (Military history of the Fourth Front Army of the Chinese Red Army of Workers and Peasants, hereafter MHFF). Beijing: Jiefangjun chubanshe 解放軍出版社, 1989, p. 262.

³ In the Sichuan-Shaanxi base, Zhang Guotao was the Chairman of the Sichuan-Shaanxi Revolutionary Military Committee and the Chairman of the Sichuan-Shaanxi Soviet Region. The Fourth Front Army left the Sichuan-Shaanxi Revolutionary Base in March 1935. On May 18, 1935, the above two institutions were renamed as the Northwest Special Zone Committee of the CCP and the Northwest Revolutionary Military Committee. Zhang Guotao was still the chairman of these two committees.

Maogong 懋功 in Sichuan Province in June 1935, after eight months' of fierce fighting during the Long March. Because the First Front Army had fewer troops than did the Fourth at the time,⁴ approximately 3,700 troops were transferred to the First Front Army to balance its military power. Meanwhile, several cadres of the First Front Army were appointed as chiefs of staff or directors of political departments in branches of the Fourth Front Army.⁵ In early August 1935, the Red Army, which had more than 100,000 troops, was divided into two groups—the Right and the Left Route Army—and proceeded north along two different routes (Table 1-1).⁶ The Party Center was to march with the Right Route Army, commanded by Xu Xiangqian 徐向前 (1901-1990) and Chen Changhao 陳昌浩 (1906-1967), Zhang's closest colleagues in the Fourth Front Army.⁷

At dawn on September 10, 1935, when the Right Route Army was stationed near Baozuo 包座, the Party Center secretly ordered the First Front Army troops in the Right Route Army—consisting of the First and Third Armies—to march northward quickly, informing neither Xu nor Chen of this.⁸ There are two extremely divergent interpretations of why this happened. According to the CCP's official historiography, the Party Center—persisted correctly to march northward, while Zhang insisted on retreating to the southern regions. To achieve his goal, Zhang “attempted to split and jeopardize the Party Center.” He secretly sent a cable to Chen Changhao on September 9, asking him to lead the Right Route Army southward. Ye Jianying 葉劍英 (1897-1986) read the cable accidentally and reported it to Mao immediately. To avoid conflict within the Red Army, Mao and other leaders decided to march northward in secret.⁹ According to Zhang, Mao took advantage of the Fourth Front Army to open a route to the north and then

⁴ The CCP's official history books do not record of the exact size of the First Front Army when it met the Fourth Front Army in Maogong. Many books have cited Zhou Enlai's conversation with Zhang Guotao in Maogong that the First Front Army had 30,000 troops when they stayed in Zunyi five months before. But a number of recollections have suggested that the First Front Army had less than 10,000 troops in June 1935.

⁵ MHFF, p. 329.

⁶ The Fourth Army and the Thirtieth Army joined together with the major force of the First Front Army and was called the Right Route Army. The Fifth Army and the Thirty-second Army of the First Front Army combined with the other three armies of the Fourth Front Army—the Ninth Army, the Thirty-first Army and the Thirty-third Army to be known as the Left Route Army. For a full explanation of the detail of the combination that occurred, see Table 1-1.

⁷ MHFF, p. 330. See Table 1-1.

⁸ MHFF, p. 338.

⁹ Zhonggong zhongyang dangshi yanjiushi 中共中央黨史研究室, *Zhongguo gongchandang lishi* 中國共產黨歷史, 第一卷 (上) (The Chinese Communist Party's history, Volume 1, Part 1). Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi chubanshe 中共黨史出版社, 2011, p. 393.

escaped secretly to save his own troops.¹⁰ Debate on this issue still rages in China today. In any case, the CCP's authority and the Red Army were divided into two groups thereafter.

After the split between the First and Fourth Front Armies, Mao's Party Center immediately convened a conference in Ejie 俄界 to accuse Zhang of splitting the Red Army.¹¹ Zhang's Fourth Front Army also held a conference in Zhuomudiao 卓木碉 to dismiss Mao, Zhou Enlai 周恩來 (1898-1976), Bo Gu 博古 (1907-1946) and Zhang Wentian 張聞天 (1900-1976) from the Central Committee and the Party, and to list them as wanted. The alternative Central Committee, the Politburo, and the Military Council were established during this conference.¹²

Given that there were two "Party Centers" during the following eight months, and that this thesis adopts a neutral perspective concerning power struggles within the CCP, Mao's and Zhang's Party Centers will be referred to as the "Shaanxi Party Center" and the "Sichuan Party Center," respectively.¹³

In the CCP's official Party History, the Shaanxi Party Center led by Mao was the sole legitimate leadership, and the Fourth Front Army's compliance with its directives was non-negotiable. Despite reaching different conclusions, most extant publications about the relationship between Zhang and Mao are based on this premise, which prevents us from fully understanding the operation of the Red

¹⁰ Zhang Guotao 張國燾, *Wo de huiyi* 我的回憶 (My memoirs), Volume 2. Beijing: Dongfang chubanshe 東方出版社, 2004, p. 418.

¹¹ "Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu Zhang Guotao tongzhi de cuowu de jue ding (Ejie huiyi) 中共中央關於張國燾同志的錯誤的決定（俄界會議）（1935年9月12日）" (The CCP Central Committee's resolution on Comrade Zhang Guotao's errors issued at the Ejie Conference on September 12, 1935). Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun junshi kexue yuan 中國人民解放軍軍事科學院 (PLA Military Science Academy) and Zhongyang dang'an guan 中央檔案館 (Central Archives), eds., *Hongjun Changzheng wenxian* 紅軍長征·文獻 (Reference on the Red Army's Long March, hereafter RRAL). Beijing: Jiefangjun chubanshe 解放軍出版社, 1995, pp. 683-684. This resolution was conveyed to the members of the Central Committee after the Ejie Conference, but was not circulated within the Party until January 1936. See "Zhongyang zhengzhiju guanyu Zhang Guotao tongzhi chengli 'di'er zhongyang' de jue ding 中央政治局關於張國燾同志成立「第二中央」的決定（1936年1月22日）" (The CCP Politburo's decision on the establishment of the 'alternative Party Center' by Comrade Zhang Guotao, on January 22, 1936), in *Zhongguo gongnong hongjun disi fangmianjun zhanshi ziliao xuanbian, Changzheng shiqi* 中國工農紅軍第四方面軍戰史資料選編·長征時期 (Selected materials on the history of the Fourth Front Army in the Chinese Red Army of Workers and Peasants, the Long March period, hereafter SMHF). Beijing: Jiefangjun chubanshe 解放軍出版社, 1992, p. 328.

¹² "Zhang Guotao ling li 'zhongyang' de zuzhi jueyi 張國燾另立「中央」的組織決議（1935年10月5日於卓木碉）" (Zhang Guotao's organizational resolution on establishing an alternative "Party Center", in Zhuomudiao on the October 5, 1935), in SMHF, p. 230.

¹³ In early June 1936 the Sichuan side concealed their "Party Center" but they did not recognize the Shaanxi side to be the legal Party Center until late September. So in this thesis, when dealing with the period from June to September 1936, the two sides are referred to as the "Shaanxi Party Center" and the "Fourth Front Army" respectively.

Army during this period. Therefore, it is necessary to analyze the relationship between the Shaanxi and Sichuan sides of the CCP before discussing the Red Army's military operations.

The Relationship between the Two Party Centers

When they divided initially, each side asserted that it was the real Party Center, and insisted that the other side should defer.¹⁴ In this situation, support from the Communist International (Comintern) would have been a decisive factor that could have legitimized the leadership of the CCP of one of the two sides. However, the Comintern had lost radio contact with the CCP for more than two years, since the Party Center left Shanghai in 1933. In November 1935, Lin Yuying 林育英 (1897-1942), one of the CCP's representatives in the Comintern, arrived in northern Shaanxi with oral directives from Stalin, as well as a new code system to re-establish radio links between the Shaanxi Party Center and Moscow. In the following months, the Shaanxi Party Center allowed Lin to act as a mediator to solve the problem of the Party's split. During this period, the Shaanxi Party Center took full advantage of Lin's position as a representative from the Comintern to persuade the Sichuan Party Center to cooperate with them. However, this did not work well initially.¹⁵ Although Zhang Guotao and his colleagues announced that they would cooperate with the Comintern,¹⁶ they did not openly change their attitudes, and the two Party Centers and their armies continued to operate independently, and without any strategic cooperation.¹⁷ Cables between Lin and the Sichuan Party Center indicate that Zhang insisted at that time that both sides

¹⁴ The Shaanxi Party Center ordered the Sichuan Party Center to stop using the title of the "Red Army Headquarters". See Cable 3; Cable 5; Cable 7 (Appendix). The Sichuan Party Center insisted that the Shaanxi Party Center, the institutions and armies in Shaanxi should be referred to as the "North Bureau", "The Shaanxi-Gansu Government" and the "Northern Route Army" respectively. See Cable 1; Cable 2.

¹⁵ Because the Shaanxi side used ambiguous words in cables and did not convey any specific directives from the Comintern, Zhang Guotao was quite suspicious and wrote to Lin Yuying to ask whether he "communicated with Comintern frequently". See Cable 10.

¹⁶ Cable 4.

¹⁷ In March 1936, Zhang Guotao changed his strategy of controlling southern regions and planned to go northward to build an anti-Japanese base in northwest China. Because the CCP's official Party historiography and other popular reading materials describe the conflicts between Zhang Guotao and the legal Party Center as a divergence between "going southward" (*nan xia* 南下) and "going northward" (*bei shang* 北上), Zhang Guotao's decision to "go northward" in March 1936 is easily to be taken as an agreement with the Shaanxi Party Center's strategies, and even as a gesture of compliance with the Shaanxi side. For instance, *The History of the Red Army's Long March* by the Central Party History Research Office holds this point of view. (Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi chubanshe, 2006, p. 319.) The fact is that although both sides intended to make northwest China their revolutionary base, they did not cooperate with each other and at the time their knowledge of the other side's intentions was limited.

be referred to simultaneously as “bureaus,” and led by the Comintern.¹⁸ The Shaanxi side suggested that the Party’s branches in Sichuan would be instructed directly by the CCP’s representatives in the Comintern, and that the Shaanxi Party Center, as the sole legal Party Center, would control all other branches.¹⁹ The tremendous differences on this fundamental issue caused Lin’s mediation efforts to stagnate for months.

The CCP leadership problem still had not been resolved by late May 1936, when the Second and the Sixth Army Corps, led by Ren Bishi 任弼時 (1904-1950) and He Long 賀龍 (1896-1969), who were completely unaware of the Party’s split, were about to meet the Fourth Front Army in Sichuan. As the most powerful force other than the First and Fourth Front Armies, their opinions on Party and army affairs could break the deadlock between the Shaanxi and Sichuan factions. Consequently, both factions felt it was urgent to decide how to define the relationship between the two corps and the Sichuan Party Center.²⁰ Zhang took this opportunity to assess Lin’s, or the Comintern’s, attitude by inquiring whether the Shaanxi Party Center had changed its title to “The North Bureau.”²¹ One week later, cables from the Sichuan side claimed that both it and the Shaanxi side had stopped calling themselves “the Party Center.”²² At the same time, the Sichuan side began to call the Shaanxi side the “colleagues of the North Bureau.”²³ Accessible resources provide no evidence of Lin’s reply, so the response from Sichuan can be explained in at least two alternative ways. One possibility is that the Shaanxi side compromised and agreed to the degradation of the bureaus. An almost equally reasonable explanation is that it was only wishful thinking on the part of the Sichuan side. Until more documents are released, we cannot determine which one is the most likely. In any case, at least one thing is certain from the

¹⁸ Cable 7.

¹⁹ Cable 6.

²⁰ In July 1936, the Second Army Corps combined with the Sixth Army Corps to be the Second Front Army. There are different interpretations on the role that the Second Front Army leaders played in this period. The Central Party History Research Office said that Zhang Guotao attempted to make the Second Front Army leaders his supporters, but was firmly refused by them. See *The Chinese Communist Party’s History*, Volume 1, Part 1, p. 399. Zhang Guotao’s account is that Ren Bishi wanted to be mediator and believed both sides had made some mistakes. See Zhang Guotao, 2004, Volume 2, pp. 449-450.

²¹ Cable 10.

²² “Zhang Guotao zai zhongyang zongdui huodong fenzi hui shang baogao beipo xuanbu quxiao ‘dier zhongyang’ 張國燾在中央總隊活動分子會上報告被迫宣布取消“第二中央”(1936年6月6日)” (Zhang Guotao was forced to announce the concealment of the “alternative Party Center” at the Central Column’s meeting, on June 6, 1936), in SMHF, pp. 533-540.

²³ Cable 11.

correspondence at the time—the Sichuan side did not believe that the Shaanxi side should lead them; on the contrary, it believed that it was the legitimate leadership to whom the other side should report, and from whom it should ask for advice. It was only for the sake of Party unity that the Sichuan gave up its title of Party Center and adopted a negotiation strategy regarding inner-Party affairs and military operations.²⁴ In order to show its authority, each side sent cables to guide the other side's work, especially regarding military arrangements, even though both sides understood clearly that these “directives” had no influence at all. Some of these cables have been released, but only those that demonstrate the authority of the Shaanxi side over the Sichuan side have been cited frequently in publications.

In summary, the relationship between the two sides was complicated and murky, and cooperation would only occur if both sides benefited from it, rather than one side complying with the other's orders. Fortunately, the Shaanxi side's plan to secure a connection with the Soviet Union was in the interests of both sides.

1.1.2 One Step towards Party Reunion

For three reasons, since early 1936, the Shaanxi Party Center had prioritized securing Soviet military assistance as one of its most urgent tasks. First, with their sparse populations and infertile land, the areas in northern Shaanxi that they occupied could not support the thousands of Red Army soldiers positioned there. More critically, they were short of munitions.²⁵ Second, Stalin's oral message, which Lin delivered to northern Shaanxi, recommended that the majority of the Red Army go to northern or northeastern China, and that he would not oppose the Red Army's approach to the Soviet Union.²⁶ Third, in negotiations with local warlords, the Party leadership in Shaanxi realized gradually that the strategy of

²⁴ The Shaanxi camp wrote in a telegram that it “acknowledged the negotiated relationship with Guotao”. See Cable 9. The Sichuan camp said it was unnecessary to “order” the colleagues in Shaanxi and it was acceptable to negotiate with them. See SMHF, pp. 533-540.

²⁵ Cable 17.

²⁶ Cable 8. For more about the CCP's attempts to connect with the Soviet Union, see Yang Kuisong 楊奎松, *Xi'an shibian xintan: Zhang Xueliang yu Zhonggong guanxi zhi mi* 西安事變新探：張學良與中共關係之謎 (The Xi'an Incident revisited: a study of the relationship between Zhang Xueliang and the CCP). Nanjing: Jiangsu renmin chubanshe 江蘇人民出版社, 2010, pp. 13-15. According to Yang, proposals about marching to the Sino-Soviet borders had been made occasionally after the late 1920s, especially when the CCP met serious difficulties. These proposals, however, were immediately rejected because of worries about negative consequences for the Soviet Union. The main concern of the opponents was that this would place diplomatic pressure on the Soviet Union and might even be a pretext for the Japanese to invade Mongolia. This time, Stalin's message turned this former politically incorrect proposal into a reasonable plan.

these warlords was to gain the Soviet Union's support via the CCP, rather than merely to cooperate with the Chinese Communists. As a result, the task of obtaining the Soviet Union's assistance was not only important to the Red Army's ability to replenish its armaments, but also was the key to implement the Comintern's order to "unite all forces which could be united." Among these local warlords, Zhang Xueliang, the marshal of the Northeast Army (or the Manchuria Army, *Dongbei jun* 東北軍) and then Deputy Commander in Chief of the Northwest Anti-Communist General Headquarters, played the most important role in implementing the plan.²⁷

There is no evidence to suggest that the Shaanxi Party Center first considered inviting the Sichuan side to join in their plan to secure assistance from the Soviet Union. Presumably, it made this decision partly due to Zhang Xueliang's ever-changing ideas in negotiations with the Shaanxi Party Center, which convinced the Shaanxi side that if it was determined to obtain assistance, the Fourth Front Army's participation would be necessary.

An essential reason that the Sichuan side found the Shaanxi Party Center's invitation attractive was that the plan was related closely to the Comintern. Lin conveyed Stalin's oral message to Zhang as early as January 1936, but Zhang did not respond positively. On July 6, 1936, the Shaanxi Party Center told their colleagues in Sichuan that they had communicated with the Comintern by radio, and had forwarded a cable from Moscow to Sichuan immediately.²⁸ This cable has not been released,²⁹ but one can assume, based on the responses of the Sichuan Party Center, that it was very likely to have been a decisive factor in making them agree to go north to cooperate with the First Front Army.³⁰ By then, after months

²⁷ For more about the relationship between Zhang Xueliang and the Shaanxi Party Center see Yang Kuisong, 2010.

²⁸ According to Yang Kuisong's research based on archives of the Comintern, the Shaanxi Party Center succeeded in communicating with the Comintern on June 16, 1936. On July 2, 1936, Zhang Wentian sent another cable to the CCP representatives in the Comintern. (See Yang Kuisong, 2010, pp. 111-113.) It is thus clear that the Shaanxi Party Center deceived the Sichuan Party Center on this issue.

²⁹ The Sichuan Party Center asked, "what the Comintern's directives were", the Shaanxi Party Center replied two days later to say: "Besides the cable that we had already forwarded to you, the Comintern did not send any directives on issues concerning the Second Front Army and the Fourth Front Army." See Cable 14; Cable 15.

³⁰ The Shaanxi Party Center attempted to persuade the Fourth Front Army and the Second Front Army to join the First Front Army in Shaanxi and Gansu several times. See "Qingzhu er si fangmian jun shengli huishi 慶祝二、四方面軍勝利會師 (1936年7月1日)" (Celebrating the union of the Second Front Army and the Fourth Front Army, on July 1, 1936), in SMHF, p. 569; Cable 12; Cable 13. The Sichuan Party Center's response, however, was just promises to "cooperate with the First Front Army". See Cable 11. Not until August 1 did Zhang Guotao and his men agree to meet the First

of negotiation, the two split Party leaderships agreed to cooperate for the first time.

On August 12, 1936, the Shaanxi side included the Fourth Front Army in their formal military plan of operations. Zhang Xueliang's Northeast Army was still the main force in this plan to occupy western Gansu and connect with the Soviet Union through Xinjiang. The Second and Fourth Front Armies were supposed to attack the Nationalist Central Army and the Gansu local force in order to provide the Northeast Army with an opportunity to take over the strategically significant Lanzhou 蘭州 and western Gansu. The First Front Army was to occupy Ningxia and connect with the Soviet Union through Mongolia.³¹ Given the fact that Zhang Xueliang had failed to execute his cooperative plans with the Communists, it was not a surprise that two weeks later, when the second plan to take over Ningxia and western Gansu was finalized, the significant role of the Northeast Army was withdrawn. Instead, the Fourth Front Army was to march directly to the Hexi Corridor through Qinghai and then arrive at Suzhou 肅州 (now Jiuquan 酒泉) in the first half of the following year, while the First Front Army was to occupy Ningxia. This plan was submitted to Wang Ming 王明 (1904-1974), the then representative of the CCP in the Comintern, on August 25.³²

The Two Routes to Connect with the Soviet Union

From the location of the main forces of the Red Army, there were only two routes to connect with the Soviet Union: one was to pass through Ningxia and Suiyuan 綏遠,³³ while the other was to take the Hexi Corridor to Xinjiang. Both routes had advantages and disadvantages. Mao once calculated that the Ningxia route was shorter and had natural and economic conditions that were more favorable, while the Gansu route was easier to retain in the long term.³⁴ In addition to these factors, there was a significant distinction between the two routes: the Japanese Kwantong Army controlled a part of Mongolia far from Gansu.

Front Army. See Cable 14.

³¹ Cable 16.

³² Cable 17.

³³ Suiyuan was a province of China in the Republican period. Abolished in 1954, its territory now forms part of the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region.

³⁴ Mao Zedong, "Hongjun jiejin Sulian de daolu he shiji wenti 紅軍接近蘇聯的道路和時機問題 (1936年6月29日)" (About the route and timing of the Red Army approaching to the Soviet Union, on June 29, 1936), in *Mao Zedong junshi wenji* 毛澤東軍事文集 (Selected military works of Mao Zedong), Volume 1. Beijing: Junshi kexue chubanshe 軍事科學出版社 and Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe 中央文獻出版社, 1993, pp. 551-552.

Further differences derived from this major distinction. On the one hand, once the Gansu route was traversed successfully, it would become “a permanent route free of the Japanese threat.” In this sense, Mao believed that with respect to connecting with the Soviet Union, occupying Ganzhou 甘州 (now Zhangye 張掖), Liangzhou 涼州 (now Wuwei 武威) and Suzhou—three large cities along the Hexi Corridor—was more important than occupying Ningxia; on the other hand, marching towards Mongolia was more advantageous politically, and would facilitate propaganda and mobilization significantly. As a result, the Party Center decided to connect with the Soviet Union from two directions, attempting to take advantage of the propaganda value of the Ningxia-Mongolia route and maintain the Gansu-Xinjiang route permanently.³⁵

From the perspectives of both the Shaanxi Party Center and the Fourth Front Army, the plan to take over these two routes was acceptable. The Shaanxi Party Center’s priority was to obtain Soviet military assistance; in fact, Mao once explained in a letter to Peng Dehuai 彭德懷 (1898-1974) that the First Front Army rather than other Red Army branches had to undertake this task.³⁶ As for the Fourth Front Army, there are at least three reasons that explain its leaders’ preference for connecting with the Soviet Union independently through Gansu. First, they understood clearly that intra-Party struggles were inevitable after the reunion with the Shaanxi Party Center. They were unsure whether the Comintern’s attitude to this issue supported them, and believed, therefore, that it would be better to postpone the impending reunion with the Shaanxi side. Second, they acknowledged fully that if the Fourth Front Army did not have its own base, then its supplies would have to depend on the Shaanxi Party Center, which was unacceptable. Third, they intended to preserve the Fourth Front Army’s strength by avoiding a fight with the powerful Nationalist Central Army. Overall, they believed they would have more leverage in future negotiations or competition with the Shaanxi Party Center if they succeeded in building new bases and expanding

³⁵ “Zhang Wentian, Zhou Enlai, Bo Gu, Mao Zedong gei Zhang Xueliang de yi feng xin 張聞天、周恩來、博古、毛澤東給張學良的一封信（1936年8月9日）” (A letter by Zhang Wentian, Zhou Enlai, Bo Gu and Mao Zedong to Zhang Xueliang, on August 9, 1936), in Hao Chengming 郝成銘 and Zhu Yongguang 朱永光, eds., *Zhongguo gongnong hongjun Xilujun (wenxian juan)* 中國工農紅軍西路軍（文獻卷）(The WRA of the Chinese Red Army of Workers and Peasants: references), Volume 2. Lanzhou: Gansu renmin chubanshe 甘肅人民出版社, 2004, pp. 97-104.

³⁶ Mao Zedong, “Hongjun jiejin Sulian de daolu he shiji wenti” (About the route and timing of the Red Army approaching to the Soviet Union), in *Mao Zedong junshi wenji* (Selected military works of Mao Zedong), Volume 1, pp. 551-552.

their military power.³⁷ By early September 1936, the Fourth Front Army had been preparing for its planned and mutually beneficial march to Xinjiang through the Hexi Corridor, until the Shaanxi Party Center changed its position.

1.1.3 New Conflicts

The new plan that the Shaanxi Party Center made on September 14, 1936 included three steps: first, the Fourth Front Army would control the line of transport connecting Xi'an 西安 and Lanzhou, thereby preventing the Nationalist Central Army, led by Hu Zongnan 胡宗南 (1896-1962), from marching farther west. The Second Front Army was to cooperate with the Fourth Front Army. The First Front Army would take this opportunity to rebuild itself. The second step involved the First and Fourth Front Armies taking over northern and southern Ningxia, respectively, while the Second Front Army would fight with Hu Zongnan's forces. Lastly, the First Front Army would secure Soviet military assistance through the Ningxia route.³⁸ As for the Gansu route towards the Sino-Soviet border, under the new plan, it would be connected when there was an opportunity.³⁹

The only fact that can explain why the Shaanxi Party Center changed its mind is the completely unexpected speed with which Hu Zongnan's troops were moving. At the time, Hu's major force was marching towards Lanzhou, a city that was strategically significant in the overall plan to connect with the Soviet Union.⁴⁰ This meant that if the CCP adhered to the old plan, then the First Front Army was very likely to be pursued by Hu when it advanced towards Mongolia through Ningxia. Mao and his men preferred to force Hu's troops to stop moving farther north while taking Ningxia, but alone, they were unable to achieve these two goals simultaneously. This explains why they asked the Fourth and Second Front Armies to resist Hu's troops.

The Shaanxi Party Center received a cable from the Comintern on September 11, 1936, which "firmly pointed out that the Red Army must not advance towards

³⁷ Zhang Guotao's memoirs refer to some of these considerations. Zhang would not have been the only one in the Fourth Front Army who held such concerns, but in the CCP's official narratives, all other commanders are portrayed as opposing Zhang's selfish concerns and were eager to join with the Party Center.

³⁸ The plan did not explicitly state that the First Front Army would secure this, but it was an obvious conclusion given the First Front Army would take over north Ningxia while the Fourth Front Army would take over south Ningxia.

³⁹ Cable 19.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

Xinjiang, to make sure the Red Army won't leave China proper," and informed the CCP that military assistance should be obtained along the Ningxia-Mongolia route.⁴¹ Three days later, the Shaanxi Party Center finished its new plan to concentrate its forces to take Ningxia. As a result, some scholars have assumed that the Party Center had abandoned its old plan created in August 1936 in response to the Comintern's directive.⁴² This assumption neglects two basic facts. First, in the same cable, the Comintern approved the CCP's plan to occupy Ningxia and western Gansu. Second, in March 1936, the local Xinjiang warlord, Sheng Shicai 盛世才 (1897-1970), wrote to the Comintern to express his willingness to assist in transporting the Soviet Union's military assistance secretly to Gansu,⁴³ which meant that the Comintern definitely knew that the Chinese Red Army could receive assistance without entering Xinjiang. Thus, the Comintern's order that the CCP not march farther to Xinjiang did not amount to requiring the CCP to abandon the Gansu-Xinjiang route. The cable, however, did provide the Shaanxi Party Center with an excuse to persuade the Fourth Front Army to join it in occupying Ningxia. The Fourth Front Army raised a series of concerns about the new plan,⁴⁴ and proposed an alternative plan in which the Fourth Front Army would cross the Yellow River in southern Gansu, which meant that the First Front Army would have to fight Hu Zongnan's troops alone. In response to these concerns, the Shaanxi Party Center had to play the Comintern card again, telling the Fourth Front Army that Moscow said they would receive assistance only if they kept marching northward, rather than westward.⁴⁵ This excuse was obviously insufficient.

Given the relationship between the Shaanxi Party Center and the Fourth Front Army, the former definitely had difficulty in persuading the latter to risk sacrificing themselves in order to guarantee that the First Front Army could march northward smoothly. Consequently, there were clashes over whether it should stop Hu's troops in the first place, and if so, how this should be accomplished. This

⁴¹ Cable 18.

⁴² For instance: Qin Sheng 秦生, *Hong Xilujun shi* 紅西路軍史 (History of the WRA). Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe 中國社會科學出版社, 2011, p. 27.

⁴³ "Sheng Shicai gei Wang Ming de xin 盛世才給王明的信(1936年3月15日於烏魯木齊)" (Sheng Shicai's letter to Wang Ming on March 15, 1936, in Urumqi), in *Liangong (bu), gongchan guoji yu Zhongguo suweiai yundong (1931-1937)* 聯共(布)、共產國際與中國蘇維埃運動(1931-1937) (Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolshevik), the Comintern and China's Soviet movements, 1931-1937). Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi chubanshe 中共黨史出版社, 2007, p. 171.

⁴⁴ They asked: "which is our focus, Ningxia or western Gansu?" "what is the enemy's situation in Ningxia?"

⁴⁵ Cable 21.

was the main source of conflict between the two sides from mid-September to late October 1936. Further, there were disagreements within the Fourth Front Army⁴⁶ that increased the complexity of the situation and the Shaanxi Party Center's difficulty in predicting the Fourth Front Army's actions.

After receiving a cable from Shaanxi on September 14, the Fourth Front Army held a three-day conference in Minzhou 岷州, during which an accusatory letter was sent to Shaanxi in the name of the Fourth Front Army Committee. The resolution of this conference, however, was in accordance with the Party Center's order—the Fourth Front Army would fight Hu Zongnan's troops in Jingning 靜寧 and Huining 會寧.⁴⁷ Three days later, the Fourth Front Army leaders held another conference in Zhangxian 漳縣 and changed the plan above completely, deciding instead to cross the Yellow River hundreds of miles west of Jingning, in Yongjing 永靖 and Xunhua 循化.⁴⁸ They informed the Shaanxi Party Center that they would divide their troops into three groups, one occupying Yongdeng 永登 and surrounding areas on the west bank of the river, one holding the ferry, and one drawing the Nationalist Central Army's attention to the east bank of the Yellow River while assisting the First Front Army to cross the river.⁴⁹ The Shaanxi Party Center, however, could not help being suspicious. Peng Dehuai wrote in a secret letter to Mao and Zhou Enlai that the plan was “nonsense,” firmly believing that the Fourth Front Army would not assist the First in seizing Ningxia. He believed that Zhang's intention instead was to control the Second Front Army by preventing it from joining the First.⁵⁰

Several rounds of negotiations between the Shaanxi Party Center and the Fourth Front Army took place from September 22 to September 27 regarding the issue of whether the Fourth Front Army should go northward to join the First, or cross the Yellow River to the west bank in southern Gansu. At issue was whether the Fourth Front Army was to fight Hu's troops. This was resolved when Zhang and his men

⁴⁶ Because of the reorganization in August 1935, some former First Front Army commanders went with Zhang Guotao's troops. Zhu De, the Chief Director of the Red Army, worked with Zhang Guotao from August 1935 to November 1936. The CCP's official narratives say these commanders firmly supported the Shaanxi Party Center and Mao Zedong, and struggled against Zhang Guotao. Although it is exaggerated, accessible materials show that in some cases Zhang Guotao could not have his orders implemented without any resistance.

⁴⁷ At the end of the Minzhou Conference 岷州會議 the “Outline of the Jingning and Huining Campaign” 靜寧會寧戰役綱領 was passed. See Cable 20.

⁴⁸ Cable 22.

⁴⁹ Cable 23.

⁵⁰ Cable 24.

found that the natural conditions in deep autumn did not allow them to cross the river in the area preferred.⁵¹ On September 27, the Fourth Front Army gave up the plan of crossing the river and turned north. After months of negotiation, bargaining, and even deception, the First Front Army finally met their comrades-in-arms in Huining, Gansu (Table 1-2).⁵²

A careful examination of both the Shaanxi Party Center and the Fourth Front Army's arrangements reveals that the two sides were engaged in a strategic game of investigating each and every action in order to predict the other's intentions, and then planning their own actions accordingly. In general, each side's primary goal was to preserve and expand its own power. It was this relationship of ostensibly discussing and cooperating with each other, while actually distrusting each other, that made military orders in October 1936 quite confusing.

1.2 The Western Route Army and the Party Center

1.2.1 The Establishment of the Western Route Army

Since September 27, when the Fourth Front Army decided finally to go north to join the First Front Army, Zhang had acknowledged that the Shaanxi side was the Party Center, and stopped calling them "our colleagues of the North Bureau." This gesture, however, did not indicate his absolute compliance. Mao and his confidants knew this very well, so they adopted two measures to make sure Zhang's forces would operate according to their orders. One was to assign Zhu De 朱德 (1886-1976) and Zhang as the Chief Commander and Chief Commissar of the Red Army, respectively. These were two important positions that were supposed to "direct the three front armies according to the Central Military Council's decisions."⁵³ The Party Center believed this measure would help it control the Fourth Front Army.⁵⁴ The other measure was to send Lin to work in the Fourth Front Army for the purpose of "achieving political unity."⁵⁵ It is difficult to assess

⁵¹ Fu Zhong 傅鐘, *Xibeiju de guangrong shiming* 西北局的光榮使命 (The glorious missions of the Northwest Bureau), in SMHF, p. 785.

⁵² In the CCP's official narratives, the Fourth Front Army's attempt at crossing the Yellow River in southern Gansu is called the "*Gannan fengbo*" 甘南風波 (an episode in southern Gansu). The word *fengbo* 風波 implies it was illegal.

⁵³ Cable 25.

⁵⁴ Zhang Peisen 張培森, ed., *Zhang Wentian nianpu* 張聞天年譜 (Chronological biography of Zhang Wentian), Volume 1. Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi chubanshe 中共黨史出版社, 2000, p. 378.

⁵⁵ Zhonggong zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi 中共中央文獻研究室 (The CCP Central Literature Research Center), *Mao Zedong nianpu* 毛澤東年譜 (1893-1949) (Chronological biography of Mao Zedong, from 1893 to 1949), Volume 1. Beijing: Renmin chubanshe 人民出版社, Zhongyang

the effectiveness of these two measures. However, they reflected the strong lack of confidence the Party Center had in its ability to control the Fourth Front Army.

It had been more than a month since the Fourth Front Army expressed its preference to occupy areas along the Hexi Corridor independently. Although the situation had changed considerably due to the Nationalist Central Army's rapid advance, the priority of the Party Center and the Fourth Front Army did not change, as the Party Center still intended to secure Soviet assistance, while the Fourth Front Army still attempted to avoid either rejoining or sacrificing itself for the First Front Army. In such an atmosphere, allowing the Fourth Front Army leader, Zhang Guotao, to co-lead the Red Army Headquarters with Zhu De would actually make united military operations even more difficult.

On October 11, 1936, the day after the three branches of the Red Army joined in Huining, the Party Center issued an updated plan for taking over Ningxia, entitled "Outline of Military Plan for October" (known as the "Ningxia Campaign Plan"), with the ultimate goal of receiving Soviet military assistance on the borders of Mongolia. According to this plan, the Fourth Front Army would need to be divided into two parts. One would prevent the Nationalist Central Army from marching northward, while the other would cross the Yellow River in advance to assist the First Front Army in marching to the west bank of the river; thereafter, the two Front Armies would attack Ningxia together.⁵⁶ No further details were provided, but a later plan submitted by Peng Dehuai implied that it was still the First Front Army that would receive Soviet assistance, while the Fourth would be in charge of attracting Ningxia local warlord, Ma Hongkui's 馬鴻逵 (1892-1970) troops.⁵⁷ There were at least two aspects of this plan that the Fourth Front Army would try its best to avoid: decentralizing its main force, and covering for the First Front Army. The solution to these two problems was to allow the entire Fourth Front Army to cross the Yellow River to the west bank before Hu's troops arrived. According to Chen Changhao's recollection, written in September 1937, after arriving at Huining, the Fourth Front Army barely engaged in any military preparation, other than collecting timber for boat building.⁵⁸ The Party Center was

wenxian chubanshe 中央文獻出版社, 1993, p. 649.

⁵⁶ Cable 26.

⁵⁷ Wang Yan 王焰, ed., *Peng Dehuai nianpu* 彭德懷年譜 (Chronological biography of Peng Dehuai). Beijing: Renmin chubanshe 人民出版社, 1998, p. 161.

⁵⁸ "Chen Changhao guanyu Xilujun shibai de baogao 陳昌浩關於西路軍失敗的報告" (Chen Changhao's report on the WRA's failure), in SMHF, pp. 977-978.

aware of the Fourth Front Army's concerns. Therefore, although Zhu and Zhang both expressed their full agreement with the "Outline of Military Plan for October,"⁵⁹ Mao repeatedly urged the Fourth Front Army to make it a priority to block the enemy that was approaching from the south,⁶⁰ and deliberately reminded Peng to "pay sufficient attention to certain comrades' wavering" and prepare to implement the plan independently.⁶¹ To be fair, not to mention other influential factors, including the enemy's rapidly changing situation, or its own limited intelligence-gathering capability, the conflicts within the Party alone would have prevented the CCP from conducting any large-scale campaign that required the cooperation of all three Front Armies.⁶² It was under these circumstances that the Fourth Front Army began to cross the Yellow River in order to conduct the Ningxia Campaign Plan issued on October 11, 1936.

Crossing the Yellow River

At midnight on October 24, 1936, the vanguard of the Thirtieth Army crossed the Yellow River at the Hubaokou 虎豹口 ferry. This pleased the Party Center, because the First Front Army would have to rely on the Thirtieth Army to cross the river on its way to Ningxia. The following day, however, when the Ninth Army began to cross the river, differences of opinion broke out.

As the commanders of the Fourth Front Army, Xu Xiangqian and Chen Changhao's major concern was not to divide their troops, and thus, they proposed that all of the other Fourth Front Army troops follow the Thirtieth Army to the west bank. From the Party Center's perspective, the Red Army's priority was to prevent the Nationalist Central Army from marching farther north, so they preferred that only a part of the Fourth Front Army go westward, while the main force stay on the east bank. In the meantime, the leaders of the Red Army Headquarters, Zhu and Zhang, who kept sending orders together under the name of "Zhu and Zhang," disagreed with each other occasionally. The three sides above sent conflicting telegrams and sometimes contradicted themselves. What occurred over the next week illustrates the confusion and lack of direction that would later doom each of the quarrelling sides.

On October 24, Chen and Xu wrote to the Red Army Headquarters, proposing

⁵⁹ Cable 28.

⁶⁰ Cable 29; Cable 30.

⁶¹ Cable 27.

⁶² The "Haida campaign plans" 海打戰役計劃 later made by Peng Dehuai was spoiled for similar reasons.

that the Thirtieth, Thirty-first, and Ninth Armies cross the river in succession. The Red Army Headquarters approved this the following day.⁶³ On the same day, Mao and Zhou ordered that one more unit of the Fourth Front Army should cross the river after the Thirtieth Army, but the Ninth Army should stay on the east bank.⁶⁴ Early on the morning of the 26th, Mao and Zhou ordered the Fourth Front Army to spend two or three days observing the Nationalist Central Army's intentions before allowing one more army to cross the river.⁶⁵ On the same day, the Ninth Army initiated their river crossing operation.⁶⁶

At 5 a.m. on October 27, Zhu and Zhang ordered all Fourth Front Army troops, except the Thirtieth and Ninth Armies, which had been on the west bank, to stop crossing the river.⁶⁷ On the same day, Xu and Chen proposed that the whole Fourth Front Army should cross the river, as they had found enemy planes near the ferry.⁶⁸ At 12 p.m. on the 28th, the Party Center declared that it agreed with Zhu and Zhang's arrangements made at 5 a.m. that day.⁶⁹ At 4 p.m. the same day, Zhu and Zhang sent a telegram to Xu and Chen, telling them that they could allow the Thirty-first Army to cross the river at 8 a.m. the next day unless they received orders from the Party Center beforehand directing them not to do so.⁷⁰ At 7 p.m., Zhu and Zhang ordered the Thirty-first Army to move to Dalachi 打拉池 fifty kilometers east of the Yellow River.⁷¹ At 7:15 p.m., Zhu and Zhang cabled the Party Center and Xu and Chen, proposing that the Fourth Front Army should take Dingyuanying 定遠營 after they controlled the west bank of the Yellow River. To realize this plan, the Thirty-first Army was to cross the river as soon as possible, while the Fifth Army should rest, and the Fourth Army should fight with any enemy pursuing them. Zhu and Zhang ordered Xu and Chen to carry on with this plan if they did not receive the Party Center's reply by midnight.⁷² At 8 p.m., Zhu and Zhang ordered Xu and Chen to arrange for the Fifth Army to cross the river after they had drawn out the enemy, while the Ninth and Thirtieth Armies should

⁶³ These two telegrams have not been released, but the content is implied in a telegram sent by Xu Xiangqian and Chen Changhao on October 26. See Cable 32.

⁶⁴ Cable 30.

⁶⁵ Cable 31.

⁶⁶ Cable 32.

⁶⁷ Cable 33.

⁶⁸ Cable 34.

⁶⁹ Cable 35.

⁷⁰ Cable 36.

⁷¹ Cable 37.

⁷² Cable 38.

march north to take Dingyuaning, and the Fourth and Thirty-first Armies should march east to Dalachi to fight the Nationalist Central Army.⁷³ At 12 a.m. on October 29, Mao and Zhou ordered the Thirty-first Army to cross the Yellow River immediately,⁷⁴ and then, on October 30, they reversed themselves and ordered the Thirty-first Army not to cross the river.⁷⁵ Following the orders listed above, the Thirty-first Army arrived on the east bank of the Yellow River on October 29, and the Directly Affiliated Squad began to cross. The next day, according to the new orders, the troops who had arrived already on the west bank returned to the east.⁷⁶

The Fifth Army's experience was not as dramatic as that of the Thirty-first Army, but was still quite confusing. At 3 p.m. on October 29, the day after Zhu and Zhang ordered the Fifth Army to cross the river after it had fulfilled its task, Zhu and Zhang cabled Xu and Chen again, but this time to rescind the order to cross the river.⁷⁷ However, at 10:30 a.m. on October 30, Zhu and Zhang told them that they had already ordered the Fifth Army to cross the river.⁷⁸ By November 1, the Fifth Army had succeeded in doing so. By then, all three Armies that later comprised the WRA had reached the west bank of the Yellow River.

Many of the orders conveyed in the telegrams mentioned above contradicted each other, and some contradictory orders were issued over a period as short as fifteen minutes. All information released from the Party archives indicates only the content and time of the telegrams—there is no indication whether or when a telegram was received and decoded successfully. Overall, too many pieces of the mosaic have been lost or erased deliberately. Despite this obvious defect, a few decades later, Party historians who held a range of opinions used these telegrams to support their own arguments about the WRA. Regardless of whom they supported or criticized—the Party Center, Zhang, or the commanders, Xu and Chen—all of them derived their conclusions from the same time of the river crossing. The reason for their focus on why and how the WRA crossed the Yellow River lies in their common understanding that crossing the river confirmed that the troops were marching towards Xinjiang along the Hexi Corridor, which was

⁷³ Cable 39.

⁷⁴ Cable 40.

⁷⁵ Cable 42.

⁷⁶ Qin Sheng, 2011, p. 338.

⁷⁷ Cable 41.

⁷⁸ Cable 43.

tantamount to sending the troops to their deaths. Consequently, these Party historians drew their conclusions with respect to such questions as who was strategically correct, or who should take the responsibility for the WRA's failure. Nevertheless, during the period discussed in this subsection, neither the Party Center nor the Red Army Headquarters knew the route these 22,000 troops were marching and the difficulties they would face in the future. In the author's opinion, between the period when Zhang and his supporters agreed to go north to join Mao's Party Center in July 1936, and when the three Armies crossed the Yellow River successfully is remarkably revealing, because the attitudes and actions of the different parties during this period demonstrated clearly the complicated relationship between the Party Center and the Fourth Front Army and the complexity of the related decision-making process.

"The Western Route Army"

From November 1, 1936, when Hu's troops seized control of ferries on the east bank of the Yellow River, the Red Army was divided into two parts. The Fifth, Ninth, and Thirtieth Armies of the Fourth Front Army were stranded on the west bank, while the Fourth and Thirty-first Armies of the Fourth Front Army, and almost all troops of the First and Second Front Armies, remained on the east side. Under these circumstances, the Red Army had only a slim chance to regroup and concentrate on taking Ningxia. Moreover, two days later, a cable from the Comintern reached the Party Center, and stated that it had decided not to extend military assistance from the Mongolian direction.⁷⁹ This decision was unexpected, and the Party Center realized that its Ningxia Campaign plan was not only impossible, but unnecessary. As a result, the Party Center issued a new plan. The Red Army was to be divided into three parts, with the First and Second Front Armies forming the Southern Route Army, the Fourth and Thirty-first Armies of the Fourth Front Army forming the Northern Route Army, and troops on the west bank of the Yellow River forming the Western Route Army (WRA). According to this new plan, over the following one or two years, the Southern and Northern Route Armies would move eastward first, and later might move to the southern provinces, while the WRA would "build revolutionary bases and connect with the Soviet Union [to obtain Soviet assistance] directly."⁸⁰ In short, this plan abandoned the idea of establishing bases in the Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia border

⁷⁹ Cable 45.

⁸⁰ Cable 46.

regions, and focused instead on moving the divided Red Army to the eastern and western regions, respectively. Given the proposed marching distances in this plan, and the time it would take, it is no exaggeration that the entire plan was tantamount to proposing a new Long March. Although the plan was not executed fully, it did indicate that the Party Center had abandoned the idea of focusing all forces on one target. It also was in this plan that the troops on the western bank were named “the WRA” officially. Three days later, the WRA Military Committee and WRA Headquarters—two institutions in charge of military and political affairs—were established.⁸¹ It was then that the WRA began to march towards Xinjiang as a relatively independent part of the Red Army.

1.2.2 The Tensions between the WRA and the Party Center

Party historians in Mainland China view June 6, 1936, the date when Zhang announced that the Sichuan side would no longer be referred to as “the Party Center,” as a milestone in the Party’s reunion. As analyzed in the previous part of this chapter, this conclusion was based on a selective interpretation of primary materials. In the author’s opinion, whether the Party was still split should be evaluated by whether the Party Center could exert absolute and sole influence on its army.

On November 1, 1936, the commanders of the three front Armies, Peng, Zhu, Zhang, He, and Ren, met at the Red Army Headquarters in Guanqiaobao 關橋堡. According to the telegram Peng sent to the Party Center, all attendees agreed firmly that the Red Army should be commanded uniformly by the Chief Commander of the Front (*Zong qianxian zhihui* 前線總指揮) and Zhu and Zhang would not intervene.⁸² On November 26, the Central Military Committee issued the following order: “Comrade Peng Dehuai has been appointed as Chief Commander of the Front; Comrade Ren Bishi has been appointed as the Chief Commissar. Apart from the WRA, all troops of the First, the Second, and the Fourth Front Armies, other army corps and people’s armed forces are under the command of the General Headquarters of the Front.”⁸³ At the end of November, Zhu and Zhang travelled to Baoan 保安 to join the Party Center. The situation during the

⁸¹ Cable 47.

⁸² Cable 44.

⁸³ *Ren Bishi nianpu* 任弼時年譜 (Chronological Biography of Ren Bishi). Beijing: Zhongyang dangshi wenxian chubanshe 中央黨史文獻出版社, 2004, p. 305.

previous few months with the Party Center and the Red Army Headquarters' sending different, even opposing, orders to the front simultaneously would not be repeated. Indeed, as early as two weeks previously, when the Fourth and Thirty-first Armies took part in the Shanchengbao 山城堡 Battle, united and coordinated military operations had been restored already.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the Yellow River, the WRA inherited the Fourth Front Army's tensions with the Party Center. On the one hand, they consulted each other on military operations, but on the other, they distrusted each other. The hostility between them became more and more obvious as the WRA's situation deteriorated. When the WRA began losing battles in the Hexi Corridor, its leaders complained that the Party Center did not provide them with sufficient information⁸⁴ and did not dispatch any reinforcements.⁸⁵ The Party Center criticized the WRA for relying on external assistance, and for lacking the confidence necessary to defeat the enemy by itself.⁸⁶ In the final period of the WRA's fighting in western Gansu, both sides used historical issues to attack each other's legitimacy, which made the debates between the two sides even more acrimonious. The WRA leadership used the fact that the Party Center had given up the Central Soviet Region in 1934 as evidence to argue that retreating did not necessarily mean "retreatism;" further, they denied the Party Center's accusation that they did not try their best to fight the enemy.⁸⁷ The Party Center became increasingly angry with the WRA, and argued that they had committed so-called errors of "right-wing retreatist opportunism."⁸⁸ In the end, at the Shiwo Conference held in March 1937, the WRA Military Committee decided to permit two leaders, Chen and Xu, to return to Yan'an to "struggle with the Party Center."⁸⁹ This was a measure of the depth of their mutual animosity.

In the months before the WRA's establishment in November 1936, serious conflicts of interest arose between the Sichuan and the Shaanxi Party Centers (or between the Fourth Front Army and the Party Center). The root cause was that both were competing for the same strategic interest, namely, to be the sole army responsible for securing the Soviet Union's military assistance, while

⁸⁴ For instance: Cable 59; Cable 60.

⁸⁵ Cable 61; Cable 68.

⁸⁶ Cable 62.

⁸⁷ Cable 68.

⁸⁸ Cable 70.

⁸⁹ Xu Xiangqian 徐向前, *Lishi de huigu* 歷史的回顧 (Looking back on history), Volume 2. Beijing: Jiefangjun chubanshe 解放軍出版社, 1985, p. 549.

simultaneously avoiding fighting the Nationalists' Central Army. The prime objective for which they competed was the support of the Comintern, which would be extremely helpful in the inevitable impending intra-Party power struggles. Once the WRA became stranded on the west bank of the Yellow River, it was in a position to approach the Gansu-Xinjiang border alone in order to gain military assistance, and as a consequence, the two sides were no longer in competition. Further, because of the geographical barriers, the WRA and the troops who remained on the eastern bank of the Yellow River now faced different enemies, and thus, they were much less likely to have to sacrifice themselves for the other side.⁹⁰ In general, conflicts of interest no longer existed, as both sides would benefit only if the WRA succeeded in gaining the Soviet Union's assistance and preserving its forces. Why, then, did the Party Center and the WRA continue to have such a hostile relationship? In addition to the background of the already complicated relationship between them, another explanation is that both sides made erroneous evaluations of the situation in Gansu, which resulted in the deterioration of the WRA's situation on the battlefield.

The Party Center had limited knowledge of western Gansu, so its orders to the WRA depended heavily on information the latter sent back to Shaanxi. This information was frequently contradictory, and some later proved to be completely inaccurate. This was a result of the WRA's poor intelligence-gathering capacity, and because its leaders often reported their findings selectively as well in order to influence the Party Center. The Party Center, on the other hand, continued to convey strategic decisions to the WRA without explaining the reasons for those decisions. Not surprisingly, the WRA found the Party Center's directives far from persuasive. During this time, the Party Center kept secret from the WRA the details of two important issues: the negotiations with the Nationalist Party and the alliance with Zhang Xueliang, both of which were highly relevant to the WRA. The lack of communication about these issues made the WRA even more disaffected from the Party Center.⁹¹

⁹⁰ Proposals about the WRA cooperating with the Red Army on the east bank of the Yellow River emerged occasionally in communications between the WRA and the Party Center, but actually none of these proposals was put into action.

⁹¹ An example is the period from the launch of the Xi'an Incident on December 12, 1936 to December 25, 1936 when Chiang Kai-shek was released and departed from Xi'an. In this period the Party Center constantly changed the orders that they gave to the WRA. The orders changed because negotiation between the Nanjing government, the CCP and Zhang Xueliang were still in progress and Chiang's Central Army threatened the Red Army and Zhang Xueliang's Northeast Army. The

Inaccuracy and the inefficient flow of information led to erroneous military strategies and tactics on the part of both the Party Center and the WRA. As their situation continued to deteriorate, the WRA leaders at last apprehended the reality of their situation. Under normal conditions, new strategies should have been adopted according to the changing situations on the ground. However, the strained relations between the high command in Shaanxi and the field command in Gansu distorted the decision-making process greatly. As a result, rather than working together to save the army, the WRA's leadership distrusted and complained about the Party Center's direction further, such that, at the end of January 1937, the Party Center simply ordered the WRA to "decide its operation by itself."⁹² The fierce rhetoric in the telegrams they exchanged during this period set the tone for the future criticisms of the WRA, and even the entire Fourth Front Army.

The Party Center and the WRA evaluated the situation incorrectly in four respects: underestimation of the Ma brothers' military capability; overestimation of the natural and economic conditions in western Gansu, and overestimation of the so-called "united front work," and the accessibility of military assistance. I will analyze these four areas individually in the next section.

1.3 The Failure of the WRA

1.3.1 Failures in Military Operations and in Establishing Revolutionary Bases

The first and most critical error made by the Party Center and the WRA leaders was underestimating the local warlords' determination to defeat the Communist troops.

When the WRA was first established in November 1936, the Party Center and the WRA Military Committee were confident that they could not possibly be defeated by the local troops in Gansu.⁹³ At first, when the WRA entered Ma

WRA leaders had no idea about what was happening on the east bank of the Yellow River and became furious about the Party Center's changeable directives. Another issue that the WRA greatly cared about was the Soviet Union's arrangement for the provision of military assistance; according to accessible materials, the Party Center did not deliberately conceal anything from the WRA. The problem was that communication between the Comintern and the CCP was limited.

⁹² Cable 64.

⁹³ For instance, Xu Xiangqian and Chen Changhao reported that "two-thirds of Ma brothers' troops had already been attacked by the WRA" and "the enemy's fighting capacity was just so so". Zhu De and Zhang Guotao also believed that the WRA could complete their missions without assistance. See Cable 48; Cable 49. The Fourth Front Army had once defeated the Muslim Hui troops from northwest China, and regarded them as ragtag and ill disciplined. For instance, the Fourth Front Army annihilated a regiment of Ma Hongkui's 35th Division in the fourth "anti-encirclement" 反圍剿 of the E-yu-wan Soviet Region.

Buqing's 馬步青 (1901-1977) territory, Ma had no time to centralize his troops, which were stationed in various areas, so the WRA troops met little resistance, which further strengthened their confidence. When Ma's brother, Ma Bufang 馬步芳 (1903-1975), gathered his forces to pursue and besiege the WRA, however, the battle took a sudden and dramatic turn. The WRA was defeated on the battlefield primarily because it faced two overwhelming disadvantages: a low percentage of combat forces, and insufficient munitions.⁹⁴ These disadvantages were obvious when compared with the capabilities of the Ma brothers' troops.

The total number of troops that the Ma brothers deployed in battles against the Communists from late 1936 to April 1937 is unknown now, but information is available on the forces they had at the time. Ma Bufang's Qinghai Army alone had more than 35,000 regular troops in 1935.⁹⁵ The Ma brothers' advantages, however, lay not only in the numbers of their regular troops. Compared to the Red Army, their ability to supply labor and their powerful and experienced cavalry were their real strengths. Ma Bufang began his "Military Training for Citizens" project in 1936. Under his rule, all men between 17 and 50 years of age could be conscripted. These men were organized into large-scale "National Corps" that complemented the regular troops.⁹⁶ In battles near Nijiayingzi 倪家營子 in March 1937, the "National Corps" from several regions, including those from Menyuan 門源 and Xunhua in Qinghai province, which amounted to 75,000 men, were dispatched to fight the Communists.⁹⁷ According to some scholars, Ma Bufang sent a total of more than 100,000 men to the battlefields.⁹⁸

Ma Buqing's Fifth Cavalry Division had 15,000 troops.⁹⁹ In contrast, the WRA had only 200 cavalymen and, because they did not have enough battle-horses,

⁹⁴ Women, teenagers and sick people made up more than half of the troops. (The Fourth Front Army recruited a considerable number of female and very young soldiers in Sichuan, because of the large opium-addicted population there.) The other forty percent were combat forces, but not every soldier had a rifle. For instance, in the most powerful army, the Thirtieth Army, 7000 troops had only 3200 rifles, with an average 25 bullets for each rifle. This situation was worse in the Fifth Army, as its 2500 troops had 1000 rifles, with only 4 bullets for each rifle. See "Chen Changhao guanyu Xilujun shibai de baogao" (Chen Changhao's report on the WRA's failure), in SMHF, p. 982.

⁹⁵ Chen Bingyuan 陳秉淵, *Ma Bufang jiazu tongzhi Qinghai sishi nian* 馬步芳家族統治青海四十年 (Ma Bufang's family controlled Qinghai for four decades). Xining: Qinghai renmin chubanshe 青海人民出版社, 1986, p. 122.

⁹⁶ Chen Bingyuan, 1986, p. 122.

⁹⁷ Chen Bingyuan, 1986, p. 137.

⁹⁸ Zheng Ziwen 鄭子文, "Xilujun zai hexi zao Ma fei zuji de kaocha 西路軍在河西遭馬匪狙擊的考察" (Investigation on the Western Route Army's failure in west Gansu), *Gansu shehui kexue* 甘肅社會科學, 1980(3), pp. 68-73.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

they had to use regular horses instead. As a result, they simply could not stop Ma's cavalry attacks.¹⁰⁰ The WRA's remaining 20,000 plus troops were infantry. The advantage of cavalry forces over infantry forces was apparent in Gansu, especially after the WRA arrived at Gaotai 高台, Linze 臨澤 and the surrounding areas in early 1937. In this region, the population was small and dispersed. The WRA did not have sufficient accommodations, and therefore had to stay in blockhouses that locals had built to hide from bandits. Once the enemy besieged a blockhouse, the troops inside had no choice but to fight until they had depleted their ammunition.¹⁰¹ Only after these serious failures on the battlefield did the WRA leaders realize that "this army [the WRA] did not have the capability to defeat the Ma brothers' troops by itself."¹⁰²

The WRA commanders made some clear mistakes that are historically undisputed. Among these, the most serious was that they often separated their troops. From the outset of the conflict, the three armies always took different routes in their westward advance. They did this in part because of the shortage of accommodations, but conflicts within the WRA were also an influential factor.¹⁰³ The Ma forces took advantage of the separation of the Red forces and defeated the smaller one by one. The Ninth Army lost half of its troops in Gulang 古浪 when the main force of the WRA was marching along another parallel route. The Fifth Army was almost annihilated in Gaotai when other Red troops were not far away, but were unable to support them.¹⁰⁴

Another related problem was the WRA's failure to establish bases. According to the original plan the Party Center made on November 11, 1936, the WRA should have first established revolutionary bases in the Hexi Corridor, and then should have dispatched troops to gain assistance on the Gansu-Xinjiang border. It was a reasonable plan, given the large proportion of non-combat troops and the bad transport conditions in western Gansu. The idea of establishing revolutionary

¹⁰⁰ Cable 53; Cable 55; "Chen Changhao guanyu Xilujun shibai de baogao" (Chen Changhao's report on the WRA's failure), in SMHF, p. 982.

¹⁰¹ A number of former commanders and soldiers described situations in the battlefields in their recollections. See Hao Chengming 郝成銘 and Zhu Yongguang 朱永光, eds., *Zhongguo gongnong hongjun Xilujun (huiyilu juan)* 中國工農紅軍西路軍 (回憶錄卷) (The WRA of the Chinese Red Army of Workers and Peasants: memoirs). Lanzhou: Gansu renmin chubanshe 甘肅人民出版社, 2009.

¹⁰² Cable 73.

¹⁰³ Some telegrams Xu Xiangqian and Chen Changhao sent to the Party Center suggested that for a period the Ninth Army had not complied with Xu and Chen's directives. This might have contributed to the commanders' decision to go westward separately. See Cable 52; Cable 56.

¹⁰⁴ Qin Sheng, 2011, pp. 175-183.

bases, however, was based on the precondition that the enemy had been defeated, or at least defeated for a time. However, the WRA could not accomplish this. In addition, the population and economic conditions were not conducive to establishing bases. For these reasons, the WRA's efforts to establish bases in Yongchang 永昌, Shandan 山丹 and areas around Zhangye were unsuccessful. The methods the Red Army had adopted previously in the southern provinces, such as confiscating the property of local landlords and distributing land, were inappropriate in western Gansu. As they could not obtain provisions by the usual means, the WRA had to plunder from the local population as a last resort, but even this practice provided only limited materials. It also worsened the WRA's relationships with local people,¹⁰⁵ which prevented it from recruiting and collecting useful information, and in turn, worsened the army's situation on the battlefield.

The WRA's regular military failures and unfavorable economic and social conditions beg the question: why did the WRA insist on marching westward? There were two reasons. First, the Party Center and the WRA believed they would be able to survive in western Gansu by means of "united front works." Second, they were attracted to the prospect of securing the Soviet Union's military assistance. The following sections will argue that both of these positive outcomes of "united front works" and Soviet assistance were merely extravagant hopes that never materialized.

1.3.2 The Unsuccessful "United Front Works"

The essence of the "united front," a concept invented by Lenin, is to cooperate with minor enemies in order to confront the main enemy. During the Republican period, numerous independent warlords controlled China, a situation that provided the Communists with an ideal arena in which to implement this theory in practice.¹⁰⁶ In its decades of armed struggles, the CCP changed the definition of its minor enemies and the main enemy repeatedly. By attacking some military forces

¹⁰⁵ "Chen Changhao, Li Zhuoran guanyu Xilujun zhengzhi gongzuo de baogao 陳昌浩、李卓然關於西路軍政治工作的報告(1936年12月2日)" (Chen Changhao and Li Zhuoran's report on the WRA's political works, on December 2, 1936), in Hao Chengming and Zhu Yongguang, eds., 2004, pp. 459-460. Cable 69.

¹⁰⁶ Mao Zedong acknowledged that the existence of the communist regime in China was made possible by the constant struggles among a variety of warlords. See "Zhongguo de hongse zhengquan weishenme nenggou cunzai? 中國的紅色政權為什麼能夠存在?" (Why could China's red regime exist?), *Mao Zedong xuanji* 毛澤東選集 (Selected works of Mao Zedong), Volume 1. Beijing: Renmin chubanshe 人民出版社, 1991, p. 49.

while cooperating with others, the Chinese Communists survived and finally secured national power.¹⁰⁷ This is why the united front was named one of “the three great teachings” (*san da fabao* 三大法寶)¹⁰⁸ of the Chinese revolution. In 1934 and 1935, the First Front Army relied on united front work to solve problems during the Long March. The Fourth Front Army also adopted this method in the Sichuan-Shaanxi Revolutionary Base.¹⁰⁹ When the Party considered occupying Ningxia and Gansu, it believed naturally that the united front approach would help. The local warlords in Gansu, Qinghai, and Ningxia were Muslim Hui people, and thus, the Party adopted the slogan, “Independent Hui People” according to their understanding of China’s ethnic problems. Together with other slogans, such as “Against the Japanese,” and “Down with Chiang Kai-shek,” the Party Center believed that Gansu local warlords might find cooperation with the Communists attractive.¹¹⁰

The Communists attempted to negotiate with Gansu local warlords by two means. An indirect means was to ask Zhang Xueliang and Shaanxi warlord, Yang Hucheng 楊虎城 (1893-1949), who had already built an alliance with the CCP, to persuade the Ma brothers to stop fighting with the WRA. A more direct means was to negotiate with enemy commanders on the battlefield. The Party Center believed that if the Red Army could destroy a certain number of Ma Buqing’s troops, he would agree to make peace with them.¹¹¹ After the Xi’an Incident, the Party Center had greater hopes for Zhang and Yang’s influence on the Ma brothers.¹¹²

¹⁰⁷ For more about the Chinese Communist Party’s “united front” policies in the 1930s, see Lyman Van Slyke, *Enemies and Friends: The United Front in Chinese Communist History*. California: Stanford University Press, 1967. A more recent study about the “united front work” is *Managing Transitions: The Chinese Communist Party, United Front Work, Corporatism, and Hegemony* by Gerry Groot (New York: Routledge, 2004). Due to its much longer time span (from 1930 to the mid-1990s) and its focus on minor parties and groups, Groot’s book does not dedicate much to the relationship between the CCP and the local warlords in the 1930s. Yang Kuisong’s work (2010) provides insights into changes in the CCP’s opinions about cooperation with local warlords after the Seventh World Congress of the Comintern in 1935.

¹⁰⁸ The “three great teachings” of Chinese revolution are united front 統一戰線, armed struggle 武裝鬥爭 and construction of the Party 黨的建設. This concept first appeared in the “Addressing Words” of *Communists* 共產黨人 written by Mao Zedong in 1939.

¹⁰⁹ Sima Lu 司馬璐, *Hongjun Changzheng yu Zhonggong neizheng* 紅軍長征與中共內爭 (Red Army’s Long March and Chinese Communist internal power struggle). Taipei: Zilian chubanshe 自聯出版社, 1985, p. 149.

¹¹⁰ “Zong zhengzhibu guanyu wajie yu zhengqu baijun guanbing gongzuo jueyi (cao an) 總政治部關於瓦解與爭取白軍官兵工作決議（草案）（1936年6月27日）” (A draft decision of the General Political Department on disorganizing and gaining the whites, on June 27, 1936), in SMHF, pp. 546-548.

¹¹¹ Cable 16.

¹¹² Cable 58.

Simultaneously, the WRA initiated united front work immediately after it crossed the Yellow River. In addition to regular methods, such as propaganda and mobilization, a seemingly effective way was to send captured enemy soldiers home.¹¹³

Ironically, when the Communists attempted to “unify” these Hui warlords under the slogan of “Down with Chiang Kai-shek,” the CCP leadership was actually conducting secret talks with Chiang, in which the WRA was one of the most important issues.

All of these attempts to negotiate with Gansu local warlords proved to be in vain. It did not take the Party Center long to realize that Zhang and Yang were not as friendly with the Ma brothers as they had once imagined.¹¹⁴ On the battlefield, despite the Reds’ friendly gestures, Ma Buqing resumed his attacks after a brief truce, and committed more troops to the conflict. The method of negotiating directly ended with no effect.

Talks with the Nanjing government were also fruitless. According to the Party Center’s telegram to the WRA on January 25, 1937, Chiang promised to allow the Red Army to be stationed in the region to the west of Liangzhou.¹¹⁵ It was not long before he changed his mind and asked the WRA to stay in just two cities, Liangzhou and Suzhou.¹¹⁶ This promise, however, proved to have little effect. On March 8, when the negotiation between the CCP representative, Zhou, and the Nationalist representative, Gu Zhutong 顧祝同 (1893-1987), was about to end, Gu personally sent a telegram to Ma Bufang to ask him to stop pursuing and attacking the WRA.¹¹⁷ This telegram also was ineffective, and the Ma brothers continued to fight even after the WRA was scattered. Why was united front work unsuccessful on this occasion?

The Power Structure of Gansu in the 1930s

It is known generally that although Chiang had nominally unified China after the Northern Expedition in 1927, the relationship between the Nanjing government and local warlords was not that of ruler and ruled in the ordinary sense. Chiang had incorporated warlord troops into the National Revolutionary Army during the

¹¹³ For instance, some of Ma Buqing’s troops were sent back after being captured by the WRA in the middle of November 1936. See Cable 50.

¹¹⁴ Cable 57.

¹¹⁵ Cable 65.

¹¹⁶ Cable 67.

¹¹⁷ Cable 74.

Northern Expedition, but the structure of their forces remained the same, and few leaders were replaced. Indeed, they only changed their titles. Local officials appointed by the Nanjing government often met difficulties when their administrative power conflicted with local military power. A speech by Chiang in 1929 illustrates the relationship between the central and local governments: “The local governments control finance. They purchase munitions and increase their troops without the central government’s approval. The central government cannot intervene in the local governments’ affairs. In contrast, the local governments who have military power put pressure on the central government.”¹¹⁸ The Nanjing government’s rule over Gansu was no exception.

To some extent, it was the Nanjing government’s intention that Gansu remain in such a semi-independent state. Chiang was not eager to put this region under his direct control, because of the limited capability of the central government. At the time, the central government’s priority was to control politically, economically, and culturally significant regions, in order to consolidate its rule. It had insufficient resources to pay attention to other regions. Gansu, Qinghai, and Ningxia were far from the center of authority. More importantly, the local warlords in those regions were much less powerful than were those of other provinces, such as Yan Xishan 閻錫山 (1883-1960) in Shanxi and Li Zongren 李宗仁 (1891-1969) in Guangxi, so they did not threaten the central government. The policy Chiang adopted in these regions was that as long as the local warlords acknowledged the authority of the Nanjing government, they could enjoy considerable independence. From the late 1920s to the mid-1930s, several warlords competed for power in the Gansu region.¹¹⁹ During periods of power vacuums, the local gentry and strongmen expressed a desire for the central government to exert its influence to end the turbulence in Gansu. Chiang, however, left it to the various local forces to sort out their power struggles, rather than dispatch large numbers of troops to occupy the region.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ Chiang Kai-shek 蔣介石, “Zhongguo guomindang disanci quanguo daibiao dahui kaimu ci 中國國民黨第三次全國代表大會開幕詞 (1929年3月15日)” (Opening speech for the Third National Congress of the Kuomintang, on March 15, 1929), in Qin Xiaoyi 秦孝儀, ed., *Xian zongtong Jiang gong sixiang yanlun zong ji 先總統蔣公思想言論總集* (Collection of the late President’s thoughts and speeches), Volume 10. Taipei: Zhongyang wenwu gongyingshe 中央文物供應社, 1984, p. 382.

¹¹⁹ Both Feng Yuxiang 馮玉祥 (1882-1948) and Yang Hucheng 楊虎城 controlled Gansu for some time, and Hui warlord Ma Fuxiang 馬福祥 (1876-1932) was also an active competitor.

¹²⁰ Liu Jin 劉進, *Zhongxin yu bianyuan: Guomindang zhengquan yu Gan Ning Qing shehui 中心與邊緣：國民黨政權與甘寧青社會* (The center and margin: the Kuomintang regime and society in

This, however, did not mean that Gansu and other provinces in Northwest China were unimportant to the Nanjing government. As Japanese invaders approached the Chinese heartland, it became increasingly important to exploit and control Northwest China. In 1931, Shao Lizi 邵力子 (1882-1967), a senior official in the Nationalist Party, was appointed as the provincial governor of Gansu. After Shao's period of governance ended in failure, the military leader, Zhu Shaoliang 朱紹良 (1891-1963) replaced him in 1933. The appointments of both Shao and Zhu underscore the central government's endeavor to consolidate its rule over Gansu while still having no intention to control it with full force. Meanwhile, local warlords continued to enjoy their independence under the Nationalists' unified banner.

This was the power structure of Gansu when the WRA entered the region in late 1936. After the WRA crossed the Yellow River, they travelled through the territory controlled by Ma Buqing and then went into western Gansu, a vast region controlled by Ma Bufang. The Ma brothers neither felt threatened by Japanese invasion, nor were they capable of challenging the central government's authority. They had their own independent kingdom in Chiang's regime, so none of the Communists' slogans, such as "Against the Japanese," "Down with Chiang Kai-shek," and "Independent Hui people," were attractive to them. A truce between the Communists and the Ma brothers would take place only if the following two preconditions were met. First, the Ma brothers would need to be convinced that the Red Army was determined to pass through their region, rather than stay indefinitely, and second, the Nationalists' Central Army would not enter into the regions controlled by the Ma brothers in the wake of the Red Army. As long as one of the above preconditions was not met, the basic interests of local warlords were threatened. For these reasons, no united front work method could be effective.

As for the ineffectiveness of negotiations with the Nationalist central government, a reasonable explanation is that annihilating the WRA in western Gansu was consistent with the common interests of the central government and local warlords. As a powerful force that made up one-fourth of the Communists' military power, the WRA's situation in western Gansu lent the CCP significant leverage in negotiations with the Nanjing government. The WRA's defeat was a

blow for the CCP in its push for better terms in the negotiation.¹²¹ From the Nationalists' perspective, the more troops the Ma brothers killed, the stronger the Nationalists became in their negotiations with the CCP. As such, they did not take seriously the Communists' request to stop the Ma brothers' attacks. Even if the Nanjing government really wanted the Ma brothers to let the WRA have clear passage, the brothers would not have obeyed those orders.¹²²

1.3.3 Unattainable Assistance

The CCP placed great hope in securing military assistance from the Soviet Union. The Party Center's need for heavy weapons became clear after it paid a high price when fighting against the solid blockhouses Chiang built in the Jiangxi Soviet Region during the fifth encirclement campaign in 1934. This is reflected in cables sent to the Comintern in June and August of 1936. Mao's list of needs included "planes, heavy artillery, shells, infantry rifles, anti-aircraft machine-guns, pontoons and so on,"¹²³ and in August, he emphasized planes and heavy artillery again, together with Soviet personnel to fly the planes and operate the artillery.¹²⁴ As mentioned before, Mao was determined to let his troops secure the Soviet Union's assistance. However, on October 18, he heard from the Comintern that "the goods are not as many as you requested... and there would be no planes or heavy artillery..."¹²⁵ The difference between Mao's expectation and the reality was enormous, and it might explain why Mao agreed that the Fourth Front Army receive the assistance. Although not as generous as expected, the Soviet Union's

¹²¹ The close relationship of situations in battlefields and negotiations was obvious in the case of Shanchengbao Battle. The articles the Nationalists raised after the battle were different with those before the battle and were favourable for the Communists. See Yang Kuisong 楊奎松, *Shiqu de jihui? Kangzhan qianhou Guo Gong tanpan shilu 失去的機會? 抗戰前後國共談判實錄* (A lost opportunity? A record of the negotiations between the Nationalists and the Communists before and after the Anti-Japanese War). Beijing: Xinxing chubanshe 新星出版社, 2013, pp. 39-40. During the negotiations after the Xi'an Incident, the CCP's leadership worried that the WRA's failure would bring negative effects to the Communists' upper hand in the negotiation. See Cable 63; Cable 66.

¹²² There is no reason to deny the existence of ethnic animosity, but in the particular period discussed in this chapter, ethnic animosity was not a major contributing factor to the tension between the WRA and the Ma brothers.

¹²³ "Jimiteluofu gei Sidalin de xin 季米特洛夫給斯大林的信(1936年7月初於莫斯科)" (Dimitrov's letter to Stalin, in early July 1936, Moscow), *Liangong (bu), Gongchan guoji yu Zhongguo suweiai yundong (1931-1937)* 聯共(布)、共產國際與中國蘇維埃運動(1931-1937) (Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolshevik), the Comintern and China's soviet movements, 1931-1937). Beijing: Zhonggong zhongyang dangshi chubanshe 中共中央黨史出版社, 2007, pp. 223-229.

¹²⁴ Cable 17.

¹²⁵ "Gongchan guoji zhiweihui shujichu zhi Zhonggong zhongyang shujichu dian 共產國際執委會書記處致中共中央書記處電(1936年10月18日)" (A letter of the Comintern Secretariat's Executive to the CCP Secretariat, on October 18, 1936), quoted in Yang Kuisong, 2010, p. 238.

assistance was still attractive to the WRA, who lacked winter clothes and ammunition. The WRA's Military Committee sent several telegrams to ask that "bullets and fur clothes" be sent soon, and asked the Soviet Union to send assistance to Gansu rather than to the Xinjiang-Gansu border.¹²⁶ However, none of their requests were met. The Soviet Union would have liked to assist the Chinese Communists, but not openly. To hide their actions from international society, the Soviet Union bought weapons from other countries, rather than providing Soviet-made weapons. Purchase and transportation of weapons were outsourced to a foreign company,¹²⁷ which meant longer delivery times. The WRA once attempted to go westward directly and planned to arrive in Anxi, the last town before they reached the Xinjiang-Gansu border, in early December 1936. However, they were informed that the assistance would not be transported to Xinjiang until the following February,¹²⁸ so they had to remain in the Hexi Corridor for the entire winter.

The WRA also had expected assistance from the other parts of the Red Army. After rejecting the WRA's request for reinforcements repeatedly, in March 1937, the Party Center decided to establish a "Rescuing Army for the Western Route Army" (*Yuan xi jun* 援西軍, hereafter RAWRA), to help the remaining troops in western Gansu. The RAWRA consisted of the Fourth and Thirty-first Armies. Nonetheless, there is reason to doubt that the Party Center truly wanted these troops to approach western Gansu. At the time, the WRA already hovered on the brink of collapse. Their ammunition was almost depleted and they were besieged by their enemy.¹²⁹ At the time, branches of the RAWRA had only just departed from Chunhua 淳化 in Shaanxi Province, which was at least 1,200 kilometers from the WRA. Given their frequent radio communications, the Party Center definitely would have known that the reinforcements from Chunhua could not make it in time to help the WRA. Complicating matters further was the fact that the CCP was in the middle of negotiations with the Nationalist Party, and thus, making large-scale military arrangements, such as sending a large force to Gansu, was obviously inappropriate. The Party Center understood this clearly. These two

¹²⁶ Cable 51.

¹²⁷ Yang Kuisong 楊奎松, "Sulian da guimo yuanzhu zhongguo hongjun de yici changshi 蘇聯大規模援助中國紅軍的一次嘗試" (An attempt of the Soviet Union to provide the Chinese Red Army large-scale assistance), *Jindaishi yanjiu* 近代史研究, 1995(1), pp. 254-269.

¹²⁸ Cable 54.

¹²⁹ Cable 71.

considerations might explain why the RAWRA stopped marching and stayed in Zhenyuan 鎮原, a town only 250 kilometers away from their departure point. Thus, it is safe to conclude that the reason that the RAWRA was established was not to rescue the WRA. Instead, it was designed to increase the pressure on Chiang, and force him order the Ma brothers to stop attacking the Red Army, and also to prevent commanders, comrades, and soldiers from condemning the Party Center for not sending reinforcements to the WRA. Their first objective was impossible to achieve, as explained above. However, the establishment of the RAWRA did console those aligned with the Communist camp at the time.

Interestingly, at almost the same time that the RAWRA was established, the Party Center sent telegrams to the WRA, blaming them again for not defeating their enemies. In a telegram sent on March 4, 1937, the Party Center said, “Leaders of the WRA did not rely on their own power to conquer all difficulties, to destroy enemies, and to accomplish their tasks.” The Party Center attributed the WRA’s mistakes further to their political errors, and asserted that “the WRA leaders had committed errors of right-deviationist retreatist opportunism, the same errors as the Fourth Front Army had committed when they built the alternative Central Committee”.¹³⁰ The WRA Headquarters defended itself by arguing that it “was firmly carrying out the correct line of the Party Central Committee,” while claiming that it had never conducted “Guotao Errors” (*Guotao cuowu* 國燾錯誤, i.e., splitting the Party).¹³¹ When Xu recollected the WRA’s operations fifty years later, he said that, at the end of February 1937, “failure was then certain, and the circumstances [for military advantage] had gone.”¹³² Although fully aware of the WRA’s difficult situation, the Party Central Committee continued to criticize the WRA. In a telegram sent on March 17, the Central Committee insisted that “the leaders always opposed the Party Central Committee and the Central Military Committee, and that this was why the WRA had found itself in a woeful predicament.”¹³³ It was obviously inappropriate for the Party Center to criticize the WRA in this way when the troops were in such a desperate situation. These telegrams also can be comprehended better in light of the preparation to purge Zhang in Yan’an (see Chapter 2), rather than in the context of the actual situation in Gansu. At the time,

¹³⁰ Cable 70.

¹³¹ Cable 73.

¹³² Xu Xiangqian, 1985, p. 365.

¹³³ Cable 74.

although the top commanders in Gansu did not know their roles in purging Zhang, and although they were thousands of miles from Yan'an, they had indeed become a part of the impending political movement.

1.3.4 The End of the Western Route Army

Since January 1937, when the WRA moved to Gaotai and Linze, they had been stranded in the area, and reduced to wandering for two and a half months. In the middle of January, the Fifth Army was nearly annihilated in Gaotai, after which the main force of the WRA was besieged in Nijiayingzi. After more than a month of fierce fighting, fewer than 10,000 troops were left.¹³⁴ On February 27, the WRA broke out of the siege, but was pursued closely by their enemy and forced to engage in battle again. After another ten days' fighting, of the remaining five regiments, seventy percent were wounded or sick. The troops hid in thick forest and survived on the meat of dead horses and mules.¹³⁵ On March 12, the WRA fought in a gorge called Liyuankou 梨園口. Thereafter, Headquarters lost connection with all troops, except for a few in the Thirtieth Army. In fact, the WRA had been disbanded already.

Two days later, on March 14, 1937, the WRA Military Committee convened its last conference in a mountain where they were hiding, and decided to dispatch Chen and Xu to Yan'an, accompanied by a team of guards. The remaining troops were divided into three guerrilla teams, among which only the team led by Li Xiannian arrived at the Xinjiang-Gansu border and met Chen Yun 陳雲 (1905-1995), one of the CCP representatives from the Comintern who took charge of delivering munitions to the Red Army. Thereafter, this team of 420 troops went to Dihua 迪化 (now Urumqi). The Xinjiang government claimed they were recruited from China proper to build roads in Xinjiang, but actually they took classes on Marxist theory and military techniques in Dihua.¹³⁶ Over the following two years, these survivors were transported to Yan'an in several groups.

According to the CCP's official statistics, of the 22,000 troops who crossed the

¹³⁴ Qin Sheng, 2011, pp. 352-359.

¹³⁵ Cable 72.

¹³⁶ Teng Daiyuan 滕代遠, "Huiyi fu Xinjiang yingjie Hong Xilujun he chengli Balujun zhu Xinjiang banshichu qingkuang 回憶赴新疆迎接紅西路軍和成立八路軍駐新疆辦事處情況" (Recollection of welcoming the WRA and establishing the Eighth Route Army Agency in Xinjiang), in *Zhongguo gongnong hongjun zuo zhidui zai Xinjiang* 中國工農紅軍左支隊在新疆 (The Left Branch of the Chinese Red Army of Workers and Peasants in Xinjiang). Urumchi: Xinjiang renmin chubanshe 新疆人民出版社, 1991, p. 40.

Yellow River in October 1936, more than 7,000 were killed on the battlefields, and approximately 11,000 were captured or drifted around in western Gansu. Some of the captives escaped from the Ma brothers' control after the Communists and Nationalists began their second official round of cooperation.¹³⁷ In the following years, approximately 4,000 members of the former WRA entered Yan'an by various means.¹³⁸ Although more than half of its troops survived, the three armies that consisted of the WRA—the Fifth, Ninth, and Thirtieth Armies, no longer existed. This marked the end of the WRA.

Since they first met in Maogong in June 1935, competition between Mao and Zhang had been a major issue for the Party. The competition was not determined solely by Mao's and Zhang's respective military power, but was definitely a significant factor. When they met in Maogong, the First Front Army had only 10,000 troops, while the Fourth Front Army had 80,000. Over the next 12 months, however, they had very different experiences. The Party Center led by Mao, and the First Front Army, which settled in north Shaanxi, developed quickly. After failed attempts to take over Chengdu and the surrounding towns, the other Party Center led by Zhang and the Fourth Front Army were stationed in Tibetan regions in western Sichuan, where conscripting soldiers was extremely difficult due to sparse settlement, as well as geographic, logistical, and cultural factors. Combined with harsh natural conditions, by October 1936, when the main forces of the Red Army—the First, Second and Fourth Front Armies—joined in Huining, fewer than 40,000 troops remained under Zhang's control. Meanwhile, the First Front Army had grown.¹³⁹ Five months later, when the 22,000 troops of the WRA had largely been decimated, the impasse in the balance of power between Mao and Zhang was resolved completely. Even more importantly, however, the failure of the WRA

¹³⁷ See Dong Hanhe 董漢河, "Guanyu Xilujun shi yanjiu zhong de jige wenti 關於西路軍史研究中的幾個問題" (On some issues of the WRA's history), *Gansu shehui kexue* 甘肅社會科學, 1980(1), pp. 67-73.

¹³⁸ Zhang Wentian 張聞天, "Guanyu Xilujun shibai de jiaoxun yu fan Guotao luxian 關於西路軍失敗的教訓與反國燾路線 (1937年11月24日)" (Lessons drawn of the WRA's failure, oppose to the Guotao Line, on November 24, 1937). Hao Chengming 郝成銘 and Zhu Yongguang 朱永光, eds., *Zhongguo gongnong hongjun Xilujun (diaocha yanjiu juan)* 中國工農紅軍西路軍 (調查研究卷) (The WRA of the Chinese Red Army of Workers and Peasants: research). Lanzhou: Gansu renmin chubanshe, 2009, p. 649.

¹³⁹ There is no exact number of the Red Army in Shaanxi in October 1936. Some scholars believe there are about 20,000 troops. See 姜任耕 Jiang Rengeng, "Guanyu Changzheng jieshu hou de Hongjun renshu wenti 關於長征結束後的紅軍人數問題" (The number of the Red Army troops after the Long March), *Jiangxi daxue xuebao (shehui kexue ban)* 江西大學學報 (社會科學版), 1983(3), pp. 86-88.

provided Mao and his supporters with a perfect excuse to launch a purging campaign against Zhang. In fact, in late March, when the remaining troops of the WRA were still conducting guerilla warfare in the Qilian Mountains, Mao and his supporters had already prepared themselves to deal with the problem of Zhang.

Conclusion

This chapter dealt with the divergences and conflicts between the Fourth Front Army and the Party Center during the period from June 1935 to April 1937, and focused on the establishment and defeat of the WRA.

Cooperating to secure the Soviet Union's military assistance was a plan that would have benefitted both sides, but due to movements of the Nationalist Central Army and other changing situations, this plan was not conducted as conceived in August 1936. Since September 1936, both the Party Center and the Fourth Front Army had rearranged troops according to their own interests. As the Party had already nominally reunified, theoretically speaking, both the Party Center and the Red Army Headquarters headed by Zhu and Zhang were able to direct the Fourth Front Army's operations, which complicated further the contradiction in directives that the operational commanders received.

It was under these circumstances that the WRA was established and began to march westward to Xinjiang. Due to the complicated relationship that has been analyzed previously, the Party Center and the WRA commanders made a number of inaccurate evaluations of the situation on the ground, and furthermore, to the detriment of the WRA, these evaluations failed to be corrected through normal decision-making processes. As a result, the WRA was defeated utterly by the Ma brothers' troops in Gansu. This failure also meant that Mao's military strength finally overwhelmed that of Zhang, and provided the pretext Mao had long been looking for to purge Zhang.

There is one aspect of the friction between the Shaanxi and the Sichuan Party Centers, or between the Party Center and the WRA, that historians cannot afford to ignore. That is the attempts on the part of both sides to evaluate the other side's work. Each side had its own discourse to interpret what had happened and was happening, and competition between the two incompatible discourses featured in their battle for intra-Party power. Specifically, during the period of separation, both sides spared no efforts to define the other side as illegal, in order to legitimize its own status as the real "Party Center." When they did negotiate, both sides

worked to prove that their plans were correct. When the WRA fought in Gansu, both sides argued that the other should take responsibility for the WRA's disadvantageous situation on the battlefields. As will be shown in the next two chapters, the Shaanxi Party Center won this competition, and during the Mao era, Zhang was depicted as a traitor who led the WRA to their deaths, while the WRA was portrayed as a practitioner of the so-called "Zhang Guotao Line."

Table 1-1 The Right Route Army and the Left Route Army (August 3, 1935-September 10, 1935)¹⁴⁰

	The Central Red Army (The First Front Army)	The Fourth Front Army
Leadership	Chief Commander: Zhu De Chief Political Commissar: Zhou Enlai Chief of Staff: Liu Bocheng	Chief Commander: Xu Xiangqian Deputy Commander: Wang Shusheng Political Commissar: Chen Changhao
The Right Route Army Commanders: Xu Xiangqian and Chen Changhao	The First and Third Armies Note: 1. The First and Third Armies used to be referred to as the First Army Corps and the Third Army Corps. The titles were changed in July 1935. 2. The Party Center was with the Right Route Army. 3. After the split between Mao and Zhang, the First Army and the Third Army marched to the Shaanxi-Gansu Soviet Region with the Party Center led by Mao.	The Fourth and Thirtieth Armies* Note: After the split between Mao and Zhang, Chen Changhao and Xu Xiangqian led the Fourth and Thirtieth Armies back to Zhang's camp.
The Left Route Army Commanders: Zhu De and Zhang Guotao	The Fifth and Thirty-second Armies Note: 1. In July 1935, the Fifth Army Corps and the Ninth Army Corps of the First Front Army were reorganized into the Fifth and Thirty-second Armies. 2. After July 1936, the Thirty-second Army accompanied the new-established Second Front Army to the Shaanxi-Gansu borders. 3. In January 1936, the Fifth Army combined with the Thirty-third Army of the Fourth Front Army and became a new Fifth Army.	The Ninth*, Thirty-first, and Thirty-third Armies Note: In January 1936, the Thirty-third Army combined with the Fifth Army of the First Front Army and became a new Fifth Army*.

* The armies that later formed the Western Route Army

¹⁴⁰ Military History Institute of PLA Military Science Academy, ed., 1987, pp. 263-283; Appendix, Table 48.

Table 1-2 The First Front Army, the Second Front Army and the Fourth Front Army (October 1936)¹⁴¹

The First Front Army Commander/Political Commissar: Peng Dehuai	The First Army Corps
	The Fifteenth Army Corps
	The Twenty-eighth Army
The Second Front Army Chief Commander: He Long Political Commissar: Ren Bishi	The Second Army Corps
	The Sixth Army Corps
	The Thirty-second Army
The Fourth Front Army Chief Commander: Xu Xiangqian Political Commissar: Chen Changhao	The Fourth Army
	The Fifth Army
	The Ninth Army
	The Thirtieth Army
	The Thirty-first Army

¹⁴¹ Military History Institute of PLA Military Science Academy, ed., 1987, Appendix, Table 63.

Table 1-3 The Western Route Army (November 1936-April 1937)¹⁴²

Chief Commander: Xu Xiangqian Political Commissar: Chen Changhao Deputy Commander: Wang Shusheng Chief of Staff: Li Te Director of Political Department: Li Zhuoran	
The Fifth Army	The Thirteenth Division
Commander: Dong Zhentang Political Commissar: Huang Chao	The Fifteenth Division
The Ninth Army	The Twenty-fifth Division
Commander: Sun Yuqing; Wang Shusheng (after Sun died) Political Commissar: Chen Haisong	The Twenty-seventh Division
The Thirtieth Army	The Eighty-eighth Division
Commander: Cheng Shicai Political Commissar: Li Xiannian	The Eighty-ninth Division
Others	The Calvary Division
	The Women's Independent Regiment
	The Special Service Regiment (<i>Tewu tuan</i> 特務團)
	The Instructor Regiment (<i>Jiaodao tuan</i> 教導團)

¹⁴² Military History Institute of PLA Military Science Academy, ed., 1987, Appendix, Table 67.

Chapter 2: Constructing a Consensus on the Western Route Army's History in the Yan'an Period

Introduction

The last chapter indicated that, as early as the time during which the WRA was still fighting in Gansu, there emerged two distinct interpretations about the WRA's failure. The WRA Headquarters insisted that the Party Center had overestimated their capability and offered confusing directives. The Party Center argued that the WRA had committed so-called "errors of line" (*luxian cuowu* 路線錯誤). This chapter investigates the process during which, in the several years following the WRA's defeat, the Party Center's interpretation of the WRA emerged victorious and gained consensus within the Party. Through this case, this chapter will reveal the methods by which Mao's camp succeeded in suppressing other historical narratives, and maintaining a firm hold in interpreting Party history.

For Mao, the power of interpreting Party history had twofold significance. On the one hand, highlighting his opponents' mistakes was one of the crucial ways in which Mao secured more administrative and military power within the Party. Only after his opponents were forced to bear certain historical blame could Mao eliminate their influence and take over their forces. On the other hand, the formation of Mao's image as a (or the only) practitioner of the correct political line, or in other words, the creation of the "Maoist myth," as Dorrill defined it,¹ was critical to Mao's rule over the Party. It was by promoting a series of such myths that Mao and his Party theorists created so-called "Mao Zedong Thought," and made it the accepted "sinicization of Marxism." Based on the two points above, it is fair to say that Party history played an important role for Mao in realizing the union of organizational power and political ideology.

Mao's criticism of his opponents and his supporters' praise co-occurred; in the case of the WRA, when Zhang was condemned for having sacrificed the WRA to endorse his incorrect political line, the myth that Mao had correctly pointed out

¹ According to William F. Dorrill, the major elements of the "Maoist myth" included: (1) Mao's successful leadership of the practical movement since the Zunyi conference; (2) his gradual displacement of all opposition groups in the Party; (3) his increasing independence from the influence of Moscow; (4) his growing stature as the party's leading military strategist; and (5) his emergence as a Marxist-Leninist theorist in his own right. William F. Dorrill, "Transfer of Legitimacy in the Chinese Communist Party: Origins of the Maoist Myth", in John Wilson Lewis, ed., *Party Leadership and Revolutionary Power in China*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970, pp. 69-113.

Zhang's errors formed simultaneously. The case of the WRA indicates that, as a means to write Party history, this dual process of criticizing opponents while praising Mao was designed elaborately, and carried out from the top down during the Yan'an period. The first section of this chapter deals with the process the CCP top leadership underwent in defining Zhang's errors. The second section analyzes how the top leadership's critical interpretation of the Zhang issue became a consensus among Party cadres. Throughout the whole top-down process, the issue of the WRA was the main focus of debate, and its failure was a significant factor in the purges of Zhang and the Fourth Front Army.

2.1 Verdicts on the Western Route Army: "The Final Breakdown of the 'Zhang Guotao Line'"

In late November or early December 1936, Zhang and Zhu, who held the titles of Chief Political Commissar and Chief Commander of the Red Army, respectively, arrived at Bao'an, the small town in North Shaanxi where the CCP's Party Center was located. This was the first time since the CCP's split in September 1935 that Zhang and Zhu met with the Party Center controlled by Mao, and it was then that the purge of Zhang began to be prepared in secret.

At the time, the WRA was trapped in western Gansu, and the remainder of the Fourth Front Army troops had been organized as the RAWRA with Liu Bocheng 劉伯承 (1892-1986), a senior commander whom Mao trusted, as the head. By that time, Zhang had lost his control over military power. Therefore, the preparation on an organizational level to purge Zhang was comparatively easy. Consequently, the friction between Zhang's and Mao's camps during this period, as this section will show, occurred primarily as a result of theoretical issues. Although Zhang was certain to lose his power within the Party leadership, there was still space for him to struggle, because whether he would come back to power in the future depended on how the Party Center defined the errors he had committed.

2.1.1 Debates in Defining Zhang Guotao's Errors

During this period, Mao published no words condemning Zhang, but let then Chief Director of the CCP's Propaganda Department, He Kequan 何克全 (or Kaifeng 凱豐) (1906-1955), be his spokesman. There were significant differences between the two sides in defining Zhang's alleged "errors." These were reflected

primarily in two materials—the self-critical material Zhang submitted to the Central Committee in February 1937 and He’s lengthy article, “What are the Divisions between the Party Central Committee and the Guotao Line?”²

In his article, He analyzed and criticized Zhang and his “wrong line” from thirteen perspectives. Indeed, He provided such a comprehensive criticism that almost all of Zhang’s “revolutionary activities” were included.³ However, by careful comparison of Zhang’s self-criticism and He’s criticism, one can find that the heart of their debate was twofold, and that the major effort on the part of Mao’s side was to emphasize the seriousness and negative impacts of Zhang’s errors.

The first and most significant disagreement was whether Zhang’s errors were “errors of line.” Since the 6th National Congress of the CCP in 1928,⁴ committing “errors of line” had been one of the most serious mistakes one could make within the Party. In Zhang’s opinion, he did commit some mistakes, but they were merely tactical errors, rather than “errors of line.”⁵ According to He, the nature of Zhang’s errors needed no discussion. He entitled his article, “the Guotao Line” (*Guotao luxian* 國燾路線), and defined it as “a particular type of right-deviationism (*youqing zhuyi* 右傾主義), warlordism (*junfa zhuyi* 軍閥主義) and banditry (*tufei zhuyi* 土匪主義).”⁶

² According to He Kequan’s biographer, He’s writing was inspired by his discontent with Zhang’s self-criticism. See Zhang Xuelong 張學龍, *Kaifeng zhuan* 凱豐傳 (Biography of Kaifeng), Nanchang: Baihuazhou wenyi chubanshe 百花洲文藝出版社, 2010, p. 148. In fact, publishing such an article criticizing a high-rank leader could not be He’s personal decision. He’s article made a preliminary verdict on Zhang Guotao on behalf of Mao.

³ He Kequan criticized Zhang Guotao on the following points: assessment of the recent political situation, military strategies, issues of marching north or south, the unity of the First Front Army and the Fourth Front Army, the construction of the Red Army and Soviet Governments, revolutionary bases, the policies of eliminating counterrevolutionaries, construction of the Party, ethnic problems, the national united front, the relationship between national revolution and land revolution, and the relationship between the Party and Soviet Union and the unity of the Party. See Kaifeng (He Kequan), “Dang zhongyang yu Guotao luxian fenqi zai nali 黨中央與國燾路線分歧在哪裡” (What are the divisions between the Party Central Committee and the Guotao Line?), in Sheng Xueren 盛學仁, ed., *Zhang Guotao wenti yanjiu ziliao* 張國燾問題研究資料 (Materials for studies on Zhang Guotao issue). Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe 四川人民出版社, 1982, pp. 23-72.

⁴ The 6th National Congress of CCP was held in Moscow from July to August 1928.

⁵ Zhang Guotao, “Cong xianzai kan guoqu 從現在看過去” (Think about the past from the present perspective), in Sheng Xueren, ed., 1982, p. 608. Zhang argued this point in a remarkably subtle way. He admitted that he had misunderstood the Central Red Army’s retreat from the Jiangxi Soviet Base in 1934 and the military failure during the Long March, wrongly deeming them to be errors of line. He said, “Tactical and partial errors should not be misinterpreted as errors of line”. In this way, although he did not make the nature of his own errors clear, he succeeded in suggesting that they were not errors of line.

⁶ Kaifeng, in Sheng Xueren, ed., 1982, p. 23.

The other significant difference between Zhang's and Kai's assessments was whether Zhang's errors had been rectified. Zhang insisted in his self-criticism that there was no division between him and the Party Center after the December Conference was held and the *December Solution* issued.⁷ Thus, regardless of how serious his mistakes were, they lasted for less than four months, from September 1935 to December 1935.⁸ In contrast, in He's opinion, Zhang's erroneous line was persistent and still played a significant role in the Fourth Front Army after it rejoined the Central Red Army in October 1936.

These disparate accounts of Zhang's errors explain why the WRA and its defeat were important in Mao's rebuttal of Zhang. The WRA moved to western Gansu, a barren region far from the battlefields of the Chinese troops and the Japanese invaders. Therefore, the WRA's actions were ostensibly in accord with Mao and his supporters' condemnation of Zhang's errors as being retreatism, or, more specifically, avoiding fighting with powerful enemies and instead retreating to relatively safe areas. The WRA became a convenient source of evidence for the existence of Zhang's retreatist policies, and, at the same time, provided an excellent excuse to purge him. As long as the WRA could be proven to have been carrying out the so-called "Zhang Guotao Line," its defeat could prove that the "wrong line" was still causing the Red Army harm, and therefore, a large-scale purge was warranted.

In the article, which was published in March 1937, He wrote explicitly that Zhang held political views different from those of the Party Center, and it was on the basis of these views that Zhang ordered WRA troops to go farther west after they arrived in Gansu. According to He, the WRA was to retreat to the western region to preserve military power.⁹ This was the first attempt by Mao's supporters to connect the WRA with the "Zhang Guotao Line" officially.

To describe the WRA and its defeat as a "product of the Zhang Guotao Line" was not easy. As has been argued in Chapter 1, the establishment of the WRA was due to the CCP's need for military assistance from the Soviet Union, Zhang Xueliang's fickle cooperation with the CCP in its efforts to secure the Soviet Union's assistance, as well as to the splits within the Party and the Red Army. To interpret such a complex situation as Zhang's errors of line was not convincing. Actually, as the

⁷ The December Conference referred to the Wayaobao Conference, which held in December 1935.

⁸ Zhang Guotao, in Sheng Xueren, ed., 1982, pp. 605-610.

⁹ Kaifeng, in Sheng Xueren, ed., 1982, pp. 23-72.

second part of this chapter will show, it took the CCP leadership months to persuade Party members and Red Army commanders, especially the Fourth Front Army commanders, that the WRA's defeat represented the failure of the so-called "Zhang Guotao Line."

To compensate for the weakness of some of the claims made in his article, He adopted other means to bolster his judgment of Zhang. At approximately the time that the article was published, He convened a series of secret meetings to arrange the impending purge, and all attendees were expected to participate actively in criticizing Zhang.¹⁰ It is likely that, as a part of the arrangement, He disseminated the views written in his article to these leaders of opinion in the Party and the Red Army, and let them exert influence on other people.

When the Party Center, led by Mao, was ready, it held a conference to launch its large-scale purge.

2.1.2 The Yan'an Conference and its Resolution

The Yan'an Conference was an enlarged conference of the Politburo of the CCP.¹¹ In the last five days of the conference, participants focused on discussing the errors that Zhang had committed. Convening an enlarged conference to criticize a Party leader's mistakes showed how determined Mao and his allies were to elevate this issue to a new height.

Accessible materials on the Yan'an Conference include official chronological biographies of Mao, Zhang Wentian, and other CCP leaders, as well as Zhang's memoirs. In addition to these, more noteworthy are excerpts of conference records released in a book printed privately by a group of retired researchers at the CCP Central Archives.¹² There is a vast discrepancy between the CCP's official publications, and Zhang's recollection of the Yan'an Conference, even on certain basic issues, such as the procedure and participants.¹³ Considering that Zhang

¹⁰ Zhang Guotao, 2004, volume 2, pp. 495-496.

¹¹ This conference convened from March 23 to March 31, 1937 (March 25 was an adjournment day).

¹² These excerpts of conference recordings were compiled in *Lantai gaocun* 蘭臺稿存 (edited by Tian Fenglu 田逢祿, printed in May 2005). Tian Fenglu is the former office administrator of the Central Archives, and once took part in the compilation of *Selected Works of Mao Zedong* and *Chronological Biography of Mao Zedong*. All articles in *Lantai gaocun* were written by retired researchers of the Central Archives, including Geng Zhonglin, Qi Deping, and others.

¹³ For example, according to the official chronological biography of Zhang Wentian, a total of fifty-six Party leaders attended this conference. See Zhang Peisen, ed., Volume 1, 2000, p. 441. Zhang Guotao said there were only twenty some attendees, most of whom were students at Kangda and many Politburo members, including Zhou Enlai, Bo Gu, Wang Jiaxiang and Ren Bishi did not

recalled this event decades later, and the CCP Party historians made a considerable number of changes when compiling the conference speeches into publications, the conference records that were released without any official supervision provide an independent perspective.¹⁴

As this privately released material shows, a total of sixty senior cadres and commanders attended the Yan'an Conference, and thirty-one of them spoke. Most speeches denigrated Zhang and his main supporters in Yan'an.¹⁵ Each of the attendees recalled their work experience and personal contact with the criticized, and made arguments based on their recollections.¹⁶ Some speakers' made barbed and sarcastic remarks. He Long, for example, said: "Once I was a warlord. Now I am a Communist Party member. I became a Communist after being a warlord. You have retrogressed from being a Communist to become a warlord. I am definitely more progressive than you! Your trick is no more than what the most unenlightened warlord of Sichuan would have done."¹⁷ Arguments such as these bolstered the Party Center's reasons to purge Zhang.

Indeed, there is evidence that the cadres' speeches at the Yan'an Conference were influenced to varying degrees by the careful preparations of Mao and his colleagues. On March 25, mid-way through the conference, Zhang Wentian and Mao sent a telegram to Zhou Kun and Yuan Guoping, who then headed the Qingyang Infantry School.¹⁸ The telegram directed them to "commence discussion

attend. See Zhang Guotao, 2004, p. 504.

¹⁴ There are two reasons that lead me to believe that the excerpts of conference recordings in *Lantai gaocun* are likely to be a part of the original recordings. First, due to their positions, the compilers of *Lantai gaocun* had access to the CCP's original conference recordings. Second, these compilers had deep affection for Mao. In fact, their purpose in compiling such a book was to criticize other writers who held less favorable opinions about Mao. Therefore, they have no motivation to fabricate a version of reference recordings in which Mao spoke less logically and less reasonably than in the official version.

¹⁵ Besides Zhang, the main targets for criticism included Zhou Chunquan 周純全 (1905-1985), the Director of the Political Department of the Fourth Front Army, and He Wei 何畏 (1900-1960), who once held the position of the Ninth Army commander.

¹⁶ For example, He Long criticized Zhang Guotao for not allowing him to join the Party several years earlier, and Ren Bishi complained that one year earlier Zhang let the Second Front Army be the vanguard for the Fourth Front Army.

¹⁷ Tian Zhongqun 田仲群, "Qingsuan Zhang Guotao cuowu de yici zhongyao huiyi—1937 nian 3 yue zhongyang zhengzhiju kuoda huiyi taolun Zhang Guotao cuowu wenti de qingkuang jieshao 清算張國燾錯誤的一次重要會議——1937年3月中央政治局擴大會議討論張國燾錯誤問題的情況介紹" (An important conference on reckoning Zhang Guotao's errors—an introduction to the discussions of Zhang Guotao's errors in the Politburo's enlarged conference in March 1937), in Tian Fenglu, ed., *Lantai gaocun* 蘭臺稿存 (A Collection of Lantai), Privately published, 2005, pp. 298-299. Tian Zhongqun is the collective penname of Tian Fenglu, Geng Zhonglin 耿仲琳 and Tang Qun 唐群.

¹⁸ The Qingyang Infantry School (*Qingyang bubing xuexiao* 慶陽步兵學校) was a branch of the

on opportunistic errors of the Guotao line immediately and fully expose those errors, in order to achieve the unity of the Party.”¹⁹ The telegram shows that when the attendees were discussing the first item on the agenda of the Yan’an Conference, Zhou and Yuan were not at Yan’an. Later, however, when Zhang’s errors were criticized, Zhou appeared in the meeting room and clamored for a public trial of Zhang.²⁰ The careful preparation Mao and his allies made at the Yan’an Conference to purge Zhang is evident.

Mao’s Speech

Mao did not make his speech to discuss the Zhang Guotao issue until the penultimate day of the conference. In the conference records, Mao’s speech is quite long, and his style is just like that which Zhang recalled decades later—“Mao made an impromptu speech with giggles and a relaxed presence.”²¹ However, after Party writers had polished the recordings, compiled them into the chronological biographies of Party leaders, and issued them to the whole Party, Mao’s speech was edited into a piece of logical and convincing analysis of the Zhang issue, and was only one-tenth of its original length. This revised version of his speech subsequently became the authoritative assessment of Zhang.

At the outset of the official version of Mao’s speech, he repudiated the so-called “Zhang Guotao line” totally. He then criticized Zhang from both military and political perspectives. In the CCP’s discourse, although many military errors were motivated by political errors, purely military mistakes were always considered forgivable. Whether an error was politically innocent or not depended on the intra-Party political situation at the time the error was criticized, rather than on social, military, or political grounds.²² Obviously, in Mao’s opinion, Zhang’s problem was not limited to military matters. Zhang’s main error was to have adopted an “opportunistic line.” According to Mao, Zhang had committed opportunist errors for several years.²³ This indictment of Zhang’s political errors provided legitimacy for a large-scale criticism of him.

This official version of Mao’s speech is clearly a result of deliberate editing. By

China Anti-Japanese Red Army College. Zhou Kun 周昆 (1902-?) disappeared in 1938, but there is no evidence that Zhou defected to the KMT.

¹⁹ Zhang Peisen, ed., 2000, p. 441.

²⁰ Zhang Guotao, 2004, p. 506.

²¹ Zhang Guotao, 2004, p. 505.

²² The defeat at the Jiangxi base which was judged to be a pure military error at the Zunyi Conference 遵義會議 during the Long March is an example.

²³ Zhonggong zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi, 1993, p. 666.

comparing it with the conference records, one can find that three main components were deleted, including Mao's accounts of the WRA's history. In his speech, Mao took the WRA as an example to argue that Zhang once deceived the Party Center and tried to control the Red Army through conspiracy. Mao said, "Zhang intended to let all troops cross the Yellow River; we did not know this until the three armies had finished crossing; we had no choice but to approve." A huge proportion of the telegrams that were cited in Chapter 1 of this thesis indicate that this final argument of Mao's is greatly at odds with the facts. The Party historians would have been unwilling to leave these incorrect narratives to be challenged. This helps explain why the official version of Mao's speech at the Yan'an Conference consists almost solely of conclusions, and is devoid of factual evidence. A further deletion was made of Mao's judgment on Zhang's errors, as well as on Zhang's self-criticism. Mao argued that Zhang had committed "evil errors," and consequently called on comrades to "ruthlessly expose" Zhang and his followers. The third component that was deleted is his sarcastic remarks about Zhang.²⁴ It is likely that the two sections above were deleted in order to conceal the ferocity of intra-Party power struggles.

A Resolution

On March 31, 1937, the last day of the Yan'an Conference, the Central Committee passed the "Resolution about Comrade Zhang Guotao's Errors" (hereafter "Resolution"). Based largely on the definition of Zhang's mistakes Mao gave in his speech, the "Resolution" also specified the origin, content, and harmful influence of those mistakes.

This resolution defined Zhang's errors officially as "Right-opportunist retreatism and warlordism." In the words of the "Resolution," the essence of Zhang's Right-opportunism was that "he lost the confidence to defeat enemies, to build a new Soviet base in northwestern China, and to make the Soviet Red Army the leading center of the anti-Japanese revolutionary war; instead, he proposed retreating to the barren area of western China." Zhang's warlordism was stated to be his attempt to "build his private network in the Red Army." He "sought military

²⁴ When criticizing Zhang's empiricism—"not believe what one cannot see with one's own eyes"—Mao said, "Zhang needs not only glasses, but also telescopes and microscopes". If cadres were all like Zhang Guotao, then "nameless sores would emerge endlessly" (*wuming zhongdu cengchu buqiong* 無名腫毒層出不窮). When dealing with the destructive effects of Zhang's thoughts and works, Mao compared Zhang to the bandits in the Chinese novel *Outlaws of the March* (*Shuihu zhuan* 水滸傳)—"Is Zhang Guotao a Chao Gai or is he a Wang Lun?" (*Guotao jiuqing shi Chao Gai haishi Wang Lun?* 國燾究竟是晁蓋還是王倫?) See Tian Fenglu, ed., 2005, pp. 299-301.

power over the Party's power [as by having control of the military power he could go on to gain political power]." Although the "Resolution" stated that Zhang's opportunism and warlordism were reflected in all of his work, such as mass work (*qunzhong gongzuo* 群眾工作), and land and economic policies, the Party Center emphasized the military affairs clearly.

As for Zhang's most significant error—that of splitting from the Party—the "Resolution" claimed that this error had a much deeper and wider influence than any inner-Party issue, as it influenced not only the Red Army, but also counteracted the efforts of the Anti-Japanese National United Front. In the Party Center's opinion, although Zhang had changed his mind and marched north following the Party Center's directive, he was always unaware of the correctness of the Party Center's line, and thus, his wrong line had not diminished. On this point, the actions of the WRA were clear evidence. Therefore, the "Resolution" stated, "The main reason for the WRA's march to northern Gansu and its serious failure is that they did not get over the Zhang Guotao Line."²⁵

As was discussed in Chapter 1, during the period of the split (from September 1935 to November 1936), both Zhang's and Mao's sides issued official documents to declare the other side's identity illegal. Although issued in the name of the "Party Center," these documents actually did not represent authoritative opinions of the Party. In contrast, the resolution of the Yan'an Conference was a decision made by the united Party Center. After reference to the so-called "Zhang Guotao Line" was included in the official document, Zhang wrote a short statement to criticize the lack of thoroughness and depth of his earlier self-criticism, emphasizing that his errors were "errors of line." He said, "I declare the complete failure of my wrong [political] line and that every comrade relentlessly struggling with my errors is an essential guarantee of the Bolshevization of the Party."²⁶ By making this statement after the conflicts at the Yan'an Conference, Zhang effectively admitted his defeat in the power struggles for top leadership, as well as his failure in the competition to interpret the history of the Fourth Front Army and

²⁵ "Guanyu Zhang Guotao tongzhi cuowu de jueyi 關於張國燾同志錯誤的決議" (Resolution about Comrade Zhang Guotao's errors), in *Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun lishi ziliao congshu shenbian weiyuanhui* 中國人民解放軍歷史資料叢書審編委員會 (Committee for compiling historical materials of the PLA), in *Gonggu he fazhan Shaan-Gan suqu de junshi douzheng* 鞏固和發展陝甘蘇區的軍事鬥爭 (Consolidate and develop the military struggles in the Shaanxi-Gansu Soviet Region). Beijing: Jiefangjun chubanshe 解放軍出版社, 2000, pp. 952-954.

²⁶ Zhang Guotao, "Guanyu wo de cuowu 關於我的錯誤" (About my errors), in Sheng Xueren, ed., 1982, pp. 611-612; originally published in *Dang de gongzuo* 黨的工作, No. 31 (April 12, 1937).

the WRA. At that point, intra-Party conflict then shifted to the level of middle-rank cadres.

2.1.3 Mao's article, "Strategic Issues of the Chinese Revolutionary War"

Amongst official documents released by the CCP, the first interpretation of the WRA appeared neither in He's article published in mid-March 1937, nor in the Yan'an Conference resolution issued at the end of March 1937. Instead, it was presented in an article Mao had written some four months earlier. The relevant content in this article may have been revised after the Yan'an Conference, and similar to the conference's resolution, this article also played a significant role in disseminating the official interpretation of the WRA to ordinary Party members.

"Strategic Issues of The Chinese Revolutionary War" (hereafter "Strategic Issues") is one of Mao's most famous articles, and is regarded as "a work that made a contribution to Marxist military theory."²⁷ Although there is only one sentence in this article that assesses the WRA, it was taken to be the most reliable basis for Party historians to write about the WRA's history.

The original version of "Strategic Issues" was based on Mao's lecture notes in the China Anti-Japanese Red Army College (*Zhongguo kangri hongjun daxue* 中國抗日紅軍大學, or *Kangda* 抗大)²⁸ from October 1936 to December 1936.²⁹ When the lectures concluded, mimeographed single-article pamphlets were made, and Mao's views about Chinese revolutionary war were circulated among the Red Army commanders.³⁰ In February 1941, the *Military Politics Magazine* Press republished "Strategic Issues" and subsequently, that version was reprinted repeatedly.

²⁷ Zhonggong zhongyang dangshi yanjiushi 中共中央黨史研究室 (The Central Party History Research Office), *Zhongguo gongchandang lishi* 中國共產黨歷史 (The CCP's history) (1921-1949), Volume 1. Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi chubanshe 中共黨史出版社, 2002, p. 454.

²⁸ The China Anti-Japanese Red Army College was established in Bao'an. After the college moved to Yan'an in 1937, its name was changed to The Chinese People's Anti-Japanese Military and Politics College (*Zhongguo renmin kangri junzheng daxue* 中國人民抗日軍政大學) but it was still called Kangda for short.

²⁹ In order to lift the morale and teach military and political knowledge, several CCP leaders gave lectures there. See Cao Muyao 曹慕堯, "Hongse ronglu: Yan'an Kangda er qi de xuexi yu shenghuo 紅色熔爐 延安抗大二期的學習與生活" (The red furnace: learning and living in the Yan'an Kangda), *Dangyuan zongheng* 黨員縱橫, 1996(6), pp. 6-7.

³⁰ He Jinnian 賀晉年, "Yongbu yunluo de xing 永不隕落的星" (The star that will never fall), in zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi 中央文獻研究室 (CCP Central Literature Research Office), ed., *Mianhuai Mao Zedong* 緬懷毛澤東 (Cherish the memory of Mao Zedong). Beijing: Zhonggong zhongyang wenxian chubanshe 中共中央文獻出版社, 1993.

www.people.com.cn/GB/shizheng/8198/30446/30450/2209759.html (last visited on November 24, 2015).

At the beginning of the 1941 version, there was a note explaining the purpose of the article. Summarizing the experience in the civil war, “it was the outcome of a huge debate, and represented one [political] line’s opposing the views of another [political] line.”³¹ Thus, this article focused on the different policies and views of the correct vs. the incorrect political line. As a result, Mao provided examples in each chapter of both the correct and erroneous political lines. In the fifth chapter, “Tactical Defense,” Mao stated, “In the ten-year war³² there were two tendencies:” one was to underestimate the enemy, while the other was to be frightened by him. The former were identified as “leftist” errors, and the latter as rightist errors. Mao used the Hai-Lu-Feng³³ and the Er-Yu-Wan Soviet Areas as examples of “leftist” errors. The WRA was an example of a rightist error. Mao wrote, “An extreme example of being frightened by the enemy is the retreatist Zhang Guotao Line; the failure of the WRA on the west bank of the Yellow River was the final breakdown (*zuizhong pochan* 最終破產) of this political line.”³⁴ This argument seems clear and reasonable, and serves the theme of Mao’s article well. A closer look at its content and publication date, however, reveals a controversy.

Mao’s lectures on tactics began in late October 1936. He taught three hours weekly until the Xi’an Incident occurred in December 1936. Consequently, December 1936 has always been taken as the date when they were written. Because Mao’s lectures were long, however, they must have taken him some days to prepare. Considering the start date of Mao’s lectures, and the fact that the WRA was mentioned in the middle lectures, it is safe to say that if Mao did discuss the WRA’s failure in class, this would have taken place in the middle of November 1936 at the latest. By that time, the WRA had lost some troops in Gansu, but neither the WRA nor the Party Central Committee thought they had lost the battle with the Ma brothers. This point is supported by telegrams between the WRA Headquarters and the Party Center. Therefore, the sentences about the WRA did not appear in Mao’s original speech, but must have been added to the article later. Cong Jin, a mainland scholar, discussed this point in a paper in the early 1980s. He

³¹ Mao Zedong, *Zhongguo geming zhanzheng de zhanlue wenti* 中國革命戰爭的戰略問題 (Strategic issues of the Chinese revolutionary war). Huabei xinhua shudian 華北新華書店, 1947, p. 1.

³² Here “the ten-year war” refers to the war between the Republic Government and the CCP from 1927 to 1937.

³³ The Hailufeng Revolutionary Base (海陸豐蘇區) was established in 1927 and covered two counties, Haifeng 海豐 and Lufeng 陸豐, in Guangdong Province.

³⁴ Mao Zedong, 1947, pp. 33-34.

believed that the article was revised during the anti-Zhang campaign, which did not begin until late March 1937.³⁵ Although the original mimeographed version has not been found, Cong's view is the most reasonable deduction.

Thus far, this section has presented a process during which the narratives about issues that related to Zhang, including the WRA issue, were gradually simplified. According to accessible materials, both before and during the Yan'an Conference, debates on the Zhang issue were fierce. Zhang's opinion on this issue was criticized vehemently, but Zhang at least had the opportunity to defend himself. When compiled into official conference records and issued as an official resolution, different opinions about how to define Zhang's errors were erased, and Mao's words, much revised, stand alone as the final assessment. Furthermore, when Mao's verdicts on the WRA were added to his "Strategic Issues," both background and evidence were concealed, and readers were provided only with a one-sentence conclusion. When Chinese people study this history, the first thing they learn is this extremely simplified conclusion.

The next chapter will show that in the 1950s, Mao and his secretaries made a number of changes to "Strategic Issues," as well as Mao's other works, in order to make the dissemination of official historical narratives more effective, as well as to maintain Mao's "great, glorious, and correct" image. Similar to Mao's works, the records of the Yan'an Conference were revised as well, and even the revised version was not released until the 1980s. Materials about debates between Zhang and He, as well as primary records of the Yan'an Conference, still remain unavailable to most readers. As a result, Chinese readers have neither access to earlier versions of historical narratives, nor to all of the historical facts required to draw any objective conclusions. In summary, the Party concealed the debates on historical interpretations within the top leadership, and in doing so, concealed the possibility that the official interpretation is incorrect.

After the top leadership achieved a consensus on the Zhang issue, confronting the Party Center was another, and even more serious, task. This task involved making the verdicts on Zhang common knowledge to all senior cadres, veteran commanders, and ordinary Party members and soldiers.

³⁵ Cong Jin 叢進, "Dui 'Maoxuan' zhong guanyu Xilujun de yige duanyu he yitiao zhushi de bianyi 對'毛選'中關於西路軍的一個斷語和一條註釋的辨疑" (Analysis of a judgment and a note about the WRA in *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*), *Dangshi yanjiu cankao ziliao* 黨史研究參考資料, 1983(9), pp. 27-30. The journal in which this article was published was withdrawn in 1983 because of high-rank officials' intervene (see Chapter 4).

2.2 Constructing a Consensus

The following three sections will deal with the three essential steps the Party Center employed to force cadres to accept its verdicts on the WRA: conducting purges, dealing with the after-effects of the purges, and requiring cadres to study Party history systematically.

2.2.1 Purges and Discontents

Despite the Party Center's fierce criticism of Zhang and of the close relationship between him and the Fourth Front Army, official documents issued at the Yan'an Conference emphasized protecting the Fourth Front Army cadres, arguing that they were victims of Zhang's lies. Then CCP Chief Secretary, Zhang Wentian, said at the conference that, "the reason these cadres chose to follow Zhang Guotao was because Zhang applied his deceptive policies, and consequently these cadres were deceived and thought Zhang was the equivalent of the Party Center."³⁶ Logically, Zhang's speech and other documents pointed out firmly that the Fourth Front Army and the Zhang Guotao Line should be treated separately. In their opinion, "Comrade Zhang Guotao should take the majority of the responsibility for the mistakes that the Fourth Front Army committed,"³⁷ and they promised to "oppose the kind of view that linked criticism of Zhang Guotao with criticism of the Fourth Front Army."³⁸

If the Party Center actually applied the principles above in addressing the issue of Zhang, it would have criticized and punished him, and no one else would have been involved. At the time, however, to isolate Zhang completely was impractical, as the Fourth Front Army still included a considerable number of Zhang's supporters and followers. In this case, if the Party Center could not first eliminate Zhang's influence on the Army, his purge might meet resistance. What happened subsequently actually confirms that the vow to protect the Fourth Front Army commanders and soldiers was just an empty promise. In fact, the Party Center took the opportunity to criticize Zhang to launch a movement against the whole Fourth Front Army.

³⁶ Zhang Wentian, "Chuli Zhang Guotao cuowu ying zhuyi de jige wenti 處理張國燾錯誤應注意的幾個問題" (Several issues on dealing with Zhang Guotao's errors that require attention) (on March 31, 1937), in *Zhang Wentian xuanji* 張聞天選集 (Selected works of Zhang Wentian), Volume 2. Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi chubanshe 中共黨史出版社, 1993, pp. 229-231.

³⁷ "Guanyu Zhang Guotao tongzhi cuowu de jueyi" (Resolution about Comrade Zhang Guotao's errors).

³⁸ Zhang Wentian, "Several issues on dealing with Zhang Guotao's errors that require attention".

The Party Center purged the senior commanders and lower-range cadres for different purposes. For the senior commanders and cadres who had personal connections with Zhang, the Party Center planned to force them to reconsider their relationship with him. After everyone stated unequivocally his or her view on Zhang, the Party Center used intra-Party power struggles to control them. For middle-range and junior cadres and soldiers, the Party Center “re-educated” them, and made them accept the Party Center’s account of Zhang’s errors. Overall, the Party Center’s ultimate goal was to make the majority of Zhang’s supporters turn to Mao’s camp, and eliminate those who insisted on supporting Zhang. Consequently, although the Party Center claimed it would not hold other people accountable for Zhang’s actions, nearly all of the Fourth Front Army commanders and soldiers were subjected to “cruel attack and merciless struggle” (*canku daji, wuqing douzheng* 殘酷打擊，無情鬥爭).³⁹

Yan’an had been the CCP’s political center since the Party Center had moved there from Bao’an in January 1937. Mao and his supporters launched the official purge against Zhang Guotao two months later, and Yan’an naturally became the main stage. In Yan’an, Party leaders paid most attention to Kangda, because at the time, a large number of Red Army commanders, as well as senior and middle-range cadres were studying there. The Party Center summoned a number of the Fourth Front Army commanders to Yan’an to study in Kangda, putting them under their direct control. This made Kangda a perfect place to promote the Party Center’s verdict on Zhang.

According to Zhang Guotao’s recollection, extensive preparation was made before the purge began, including separating Red Army commanders and other cadres, and arranging activists to be placed in every study unit.⁴⁰ The goal was to prevent cadres outside of the Red Army from obtaining knowledge of what really happened within the Army. In the early stages of the purge, the Political Department of Kangda held meetings for the activists of each unit, explaining how to conduct the purge, and conveyed the Party Center’s interpretations on Zhang’s and the Fourth Front Army’s errors to other cadres. Hong Xuezhi 洪學智 (1912-2006), then Chief of the Political Department in the Fourth Army, recalled that Kangda students were told that the Fourth Front Army was guilty of three

³⁹ Originally this phrase was used to criticize the brutality of struggles within the Party under Wang Ming’s leadership.

⁴⁰ Zhang Guotao, 2005, p. 496.

crimes: “First, the Fourth Front Army soldiers are bandits. Second, the Fourth Front Army commanders are warlords. Third, all Fourth Front Army commanders are bought by Zhang Guotao.”⁴¹ These convictions indicate that, at the time, the policy of protecting the Fourth Front Army commanders and soldiers, and separating them from Zhang’s errors was utterly contradictory.⁴² Fourth Front Army troops stationed at other places experienced similar treatment.⁴³ The Party Center held a “struggle session” for Zhang in May 1937, and forced all senior commanders of the Fourth Front Army, including those in Zhenyuan, to gather in Yan’an to attend the meeting. Rather than being protected—as official documents had ordered—these senior commanders became objects of the struggle session. Labeled as “Zhang Guotao’s men,” their comrades in other armies ridiculed and humiliated them.⁴⁴

The Fourth Front Army commanders responded aggressively to the accusations above. Some who were studying in Kangda questioned, “If Zhang Guotao bought the Fourth Front Army’s loyalty after he went to the Er-Yu-wan Revolutionary base in 1931, then who paid for our loyalty when we joined the Red Army in 1927?” These commanders asked the Politics Department of Kangda to answer these questions, but, not surprisingly, received no answer. Certain others chose to flee from the Red Army.⁴⁵

The antagonism between the Party Center and the Fourth Front Army commanders reached its zenith when Xu Shiyou 許世友 (1905-1985) organized

⁴¹ Hong Xuezhì 洪學智, *Hong Xuezhì huiyilu* 洪學智回憶錄 (Memoirs of Hong Xuezhì). Beijing: Jiefangjun chubanshe 解放軍出版社, 2002, p. 128.

⁴² When it came to the last stage of this purge, the Fourth Front Army commanders were interrogated severely. Heads of Kangda, Luo Ruiqing 羅瑞卿 (1906-1978) and Mo Wenhua 莫文驩 (1910-2000), personally led “struggle teams” (*douzheng xiaozu* 鬥爭小組) to interrogate these commanders one by one, to force them to answer questions such as “Did you ever kill people without proper reasons?”, “Did you ever struggle with landlords without permission?”, “Did you ever rape women?”, “Did you ever say anything critical of the Party Center?” See Zhang Guotao, 2005, p. 499.

⁴³ For example, in the RAWRA, which at the time was stationed at Zhenyuan, 380 kilometers away from Yan’an, the commander Liu Bocheng also mobilized their troops to criticize Zhang. Qin Jiwei, a middle-rank officer in the WRA who was captured by the Ma brothers and then escaped to Zhenyuan, recollected in his memoirs that Liu Bocheng claimed Zhang Guotao was a “poisonous pill”. Liu said: “This pill was thrown into a well and all comrades in the Fourth Front Army drank water from this well. This is why all these comrades need to take a shower.” By “take a shower”, Liu meant Zhang Guotao’s influence needed to be eliminated by means of education and “struggle”. Qin Jiwei 秦基偉, *Qin Jiwei huiyilu* 秦基偉回憶錄 (Memoirs of Qin Jiwei) (E-book). Beijing: Jiefangjun chubanshe 解放軍出版社, 2002, p. 57.

⁴⁴ Li Jianli 李建力 and Lu Yanhua 鹿彥華, *Chuanqi jiangjun Hu Qicai* 傳奇將軍胡奇才 (Legendary General Hu Qicai). Beijing: Jiefangjun wenyi chubanshe 解放軍文藝出版社, 2004, p. 95.

⁴⁵ For instance, on the same day as Liu Bocheng’s speech mentioned above, two regimental commanders and a battalion commander deserted at night. Qin Jiwei, 2002 (E-book), p. 57.

the flight of a number of commanders in April 1937. Xu was the head of the Fourth Army, and an influential figure among its commanders. While studying in Kangda, Xu started to make a plan to go to southern Shaanxi to conduct guerilla warfare. Xu was successful in persuading thirty-odd commanders to desert with him, including five army commanders, six division commanders, and more than twenty regimental commanders.⁴⁶ As for Xu's motivation, according to the verdict issued by the Shaan-Gan-Ning High Court, and the materials provided by then Chief of Staff in Xu's army, Jin Ye, Xu planned to flee primarily because he was dissatisfied with the Party Center's resolution of the Zhang Guotao issue, believing that the Party Center took this opportunity to disband the Fourth Front Army by destroying army units and commanders one by one.⁴⁷ According to Jin's recollections, Xu insisted that Zhang had not committed retreatist errors, and used the First Front Army as an analogy, claiming that if Zhang and the Fourth Front Army's departure from its base in 1934 was an "escape," then the Party Center and the First Front Army also "escaped" the Central Soviet Base in Jiangxi. This statement made Xu a "struggle" target. Some commanders said that Xu was Zhang's spokesman in Kangda, and therefore, if Xu could not be brought under control, the struggle against Zhang could not be undertaken successfully. Almost at the same time, the deputy head of Xu's army committed suicide because of the constant purges. This incident forced Xu to decide to leave.

As introduced above, these events reflect the political atmosphere in Yan'an and the considerable pressure placed upon the Fourth Front Army cadres. At the same time, these events also reflect the fact that the Party leaders faced an internal crisis. Mao and his supporters, however, were already skilled in conducting intra-Party struggles and averting crises related to power struggles. Thus, this latest crisis was soon resolved.

2.2.2 Carrots and Sticks

The first measure the Party Center applied was to separate the opponents who held differing opinions from the Party Center concerning Zhang Guotao, the Fourth

⁴⁶ In the end, however, Xu's plan was foiled since one of the supposed escapers revealed the escape plan to the top official of Kangda and all the participants were immediately arrested. Li Yigen 李意根, "Hong si fangmian jun ganbu 'gaozhuang shijian' shimo 紅四方面軍幹部「告狀事件」始末" (The complaint of the Fourth Front Army cadres), *Wenshi jinghua* 文史精華, 2009(4), pp. 42-50.

⁴⁷ Hu Yongheng 胡永恆, "Xu Shiyou deng 'tuoqiang taopao an' shenpan shimo 許世友等「拖槍逃跑案」審判始末" (The trial on the defection of Xu Shiyou and other people), *Bolan qunshu* 博覽群書, 2010(11), pp. 109-113.

Front Army, and the WRA. With the constant struggle sessions and criticism, a few of the Fourth Front Army cadres took the first steps in accepting the Party Center's verdicts on the issue of Zhang, and began to join the bandwagon and criticize the Fourth Front Army leaders.⁴⁸ Consequently, the original situation of the Party Center vs. the whole Fourth Front Army changed, as a number of Fourth Front Army commanders joined the Party Center in opposing their colleagues. This not only strengthened the Party Center's position in this confrontation, but also informed other commanders that they actually had an alternative other than insisting the Fourth Front Army was blameless. After the first few commanders turn to its side, the power of this example motivated more and more cadres to express agreement with the Party Center's verdicts.

The second measure was the decision by top Party leaders to review struggle policies and practices. After the ruthless struggle against the Fourth Front Army commanders, top leaders headed by Mao, criticized the radical way of conducting struggle sessions, and insisted on the "correct way" to purge Zhang, while protecting other commanders personally. This action had the effect of making those who had been purged believe firmly that all the unfair treatment they had suffered was due to the misconduct of middle-level officers rather than the intentions of the top leadership. Because of this psychological compensation, these commanders accepted the Party Center's verdicts on Zhang and the Fourth Front Army, which were in fact also verdicts on themselves. How the Party Center dealt with Xu's case is an example.

In the CCP's system, inciting military commanders to desert is a serious crime. However, Xu was sentenced merely to one year in jail and, in fact, was released after a short-term detention. There is a popular theory about why Xu was not punished: Chairman Mao forgave him. Xu wrote in an article in 1970 that Mao had told him face to face that because it was the Party Center who sent Zhang to the Fourth Front Army, Zhang's errors should be blamed on Zhang himself and on the Party Center, not on cadres in the Fourth Front Army. It was not rare in the CCP's history that the leadership let middle-rank officials conduct intra-Party purges in radical ways, and then criticized and corrected such inappropriate behavior subsequently. The effect of this method was obvious, as almost all cadres who had been purged ruthlessly praised and expressed gratitude to the leadership after

⁴⁸ Zhang Guotao, 2005, p. 503.

they were “rescued,” “liberated,” or “forgiven,” which only enhanced Mao’s charisma. This method worked on Xu, who served Mao loyally in the following decades, and performed outstanding military service, as did many other Fourth Front Army cadres.

As for those cadres who had a close relationship with Zhang Guotao, the Party Center applied the third method to continue to purge them until they lost all power within the Party. Zhang deserted to the Nationalist Party after a yearlong purge in April 1938. He Wei, a senior commander, who was also a major target of these purges, secretly left Yan’an almost one year earlier.⁴⁹ Because the CCP had already identified the two as traitors, the Party Center no longer needed to attempt to keep them under control or woo their return. For the other senior commanders of the Fourth Front Army, the Party Center divided them into two categories, and settled them in new positions in two different ways.

Commanders in the first category were forced to leave the politically central institutions, and were never again allowed to lead military operations. The Chief Commissar of the WRA, Chen Changhao, who was also Zhang’s closest colleague, is one example. Chen wrote two confessions in 1937, but still could not win the trust of the Party Center. In 1939, Chen was sent to the Soviet Union for medical treatment. After his recovery, he continued to write to the Party Center to ask to return to China to devote himself to the Party, but the Party Center refused every time until the PRC was established. Chen returned to China finally in 1952, only to be appointed as deputy director of the Central Compilation and Translation Bureau for Marx’, Engels’, Lenin’s, and Stalin’s Works, a position that did not match his former ranks within the Party and the Red Army.⁵⁰ Another example is Li Zhuoran 李卓然 (1899-1989), the WRA’s commissar from March 1937 until their defeat. Li began his revolutionary career in France as early as 1921 and joined the CCP in 1923. One of the few senior Party members who had undergone regular military training, Li graduated from the famous Frunze Military Academy in the Soviet Union. As the commissar of the Fifth Army Corps, Li led his troops in the rearguard

⁴⁹ About He Wei’s experience after his defect, there still are different opinions in Mainland China. For instance, scholars are still uncertain about to what extent He served the Nationalist Party after he left Yan’an. See He Libo 何立波 and Liu Yuhai 柳玉海, “Bei lishi yanmo de Hong Jiujun junzhang He Wei 被歷史湮沒的紅九軍軍長何畏” (Commander of the Ninth Army He Wei who has been forgotten by history), *Dangshi bocai* 黨史博采, 2010(12), pp. 19-22.

⁵⁰ Fan Qing 范青, *Chen Changhao zhuan* 陳昌浩傳 (Biography of Chen Changhao). Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi chubanshe 中共黨史出版社, 1993, p. 308.

during the Long March, protecting the Party Center, and more significantly, as one of thirteen attendees of the Zunyi Conference, Li supported Mao firmly at the conference. Despite this background, Li was removed from military positions after the WRA's defeat, and worked as a propaganda officer for the remainder of his life.⁵¹

Commanders in the second category were permitted to resume their careers in the army, but in much lower positions. For example, Li Xiannian, the Commissar of the Thirtieth Army, was appointed as a battalion commander, a position six ranks lower than his former position.⁵²

Relying on a combination of carrots and sticks, opposition to, or dissatisfaction with, the way in which the Party Center dealt with the issue of Zhang Guotao and the Fourth Front Army was suppressed successfully.⁵³ The Party's efforts following the Yan'an Conference legitimized the verdicts issued at the conference further, and by the end of the 1930s, the verdicts had already become a consensus among the Fourth Front Army cadres.

⁵¹ From 1937, Li Zhuoran served as director of Propaganda Department of the General Political Department, director of Propaganda Department of the Border Region's Central Bureau, director of Propaganda Department of the Northwest Bureau, etc. See Qin Chuan 秦川, "Wo yanzhong de 'yanwang dian' 我眼中的「閻王殿」" (The "Palace of Hell" that I have experienced), in Ji Xianlin 季羨林, ed., *Women dou jingli guo de rizi* 我們都經歷過的日子 (The days that we all experienced). Beijing: Beijing shiyue wenyi chubanshe 北京十月文藝出版社, 2001, pp. 181-203.

⁵² "Mao Zedong zanyu Li Xiannian 'jiangjun bu xiamai' 毛澤東讚譽李先念「將軍不下馬」 (Mao Zedong praised Li Xiannian as 'a general who never got off his horse')" on *Zhongguo gongchandang xinwen* 中國共產黨新聞 (News of the Communist Party of China)

<http://cpc.people.com.cn/GB/64172/85038/6198311.html> (last visited on November 24, 2015). According to this article, it was Mao Zedong's decision to change the instruction that assigned Li to a battalion position and send him to Central China to be a brigade level officer. Also see *Li Xiannian zhuan* 李先念傳 (Biography of Li Xiannian). Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe 中央文獻出版社, 2009.

⁵³ If Chen Fusheng's recollection in his memoirs are correct, what is even more brutal is that some of former WRA cadres were killed in Yan'an by Kang Sheng 康生 and the Party's security institution under his control. Chen Fusheng 陳復生, *Sanci bei kaichu dangji de ren—yige lao hongjun de zishu* 三次被開除黨籍的人——一個老紅軍的自述 (A man who was thrice expelled from the Party: memoirs of an old Red Army soldier). Beijing: Wenhua yishu chubanshe 文化藝術出版社, 1992, pp. 21-28. However, as Gao Hua points out in his book, there is no further evidence to support Chen's argument. Interestingly, no official institution ever tried to clarify this argument. So whether WRA cadres were really killed by the Party is still a pending case. See Gao Hua 高華, *Hong taiyang shi zenyang shengqi de—Yan'an zhengfeng yundong de lailong qumai* 紅太陽是怎樣升起的——延安整風運動的來龍去脈 (How the red sun rises: the Yan'an Rectification Movement). Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong Press 香港中文大學出版社, 2000, p. 444. Two high-ranking officers of the WRA, Huang Chao 黃超 (1906-1938) and Li Te 李特 (1902-1938) were killed in Xinjiang in 1938 as Trotskyites, but whether this was related to the purging of Zhang Guotao is not clear.

2.2.3 Forming a Common Understanding about the Party's History

Despite the sophisticated skills in ideological control that the Party had developed in the 1930s, the leadership's goal of constructing a consensus on the history of the Party could not be achieved by one or two purges or educational movements. In the late 1930s, Mao was inspired by Stalin's official History of the CPSU, which was published in 1938, and thereafter became the only orthodox version of the CPSU's turbulent past. Following Stalin's model, Mao began to expand the writing and learning of Party history on a larger scale.

In the early 1940s, the Party Center had good reasons to make innovations in history education. In addition to a relatively stable environment, the Party members' and commanders' ignorance of the Party's past was an advantage in indoctrinating certain ideas. In the preceding decade, because of the geographical separation of CCP revolutionary bases, most cadres had limited knowledge of Party affairs. When they had the opportunity to learn systematically what happened to the Party and the Red Army for the first time, they accepted the assessment of each event together with the relevant facts selected deliberately by the Party Center. The methods of history education applied in the Yan'an Rectification Campaign then became the Party's classic strategy for ideological transformation, and were used widely in political movements and in everyday life.

From the beginning of the 1940s, all cadres and Party members were forced often to take part in political movements during which the official interpretations of their experience were reinforced repeatedly. Every cadre also needed to learn other parts of Party history that s/he had not witnessed in person. In this way, a common understanding of Party history from 1921 was built within the CCP, and Mao was presented as the only true successor to the Marxist revolutionary legacy in China.

Party History Education during the Yan'an Rectification Campaign

The WRA participants and the Fourth Front Army commanders found themselves having to prepare for another large-scale political movement almost as soon as they survived the anti-Zhang movement in Yan'an. In the first half of the 1940s, during the Yan'an Rectification Campaign, these cadres, together with other Party members and military commanders, attended collective study sessions about Party history, recalled their personal experiences, and provided primary materials used to write the official version of Party History. How to interpret the WRA was

no longer a problem relevant merely to the Fourth Front Army cadres. Similarly, as a system of knowledge about Party history had been established, for these participants, the WRA was not merely a personal experience, but an integral part of the system for interpreting the Party's past.

The Yan'an Rectification Campaign is famous for the Party members' ideological transformation, which led directly to the establishment of Mao's absolute power within the Party. Allowing cadres to study and take part in writing Party history was an essential factor that contributed to the movement's success. Some scholars have argued this point already, and Party historians have emphasized the extensive participation in writing history during this period as well, describing the Yan'an period as "the first flourishing period of the CCP's historiography."⁵⁴

The Party's history education system during the Yan'an Rectification Campaign was highly effective, and consisted of three levels: theories, assessments of different political lines, and interpretations of specific historical events, all of which interacted with each other. If a person acknowledged the authority of Mao's thought, s/he would have to accept the verdicts on different "wrong lines" that were made in accordance with Mao's political theories. Similarly, if one supported the way in which the Party Center assessed the "wrong lines" in Party history, it is self-evident that one also had to agree with the official assessments of events and figures related to these political lines. Looking at the procedure of Party history education in Yan'an, one can learn how the three levels of education worked.

When Mao and his men began to prepare for the Rectification Campaign, they did not call upon the whole Party to study its past at that time. Instead, they introduced their plan by promoting "Mao Zedong Thought," through which Mao's verdicts on former Party leadership were presented as supporting material. For example, when Mao taught dialectical materialism in Kangda, he related philosophical terminologies to examples in Party history in order to emphasize "the danger of subjectivism, dogmatism, and empiricism to the revolution."⁵⁵

When this theoretical preparation was completed, an enlarged conference of the CCP Politburo (the "September Conference" 九月會議) was held from September to October 1941. This conference was considered to be the official start to senior

⁵⁴ Zhang Jingru and Tang Manzhen, 1990, p. 53.

⁵⁵ Jiang Jiannong 蔣建農 and Zheng Guangjin 鄭廣瑾, *Changzheng tuzhong de Mao Zedong* 長征途中的毛澤東 (Mao Zedong during the Long March). Beijing: Hongqi chubanshe 紅旗出版社, 1993, p. 312.

cadres' study of Party History.⁵⁶ At the conference, the Party Center decided to build "senior learning groups." All cadres of the Party Central Bureau, branched bureaus, and provincial committees, as well as the Eighth Route Army, and the New Fourth Army commanders were required to attend these learning groups to study theories and Party history.⁵⁷ Ways in which to assess historical problems was the focus of study for senior cadres over the following months. In these learning groups, a great deal of attention was paid to the Second Revolutionary Civil War (1927-1937), the most controversial period in the CCP's history. Cadres were asked to recall what they, and the units they belonged to, did during the period, and "combine 'studies on macroscopic issues' [such as the Party's political lines] with 'studies on microscopic issues' [such as comrades' specific works]."⁵⁸ This requirement made history studies specific and targeted. For instance, "the cadres who took part in the Long March were required to draw lessons from the dogmatism and sectarianism (*zongpai zhuyi* 宗派主義) of the 'left' line that had led to the failure in the Central Soviet Base, while the cadres who worked in the white regions (*baiqu* 白區, the regions controlled by the Nationalist Party) were required to draw on lessons from the putschism (*mangdong zhuyi* 盲動主義) of the 'left' line that caused the loss of Party organizations in cities."⁵⁹ Two committees—the Committee for Resolving Historical Problems, and the Committee for Reinvestigating Cadres Purged by Wrong Lines—led by Mao and Chen Yun, respectively, also were established at the September Conference. Their purpose was to hand down new verdicts on specific historical issues and rearrange positions for the cadres related to these issues.⁶⁰ In this context, cadres were not studying Party history in a vacuum. Indeed, the works of the two committees above during this period inevitably influenced these cadres' assessments of their own pasts.

⁵⁶ Zhang Jingru and Tang Manzhen, 1990, p. 66.

⁵⁷ Sun Guolin 孫國林, "Zhonggong dangshi shang liangci zhongyao de jiu yue huiyi 中共黨史上兩次重要的九月會議" (The two "September Conferences" in the CCP's history), *Dangshi bolan* 黨史博覽, 2011(1), pp. 28-33.

⁵⁸ Zhang Jingru and Tang Manzhen, 1990, pp. 62-63.

⁵⁹ Xu Yunbei 徐運北, "Shi wo zhongsheng nanwang de luxian jiaoyu 使我終生難忘的路線教育" (The line education that is unforgettable in my life), in Yan'an Zhongyang dangxiao zhengfeng yundong bianxiezu 延安中央黨校整風運動編寫組 (Compiling team on the rectification studies in the Yan'an Central Party School), ed., *Yan'an zhongyang dangxiao de zhengfeng xuexi* 延安中央黨校的整風學習 (The rectification studies in the Yan'an Central Party School), Volume 1. Beijing: Zhonggong zhongyang dangxiao chubanshe 中共中央黨校出版社, 1988, pp. 51.

⁶⁰ Sun Guolin, 2011, pp. 28-33.

Beginning in the winter of 1943, the third phase in the study of Party History in Yan'an began. In this phase, cadres were asked to focus on studying *Since the Sixth Congress*—selected documents compiled by Mao's aides. In contrast to the second phase, cadres no longer focused on their own experiences, but studied Party History systematically. This is why this phase was also called “the phase of studying the lines.”

When the Yan'an Rectification Campaign ended in 1945, “Mao Zedong Thought,” Mao's verdicts on different “wrong lines,” and his assessments of specific issues had become intertwined already. Consequently, the Party History education system was like a large system of gears—once set in motion, it would be extremely difficult to stop any part of it. This explains in part why during the Deng Xiaoping era in the early 1980s, the reassessments of historical events and persons met with such great resistance, as will be discussed in Chapter 4.

It is also noteworthy that exposing one's own historical problems has become an inseparable part of political life ever since the Yan'an Rectification Campaign. From that time forward, there was not a single person—except Mao himself, who was entirely innocent, of course—who was without any “historical problem.” Everyone in the CCP's system needed to examine other people's history, just as others examined and assessed one's own. In this context, rewriting one's past experiences according to the Party's official version was no longer an individual act, but a collective activity.

The Dynamic Role of Party Cadres

Another point this thesis emphasizes is that the extent to which the Party cadres played dynamic roles in learning and writing history deserves reexamination and balanced adjudication. The CCP cadres produced a large number of historical narratives during the Yan'an period that provided the foundation for history books, propaganda materials, and even literary works after 1949. However, Mao and his aides supervised the writing of these recollections and self-assessments directly, which indicates that the originality of the cadres' writings is questionable. This is evident in how cadres wrote their autographical materials in Yan'an. Liu Baiyu 劉白羽 (1916-2005), a famous writer who then was studying in the Central Party School, wrote and rewrote autographical materials under the supervision of the school leadership, “strictly investigating the past years since the day of birth, inch by inch,” but he still could not achieve recognition from his supervisor. Liu recalled

how he analyzed his own experience.

In those suffering days and nights, I wrote hundreds of thousands of words. Every time I found myself not making any progress, I felt extremely distressed; every time I made a little bit of progress, I was hysterical. It was when I made these step-by-step changes that I understood dialectical materialism and historical materialism. Only by improving my theoretical level in Marxism could my writings increasingly get closer to reality and truth. This is how theory was linked with practice.⁶¹

Liu's experience is what every cadre had to undergo during the Yan'an period. When each cadre managed to interpret his or her "microscopic history" in accordance with the Party's official assessments of its "macroscopic history," and receive approval from his or her superiors, the Party Center had achieved its goal of unifying the Party's thinking with respect to historical issues.

It would, however, be imprudent to underestimate the role cadres played in writing Party History. Their forced involvement in the writing indicates how crucial their attitude was to Mao's Party Center. Specifically, it was inevitable that building a common understanding of Party history among all cadres was based on a series of consensuses about single events or figures. These consensuses were reached through the methods described in the last subsection. If the Fourth Front Army cadres did not accept the Party Center's verdicts after the anti-Zhang movement in 1937 and 1938, it was unimaginable that the official accounts of the WRA could be disseminated without any resistance during the Yan'an Rectification Campaign. Accordingly, if Mao and his main supporters—Zhang Wentian and Wang Jiaxiang 王稼祥 (1906-1974)—had not resolved a number of internal Party problems concerning the assessments of former leaderships, the official Party historical narratives that they had striven to build in the early 1940s would have encountered much resistance. In this sense, within the CCP's system, learning and understanding the Party's entire history were related closely to narrating (or, in the Party's terms, confessing), and assessing each cadre's own history.

Only after the Party Center completed the construction of its official system of

⁶¹ Liu Baiyu 劉白羽, "Wo de rensheng zhuanzhe dian 我的人生轉折點" (The turning points in my life), in Yan'an Zhongyang dangxiao zhengfeng yundong bianxiezu (Compiling team on the rectification studies in the Yan'an Central Party School), ed., 1988, pp. 135-136.

Party history—which included both words written in official documents and authoritative articles, and invisible consensuses among the Party members—did the Party Center convene the 7th Plenum of the 6th Central Committee in 1945. This passed the first authoritative document that summarized the Party’s historical experience, “Resolution on Several Historical Issues” (hereafter “Resolution of 1945”).⁶² By then, the construction of official historical narratives of the Party’s first twenty-odd years had been completed, as had the method to construct that History.

Conclusion

According to official records, after the CCP Party Center passed its resolution on Zhang Guotao in late March 1937, which included an official assessment of the WRA, and especially after Zhang defected to the Nationalist side in April 1938, the whole Party supported this resolution fully, and agreed with the Party Center’s verdicts on Zhang and the WRA. Consequently, “the struggles against Zhang Guotao’s splittism solidified the unity of the Party and the Red Army.”⁶³ As has been revealed in this chapter, however, the fact remains that Mao and his supporters neither had a simple way to interpret such an important event in the way that they preferred, nor did they readily have a way to make their interpretation a consensus amongst all Party members and Red Army commanders.

The Party Center’s verdicts triggered not only disagreement, but also a comprehensive crisis, one that was as serious as that which had threatened the Party Center’s control over its army. Subsequently, Mao deployed a variety of measures—including persuasion, education, as well as demotion and removal from positions in the Red Army—to exert his influence. Ultimately, the majority of the Fourth Front Army accepted the Party Center’s verdicts and became obedient to Mao.

Apter and Saich’s claim that the struggle with Zhang was one of Mao’s four struggles during the Yan’an period that helped to redefine his mandate is no exaggeration,⁶⁴ because this victory helped consolidate not only Mao’s military

⁶² The 7th Plenum of the 6th Central Committee was held from May 21, 1944 to April 20, 1945. In total eight meetings were held during these eleven months. The *Resolution on Several Historical Issues* was passed at the last meeting on April 20, 1945.

⁶³ Zhonggong zhongyang dangshi yanjiushi, 2002, Volume 1, pp. 403-404.

⁶⁴ David Apter and Tony Saich, *Revolutionary Discourse in Mao’s Republic*. Cambridge: Harvard

and administrative positions, but also his intellectual and ideological positions. In the power struggle between Mao and Zhang as well as the Returned Students, one of the key issues was how to distinguish between the “correct” and “incorrect” integration of Marxist theory and Chinese practice. By condemning Zhang’s military command and theories, Mao’s camp in fact challenged Zhang and the Returned Students’ grasp of Marxism-Leninism. After he managed to win in the struggle against Zhang, in “Strategic Issues,” the same article in which Mao gave his verdict of the WRA, Mao finally could claim, “[What the Returned Students did] were mechanistic...[their actions] represented the theories and practices of stupid and ignorant people. They did not have the slightest flavor of Marxism about them; indeed, they were anti-Marxist.”⁶⁵

In his research on the emergence of Maoism, Wylie said that it was in the autumn of 1943, when the Maoists were in firm control of the Chinese Communist Party, that they turned to focus on the history of the CCP. Wylie pointed out correctly that, at the time, Maoists felt a need for an intellectual rationale to justify the cult of Mao as the correct leader of the Chinese Communist movement, and the cult of Mao’s thought as the ideological manifestation of this correct leadership.⁶⁶ Wylie’s argument, however, is based on a narrow definition of “the writing of Party history.” He believed that Party history was concerned only with the compilation of historical materials and writing of history books. If we look at the issue of writing Party history from a broader perspective, the struggle over how to interpret Party history in fact took place throughout the whole process of Mao’s efforts to gain supreme leadership. From the late 1930s to 1945, Mao and his supporters dealt with several issues similar to those that they confronted with the WRA. In doing so, Mao achieved the top position systematically and with absolute power.

Looking at the writing of Party history from the same narrow definition, scholars of the CCP’s historiography, both within and outside the PRC, considered the “Resolution of 1945” as the point at which the CCP began to chronicle official party history systematically.⁶⁷ What this chapter has emphasized is that the publication of the “Resolution of 1945” should also be seen as an outcome of a long

University Press, 1994, pp. 35-36.

⁶⁵ Mao Zedong, 1947, p. 43.

⁶⁶ Raymond F. Wylie, *The Emergence of Maoism: Mao Tse-tung, Ch'en Po-ta and the Search for Chinese Theory 1935-1945*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1980, pp. 226.

⁶⁷ Susanne Weigelin-Schwiedrzik, 1993.

process of power struggles and thought transformation that marked Mao's success in writing Party history as he preferred, and at the expense of historical accuracy.

Chapter 3: Finalizing the Western Route Army's Historical Narratives in the 1950s

Introduction

Superficial observation shows that the official interpretation of the WRA given in Mao's 1937 article, "Strategic Issues," did not change greatly until the early 1980s. The only apparent change was that an endnote was added to interpret the WRA's history when this article was compiled into *Selected Works of Mao Zedong* (*Mao Zedong xuanji* 毛澤東選集) in 1951. Subsequently, several paragraphs of narratives about the WRA's history, which at most seemed to expand the endnote, emerged in the Party History textbooks. As there also was no distinct change in the narratives of other events in Party History, it appears that the 1950s' historical narratives simply repeated the Party's verdicts made in the Yan'an period. This chapter will argue that, behind this stability, several improvements took place in the 1950s. First, the formation of an official historical framework as a whole strengthened and supported the historical narratives of individual events and the converse, making changes to existing historical interpretations even more impossible. Second, as discussed in the previous chapter, history education in the Yan'an period showed its effects in the 1950s, as participants in historical events disseminated the official interpretations to a broader readership. Third, the participation of professional historians improved the effectiveness of indoctrinating ordinary people all around the country with the Party's official narratives. This chapter illustrates the above three points through the case of the WRA.

3.1 The Western Route Army in the Party History Framework Created by the Top Leadership

Before the 30th anniversary of the Party's establishment, the Party Center issued the first nationwide call to study the Party's history. The *People's Daily* said, "Party history is like a textbook about how to apply Marxism-Leninism to China's revolutionary practice, as well as a gateway to understanding Mao Zedong Thought. Consequently, every Party member and every person who intends to understand

Communism will have to learn the Chinese Communist Party's history.”¹ The teaching materials for this national movement was a series of articles published in the *People's Daily* and the four volumes of *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, which were published successively beginning in October 1951. Compared to the “Resolution” issued in 1945, these new materials did not differ remarkably in terms of the methods used to interpret historical problems and make specific assessments. What is noteworthy is that Mao's works and Party writers' articles integrated the hitherto scattered assessments and interpretations of Party history successfully into a logical and coherent framework. As the new materials spread rapidly and widely, official Party History in the 1950s was no longer merely a powerful weapon in the CCP's intra-Party struggles, but had become an ideological instrument for social education.

This official framework consisted of two parts: an outline that defined whether a specific event should be included in the official History, and one that provided a series of authoritative interpretations of certain historical events. In the first half of the 1950s, the Party created the outline through articles written by Party writers and perfected related narratives by revising Mao's works. The following two subsections will deal with these two parts of the Party's official framework for its history.

3.1.1 “The CCP's Thirty Years” and the Two Grand Themes of Party History

Among the articles published by Party writers' in the early 1950s, Hu Qiaomu's 胡喬木 (1912-1992)² “The Chinese Communist Party's Thirty Years” (中國共產黨

¹ “Jinian dang de sanshi zhounian yinggai xuexi Dang de lishi 紀念黨的三十周年應當學習黨的歷史” (To Celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Party we should learn the history of the Party), *Renmin ribao* 人民日報, on June 29, 1951. Cited in Wu Zhijun 吳志軍, “Yijiu wuyi nian: jiangdang sanshi zhounian ‘wenben jinian’ huodong de lishi huigu yu fansi-yi dui zhonggong dangshi de xuanchuan wei xushu zhongxin 一九五一年: 建黨三十週年「文本紀念」活動的歷史回顧與反思——以對中共黨史的宣傳為敘述中心” (The year of 1951: review and reflection on ‘text commemoration’ activities in memory of the 30th anniversary of the establishment of the Party—take propaganda on the CCP's history as the narrative center), *Dangshi yanjiu yu jiaoxue* 黨史研究與教學, 2008(3), pp. 49-57.

² Hu Qiaomu enrolled in the History Department at the Tsinghua University in 1930 but left the university and became a professional revolutionary a year later. He joined the CCP in 1932 and went to Yan'an in late 1936. From 1941 to 1948, Hu worked as Mao Zedong's secretary. During this period, Hu was in charge of compiling and writing of a number of documents that were important in the history of the Party and its historiography. Ye Yonglie 葉永烈, *Hu Qiaomu* 胡喬木 (Biography of Hu Qiaomu). Beijing: Zhonggong zhongyang dangxiao chubanshe 中共中央黨校出版社, 1994. Cao Junjie 曹俊傑, *Zhongguo er Qiao: Hu Qiaomu, Qiao Guanhua zhuanlue* 中國二喬——胡喬木、喬冠華傳略 (Biography of Hu Qiaomu and Qiao Guanhua). Nanjing: Jiangsu renmin chubanshe 江蘇人民出版社, 1996.

的三十年, hereafter, “Thirty Years”)³ made the most remarkable contribution in creating the framework for official Party History.⁴ To write this article, Hu placed Mao Zedong Thought at the center of Party History, borrowing Mao’s narratives directly to interpret historical issues.⁵ Most importantly, Hu succeeded in arranging Mao’s assessments of Party history, which Mao had addressed on separate occasions, into a simple and clear outline.⁶ This was one of the reasons that Mao praised it highly.

Generally, this outline for official Party History as created in “Thirty Years” determined the structure and themes of historical narratives, and provided history writers with an official criterion. By assessing an historical event according to this criterion, writers could recognize whether an event should be included in History books, and how they should present it.

Specifically, the official Party History outline divided the history from 1921 to 1949 into four phrases—the establishment of the Party and the First Revolutionary Civil War (1921-1927), the Second Revolutionary Civil War (1927-1937), the Anti-Japanese War (1937-1945) and the Third Revolutionary Civil War (1945-1949)⁷—and events in Party history were selected deliberately to

³ This article originally was a draft for Liu Shaoqi’s 劉少奇 (1898-1969) speech at the memorial meeting before Mao Zedong decided to publish it in the *People’s Daily*. Hu Qiaomu, “Zhongguo gongchandang de sanshi nian 中國共產黨的三十年” (The Chinese Communist Party’s thirty years). *Renmin ribao* 人民日報, June 22, 1951.

⁴ Two articles by Chen Boda 陳伯達 also exerted influence to the writing of Party history in the 1950s. Chen was one of leading Party historians in the Yan’an period and also worked as Mao Zedong’s secretary. He wrote two articles “Du ‘Hunan nongmin yundong kaocha baogao’” (讀《湖南農民運動考察報告》, Report on an investigation of the peasant movement in Hunan) and “Neizhan shiqi de fan geming he geming” (內戰時期的反革命和革命, Revolutionaries and counter-revolutionaries in the Civil War) in 1944. Compared to these two articles, Hu Qiaomu’s “Thirty years” was more influential in the 1950s, so this section uses Hu’s article as the main example.

⁵ In this 30,000 word article Hu cited Mao’s 18 works 24 times in total. This writing method later became a standard way to write Party History. For more about the influence of this writing method, see Xu Chong 許衝, “Lun liangongbu dangshi dui Zhonggong dangshi bianzuan de yingxiang 論聯共布黨史對中共黨史編撰的影響” (On the influence of *A Concise History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union [Bolsheviks]* on the CCP’s historiography), *Xiandai zhixue* 現代哲學, 2013(2), pp. 47-56.

⁶ Chinese specialists of CCP historiography have already noticed this point. Zhang Jingru 張靜如 said, “this article did not contain a large amount of material, but mainly drew an outline and built a framework of the Party’s history of the previous thirty years, while also bringing out some basic views. All these played an important role in studying the CCP’s history at the time and in the following years.” See “Bianxie ‘Zhongguo gongchandang lishi jiaocai’ shiling 編寫‘中國共產黨歷史教材’拾零” (Some issues about the compilation of *Textbook of the History of the CCP*), *Bainian chao* 百年潮, 2013(2), pp. 76-78.

⁷ Dividing the Party’s history in such a way has exerted considerable influence on Party history studies ever since. In August 1951 the official journal of the CCP’s Propaganda Department *Xuexi* 學習 called on history researchers to follow this way to divide and name stages of the Party’s past.

demonstrate two grand themes. The first of these was that, when narrating intra-Party power struggles, the narratives addressed conflicts between the correct and incorrect lines, in which Mao was the representative of the correct line. In order to propagandize the CCP's legitimacy to the outside world, the second of these themes made the CCP's contribution the focus of issues external to the Party.

During the Yan'an period, the Party used this same technique of parsing out its history according to internal line struggles.⁸ In the 1950s, official materials presented five incorrect lines that "brought great loss to the Party," each of which had corresponding standard and inflexible narratives. They are the right-leaning error of Chen Duxiu (*Chen Duxiu youqing cuowu* 陳獨秀右傾錯誤),⁹ the "left"-leaning putschism (*zuoqing mangdong zhuyi* 「左」傾盲動主義) represented by Qu Qiubai 瞿秋白 (1899-1935),¹⁰ the "left"-leaning adventurism (*zuoqing maoxian zhuyi* 「左」傾冒險主義) represented by Li Lisan, 李立三 (1899-1967),¹¹ the "left"-leaning adventurism represented by Wang Ming,¹² and the right-leaning separatism of Zhang Guotao. These five incorrect lines exemplified the core of the Party's first twenty years of history, throughout which Mao proved repeatedly to have made and conducted the correct line.

The contribution that the CCP made to China and to the Chinese people is also an essential theme in the CCP's official History framework. The framework showed

See Wu Zhijun, 2008.

⁸ In his speech in the Party Center Study Group (中共中央學習組) in 1942, Mao Zedong considered lines and policies as the main object of Party history study. See Mao Zedong, "Ruhe yanjiu Zhonggong dangshi 如何研究中共黨史" (How to do research on the Chinese Communist Party's history), in *Mao Zedong wenji* 毛澤東文集 (Collection of Mao Zedong's works), Volume 2. Beijing: Renmin chubanshe 人民出版社, 1993, p. 406. One year later, Liu Shaoqi divided lines within the Party into "the Bolshevik line represented by Mao Zedong" and "the Menshevik lines represented by opportunists within the Party". See Liu Shaoqi, "Qingsuan dangnei de mengshiwei ke zhuyi sixiang 清算黨內的孟什維克主義思想" (Eliminate Menshevik thought within the Party), in *Laoyidai gemingjia lun dangshi yu dangshi yanjiu* 老一代革命家論黨史與黨史研究 (The revolutionaries of senior generation's talks about the history of the Party and research on Party History). Taiyuan: Shanxi renmin chubanshe 山西人民出版社, 1993, pp. 15-16.

⁹ According to the CCP's official interpretation, the right deviation error of Chen Duxiu (1879-1942) manifested as pinning all of their hope on left-wing Nationalists, which led to the failure of the Great Revolution.

¹⁰ According to the CCP's official interpretation, the "left"-leaning putschism manifested as proposing not only to struggle against imperialism and feudalism, but also to struggle against national bourgeoisie and upper class petty bourgeoisie.

¹¹ Around 1930, Li Lisan and other leaders of the CCP believed it was time to build a national revolutionary regime by armed uprisings. The CCP's official historiography criticized that their activities had brought serious loss to the Party and to the Communists' revolutionary career.

¹² According to the CCP's official interpretation, Wang Ming's "left"-deviation error was more serious than that of Li Lisan, as Wang's mistakes directly caused the failure of the Central Soviet Region's fifth encirclement campaign and forced the Central Red Army to start the Long March.

consistently that the CCP as a whole engaged in causes that benefited the Chinese people. Specifically, when the revolution led by the bourgeoisie, whose purpose was to establish a bourgeois republic, failed, the Chinese Communist Party, as the vanguard of the most advanced class—the working class—emerged, as was necessitated by the times (*yingyun ersheng* 應運而生). When imperialist powers and the Northern Warlords persecuted the Chinese people, the CCP cooperated with the Nationalist Party, paving the way for a new historical phase: anti-imperialism, anti-feudalism, and anti-warlordism. When Chiang Kai-shek became a new warlord, the CCP began to fight him and his army. Finally, when the Japanese invaded China in 1937, the CCP opposed their aggression resolutely. To summarize, Party History was trying its best to promote the following claim: only the CCP can save China.

Before the Communists assumed national power, their internal and external propaganda systems focused on different content, with the two grand themes above as their main concerns. The content concerning “line struggles” existed only in Party resolutions and internal documents. Senior cadres received these materials, while they carefully kept them secret from the outside world. At the same time, the CCP’s propaganda system spared no effort to demonstrate its merits to the Chinese people. In some cases, careful planning began immediately after particular events occurred.¹³ In other cases, it was other media, rather than the Party’s propaganda system, that played a major role in promoting the CCP’s contributions, and in turn, the Party’s sophisticated theorists and writers made

¹³ Propaganda on the Long March is a typical example. As has been mentioned in the Introduction section, right after the Long March, the Chairman of the Central Military Committee Mao Zedong and the Chief of Political Department Yang Shangkun 楊尚昆 (1907-1998) issued a notice to all commanders and soldiers who took part in the Long March, asking them to recall their experience and to write down their feelings for the purpose of “propaganda”. The notice said, “Writing articles amounts to making a donation to the Red Army and improving the international influence of the Red Army.” See Shen Jin 沈津, “Preface”, in *Hongjun Changzheng ji* 紅軍長征記 (The Red Army’s Long March). Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe 廣西師範大學出版社, 2006, p. 2. Tong Xiaopeng 童小鵬 wrote in his diary on August 6, 1936: “[We were told that the compilation of our articles] would be brought out of the Red region by that foreigner and be published, in order to solicit donations for purchasing aircraft. This news makes us extremely happy.” Cited in Liu Tong 劉統, *Qinli Changzheng: laizi Hongjun Changzheng zhe de yuanshi jilu* 親歷長征——來自紅軍長征者的原始記錄 (Personal experience during the Long March: primary recordings by the participants of the Long March). Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe 中央文獻出版社, 2006, p. 1. The “foreigner” referred to was the American journalist Edgar Snow who entered the Northern Shaanxi region in July 1936 through arrangements made by the CCP’s underground organizations. The elaborate arrangement of propaganda work is evident.

good use of their lavish praise.¹⁴

Both the CCP's intra-Party and external-Party propaganda systems were unquestionably efficient. Before 1949, Mao's portrayal within the Party as the designer and consistent practitioner of the correct line had been achieved successfully, while a positive image of the CCP as a patriotic and efficient organization had been disseminated widely in China and even around the world. The official Party History framework built in the 1950s incorporated the above two aspects of Party propaganda.

Thus, the question is how the WRA was presented in this Party History outline, and how this position influenced the writing of the WRA's history. First, due to its relationship with the so-called "Zhang Guotao Line," the WRA was included in the outline. This is important, because it meant the WRA would continue to be part of the Party history narrative. In contrast, the outline excluded many events and figures completely, and as a result, they were never mentioned in the Mao Era. Second, as an historical event, the WRA fell in the category of "line struggles," as evidence of Zhang Guotao's errors, and as a result, was deemed unworthy of research, and instead, deserved only criticism. When E. H. Carr explained the difference between a "fact" and an "historical fact," he emphasized the function of interpretation: "Whether a fact can be a well-established historical fact depends on whether the interpretation in support of which historians cite this incident is accepted by other historians as valid and significant. Its status as a historical fact will turn on a question of interpretation."¹⁵ It is thus fair to say that the relationship with Zhang made the history of the WRA an "historical fact" in Party History.

This outline, however, only included the WRA in the official Party history framework, but did not provide Party writers with any content with which to narrate this issue. Mao's works would fulfill this task.

¹⁴ For instance, the so-called "Great Victory at the Pingxing Pass" (*Pingxingguan dajie* 平型關大捷)—in which the Eighth Route Army secured a minor victory over Japanese forces in 1937—was greatly exaggerated by the media in Nationalist-controlled regions and subsequently was taken advantage of by the CCP to raise its reputation. For more details about the Victory at the Pingxing Pass and its propaganda, see Zhai Zhicheng 翟志成, "Jiti jiyi yu lishi zhenshi: 'Pingxingguan dajie' de jiangou yu jiegou 集體記憶與歷史真實: 「平型關大捷」的建構與解構" (Collective memory vs. historical truth: the construction of the so-called 'Great Victory at the Pingxing Pass' and its later deconstruction), *Zhongyang yanjiuyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo jikan* 中央研究院近代史研究所集刊, No. 51, 2006(3), pp. 131-186.

¹⁵ E. H. Carr, *What is History*. London : Macmillan, 1985, pp. 12-13.

3.1.2 The WRA in *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*

Before the Reform Era, the only authoritative interpretation of the WRA was an endnote in one of Mao's most famous articles. As will be described in Part Two of this thesis, even after the 1980s, opponents of the "new interpretation" of the WRA still cited this endnote frequently in their arguments. It is ridiculous to rely merely on an endnote of some hundred words to explain a historical issue as complicated as the WRA. This absurd phenomenon, however, was common in Party historiography. As Yang Kuisong, a Chinese specialist in Party history, has pointed out, the four volumes of *Selected Works of Mao Zedong* (hereafter, *Selected Works*) included standard interpretations of almost all important issues in Party history before 1949, and consequently, for quite a long time, not only Party history teachers, but also researchers in relevant fields, considered reading and memorizing the contents of *Selected Works* to be their basic and most reliable training.¹⁶ In this regard, a brief discussion of how *Selected Works* was compiled will advance our understanding of Party historiography in the Mao Era greatly.

From the beginning, both the Party Center and Mao himself emphasized the value of Mao's works as materials for studying Party history.¹⁷ In order to make Mao's works the most authoritative materials, and to indoctrinate the masses with the leader's most recent understanding of the Party's past, Mao and his secretaries, together with Party theorists and historians, made a number of changes to these works.¹⁸ Mao himself invested considerable efforts in this task, and he checked and approved all writings before their publication.¹⁹

¹⁶ Yang Kuisong 楊奎松, "Wushi nian lai de zhonggong dangshi yanjiu 五十年來的中共黨史研究" (Party historiography in the past fifty years), *Jindaishi yanjiu* 近代史研究, 1999(5), pp. 178-202.

¹⁷ On July 1, 1951, the *People's Daily* announced the publication of *Selected Works* in advance, stressing the importance of learning Party history and pointing out that "the basic materials for learning should be Comrade Mao Zedong's major works that he wrote in the different phrases of Chinese revolution." "Mao Zedong xuanji chuban weiyuanhui tongzhi 毛澤東選集出版委員會通知" (A notice issued by the Committee for the Publication of *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*), *Renmin ribao* 人民日報, on July 1, 1951. Cited in Wu Zhijun, 2008.

¹⁸ One of Mao's secretary, Tian Jiaying 田家英 (1922-1966), was in charge of compiling Mao's works. Tian went to Yan'an in 1937 when he was only 15 years old. After taking courses in Shaanbei Public School (Shaanbei gongxue 陝北公學), he joined the CCP and became a teacher in that school. From 1948 Tian was Mao's secretary until he committed suicide in 1966. The historians and theorists who took part in the compiling work included senior Marxists such as Ai Siqu 艾思奇 (1910-1966), who had become a famous theorist as early as in the early Yan'an period. See Pang Xianzhi 逢先知, "Mao Zedong he ta de mishu Tian Jiaying 毛澤東和他的秘書田家英" (Mao Zedong and his secretary Tian Jiaying), in Dong Bian 董邊, Tan Deshan 譚德山 and Zeng Zi 曾自, eds., *Mao Zedong he tade mishu Tian Jiaying 毛澤東和他的秘書田家英* (Mao Zedong and his secretary Tian Jiaying). Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe 中央文獻出版社, 1996, p. 39.

¹⁹ For more about the publication of Mao Zedong's works, see Zhang Shenqu 張慎趨, "Xin

The revisers made two types of changes to Mao's works. One was to delete or rewrite inappropriate content in the main body of the writings.²⁰ In addition to the technical changes made, such as those in grammar and structure, Mao and his aides revised these materials for two other reasons. First, Mao often used vulgar language to condemn his colleagues within the leadership.²¹ As these kinds of expressions would spoil the great leader's image, all were deleted. In other cases, particular situations had changed since the articles were written, and as a result, certain narratives needed to be rewritten, as these arguments or interpretations otherwise would contradict the larger picture of Mao Zedong Thought.²²

The other change was the addition of explanatory notes. The revisers were cautious about changing words in the main body of Mao's works. Unless absolutely necessary, they preferred to use notes to modify or complement specific meanings, rather than changing content that had already been published, and which, in some cases, had already become familiar to Party members and even to the broader readership. Indeed, to some extent, the use of notes played a more important role than the changes made in the main body of the texts, because it was by writing

Zhongguo chengli hou Mao Zedong xuanji chuban gaikuang 新中國成立後《毛澤東選集》出版概況” (Publishing *Selected Works of Mao Zedong* in the PRC), *Dangshi gailan* 黨史概覽, 2008(11), pp. 16-17, 42.

²⁰ The *Collected Writings of Mao Tse-tung* compiled by Japanese scholar Minoru Takeuchi compared various versions of Mao Zedong's works and marked the places where they had been changed in the body of the text. Minoru Takeuchi, ed., *Mao Zedong ji* 毛澤東集 (Collected writings of Mao Zedong). Hong Kong: Yishan tushu gongying 一山圖書供應, 1976.

²¹ For instance, when he mentioned Li Lisan, the Party leader between 1929 to 1930, Mao wrote “Li Lisan is sneaky” (李立三也不老實) and when he condemned dogmatism, Mao wrote “dog shit can help to fertilize the soil and human shit can feed dogs, but what about dogmatism? It can neither fertilize the soil nor feed dogs.” See Zhang Shenqu, 2008.

²² For instance, when Mao's speech *On The Coalition Government* was published in 1945, it argued that “on the premise of voluntary democracy, all ethnic groups living in the territory of China should be organized into the Federation of the Chinese Democratic Republic (中華民主共和國聯邦), and a central government should be established based on this federation”. But when the CCP held national power, Mao's ethnic policy changed to one of “ethnic autonomy” (民族自治). As a result, the relevant paragraphs about the federation of ethnic groups were deleted from *On the Coalition Government* manuscript and a new statement was added, which argued that “ethnic groups in this country should be nicely treated, and their request for autonomy should be allowed”. “Lun lianhe zhengfu 論聯合政府” (On The Coalition Government) was firstly published on May 2, 1945 on the *Jiefang ribao* (解放日報), with a subheading of “Yijiu siwu nian si yue ershisi ri zai Zhongguo gongchandang diqi quanguo daibiao dahui shang zhi zhengzhi baogao 一九四五年四月二十四日在中國共產黨第七次全國代表大會上之政治報告” (The political report on the 7th National Congress of the CCP on April 24, 1945). This version was included in the *Mao Zedong ji* edited by Minoru Takeuchi (Volume 9, pp. 183-276). The revised version of “*On The Coalition Government*” can be found in Volume 3 of *Selected Works of Mao Zedong* (pp. 930-1000). For more details about revisions on this article, see Zhong Tian'e 鐘天娥, “Zhengque lijie jianguo hou Mao Zedong dui 'Lun lianhe zhengfu' de xiugai 正確理解建國後毛澤東對《論聯合政府》的修改” (To correctly understand the revisions Mao Zedong made after 1949 on his article “*On The Coalition Government*”), *Mao Zedong sixiang yanjiu* 毛澤東思想研究, 2014(1), pp. 107-111.

notes and using them to make authoritative historical interpretations that the revisers achieved their goal of recreating Mao's writings as the official and comprehensive accounts of Party history.²³

Explanatory Notes on Titles

Explanatory notes on titles explained the writings' backgrounds, such as dates of composition and original publication information. Some notes on titles succeeded in integrating a single writing into the "line struggle" category in the Party History framework. One such example is the explanatory note made for "Analysis of the Classes in Chinese Society" ("*Zhongguo shehui ge jiecheng fenxi*" 中國社會各階層分析). This note portrayed Mao in 1926—when he wrote this article—as an opponent to then Party leader, Chen Duxiu, and high-ranking comrade Zhang Guotao.

This article was written by Comrade Mao Zedong to oppose two deviations then in the Party. The first deviation, represented by Chen Duxiu, was concerned only about co-operation with the Kuomintang and forgetting about the peasants. This was Right-wing opportunism. The second deviation, represented by Zhang Guotao, was concerned only with the labor movement, and likewise forgot about the peasants. This was "Left-wing" opportunism. Both of these opportunistic deviators were aware that their strength was inadequate, but neither of them knew where to seek reinforcements or where to obtain allies on a mass scale. Comrade Mao Zedong pointed out that the peasantry was the staunchest and numerically the largest ally of the Chinese proletariat, and thus solved the problem of who was the chief ally in the Chinese revolution.²⁴

In total, there were eighty-one explanatory notes in the four volumes of *Selected Works*, fifteen of which highlighted the correctness of Mao's political line by summarizing other mistaken lines.²⁵ These notes mentioned all the "line struggles"

²³ Minoru Takeuchi's work indicated the significance of distinguishing the different versions of Mao's articles, but he did not pay any attention to the notes that were written after 1949.

²⁴ *Mao Zedong xuanji* 毛澤東選集 (Selected works of Mao Zedong), Volume 1. Beijing: Renmin chubanshe 人民出版社, 1966, p. 3. When translating this note, the author referred to the official English version of Mao Zedong's works. *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung* Volume 1. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press 外文出版社, 1975, p. 14.

²⁵ Similar examples include: "Hunan nongmin yundong kaocha baogao 湖南農民運動考察報告" (Report on an investigation of the peasant movement in Hunan), "Guanyu jiuzheng dangnei de

in the official Party History outline analyzed in the previous subsection.

Endnotes

The eight hundred and seventy-two endnotes in *Selected Works* can be divided into three categories. The first was designed to make Mao's writings more readable by explaining classical allusions, idioms, and historical figures and events in ancient China, etc., or by paraphrasing Mao's words in simpler language.²⁶

The goal of the second category was to introduce events and figures in modern Chinese history, both within and outside the Party. Notes concerning the Nationalists, warlords, and other important persons provided a background for Mao's analysis of political, economic, and social issues, while notes on intra-Party issues enlarged the scope of Mao's writings, making the information conveyed to readers much more abundant (some of the endnotes in Volume 1 of *Selected Works* that interpreted the Party's historical issues are listed in Table 3-1).

In addition to the issues presented in Table 3-1, a number of important events in Chinese modern history, such as the Taiping Rebellion (1851-1864), the Boxer Uprising (1900), and the Xinhai Revolution, also emerged in the endnotes. The interpretations of these events provided necessary background, as well as legitimacy, for establishing the Party.

In compiling Mao's works, one of the criteria established for a good note was to maintain the authority of his works.²⁷ The third category of endnotes helped achieve this goal. One factor that could have damaged Mao's authority was that the accounts in one article contradicted those in other articles. Rather than deleting some words to eliminate the contradictions, the revisers preferred to rationalize the conflicting accounts by attributing them to changed circumstances. For example, in the 1927 article, "The Struggle in the Jinggang Mountains" ("*Jinggangshan de douzheng*" 井岡山的鬥爭), Mao stressed the importance of

cuowu sixiang 關於糾正黨內的錯誤思想" (On correcting mistaken ideas in the Party), "Lun fandui riben diguo zhuyi de celue 論反對日本帝國主義的策略" (On tactics against Japanese imperialism), "Zhongguo geming zhanzheng de zhanlue wenti 中國革命戰爭的戰略問題" (Strategic issues of the Chinese revolutionary war), "Shijian lun 實踐論" (On practice), and "Maodun lun 矛盾論" (On contradiction), etc. Most of the other notes on the titles are very short, introducing the occasion in which Mao made the speech or wrote the article.

²⁶ This work was important because Mao liked referring to ancient works of prose and taking advantage of historical stories to criticize the reality of contemporary situations, as well as using metaphors and revising Chinese old sayings to express his own ideas.

²⁷ Wang Jingye 王敬業, "Tian Jiaying yu Mao xuan sijuan de bianji chuban 田家英與《毛選》四卷的編輯出版" (Tian Jiaying and the publication of four volumes of *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*), *Chuban faxing yanjiu* 出版發行研究, 1999(10), pp. 8-10.

equal living standards and democracy within the Red Army, both of which were matters of fact at the time, but which changed in the following years. The endnotes removed the contradiction by highlighting the uniqueness of the Red Army's early period, arguing that in the early years, providing officers and ordinary soldiers with the same standard of living and maintaining democracy within the army was "necessary" for the army's development, while later on, it was also correct for officers to receive higher wages and for Mao to criticize the demand for so-called "ultra-democracy."²⁸

Another situation was that, when making arguments, Mao exaggerated or distorted the facts deliberately or interpreted them in an illogical way to win power or for propaganda purposes. In these cases, the revisers used endnotes to patch the loopholes. Take Mao's assessment of the WRA as an example. "Strategic Issues" was included in the first volume of *Selected Works* in 1951.²⁹ Compared to the book published in 1941, the most important change occurred in the endnotes section, where a 160-Chinese-character note was added to introduce the WRA's history.

In the autumn of 1936, after rejoining with the Second Front Army, the Fourth Front Army started to move north from the northeast of Xikang 西康. Then Zhang Guotao was still persisting in his anti-Party stand and in his policy of retreatism and cancelism (*quxiao zhuyi* 取消主義). In October of this year, after the Second Front Army and the Fourth Front Army arrived at Gansu, Zhang Guotao ordered the vanguards of the Fourth Front Army, numbering more than twenty thousand troops, to build the WRA and march to the west of the Yellow River towards Qinghai. The WRA suffered a blow and was practically defeated in

²⁸ See notes 13 and 14 in "The Struggle in the Jinggang Mountains" in *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, Volume 1, pp. 81-82.

²⁹ Before 1949, at least three versions of *Selected Works of Mao Zedong* published by different institutions had "Strategic Issues" included. In 1947 the Central Committee of the Jin-Cha-Ji Region printed *Continuation of Selected Works of Mao Zedong* 毛澤東選集續編, which included "Strategic Issues", as well as a letter written in 1930 by Mao to Lin Biao. Lin Biao suggested to the Central Department of the CCP that this letter should not be released to the public. As a result this book was only disseminated as internal material. The two other versions of *Selected Works of Mao Zedong* that included "Strategic Issues" were the Northeastern Bookshop version and the Central Committee of the Jin-Cha-Lu-Yu Region versions, both published in 1948. All these pre-1949 versions focused on collecting Mao's writings that were scattered in a number of journals and newspapers, rather than making any changes or comments on these works. "Strategic Issues" in these versions were the same as when it was first published by Military Politics Magazine Press in 1941.

December 1936. In March 1937, they were completely defeated.³⁰

In this endnote, “be practically defeated” (*jiben shibai* 基本失敗) and “be completely defeated” (*wanquan shibai* 完全失敗) were two innovative concepts. As analyzed in the previous chapter, when written, “Strategic Issues” contradicted Mao’s argument on the WRA in this essay. When compiling Mao’s works, the compilers’ freedom was limited, as they could not change the dates of the writings nor Mao’s verdicts in the main body. With these two unalterable premises—this essay was written in December 1936, at which point Mao already knew of the WRA’s failure—the compilers had no choice but to invent a new type of failure—“be practically defeated.” This is because Mao’s assertion would have been logical only if the WRA had already failed, even only “practically,” when he made his speech in Kangda. In this way, they rationalized the contradictions in former versions.

Several versions of *Selected Works of Mao Zedong* were published before 1949.³¹ Compared to these previous versions, the new *Selected Works* was valuable because of the unprecedented readership, and more importantly, because of the cautious revisions made to Mao’s writings, which demonstrated the Party leadership’s attempts to make Mao’s works the most authoritative interpretations of the Party’s past.

In summary, the revised version of Mao’s works contributed to the Party’s official History framework in three ways: first, some that were fitted into the contexts of “line struggles” strengthened the outline, which took the so-called “line struggles” as one of its two grand themes, further. Second, Mao’s works provided Party historians and ordinary readers with interpretations of specific historical events. Third, after revision, contradictions were removed and the official narratives became more consistent and reasonable. It was because of the existence of this seemingly logical and comprehensive framework that official narratives of

³⁰ Note 19, Mao Zedong, “Strategic issues of the Chinese revolutionary war”, in *Selected works of Mao Zedong* Volume 1, pp. 223-224. When translating this note, the author referred to *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung* (Volume 1), p. 252.

³¹ The earliest version of *Selected Works of Mao Zedong* was published by the *Jinchaji Daily* 晉察冀日報 in 1944. Then Suzhong Publishing House 蘇中出版社, Haerbin Northeast Book Store 哈爾濱東北書店 and the Central Committee of Jin Cha Lu Yu 晉察魯豫中央局 published different versions of *Selected Works of Mao Zedong* in 1945 and 1948 respectively. For more details about the publication of Mao Zedong’s works, see Liu Jintian 劉金田 and Wu Xiaomei 吳曉梅, “Mao Zedong Xuanji” *chuban de qianqian houhou* 《毛澤東選集》出版的前前後後 (About the publication of *Selected works of Mao Zedong*). Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi chubanshe 中共黨史出版社, 1993.

Party history, including the WRA's history, became more convincing and impregnable.

Looking at the process of the formation of the official Party history framework overall, we can see that in the early period of the PRC, Mao supervised the recording of Party history directly. His trusted aides, Hu Qiaomu, and Tian Jiaying, who were party theorists as well, became the first leading authorities on Party history.

3.2 A Chorus of Revolutionary Recollections of the WRA

If the formation of the official Party history framework was the most important process in Party historiography in the 1950s, the second most important was that the participants—senior Party cadres who were involved intensively in learning campaigns, and were forced or induced to accept standard versions of Party History—became its narrators. These cadres played a crucial role in the CCP's official system of historiography by writing “revolutionary memoirs” (*geming huiyilu* 革命回憶錄).³² After presenting the pattern of revolutionary memoir writing and compilation, and analyzing the position of these memoirs in the Party's historiography in general, the second half of this section will focus on memoirs written by the WRA survivors. This discussion highlights the characteristics of revolutionary memoirs written in the 1950s by comparing them to accounts of the same topic written in the Yan'an period.

3.2.1 Revolutionary Memoirs and Their Position in Party Historiography

In 1951, a series of articles written by top leaders, such as Liu Shaoqi and Zhu De, appeared in the *People's Daily* to celebrate the Party's 30th anniversary. This was the starting point of the production of revolutionary memoirs in the PRC period. Since the mid-1950s, more and more cadres had taken part in writing revolutionary memoirs. The Chief Political Department of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) launched an essays collection campaign in August 1956 to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the army's establishment. This large-scale campaign showed that memoir writing by senior cadres' had become a collective activity with official support.³³ As a result, the late 1950s witnessed a peak in the

³² Revolutionary memoirs sometimes were also called “memoirs on revolutionary struggles” (*geming douzheng huiyilu* 革命鬥爭回憶錄). The contents of these kinds of memoirs must focus on struggles that were led by the CCP.

³³ Partly as outcomes of this campaign, two revolutionary memoir series “*Xinghuo liaoyuan* 星火燎

production of narratives on Party history.

Propaganda at the time considered writing revolutionary memoirs as a way to “make History by letting people write their own history.”³⁴ Strictly speaking, revolutionary memoirs are neither serious historical works nor reliable primary historical materials, because they contain considerable elements of fiction.³⁵ Despite these elements, however, revolutionary memoirs are still worth serious study from a historiographical perspective for two reasons. First, in most cases, in revolutionary memoirs written in the 1950s, senior cadres narrated the accounts, and secretaries or writers recorded and polished them into essays. Therefore, these memoirs contain considerable elements of oral history, which makes them valuable for historical studies. Meanwhile, a more important reason that the revolutionary memoirs are worth studying is that they were essential vehicles of ideological propaganda in the first few years of the PRC, and also helped authorities connect internal Party history education before 1949 successfully to the Party history propaganda disseminated to ordinary Chinese people thereafter.

By the second half of the 1950s, many of the Communists who joined the Party during or before the 1930s already held high positions in the government, the Party, or in military institutions. It was the works of these high-ranking cadres—who had taken part in a series of political movements and who had been forced to write self-examination materials several times—that constituted the main body of revolutionary memoirs. Despite the authorship being the same, the revolutionary memoirs written in the 1950s differed considerably from the narratives written in self-examination materials before 1949. There were three new characteristics to these narratives, which indicated that revolutionary memoirs, while seemingly reflective of individual experience, indeed contained

原” (*A single spark can start a prairie fire*) and “*Hongqi piaopiao* 紅旗飄飄” (*Red flags are waving*) were published successively. Included in these two series were some of the most popular revolutionary recollections. Apart from organizing cadres to write memoirs, editing teams of the above memoir series and other related agencies also held “discussion conferences” and published comments on journals and newspapers, for the purpose of propagandizing senior cadres’ revolutionary memoirs. There were a number of “reading reports” (*duhou gan* 讀後感) for revolutionary memoirs published in newspapers in the late 1950s. These reports helped to promote revolutionary memoirs.

³⁴ Xiao Yu 笑雨, “Yong ziji de shou xie ziji de lishi 用自己的手寫自己的歷史” (To write our own history by our Own hands), *Wenyi bao* 文藝報, 1958(13).

³⁵ Some Chinese scholars, who have studied revolutionary memoirs from a literature perspective, concluded that memoirs have played a similar role in the achievements of authoritative historical narratives to that of revolutionary historical novels written by Party novelists. See Hong Zicheng 洪子誠, *Zhongguo dangdai wenxueshi* 中國當代文學史 (History of Chinese modern literature). Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe 北京大學出版社, 1999, p. 159.

elements of collective memories, and to a great degree, resembled official historical narratives.

The first characteristic of these memoirs is political correctness. The writers tended to use the differences between political lines within the Party to explain their experiences. The second feature is an omniscient perspective. Thus, the memoirs included not only the experiences of the writers, but also facts or assessments about which the writers could not have been aware when they took part in the revolutionary events.³⁶ The last characteristic is the similarity in the content of these memoirs. Given that individual narrators of revolutionary memoirs have unique experiences, theoretically, their recollections should have been different, but in fact, many contain similar ideas and some even incorporate the same sentences.

Why did revolutionary memoirs contain these three new characteristics? First, senior cadres were encouraged to recall their past in this way. Education and propaganda repeatedly instilled in cadres that once they had been blooded in revolution, they should not be satisfied with recollecting experiences from their individual perspective alone. Just as an article published in the *Journal of Literature and Art* (*Wenyi bao* 文藝報) wrote, “to write revolutionary history is not only to write what the history was, but also to write why the history was as such.” Specifically, “Writing revolutionary memoirs requires Marxist-Leninist historical views. We have to judge everything by Mao Zedong’s military thought when we write about military struggles in Chinese revolutionary history. We must distinguish between essence and mainstream, and what is mere phenomena, and consequently what should be excessively praised and what should not be propagandized, and even what should be criticized.”³⁷

Second, because these senior cadres had been steeped in the CCP’s revolutionary discourse for decades, they were apt to take a collective standpoint. When they collected memoirs in the 1950s, the editors already noticed that cadres tended to

³⁶ Chinese researcher Pan Sheng has noticed this point, noting that there was a pair of “God’s eyes” that hid behind the narratives in revolutionary memoirs. This pair of eyes could observe an event from an overall perspective, breaking the limitation of the author’s personal experience. See Pan Sheng 潘盛, “‘Shiqi nian’ geming huiyilu shuxie zhong de lishi xushi yu gonggong jiyi “十七年”革命回憶錄書寫中的歷史敘事和公共記憶 (Historical narratives and public memories in the revolutionary memoirs of the first seventeen years of the PRC). M. A. Thesis of Nanjing Normal University 南京師範大學, 2006, p. 15.

³⁷ Li Wei 李偉, “Gaoju Mao Zedong sixiang hongqi xiechu gengduo genghao de geming douzheng huiyilu 高舉毛澤東思想紅旗，寫出更多更好的革命鬥爭回憶錄” (Hold the red flag of Mao Zedong Thought and write more and better revolutionary memoirs), *Wenyi bao* 文藝報, 1960(15).

avoid talking about personal experiences, preferring instead to attribute victories to the leadership and the Chinese people as a whole.³⁸ The Party Center had conveyed its interpretations of historical events systematically to every Party member since the late 1930s. Consequently, when the Party asked these senior cadres to take up their pens again in the 1950s to recall their past, these cadres naturally adopted the orthodox dogma that they had learnt through repeated sessions in the preceding decades, and integrated specific conclusions with their personal memories. Therefore, it is not difficult to comprehend why the revolutionary memoirs were, to a great degree, a mixture of the conclusions that the Party had taught the authors and the facts that they had personally witnessed.

Further, the strategies and methods adopted by the institutions that edited the memoirs also contributed to the narrative style of the memoirs. Memoirs about a single event or several events that happened in a specific period were compiled into one category. In some cases, editors would submit a detailed outline to senior cadres during the early stage of preparation, listing some main questions to guide the recollections of the senior cadres.³⁹ In the revision and proofreading stages, editors deleted some narratives they considered unrelated to the books' themes. In this way, they could guarantee that the selected memoirs would best reflect the revolutionary themes desired in the 1950s.

Based on the above analysis, we can now make the following observation about the memoirs produced in the 1950s and early 1960s: memoirs written by senior cadres were outcomes of the Party's successful intra-Party education system. This was the first time that the consensus on historical issues reached by the Party cadres—consensus achieved through power struggles, criticism movements, and Party history education, as discussed in the previous chapter—were disseminated to ordinary Chinese people. Because of the authors' official backgrounds and editing institutions, ordinary readers and academic researchers at the time accepted revolutionary memoirs as authoritative descriptions of the CCP's revolutionary history.

³⁸ Revolutionary memoir writer Xie Nanzheng recorded in 1958 that senior cadres often told writers there was nothing about them worth writing down because all the victories were due to the Party's leadership and the Chinese masses. Xie Nanzheng 解南征, *Women shi zenyang bangzhu lao ganbu xie huiyilu de* 我們是怎樣幫助老幹部寫回憶錄的 (How we helped senior Cadres in writing memoirs), *Wenyi bao* 文藝報, 1958(12).

³⁹ *Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun moubu buduishi bianxiezu* 中國人民解放軍某部部隊史編寫組, "Women shi zenyang bianxie buduishi de" 我們是怎樣編寫部隊史的" (How we wrote the Army's history), *Wenyi bao* 文藝報, 1959(3).

The following subsection will use the WRA as a case study to compare senior cadres' writings before and after 1949, and investigate the similarities and differences between them.

3.2.2 The Western Route Army in Revolutionary Memoirs

The WRA in pre-1949 Recollections and Self-examination Materials

From 1937, when the WRA failed, to the late 1940s, some WRA survivors recorded their experiences to report their actions to Party organizations or to conduct self-examinations. The Party kept these materials secret in the archives for decades. Four such writings have been released to date: two reports to the Party Center written by the WRA's leader, Chen Changhao and two essays written by the Ninth Army's Chief of Staff Li Jukui 李聚奎 (1904-1995) and the Thirtieth Army Commander, Cheng Shicai 程世才 (1912-1990), respectively. Both focused on the reasons for the WRA's failure. Although they share similar subject matter, these materials illustrate the diversity of the WRA survivors' narratives and ideas, which reflect their different positions and perspectives at the time.

Chen's first report recalled the WRA's operations in detail and provide a multi-angled analysis of the WRA's failure, arguing that the low proportion of combat troops in the WRA, lack of weapons, geographical conditions in Gansu, and the enemies' capability were all relevant factors. In this report, Chen examines the mistakes he had made in leading the WRA cautiously, admitting that he had held some "right-deviationist points of view" that coincided to some degree with Zhang Guotao's opinions.⁴⁰ Chen's second report was terse and designed to emphasize that he advocated the Party Center's conclusion on the Zhang issue, revealing the stress he was under at the time. This report did not provide any new information about the WRA.⁴¹ Li Jukui's article analyzes the WRA's operation systematically and listed strategic and tactical mistakes that the WRA had committed. Li argues that the WRA had advantages on the battlefield yet had failed because the WRA leaders were biased against the Party Center and refused to follow its directions. Li even criticizes commanders of the same or higher rank than himself, such as Wang

⁴⁰ Only a part of this report has been released. "Chen Changhao guanyu Xilujun shibai de baogao 陳昌浩關於西路軍失敗的報告" (Chen Changhao's report on the WRA's failure), in SMHF, pp. 976-991.

⁴¹ "Chen Changhao di'erci baogao shu 陳昌浩第二次報告書" (Chen Changhao's second report), in SMHF, pp. 992-995.

Shusheng 王樹聲 (1905-1974),⁴² Cheng Shicai, and Sun Yuqing 孫玉清 (1909-1937) explicitly,⁴³ which was an unusual practice within the Party.⁴⁴ Cheng Shicai's recollection focuses primarily on the establishment of the WRA, and its battles and experiences in Xinjiang after its defeat.⁴⁵

Chen, Li, and Cheng's recollections or self-examination materials apparently reflect the different circumstances of three types of WRA survivors and their respective views about the army's failure. Chen and the other top leaders of the WRA, who were under pressure because they suffered serious military defeat, attempted to extract original ideas about the army's defeat from their own experiences. These leaders' conclusions, however, clashed with the Party Center's convictions. As a result, Chen accepted the Party Center's conclusions reluctantly and in part, while sparing no efforts to emphasize the difficulties the WRA had faced in Gansu. For the same reason, Chen criticized his own mistakes, but argued that he was different from Zhang Guotao.

Given the fact that both Li and Cheng were lower-ranking commanders and had no access to the primary materials that determined the WRA's actions at the time, such as the directives sent by the Party Center and the Central Military Committee, Cheng's cautious decision to focus on battle experience rather than talk about strategies or the way in which the WRA leadership carried out the Party Center's orders seems reasonable. In striking contrast, Li's bald criticism of the WRA leadership is difficult to understand. In fact, Li originally was a divisional commander in the First Front Army,⁴⁶ allowing him to take an opposing position to that of the Fourth Front Army and to make negative comments about the WRA.

As analyzed in the previous chapter, during the Yan'an period, WRA survivors

⁴² Wang Shusheng was the Commander of the Thirty-first Army.

⁴³ Sun Yuqing successively served as the Commander of the Ninth Army and the Fifth Army. Sun was arrested and killed by Ma Bufang in 1937.

⁴⁴ Li Jukui 李聚奎, "Xilujun xue de jiaoxun 西路軍血的教訓" (The bloody historical lessons of the WRA), in Qinghai minzu xueyuan zhengzhi xi Zhonggong dangshi jiaoyanzu 青海民族學院政治系中共黨史教研組 (The CCP Party History Teaching and Research Group in the Politics Department of Qinghai Nationalities University), ed., *Hong Xilujun zai Qinghai youguan qingkuang diaocha cailiao huibian* 紅西路軍在青海有關情況調查材料彙編 (The collection of investigation materials on the WRA in Qinghai) (Internal materials), Volume 4, 1980, pp. 580-589.

⁴⁵ Cheng Shicai 程世才, "Guanyu Xilujun de cailiao 關於西路軍的材料" (Materials on the WRA), in Hao Chengming and Zhu Yongguang, eds., 2007, pp. 15-37.

⁴⁶ When the First Front Army met with the Fourth Front Army during the Long March, some First Front Army commanders were transferred to work in the Fourth Front Army. It was then that Li Jukui was appointed to be Chief of Staff of the Thirty-first Army. When the Fourth Front Army troops crossed the Yellow River, Li was in a coma and was carried by soldiers to the west bank, while the Thirty-first Army was left on the east bank. After Li recovered, he replaced a dead commander to be the Chief of Staff of the Ninth Army.

and others were forced to accept the verdicts issued by the Party Center. Although they fought against their unfair treatment, these people reached a consensus on the issue of the WRA by the end of the Yan'an Rectification Campaign. After the PRC was established in 1949, allowing cadres and veterans to write revolutionary memoirs became a popular way to produce revolutionary narratives, through which this consensus was conveyed to a much broader audience.

The WRA in the Post-1949 Revolutionary Memoirs

From 1949 to 1966, when the Cultural Revolution began, a large number of revolutionary memoirs emerged. Presumably because of the WRA's close relationship with the so-called Zhang Guotao Line, memoirs about the WRA were not as numerous as were those about other military events. There were only Li Tianhuan's 李天煥 (1912-1986)⁴⁷ *Full of Power and Grandeur*, published in 1958, and Cheng Shicai's *Tragic Experience*, published in 1959, as well as six essays by Cheng, Qin Jiwei, Zhou Chunlin 周純麟 (1913-1986), Li Tianhuan, and Dai Kelin 戴克林 (1913-1990), which were compiled into *Selected Works of "A Single Spark Can Start a Prairie Fire."*⁴⁸ Although the number of authors and essays written after 1949 exceeded the number of similar materials before that, these memoirs written in the first few years of the PRC did not exhibit much diversity. In addition to descriptions about battles, the memoirs above focused on the following three subjects.

The first was that Zhang ordered the WRA to cross the Yellow River without the Party Center's approval. Cheng wrote that, immediately after the Red Army joined together in Huining, "Chen Changhao went to the Thirtieth Army's headquarters to convey Zhang Guotao's orders about establishing the WRA and about building a base in Ningxia, as well as to make use of the Party Center's name to put forward a slogan about connecting with the Soviet Union."⁴⁹ Li Tianhuan also recalled that Zhang conveyed a fake order to the Fourth Front Army in order to "avoid fighting against the Nationalists and Japanese imperialists, and to instead build a base in the northwest and to separate the Party." Li analyzed further why Zhang and Chen borrowed the Party Center's name to cheat the Fourth Front Army cadres and

⁴⁷ Li Tianhuan was the Chief of Political Department of the Thirtieth Army.

⁴⁸ *Xinghuo Liaoyuan xuanbian zhi san* 星火燎原選編之三 (A single spark can start a prairie fire, selected works No.3). Beijing: Jiefangjun chubanshe 解放軍出版社, 1980. Three of these six essays were excerpts of the above-mentioned singles by Cheng Shicai and Li Tianhuan.

⁴⁹ Cheng Shicai 程世才, *Beizhuang de licheng* 悲壯的歷程 (Tragic experience). Shenyang: Chunfeng wenyi chubanshe 春风文艺出版社, 1959, p. 4.

soldiers, arguing that the Fourth Front Army troops only followed the Party Center's orders. As a result, "the troops had high morale as they believed that what Chen conveyed was really from the Party Center."⁵⁰ Interestingly, this piece of information was absent in all official documents that had been issued by the Party Center, and did not exist in Party leaders' previous authoritative interpretations. How then, did these authors obtain this information or draw such a conclusion? Indeed, according to Dai Kelin's recollection, "Zhang Guotao's evil behavior of ordering the Fourth Front Army to go to the west bank of the Yellow River" had been "revealed with abundant truth," conveyed to veterans, and criticized as early as 1937 in "anti-Zhang Guotao Line meetings."⁵¹ Cheng's memoirs also mentioned that he obtained this information from Mao in the 1930s. Cheng recalled that while talking with the WRA survivors, Mao said, "Zhang Guotao feared the Nationalists while also fearing the Japanese imperialists. So he secretly dispatched troops to cross the Yellow River without the Party Center's approval for the purposes of attaining an independent region and an independent position."⁵² For Party cadres like Dai and Cheng, Chairman Mao's words and the Party Center's directives or opinions conveyed at conferences or learning sessions were as authoritative as statements printed in official documents. As Chapter 2 showed, some assessments and details always were conveyed orally, but in the end, they were not included in official reports or resolutions. Some of this information, which official documents avoided deliberately, circuitously became a part of the newly emerged and semi-official materials, including revolutionary memoirs, as the previous audience had now become writers and disseminators of Party history.

The second focus of these materials was to condemn the so-called Zhang Guotao Line and attribute the failure of the WRA to this incorrect line. In the opinions of WRA veterans, as Mao's correct line was always opposed to the incorrect lines within the Party, the WRA's failure "undoubtedly proved a truth: nobody, no matter how great a hero he is, could avoid failing, if he deviates from Chairman Mao's correct line."⁵³ As a result, narrating the WRA's story was about more than just recollecting the revolutionary past—it demonstrated the correctness of Mao's

⁵⁰ Li Tianhuan 李天煥, *Qizhuang shanhe 氣壯山河* (Full of power and grandeur). Beijing: Zhongguo qingnian chubanshe 中國青年出版社, 1959, p. 1.

⁵¹ Dai Kelin 戴克林, "Huidao dang de huaibao 回到黨的懷抱" (Return to the Party's embrace), in *Xinghuo liaoyuan xuanbian zhi san* (A single spark can start a prairie fire, selected works No.3), p. 452.

⁵² Cheng Shicai, 1959, pp. 67-70.

⁵³ Li Tianhuan, 1959, p. 85.

political line. The following is an example of how Li Tianhuan connected the WRA's failure with the significance of recognizing the correctness of Mao's line:

Using their own blood, those martyrs (of the WRA) who sacrificed themselves wrote down a basic experience and lesson in our Party's and Army's history: Chairman Mao's line is the sole correct line in this country's revolutionary history. We marched from one victory to another victory when we followed Chairman Mao's correct line. When we deviated from this correct line, we suffered failures. The following generations will draw this lesson from the WRA's failure.⁵⁴

In this way, a military failure was endowed unexpectedly with some positive meanings.

The third focus was on Chairman Mao's concern over the WRA issue. All memoirs written after 1949 have paid considerable attention to the spiritual consolation and practical assistance that the authors received from Chairman Mao. It seems that Mao helped authors divest themselves of the physical and psychological burden of being defeated, and all of the WRA survivors and the Fourth Front Army veterans were grateful to their leader for forgiving their mistakes. Dai recalled that in 1937, he and other Fourth Front Army commanders all believed that both they and Zhang would be executed, or at best, dismissed and dispatched to perform heavy labor.⁵⁵ This is why these authors expressed their gratitude to Mao for not apportioning blame to the commanders and soldiers for the WRA's mistakes. As analyzed in the previous chapter, Mao was accustomed to allowing his followers to purge specific comrades before coming forward to criticize their actions in defense of the comrades treated unfairly, in order to draw his foe's men to his side. In the logic of such a narrative, receiving Chairman Mao's forgiveness should have occurred subsequent to having been wronged greatly in purges. However, all materials about purges of the WRA survivors cited in the previous chapter emerged after the 1980s, at a time when neither official documents nor cadres' memoirs contained such accounts. The authors of the 1950s' revolutionary memoirs quoted Mao's words to emphasize the disconnection between the WRA commanders and Zhang,⁵⁶ but at the same time

⁵⁴ Ibid., 1959, p. 121.

⁵⁵ Dai Kelin, 1980, pp. 452-453.

⁵⁶ The authors all respected Chairman Mao's assessment of the WRA soldiers as innocent victims of

also acknowledged that they themselves were guilty and deserved punishment. This psychological mood disposed them to express their feelings for Mao in flattering terms. Cheng Shicai's recollection of Mao interviewing the WRA commanders is an example to show the strong leadership worship that existed in this period. Cheng wrote:

Chairman Mao's words were as quiet as lake water, as gentle as if talking about everyday life. Contained in these peaceful and plain words, however, there were truths that were solid as steel and firm as iron. Every word imprinted deeply in my heart. I looked at Chairman Mao's broad forehead and clear eyes without blinking. I concentrated on Chairman Mao's teachings, in case I missed a single word.⁵⁷

In addition to those who took part in the WRA, other Fourth Front Army commanders who stayed on the east bank of the Yellow River also wrote their recollections about the WRA in the 1950s and 1960s. Despite the absence of battlefield scenes, these memoirs also contained similar accounts of the WRA's establishment and failure, all of which came from learning sessions.⁵⁸ Overall, the WRA's history portrayed in revolutionary memoirs was a combination of being cheated by Zhang, fighting bitterly on the battlefields, and at last returning to Chairman Mao's "embrace," a memory that contained similar expressions of grievance and gratitude.

The recollections of WRA participants, however, experienced another round of rewriting in the 1980s. This will be discussed in the next chapter.

3.3 The Western Route Army's Narratives by Professional Historians

The publication of the first systematic Party History textbooks written for compulsory tertiary courses in the 1950s marked the completion of the official system of Party history narratives. The first half of this section uses the WRA as an

the so-called "Zhang Guotao Line". For example, Cheng Shicai said Mao's assessment "was a conclusion made by history, and also indicated that the times were moving ahead" (是歷史的結論，是時代在前進的腳步聲). Cheng Shicai, 1959, pp. 67-70.

⁵⁷ Cheng Shicai, 1959, p. 67.

⁵⁸ In his memoirs written in 1962, former commander of the Thirty-third Army in the Fourth Front Army, Wang Weizhou, said it was Chen Changhao who refused to join with the Party Center and insisted on letting the WRA stay in north Gansu. He also argued that the WRA's failure was because of Zhang Guotao's incorrect line. Wang Weizhou 王維舟, "Wode huiyi 我的回憶" (My recollections), *Zhonggong dangshi ziliao* 中共黨史資料 (The CCP Party history materials) Volume 1. Beijing: Zhonggong zhongyang dangxiao chubanshe 中共中央黨校出版社, 1982, pp. 105-106.

example to investigate the extent to which 1950s' Party History textbooks complemented and revised Mao and the Party Center's conclusions about historical issues. The second half discusses the role of Party historiography in the transformation of Chinese historiography that happened in the early years of the PRC.

3.3.1 The WRA in 1950s' Party History Textbooks

As early as the 1940s, "the History of the New Democratic Revolution" (*Xin minzhu zhuyi geming shi* 新民主主義革命史) had become a political subject in the CCP's education system. Although this subject focused on the Party's activities, Party theorists avoided entitling it "The CCP's history." In 1948, The University of Northern China (*Huabei daxue* 華北大學) set up courses on Party history, the building of the Party (*Dang de jianshe* 黨的建設) and the Party's policies, all lectures for which were given by Hu Hua 胡華 (1921-1987).⁵⁹ After the Communists took over Beijing, the faculty of Party history in The University of Northern China, including Hu, became a part of the Renmin University of China (*Zhongguo renmin daxue* 中國人民大學, hereinafter, RUC), a newly established university that since then has played the core role in the teaching and research of party history. In 1953, the Ministry of High Education included the course "Chinese Revolutionary History" (*Zhongguo geming shi* 中國革命史) in the compulsory courses for tertiary education. This course was firstly set up in the RUC, and then was introduced nationally a short while after. This actually marked "the integration of the history of the Chinese Communist Party's leading revolutionary struggles into the civil education system as an independent subject and the course became a significant means to deploy ideological education to university students."⁶⁰ The course in "Chinese Revolutionary History" nominally taught the history of a series of revolutions in modern times, but in fact, the history before the CCP's establishment and the history of other revolutionary group's activities were,

⁵⁹ Hu Hua 胡華, *Hua Hua wenji* 胡華文集 (The collected works of Hu Hua). Beijing: Zhongguo renmin daxue chubanshe 中國人民大學出版社, 1988, p. 229. Hu Hua went to Yan'an in 1938 when he was eighteen years old. After he graduated from the Shaanbei Public School, he became a teacher of Chinese Revolutionary History in 1940.

⁶⁰ Geng Huamin 耿化敏, "Zhongguo renmin daxue yu gaoxiao Zhongguo gemingshi kecheng de chuangjian yu tingkai 中國人民大學與高校中國革命史課程的創建與停開 (1950-1957)" (The establishment and concealment of Chinese revolutionary history classes in the Chinese Renmin University and other universities, 1950-1957), *Dangshi yanjiu yu jiaoxue* 黨史研究與教學, 2012(6), pp. 69-81.

to varying degrees, ignored. In the late 1950s, the Central Party School and the RUC set up CCP History Departments, and the latter began to recruit four-year undergraduate and three-year graduate students majoring in the Party's history.⁶¹ Subsequently, local universities also renamed their courses in "Chinese Revolutionary History," "The CCP's History."⁶²

In accordance with the evolution in Party history education above, Party History textbooks began to emerge in the early 1950s. Hu and He Ganzhi 何幹之 (1906-1969), both of whom were professors at the RUC, were the main compilers of Party History textbooks in the 1950s and 1960s. *Modern Chinese Revolutionary History*⁶³ by He, and *Chinese Revolutionary History Lectures*⁶⁴ by Hu, were the two most influential textbooks before the Cultural Revolution.⁶⁵

Hu and He's books resembled to a considerable degree Hu Qiaomu's "Thirty Years," in that all of them were strictly in accord with authoritative documents, followed the style of the Soviet Union's history textbook, *A Concise History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union [Bolsheviks]*⁶⁶ deliberately, and cited a large number of Mao's works to support their arguments. By comparison to Hu Qiaomu's article, when compiling textbooks, historians had more scope to imitate the Soviet Union's method, as well as to highlight Mao's role in both making and writing Party History, because the textbooks were much longer than regular articles and

⁶¹ Gao Jun 高峻, "Yanjin zhixue yongyu chuangxin—shenqie huainian Zhonggong dangshi xue zhuanjia Hu Hua jiaoshou 嚴謹治學勇於創新——深切懷念中共黨史學專家胡華教授" (Rigorous and innovative academic attitude: in the memory of CCP Party history specialist Hu Hua), *Fujian dangshi yuekan* 福建黨史月刊, 1988(4), pp. 58-62.

⁶² Hu Hua, 1988, p. 230.

⁶³ He Ganzhi's *Zhongguo xiandai geming shi* 中國現代革命史 (Modern Chinese revolutionary history) was firstly published in Beijing in 1954.

⁶⁴ Hu Hua's *Zhongguo gemingshi jiangyi* 中國革命史講義 was written in 1953 and 1954 and printed as teaching materials in universities. In 1959, the Renmin University of China Press published it.

⁶⁵ Besides these two books, Hu and He had other achievements that established and maintained their status in the field of Party history. Hu's *History of the China's New Democratic Revolution* (中國新民主主義革命史), completed in 1950, was the first Party history textbook that was published after the Communists took over national power and also was popular reading material for cadres and university students in the first few years of the PRC. He Ganzhi was the first historian to be appointed by the High Education Department Ministry to coordinate teachers from various universities to compile revolutionary history textbooks. This work started in 1953 and the outcome of this project, *Lectures on Chinese Modern Revolutionary History (Draft)* (中國現代革命史講稿[初稿]), was published the following year.

⁶⁶ On the influence that this history textbook exerted on Party history writing, see Wang Zhongqing 王仲清, ed., *Zhonggong dangshi xue gailun* 中共黨史學概論 (An outline of the CCP historiography). Hangzhou: Zhejiang renmin chubanshe 浙江人民出版社. Lou Shenghua 婁勝華, "Lun *Liangong dangshi jianming jiaocheng* zai Zhongguo de yingxiang 論《聯共(布)黨史簡明教程》在中國的影響 (On the influence of *A Concise History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union [Bolsheviks]* in China), *Nanjing shehuikexue* 南京社會科學, 1997(6), pp. 38-53. Xu Chong, 2013.

required more details. Take He's *Modern Chinese Revolutionary History* as an example. Similar to "Thirty Years," this book also used conflicts between the correct line represented by Mao and the incorrect "leftist" and "rightist" lines within the Party as an outline, and ultimately proved Mao's infallibility. In five of the total fifteen chapters, He used independent sections to discuss intra-Party struggles and emphasized the correctness of Mao's line.⁶⁷

Despite such similarities, it would be a mistake to regard Party History textbooks of the 1950s as simply expanded versions of "Thirty Years" or of the "Resolution of 1945". These Party History textbooks targeted ordinary readers rather than Party comrades. This meant they used much simpler language and more explanations. Moreover, although they had an equally deep sense of fidelity to the leadership's authority, university history professors were more likely to pursue logic and consistency, and also were more likely to ensure that evidence and conclusions were consistent than were those writers who held high positions in the Party or in administrative institutions. This subsection takes the WRA's history in Hu's *Chinese Revolutionary History Lectures*⁶⁸ as an example to show how historians transferred Party documents and official interpretations into historical narratives that were suitable for dissemination to ordinary readers.

The Western Route Army in the Textbook Written by Hu Hua

In general, Hu's introduction to, and analysis of, the WRA were consistent with Mao's relevant accounts as laid out in "Strategic Issues," while they also contained more details and explanations. Hu expressed complete agreement with Mao's verdict on the WRA: "The failure of the WRA was a great crime that 'Zhang Guotao separatists' committed against the Chinese revolution,"⁶⁹ and "the failure also marked the final bankruptcy of Zhang's right-deviationist separatist line."⁷⁰ Then, to argue this point of view, Hu included more illustrative accounts in his book.

⁶⁷ He Ganzhi 何幹之, *Zhongguo Xiandai gemingshi* 中國現代革命史 (Modern Chinese revolutionary history). Beijing: Gaodeng jiaoyu chubanshe 高等教育出版社, 1954. For more details and analysis about this textbook, see Geng Huamin 耿化敏, "Wushi niandai geming lishi shuxie de dianfan: Ping He Ganzhi zhubian *Zhongguo xiandai geming shi* 五十年代革命歷史書寫的典範——評何幹之主編《中國現代革命史》" (A good model of writing revolutionary history in the 1950s: a review of *Chinese Modern Revolutionary History* by He Ganzhi), *Shehui kexue luntan* 社會科學論壇, 2010(8), pp. 205-208.

⁶⁸ Hu Hua's book was republished and reprinted several times. This thesis references two versions: *Zhongguo geming shi jiangyi* 中國革命史講義 (Lectures on Chinese revolutionary history), Volume 2. Beijing: Zhongguo renmin daxue chubanshe 中國人民大學出版社, 1959; *Zhongguo geming shi jiangyi*. Beijing: Zhongguo renmin daxue chubanshe, 1979.

⁶⁹ Hu Hua, 1959, p. 285.

⁷⁰ Hu Hua, 1979, p. 370.

First, he complemented an argument in the endnotes of Mao's essay "Strategic Issues"—"Zhang Guotao was still firmly against the Party after the reunion of the Red Army"⁷¹— with more supporting materials.⁷²

Second, when discussing the establishment of the WRA, Mao used an ambiguous expression to say, "Zhang Guotao ordered" the troops to cross the Yellow River, leaving it open as to whether Zhang gave this order with the Party Center's approval or not. Hu's book made a much clearer case that these incorrect orders came from Zhang:

When the army crossed the grassland, and entered into the Gannan (甘南) area in August 1936, and the day of reunion with the Central Red Army was coming, Zhang Guotao arbitrarily ordered the vanguard of the Fourth Front Army to cross the Yellow River and march west. Zhang attempted to occupy a territory in Xinjiang. When these troops were crossing the Yellow River, two armies were blocked on the east bank (including Zhang Guotao himself; they rejoined the Central Red Army and became the 129th division led by Liu Bocheng in the Anti-Japanese War). The three armies that had crossed the Yellow River became the WRA and marched west along the Gansu Corridor according to Zhang Guotao's wrong orders.⁷³

As mentioned in the last subsection, almost simultaneously, senior cadres' memoirs also emphasized Zhang's selfish purpose and arbitrary orders that came without the Party Center's approval. As a significant element of the historical narratives of the WRA, this statement did not exist in any official documents before 1949 and no primary materials (meeting records, documents or diaries, etc.) supported it. The emergence of this piece of information in both revolutionary memoirs and Party History textbooks in the 1950s demonstrates how the Party's education and propaganda became official historical narratives.

⁷¹ Note 19, Mao Zedong, "Strategic issues of the Chinese revolutionary war", in *Selected works of Mao Zedong*, Volume 1, pp. 223-224.

⁷² Hu argued that Zhu De and Liu Bocheng went with the Fourth Front Army when Zhang Guotao separated the army from the Central Red Army because they were forced by Zhang Guotao to do this. Although under difficult circumstances, Zhu and Liu still firmly supported the Party Central Committee and Mao Zedong. This was why, according to Hu, Zhang Guotao was compelled to cancel the alternative Party Center and agreed to march north to join Mao Zedong. According to Hu's argument, however, Zhang still held his ambition, so he commanded his troops to cross the Yellow River to build a new base. These accounts supported Mao's argument that Zhang persisted in "his policy of retreatism and cancelism". See Hu Hua, 1959, p. 285; Hu Hua, 1979, p. 370.

⁷³ Hu Hua, 1979, p. 370.

Third, Hu clarified the ambiguity of two newly invented phrases in the endnote of Mao's essay, "Strategic Issues"—"be practically defeated," and "be completely defeated." As the following paragraph shows, according to Hu, the defeat in Yongchang was a practical failure and the defeats in Gaotai and Jiuquan (Suzhou) were complete failures.

Being attacked by both the northwestern warlord Ma Bufang's troops and the Nationalist Hu Zongnan's troops, the WRA fought bravely, but due to the completely wrong line, the difference in the number of troops and difficulty in providing supplies, they suffered serious setbacks in Yongchang in December 1936. In March 1937, they completely failed in Gaotai and Jiuquan. Most of the twenty thousand troops died. Only one thousand troops, led by Li Xiannian and Li Zhuoran, succeeded in breaking the siege and arriving at Xinjiang through the Qilian Mountains. In the end, only four hundred red soldiers were left.⁷⁴

It is thus clear that accounts in Mao's writings and the Party Center's documents were not absolutely unalterable. As long as they preserved the basic evaluations, revisions, including adding details, rephrasing expressions, and providing more powerful evidence, were allowed.

The influence of the 1950s' Party History textbooks has been extraordinarily long lasting and strong. In the subsequent two decades, although there were numerous textbooks entitled "*Party History*" or "*Chinese Revolutionary History*," their contents, and even specific words that they used to assess historical figures and events were similar to those used in the 1950s textbooks. Just as some Chinese scholars have pointed out, these textbooks constructed the basic knowledge of, theories about and views on modern Chinese history of an entire generation—the generation that grew up in the 1950s and 1960s.⁷⁵ Furthermore, despite relatively ample materials that scholars could use after the Cultural Revolution, and the greatly changed views of textbook compilers, the new textbooks published after the 1980s still followed the same framework and structure of their 1950s

⁷⁴ Hu Hua, 1979, p. 370. The 1959 version was more concise to make this point. The main points of the two versions are almost the same.

⁷⁵ Geng Huamin, 2010.

counterparts.⁷⁶ This fact increases the importance of discussing the 1950s Party History textbooks.

Concerning sensitive historical issues like the WRA, textbooks were the only channel through which ordinary people could obtain relevant knowledge. At the time, historians' research and teaching were under the supervision of universities' Party committees, which always played a significant role in preventing researchers from crossing the line to address sensitive topics. A more important reason was that, although there was no explicit instruction that directed Party historians on which topics they should study, or on which conclusions they should draw, most trained historians could read such information from materials that the Party provided. Understanding the Party's implications was one of the skills that these historians acquired through constant intra-Party education and political movements.

3.3.2 Party History and the Transformation of Historiography in the 1950s

Because of the establishment of Party history departments and faculty in universities and the publication of textbooks in the 1950s, Party history as a discipline is always considered to have been established in this period,⁷⁷ just like other sub-fields of Chinese history. A comparison of studies of Party history with those of other history fields, however, indicates that Party history actually occupied a relatively special position in the early years of the PRC.

Immediately after 1949, when Chinese scholars tried to rebuild professional and disciplined Chinese historiography in the new regime, they found that the tension between Marxist and non-Marxist historiography (in other words, the tension between the Historical Materialism School and the Textual Criticism School) became increasingly high. While Marxists stipulated that history is driven by the development of the forces of production, emphasizing classes and class struggles, as well as the link between historical study and social reality, the advocates of the Textual Criticism School upheld the academic principle of "seeking the truth for the sake of the truth" and emphasized "proof."⁷⁸ The process of making all historians

⁷⁶ Zhang Jingru 張靜如, "He Ganzhi dui Zhonggong lishi xueke jianshe de gongxian 何幹之對中共歷史學科建設的貢獻" (He Ganzhi's contributions to the establishment of the discipline of Party history), *Beijing dangshi* 北京黨史, 2006(5), pp. 50-52.

⁷⁷ Zhang Jingru and Tang Manzhen, 1990, p. 117.

⁷⁸ For more about the long-standing split between the Historical Materialism School (*Weiwu shiguan pai* 唯物史觀派) and the Textual Criticism School (*Shiliao kaozheng* 史料考證派), see

accept Marxist historiography, or the process of the transformation of historiography (*shixue gaizao* 史學改造), lasted throughout the 1950s. In order to realize this transformation, a number of movements formed, from the criticism of Wu Xun and the film *Wu Xun Zhuan* (武訓傳) in 1951 and that of Hu Shi 胡適 (1891-1962) in 1953-1954,⁷⁹ to the criticism of Wu Han and Jian Bozan on the eve of the Cultural Revolution. At last, Marxim-Leninism, as well as Mao Zedong Thought, became established as the unquestionable sources of guidance for history studies. During this long period, most historians' views ultimately were criticized severely, and some were purged. Their views about the Party's history, however, were never subjects for criticism or discussion. In contrast, Party history served as an ideological tool to remodel historians' thought.

The official version of Party History was an essential aspect of the educational program the CCP developed for scholars from the former regime who had to be integrated into the CCP-led academic system. Party history and that of the revolution were the central topics that all intellectuals had to learn.⁸⁰ The training of the teachers of these topics came from the newly established Remin University.⁸¹ The technique of using official Party History as learning material soon showed results, and the methodology and content of official Party History began to exert an influence on Chinese scholars. When the first round of mandatory political learning sessions for historians ended in 1951, many historians claimed that they would conduct more research on modern Chinese history that had to do with the political reality.⁸² Historians also stated that they would consider Mao Zedong Thought to be the "Chinese philosophy of history," arguing, "Mao Zedong's instructions on the writing of history is the most important foundation to make History scientific."⁸³ In practice, the influence of the official

Wang Xuedian, "Fifty Years of Chinese Historiography", *Chinese Studies in History*, Vol. 45, No. 2-3 (2011), pp. 7-69.

⁷⁹ For the public campaign against Hu Shi, see Chan Lien, "Communism versus Pragmatism: The Criticism of Hu Shi's Philosophy", *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (May 1968), pp. 551-570.

⁸⁰ In universities, "the history of revolution" was a compulsory course not only for students but also for teachers. See Du Xuexia 杜學霞, *Shi shang: ershi shiji wu liushi niandai de shixue yanjiu* 史殤：二十世紀五六十年代的史學研究 (History elegy: Chinese historiography in the 1950s and the 1960s). Beijing: Guojia xingzheng xueyuan chubanshe 國家行政學院出版社, 2014, p. 29.

⁸¹ Geng Huamin, "Zhongguo renmin daxue yu gaoxiao zhongguo gemingshi kecheng de chuangjian yu tingkai" (The establishment and concealment of Chinese revolutionary history classes in the Chinese Renmin University and other universities, 1950-1957), 2012.

⁸² Chen Yuan 陳垣, "Ziwo jiantao 自我檢討" (Self-criticism), *Guangming ribao* 光明日報, March 6, 1952, p. 3.

⁸³ Wu Tingqiu 吳廷璆, "Zunxun zhe Mao Zedong sixiang qianjin—jinian Zhongguo shixuehui

Party history framework began to step out of the field of Party history, as some historians who wrote modern Chinese history began to pay increasing attention to the role that the CCP had played, and established their points of views accordingly.⁸⁴ In summary, by studying Party history, historians learnt step by step to comply with the official history framework.

Like most Chinese intellectuals who had received a modern education, professional historians who specialized in Party history also claimed that historical research required reliable materials and scientific methods. Nevertheless, these historians, such as He and Hu, accepted the official history framework and grand narratives consciously, allowing them to dominate their research. As for those “black holes” that the CCP labeled taboo, historians showed no interest. In this sense, during this period, what professional historians conducted were the Party’s assignments rather than academic research.

Among Party history teachers in universities, those who had a “red” background—i.e., had once worked in revolutionary bases and applied Marxist theories to study modern history, including Party history—received the highest status and privilege. He and Hu belonged to this category. If we compare their backgrounds to those of scholar-officials (or “academic politicians,” as Timothy Cheek referred to Deng Tuo) who were also specialists in Party history, such as Hu Qiaomu and Tian Jiaying, we find that the difference between the educational background and experience of these two categories of people was not as significant as was imagined.⁸⁵ Whether they worked inside the Party leadership or held positions in academic institutions did not depend on how they understood the

chengli yi zhounian 遵循著毛澤東思想前進——紀念中國史學會成立一週年” (Making progress under the guidance of Mao Zedong Thought—to commemorate the first anniversary of the establishment of the Chinese Association of History Studies), *Lishi jiaoxue* 歷史教學, 1952(8), pp. 1-3.

⁸⁴ An example is Hu Sheng’s research on modern Chinese history. As Luo Zhitian pointed out, Hu’s opinion about the “three upsurges” in modern history—the Taiping Rebellion, the Boxer Movement and the Xinhai Revolution—indicated that Hu was influenced by the way in which the CCP explained its history. See Luo Zhitian 羅志田, *Jingdian danchu zhihou: 20 shiji Zhongguo shixue de zhuanbian yu yanxu* 經典淡出之後: 20 世紀中國史學的轉變與延續 (When the glory of the classics faded: transformation and continuation of Chinese historiography in the 20th century). Beijing: Shenghuo dushu xinzhishi sanlian shudian 生活讀書新知三聯書店, 2013, p. 77.

⁸⁵ The four main contributors of the first complete official version of Party History—Hu Qiaomu, Tian Jiaying, He Ganzhi and Hu Hua—shared a similar experience in the late 1930s. They all went to Yan’an during the first three years of the Sino-Japanese War and subsequently experienced the Yan’an rectification campaign. He Ganzhi was older than the other three and had already gotten reputation as a historian during the Social History Controversial. Before Hu Hua and Tian Jiaying themselves became teachers in Yan’an, He once was their teachers.

relationship between politics and academic studies.⁸⁶ In fact, in the field of Party history, professional historians were doing the same job as those scholar-officials, creating historical narratives according to the CCP's standard explanations. Thus, there actually were no "academic historians."

Dissident Opinions about the Writing of Party History

In the transformation of Chinese intellectuals, the period from mid-1956 to mid-1957 is one that is worth particular attention, because it was during this so-called "freedom of speech period" (*mingfang shiqi* 鳴放時期) that Chinese intellectuals declared their dissatisfaction with the Party's control over academic research most boldly. During this time, numerous suggestions about, and criticism of, the status quo of Party history research emerged. This criticism on the part of both professional historians and intellectuals who specialized in other fields, focused on three points.

First, scholars questioned the relationship between the two terms "Chinese revolutionary history" and "the CCP's history," trying to emphasize that there were other revolutionary forces besides the CCP.⁸⁷ As the Party's contribution to the country and to the Chinese nation was one of the two grand themes of official Party history narratives, the above argument weakened the rationality of the Party's official writings to a considerable extent.

Second, scholars challenged the authenticity of the popular Party historical narratives. They said that the conclusions in Party documents and authoritative works had simplified the complexity of historical events, and as a result, when researchers adopted these conclusions to study Party history, they were unable to analyze and assess historical issues objectively.⁸⁸ In addition to the

⁸⁶ In 1939 Mao Zedong offered He Ganzhi a position as his secretary for theories (*lilun mishu* 理論秘書), but He preferred teaching and refused this offer. See Geng Huamin 耿化敏, *He Ganzhi zhuan* 何幹之傳 (Biography of He Ganzhi). Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi chubanshe 中共黨史出版社, 2012, pp. 90-91.

⁸⁷ "Zhongyang tongzhanbu jixu yao minzhu renshi zuotan 中央統戰部繼續邀民主人士座談" (The United Front Department of the CCP continues inviting democratic personages to symposiums), *Renmin ribao* 人民日報, on May 31, 1957; "Tongzhanbu zhaokai de minzhu renshi zuotanhui zuotian jixu juxing 統戰部召開的民主人士座談會昨天繼續舉行" (Yesterday the Symposium for Democratic Personages held by the United Front Department continued), *Renmin ribao*, on June 2, 1957. In Song Yongyi 宋永毅, ed., *Zhongguo fanyou yundong shujuku* 中國反右運動數據庫 (Chinese Anti-rightist movement database) (Disc). Hong Kong: Universities Service Centre for China Studies in the Chinese University of Hong Kong 香港中文大學中國研究服務中心, 2009. Cited in Geng Huamin, "Zhongguo renmin daxue yu gaoxiao zhongguo gemingshi kecheng de chuangjian yu tingkai" (The establishment and concealment of Chinese revolutionary history classes in the Chinese Renmin University and other universities, 1950-1957), 2012.

⁸⁸ Rong Lang 榮琅, "Kefu jiaotiao zhuyi jiaqiang Zhongguo xiandai shi de kexue yanjiu 克服教條主

methodological criticism above, they raised specific questions as well. For example, some scholars questioned whether Northeastern China was liberated the day after the Soviet Union dispatched troops to this region, as Party History textbooks claimed.⁸⁹ As these historical events had occurred not long before—if too many questions about the facts in the Party’s official narratives emerged, the authoritative position of the official Party History would be questionable.

Third, historians and teachers complained that they had no access to primary materials about Party history because of the restrictions on the use of archives.⁹⁰ This point might have been the most troubling to researchers in the field of Party History. Some teachers said the lack of primary materials forced them to rely entirely on *Selected Works of Mao Zedong* and the textbooks written by He and Hu, and as a result, students had lost interest in Party history courses.⁹¹

These expressions of these fierce criticisms and sharp opinions during the “freedom of speech period” indicated that historians who specialized in Party history did not concur wholeheartedly with the Party and Mao’s ready-made historical conclusions. They were indeed quite clear about the problems that had prevented Party history studies from becoming more academic and objective. As will be discussed in Chapter 5, after Mao died, Chinese historians began to express their discontent with historical research conducted during the PRC period. After waiting for twenty years, Chinese historians grasped another opportunity to continue to do what they would have liked to do in 1957.

Conclusion

The first decade of the PRC (1949-1959) was the final phase in the formation of the official historical interpretations of the CCP’s history. During this period, the CCP leadership and professional historians were the two primary contributors

義，加強中國現代史的科學研究” (Overcoming dogmatism and improving the studies on modern Chinese history), *Guangming ribao* 光明日報, on June 20, 1957. Cited in Zhang Jiqian 張寄謙, “Yige dangshi jiaoyuan zai baijia zhengming hou de zaoyu 一個黨史教員在百家爭鳴後的遭遇” (The experience of a Party history teacher after the “Hundreds of Schools Contend” period), *Yan-Huang chunqiu* 炎黃春秋, 2011(6), pp. 44-47.

⁸⁹ Song Yongyi, ed., 2009. Cited in Geng Huamin, “Zhongguo renmin daxue yu gaoxiao zhongguo gemingshi kecheng de chuangjian yu tingkai” (The establishment and concealment of Chinese revolutionary history classes in the Chinese Renmin University and other universities, 1950-1957), 2012.

⁹⁰ Rong Lang, 1957. Cited in Zhang Jiqian, 2011.

⁹¹ Song Yongyi, ed., 2009, cited in Geng Huamin, “Zhongguo renmin daxue yu gaoxiao zhongguo gemingshi kecheng de chuangjian yu tingkai” (The establishment and concealment of Chinese revolutionary history classes in the Chinese Renmin University and other universities, 1950-1957), 2012.

who developed the Party historical narratives composed in the Yan'an period.

After assuming national power, the CCP employed official Party history for propaganda and education. In order to achieve their goals, Mao and his writers adopted certain new measures. First, they established a Party history framework that synthesized former intra-Party education materials and external-Party propaganda. Second, the Party created official versions of Mao's works and presented them as the most authoritative historical narratives. Third, they permitted senior cadres to become narrators of Party history by allowing them to write revolutionary memoirs.

Because the CCP Center did not issue any official Party history textbooks, university historians had to assume the task of transforming the internal materials used in the intra-Party power struggles into a more systematic literature and disseminating it to a broader readership. As discussed in this chapter, historians added certain elements to the official narratives about the WRA, but this was not an indicator of their creativity. In fact, certain seemingly new accounts had already appeared in the Yan'an period.

After some twenty years of development, the joint efforts of the CCP leadership and Party historians enabled the official Maoist narratives of the Party's past to achieve their final form by the end of the 1950s. The completion of this final form was marked by the regularization of Party History education in universities across the country and the popularization of a number of textbooks written by specialists. By then, the alternative narratives of historical events, as described in Chapter 1, had disappeared entirely.

The 1950s was a watershed not only in Party historiography, but also in Chinese historiography as a whole. During this period, Marxist historiography secured a dominant position in China through a number of learning movements and purging campaigns. Meanwhile, to explain Chinese history, especially modern Chinese history, the Party also created a grand narrative that was consistent with Marxist historical materialism. In this way, the Party developed a system of historical knowledge in which facts served to prove the theory, and theory served as the criterion for presenting facts. Therefore, as scholars have commented, "The historian no longer had to study history in order to know the past: he knew the past before studying history."⁹² In this process, official Party History in fact served

⁹² Susanne Weigelin-Schwiedrzik, "Chinese Historical Writing Since 1949", in Axel Schneider and

as an excellent prototype for what historians needed to build. In the competition between Maoist and non-Marxist historiography, Party history was neither a battlefield, nor a source of conflict. Instead, Party history became a tool for the transformation of Chinese historiography.

To some extent, the reeducation of Chinese intellectuals during the first seventeen years of the PRC period was a prelude to the purges of intellectuals during the Cultural Revolution, when many scholars suffered a great deal of physical and mental abuse. Similarly, the formation of the official history framework in the 1950s was also a prelude to the radical historiography of the Cultural Revolution. The way in which Party history was written into the history of two-line-struggles, with Mao as the omniscient and ever-victorious Party leader, which emerged in the Yan'an period and was finalized in the 1950s, was adopted extensively from 1966 to 1976. Some former leaders received new radical verdicts and were portrayed as practitioners of certain “wrong lines.”⁹³ Many events from the past became taboo and many facts were “distorted” in historical writings. The dishonesty of this ridiculous historiography led inevitably to an anti-“innuendo historiography” campaign immediately after the dramatic change in the CCP

Daniel Woolf, eds., *The Oxford History of Historical Writing, vol. 5: Historical Writing Since 1945*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011, pp. 615-636.

⁹³ First, on the premise that Mao Zedong always represents the correct line, the number of wrong lines increased. By 1971, according to Mao Zedong's definition, there were in total ten struggles between different lines (十大路線鬥爭) in the Party's first fifty years of history. Besides the five line struggles listed previously in this chapter, there were five more struggles. They were: the “left”-deviation adventurism led by Luo Zhanglong 羅章龍, Gao Gang and Rao Shushi's anti-party clique, Peng Dehuai's right-deviation opportunism, Liu Shaoqi's anti-party clique and Lin Biao's anti-party clique. Two years later, these line struggles were included in Zhou Enlai's report at the Tenth National Congress of the CCP. See “Zhou Enlai zai zhongguo gongchandang dishici quanguo daibiao dahui shang de baogao 周恩來在中國共產黨第十次代表大會上的報告” (Zhou Enlai's report on the Tenth National Congress of the CCP, on August 24, 1973). <http://cpc.people.com.cn/GB/64162/64168/64562/65450/4429430.html> (last visited on November 26, 2015) Second, whether a specific figure belonged to the right line or wrong lines changed according to this figure's ups and downs. Those who held power were considered to be representatives of the right line. When they lost power, however, they immediately fell into the wrong line category. The different assessments on the One-hundred Regiments Campaign (百團大戰) directed by Peng Dehuai made before and after Mao's criticism to Peng at the Lushan Conference (廬山會議) and the different narratives on the relationship between Lin Biao 林彪 and Zhang Guotao written before and after Lin's death in 1972 are two examples. Before the Lushan Conference in 1959, the One-hundred Regiments Campaign enjoyed high praise in official Party History. After the Lushan Conference, this campaign was considered to be a reflection of right-deviationist opportunism, military adventurism and Wang Ming's capitulationism. Lin Biao was called “the intimate comrade-in-arms of Chairman Mao” when he was alive. However, after Lin died, a number of accusations were made about him. For instance, some cadres recalled that when Mao struggled with Zhang Guotao's wrong line, Lin was on Zhang's side. See Sima Lu 司馬璐 *Hongjun Changzheng yu Zhonggong neizheng 紅軍長征與中共內爭* (The Red Army's Long March and the CCP's inner struggles). Hong Kong: Zilian chubanshe 自聯出版社, 1985, p. 183.

leadership in 1976. It was through this campaign that historians began to resume their academic work. Nevertheless, neither the new Party leadership nor professional historians questioned the master narrative and the official history framework. This will be discussed in the next two chapters.

Table 3-1 Endnotes about the Party's history in *Selected Works of Mao Zedong, Volume 1*

Endnote Subjects ⁹⁴	Year	Articles
The Kuomintang's alliance with Communists	1924	Analysis of the Classes in Chinese Society
The right opportunism of Chen Duxiu	1924-1929	Problems of Strategy in China's Revolutionary War
The Guomintang's general headquarters in Nanchang	1926	Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan
The organizational form of China's Red political power	Since 1927	How Can the Red Political Power Exist in China?
Independent regimes of peasants	1927	How Can the Red Political Power Exist in China?
Putschism	1927	On Correcting Mistaken Ideas in the Party
The Nanchang Uprising	1927	Problems of Strategy in China's Revolutionary War
The Trotskyite group	Since 1927	On Tactics against Japanese Imperialism
The Sixth National Congress of the Communist Party of China	1928	A Single Spark Can Start A Prairie Fire
The Ten-Point Program adopted in the Sixth National Congress of the CCP	1928	On Tactics against Japanese Imperialism
The Central Committee's letter dated February (「二月來信」)	1929	A Single Spark Can Start A Prairie Fire
The "left" opportunism of Li Lisan	1930	Problems of Strategy in China's Revolutionary War
The AB (Anti-Bolshevik) Group	1930-1931	Problems of Strategy in China's Revolutionary War
The "left" opportunist line of Wang Ming and Bo Gu	1931-1935	Problems of Strategy in China's Revolutionary War
The Fifth Encirclement and Suppression Campaign	1933	Pay Attention to Economic Work
The Second Front Army	1934	On Tactics against Japanese Imperialism
The December 9 th Movement	1935	On Tactics against Japanese Imperialism
The Long March	1934-1935	On Tactics against Japanese Imperialism
The Fourth Front Army	1935	On Tactics against Japanese Imperialism
The third encirclement and suppression campaign against the Shaanxi-Gansu revolutionary base	1935	On Tactics against Japanese Imperialism
Guerrilla war in southern China	1934-1935	On Tactics against Japanese Imperialism

⁹⁴ In many cases, the endnotes are not limited to explaining the subjects, but introduce background or other relevant issues. For example, the note for "the Guomintang's general headquarters in Nanchang" indeed analyses Chang Kai-shek's preparation for the anti-communists massacre in April 1927.

The Northeastern People's Revolutionary Army	1935	On Tactics against Japanese Imperialism
The declaration by the Chinese Communist Party on August 1, 1935	1935	The Tasks of the Chinese Communist Party in the Period of Resistance to Japan
The Wayaobao Conference	1935	The Tasks of the Chinese Communist Party in the Period of Resistance to Japan
The Red Army's telegram demanding to end the civil war	1936	The Tasks of the Chinese Communist Party in the Period of Resistance to Japan
The slogans of "A people's republic" and "A democratic republic"	1935-1936	The Tasks of the Chinese Communist Party in the Period of Resistance to Japan
The WRA	1936-1937	Problems of Strategy in China's Revolutionary War
The Xi'an Incident	1936	A Statement on Chiang Kai-shek's Statement

Part Two: Rewriting the Western Route Army's History in the Reform Era

Chapter 4: The "New Interpretation" of the Western Route Army

Introduction

The late 1970s to the middle of the 1980s was a period of transformation in Party historiography, because during this period an unprecedented number of people took part in writing Party history, and a variety of comparably new historical assessments of important personages and incidents emerged. The official historical conclusions made by the Party during the Mao Era were revised, changed, or challenged. A convenient explanation for this phenomenon is that due to the changing social circumstances after the Cultural Revolution, and due to the adoption of reform policies, Party leaders needed to make a corresponding ideological transformation. As a part of this transformation, Party history was inevitably rewritten. This explanation, however, is far from comprehensive. As this chapter will show, the new leadership did not intend originally to challenge the official historical narratives created by Mao and his writers; instead, they preferred to some extent to maintain Mao's verdicts in order to avoid conflicts among factions within the Party. Who produced the new narratives, and what was the impetus to do so? This chapter will answer these questions through the case of the WRA.

In the first several years of the Reform era, the alternative interpretation of the WRA that was replaced by Mao's in the 1930s reemerged in a new form. Because this new interpretation, which contained a number of arguments that diverged from official narratives, gained the support of high-ranking leaders and senior veterans, and also because the advocates of this new interpretation presented a huge amount of primary material as evidence, the CPHRO felt threatened and as a result, responded to the new interpretation actively. The top leadership soon stopped the debates between the two sides, because the issue was not only historical, but political as well.

This chapter includes three sections. The first examines the Party Center's

practices concerning the reassessment of Party history, arguing that although the leadership did not mean to rewrite official History comprehensively, its related practices, such as rehabilitating historical cases and publishing new resolutions on historical issues, actually encouraged senior cadres and relevant people to reconsider historical problems. It was in this context that the issue of the WRA was raised again. The second section examines debates among relevant people who held different opinions on the issue of the WRA, and the leadership's attitudes towards this issue. Because of the involvement of top Party leaders, the case of the WRA allows us to discuss the new leadership's approach to sensitive historical problems. The last section compares the different interpretations of the WRA, and examines their respective positions in Party historiography.

4.1 The New Party Center's Concerns about "Historical Problems"

In late 1977, one year after Mao's death and the end of the Cultural Revolution, the new CCP Party Center began to "rehabilitate unjust, false and erroneous cases" (*pingfan yuanjia cuo'an* 平反冤假錯案, hereafter "rehabilitate erroneous cases"). The original meaning of "rehabilitate erroneous cases" was the reinvestigation of cases in which people were convicted during the Cultural Revolution, and rehabilitation of those who had been sentenced incorrectly. Despite the Party Center's original intention to focus on those cases that were "made by the Gang of Four", the scale of the reinvestigation and rehabilitation soon extended to the entire PRC period, and even to the 1930s and 1940s. Within a short time, the whole of Chinese society was swept up in the mood of rehabilitation.¹ Because "to rehabilitate" meant to reevaluate a person or an event, "rehabilitating erroneous cases" should be considered a practice of the new leadership that actually revised historical conclusions made during the Mao Era.

At the end of the 1970s, the new leadership began to formulate a new resolution on historical issues. To this end, the Party Center organized senior cadres to

¹ According to the Party's official statistics, approximately three million cadres were rehabilitated and 470,000 cadres were readmitted to Party membership by 1985 when the rehabilitation work basically ended. *Renmin wang* 人民網 (People Online), "Zhongguo gongchandang xinwen: pingfan yuanjia cuo'an gongzuo 中國共產黨新聞: 平反冤假錯案工作" (CCP news: rehabilitation of unjust, false and erroneous cases) <http://cpc.people.com.cn/GB/64156/64157/4512071.html>. (last visited on May 9, 2015) Data provided by the daughter of Hu Yaobang shows that 1.58 million cases concerning intellectuals were resolved. See Man Mei 滿妹, *Sinian yiran wujin: huiyi fuqin Hu Yaobang* 思念依然無盡: 回憶父親胡耀邦 (Remembrance is endless: reminiscing my father Hu Yaobang). Beijing: Beijing chubanshe 北京出版社, 2005, p. 288.

discuss certain essential issues in Party history, such as Mao's positive contributions and mistakes, as well as the definition of "Mao Zedong Thought." However, these discussions revealed the contradiction in the Party leadership's idealistic perspective of attempting to maintain Mao's authority, while also trying to promote their new policies of reform and opening up. Ironically, during the discussions, some previously little-known facts were raised and subsequently disseminated widely, which, in turn, led to fervent discussions of Party history. This was something that the Party Center neither anticipated nor wanted.

In addition to discussing historical issues from the Party's perspective, senior cadres were also organized to recollect their own histories in a variety of ways. Although the Party Center's intention was to use revolutionary history to propagandize the Party's glorious image, and also to minimize the effect of historical problems within the Party, it transpired that allowing senior cadres to investigate and write their own histories led to more challenges to official historical narratives.

4.1.1 Rehabilitating Unjust, False, and Erroneous Cases

After Mao's death and the downfall of the Gang of Four, the Party Center realized that rehabilitating erroneous cases had become an urgent task for two main reasons. First, after two decades of turbulent mass movements, the Chinese people were experiencing a "crisis of faith." In particular, the injustice that had marked the Cultural Revolution had led people to question Marxism, socialism, and the Party leadership.² Therefore, if the Party could not restore social justice, it might be unable to maintain its authority. Another, and more realistic, reason was that the revival of the Party and the nation required cadres and intellectuals. Unfortunately, most of these people were, to varying degrees, purged during the Mao Era, and at the time, remained troubled by their historical problems. Without reinvestigation and rehabilitation, they would be unable to work for the Party's new cause, that of improving the economy.³ Therefore, because rehabilitating erroneous cases was

² Liu Jisheng 刘濟生, "Lun Hu Yaobang pingfan yuanjia cuo'an 論胡耀邦平反冤假錯案" (Hu Yaobang and rehabilitation), *Yan-Huang chunqiu wangzhan* 《炎黃春秋》網站 (Website of the journal *Yan-Huang Chunqiu*), <http://www.yhcqw.com/html/kwg/2010/88/108818124D61CC77824GA78AFF9060I65.html> (last visited on May 9, 2015).

³ This is why local governments were instructed not only to resolve intellectuals' living problems but also to "take advantage of their wisdom and talent to promote our socialist construction and realize the four modernizations". See Wu Linqun 吳林泉 and Peng Fei 彭飛, "Boluan fanzheng li

considered to be a threshold that must be crossed if political, social, and economic reforms were to remain on schedule,⁴ the new leadership preferred to resolve the problem as soon as possible.

Initially, the Party Center directed most of its attention to those cases that occurred during the Cultural Revolution, but soon, a large number of appeals emerged to reinvestigate cases prior to that. In the words of Song Renqiong 宋任窮 (1909-2005), Minister of Organization Department at the time: “it seemed that people wanted us to reinvestigate all the cases related to all the political movements during the PRC period.”⁵ Further, the Party Center also received appeals from senior cadres to reassess intra-Party cases that took place before 1949. This unexpected situation forced the Party Center to revise its work plan.

The revised plan of rehabilitation enlarged its scale, but continued to focus on the period of the Cultural Revolution. As for the period prior to the Cultural Revolution, most effort was invested in four political movements, because of their large scales—the Campaign to Suppress Counterrevolutionaries (*zhenya fangeming* 鎮壓反革命, in short, *zhenfan* 鎮反, 1950-1953); the Purge of Hidden Counterrevolutionaries (*suqing fangeming* 肅清反革命, in short, *sufan* 肅反, 1955-1957); the Anti-rightist Movement (*fanyou* 反右, 1957), and the Four Clearances Campaign (*siqing* 四清, 1962). With respect to other cases, the Party Center decided to address only those cases in which victims or victims’ families requested reinvestigation explicitly.⁶

Although the Party Center rehabilitated the cadres who were purged during the Cultural Revolution without hesitation, it adopted a different method to address other cases. First, it used different words to convey its attitudes towards different types of cases. Making reassessments of cases during the Cultural Revolution and removing the sentences and labels that were applied to people during that time

fengbei 撥亂反正立豐碑” (Monument for setting wrong things to right), *Renmin ribao* 人民日報, June 1, 1989, p. 6.

⁴ Li Rui 李銳, “Qianyan 前言” (Preface), in Dai Huang 戴煌, *Hu Yaobang yu pingfan yuanjia cuo'an* 胡耀邦與平反冤假錯案 (Hu Yaobang and rehabilitation of unjust, false and erroneous cases). Beijing: Zhongguo gongren chubanshe 中國工人出版社, 2004, p. 1.

⁵ Song Renqiong 宋任窮, *Song Renqiong huiyilu* 宋任窮回憶錄 (Memoirs of Song Renqiong). Beijing: Jiefangjun chubanshe 解放軍出版社, 2007, p.439.

⁶ The Central Organization Department of CCP made such rules in a document issued in 1979, titled “Guanyu ‘Wenhua dageming’ qian yixie anjian chuli yijian 關於“文化大革命”前一些案件處理意見” (Instructions on how to deal with the cases that happened before the Cultural Revolution). See Song Renqiong, 2007, pp. 439-440.

was called “rehabilitation” (*pingfan* 平反). This meant that the purges of these people and assessments of these events were definitely erroneous decisions. For certain other cases, such as the Anti-rightist Movements, the reassessments were referred to as “correction” (*gaizheng* 改正). This meant that the Party Center had made the right decision to launch the movement, but the purge was too extreme.⁷ Similarly, it was declared that the the infamous campaigns of the 1930s and 1940s that targeted the so-called “counterrevolutionaries” suffered from the problem of magnification (*kuodahua* 擴大化), indicating that the Party had launched these campaigns for a good reason as well, but had failed to control the scale of the purges.⁸ More subtly, in some cases, the information that a certain event or cadre had been reassessed was conveyed to the public by publishing commemorative articles in official newspapers, rather than by issuing official documents with explicit accounts.⁹

These methods indicated that the new Party Center in the late 1970s always “attempted to define the areas of permissible rehabilitation and debate rather than letting the momentum of public, intellectual and academic pressure lead where they might.”¹⁰ In fact, at the time, the Organization Department of the CCP adopted the following internal principle. For those cases that had already been interpreted officially before the Cultural Revolution, the Party Center removed the revisions that were made during the Cultural Revolution and reemphasized the authority of the original interpretations.¹¹

From 1977 to 1979, the three years during which historical cases were rehabilitated actively, the WRA issue was never discussed officially amongst the Party leadership. From the leadership’s standpoint, because it was related closely to intra-Party power struggles, the WRA issue was still too sensitive to be studied, or even mentioned, much less reassessed. When addressing actual problems that related to the WRA, the Party Center acted on the principle discussed above—to rehabilitate and compensate the cadres because they were purged wrongly during

⁷ Xiao Donglian 蕭冬連, *Lishi de zhuangui: cong boluan fanzheng dao gaige kaifang (1979-1981)* 歷史的轉軌：從撥亂反正到改革開放（1979-1981）（A transformation of history: from setting wrong things to right, to reforms and opening up, 1979-1981). Hong Kong: Xianggang Zhongwen daxue dangdai Zhongguo wenhua yanjiu zhongxin 香港中文大學當代中國文化研究中心, 2008, p.115.

⁸ *People Online*, “CCP news: rehabilitation of unjust, false and erroneous cases”.

⁹ Song Renqiong, 2007, p. 447.

¹⁰ Geremie Barmé, 1991.

¹¹ Song Renqiong, 2007, p. 435.

the Cultural Revolution, while avoiding dealing with purges pre-1966.¹² The outside world, however, was immersed in the excitement of rehabilitation, paying little attention to the specific methods that the Party Center used to deal with historical cases. People at the time collected information relevant to themselves or their families discreetly, and believed the release of some information was a deliberate indicator of ongoing changes.

In 1980, then Chief Secretary of the CCP, Hu Yaobang 胡耀邦 (1915-1989), wrote a comment about a senior cadre's memoirs. When this cadre mentioned Chen Changhao in his memoirs, he called Chen "a loyal running dog of the Zhang Guotao Line." Hu commented: "Comrade Chen Changhao did make mistakes but he has already died, and his death was a result of the Gang of Four's persecution. It is inappropriate to call him a loyal running dog."¹³ This comment was published in *Party History Material Reports*,¹⁴ in which messages could be delivered to all researchers and officers in the field of Party history. Although Hu also emphasized the Gang of Four's persecution, his directive to stop referring to Chen as a "loyal running dog" was impressive. There was a variety of special phrases in the revolutionary language developed during the Mao Era that served to exhibit the spirit of Maoism and to reinforce the Chinese people's collective memories. When certain specific labels were removed, this took the audience off guard, for it was not only a change in language, but also an apparent signal of change. By then, the

¹² For instance, the Party Center re-buried the former chief political commissar of the WRA, Chen Changhao, at public expense and held a memorial ceremony for him at the Babaoshan Revolutionary Cemetery in 1980. This arrangement had nothing to do with Chen having been treated unfairly since 1937 due to his connection with Zhang Guotao, but was because he had committed suicide in 1967, during the Cultural Revolution. Another example was Zhang Qinqiu 張琴秋, the commander of the Women's Independent Regiment in the WRA, who committed suicide in 1968. The memorial ceremony was held in 1979 and Xu Xiangqian presided over the ceremony. In contrast, there was no memorial service for other senior cadres who were purged and died before the Culture Revolution. As Chinese scholar Xiao Donglian observed, although many rightists died before rehabilitation, only those who died during the Culture Revolution were commemorated in ceremonies. Xiao Donglian, 2008, p. 115.

¹³ "Hu Yaobang tongzhi guanyu dui Chen Changhao tongzhi de tifa de piyu 胡耀邦同志關於對陳昌浩同志的提法的批語" (Comrade Hu Yaobang's comment about Comrade Chen Changhao). Zhonggong Gansu sheng Zhangye diwei dangshi ziliao zhengji bangongshi 中共甘肅省張掖地委黨史資料徵集辦公室 (Party Historical Materials Collection Office of Zhangye Committee of the CCP), ed., *Hong Xilujun shiliao* 紅西路軍史料 (Historical materials on the WRA) (Internal publication), Vol. 1 and Vol. 2, 1984, p. 1.

¹⁴ *Party History Material Reports* (Dangshi ziliao tongxun 黨史資料通訊) was edited by the Central Party History Research Office, starting from 1981. It was renamed *Party History Reports* (Dangshi tongxun 黨史通訊) in 1983 and combined with the *Party History Research* (Dangshi yanjiu 黨史研究) by the Central Party School in 1988 into *CCP Party History Research* (Zhonggong dangshi yanjiu 中共黨史研究).

surviving WRA commanders and their families felt the official interpretation of the WRA was ready to be challenged.

In theory, because the “rehabilitation of erroneous cases” movement targeted actual cases, rather than historical writings, it should not be included in research on Party historiography. However, the fact is that, as events and figures were rehabilitated, relevant official narratives had to be changed accordingly, which meant that Party History had already been revised. Moreover, discussion in this section has already shown that the “rehabilitation of erroneous cases” movement had changed Chinese people’s estimation of the political environment. As more and more appeals were made, the Party Center tried to limit the scale of rehabilitation, but under pressure, they could not help but address some historical assessments that they otherwise would have preferred to set aside. In short, the “rehabilitation of erroneous cases” movement inevitably led to the rewriting of Party history. In this sense, although rewriting the narratives of certain historical issues was exclusive to the Party’s original aims, it was truly an outcome of changed political realities.

4.1.2 Discussions of Several Historical Issues

At approximately the same time that the Party began to rehabilitate erroneous cases, the top leaders also expressed their concerns about writing official Party History.¹⁵ At the beginning of 1980, the Central Committee decided to establish a series of new institutions—two committees and two research offices¹⁶—to “satisfy

¹⁵ The political report to the Eleventh National Party Congress in 1977 indicated that the Party leadership had decided to organize people to research Party history, learn and sum up historical experience. See *Zhongguo gongchandang lici daibiao dahui shujuku* 中國共產黨歷次代表大會數據庫 (Database of CCP Congresses),

<http://cpc.people.com.cn/GB/64162/64168/index.html> (last visited on May 9, 2015). Ye Jianying, then chancellor of the Central Party School said in an opening speech that, “Chairman Mao had prepared to do a great thing, which was to sum up the struggle experience in our Party’s history, which has been his unfulfilled wish”. See Wu Zhijun 吳志軍, “Yijiu qiqi nian zhi yijiu baqi nian de Zhonggong dangshi yanjiu shuping 一九七七年至一九七八年的中共黨史研究述評” (Review research on CCP Party history in 1977 and 1978), *Zhonggong dangshi yanjiu* 中共黨史研究, 2011(9), pp. 38-46.

¹⁶ The two committees were the Central Party History Committee (*Zhongyang dangshi weiyuan hui* 中央黨史委員會) and the Party History Editorial Committee (*Dangshi bianshen weiyuanhui* 黨史編審委員會). The former was the top unit in the organizational structure. There were eight members in this committee, including Hua Guofeng 華國鋒 (1921-2008), Ye Jianying, Deng Xiaoping, Li Xiannian, Chen Yun, Nie Rongzhen 聶榮臻 (1899-1992), Deng Yingchao 鄧穎超 (1904-1992) and Hu Yaobang, the most senior and powerful figures in the Party. The final decisions about official opinions on important historical events rested with this committee. The Party History Editorial Committee was inferior to the previous one, responsible for regular issues concerning Party history writing. One of its missions was to examine drafts before submitting them to the Central Party

the urgent need of all Party members for compiling and publishing official Party History as soon as possible.”¹⁷ In establishing these institutions, the Party planned to publish a new official version of Party History before 1985.¹⁸

Why did the Party invest so much effort in compiling Party History at the beginning of a new era, when developing the economy and enhancing people’s standard of living were considered the first priorities? Some scholars explain the enthusiasm amongst the CCP leadership as a response to the Gang of Four’s “innuendo historiography” (*yingshe shixue* 影射史學; this concept will be explained in detail in the next chapter), or in other words, as Wu Zhijun of the Central Party School put it, “out of outrage towards fabrication of Party History by extreme-left forces and anxiety about the weakness of this field caused by extreme-left thought.”¹⁹ While correct, the analyses of Wu and other scholars are far from comprehensive. Rather than simply attributing the new leadership’s choices to their opposition to the Gang of Four, it is more reasonable to look for answers by studying the problems that the leaders faced.

One of the most urgent of these was that, because most of their new policies contradicted the principles that the Party had been advertising for decades, the leadership would be unable to promote these new policies before eliminating contradictions to them. At the time, “one option [for the Party] was to acknowledge that some of its former principles were wrong, while another option was to judge what it was working on was wrong.”²⁰ Between the above two options, the Party Center chose to reinterpret Party history—to emphasize the historical events or

History Committee. The two research offices were the Central Party History Research Office (*Zhongyang dangshi yanjiushi* 中央黨史研究室) and the Committee for Collecting Party Historical Materials (*Dangshi ziliao zhengji weiyuanhui* 黨史資料徵集委員會). The former was an institute that directly took charge of researching and writing Party History. Hu Yaobang, Peng Zhen 彭真 (1902-1997), Su Yu 粟裕 (1907-1984), Hu Qiaomu, Lu Dingyi 陸定一 (1906-1996), Li Weihai 李維漢 (1896-1984), Cheng Zihua 程子華 (1905-1991), Yang Shangkun, Wang Heshou 王鶴壽 (1909-1999), An Ziwen 安子文 (1909-1980), Yao Yilin 姚依林 (1917-1994) and Feng Wenbin 馮文彬 (1911-1997) were members of this committee. Mao’s former secretary Hu Qiaomu, one of the most famous theorists and writers within the Party was appointed director. The Committee for Collecting Party Historical Materials was established a couple of months later, in order to “save Party History data and compile official Party History”. It ran for eight years before it was combined with the Central Party History Research Office in 1988.

¹⁷ Niu Yunxiao 牛雲霄, “Canyu choujian dangshi yanjiushi 參與籌建黨史研究室” (I participated in establishing the Party History Research Office), *Zhongguo gongchandang lishi wang* 中國共產黨歷史網 (CCP History Online), <http://www.zgdsww.org.cn/GB/222127/14738703.html> (last visited on May 9, 2015).

¹⁸ Xie Xiaonai 謝筱迺, “Xie Xiaonai tongzhi de jianghua 謝筱迺同志的講話” (Speech of Comrade Xie Xiaonai), *Sichuan dangshi yanjiu ziliao* 四川黨史研究資料, 1982(5), p. 14.

¹⁹ Wu Zhijun, 2011.

²⁰ Xiao Donglian, 2008, p. 257.

aspects of an event that it had deliberately avoided mentioning previously—or to reconsider history from a different perspective in order to support its new policies. The necessity and specific approach of doing this is reflected in the following speech given in 1984 by Wang Shoudao 王首道 (1906-1996), then Standing Committee Member of the CCP Consultative Committee:

Some comrades do not understand why we need to deploy the policy of opening up. In their opinion, this policy is against the Party's splendid history as we great Communists cooperate with foreign capitalists. Let us look for answers from our Party's history. Our Party once cooperated with the Nationalist Party who slaughtered Communists, because our goal was to defeat the Japanese who invaded our country. What was the outcome of the cooperation with the Nationalists? The outcome was our victory in the Anti-Japanese War. It is fair to say that there is plenty of spiritual treasure in the Party's history, which is waiting for us to exploit.²¹

In addition to the need to construct legitimacy, there was another concern that forced Deng Xiaoping and his colleagues to rewrite Party history at the beginning of the Reform Era. As members of “the first generation of revolutionaries” who won national power under Mao's leadership, senior leaders such as Deng, Chen Yun and Ye Jianying, believed it was necessary for them to make a judgment about Mao during their lifetimes, in case someone discredited the leadership headed by Mao completely, just as Khrushchev had done to Stalin. Chen once said, “We definitely need to finalize the assessment of Chairman Mao's contributions and errors. If we fail to do this, there might be a Khrushchev [in China] in the future who could overthrow [the image of] Chairman Mao, as well as us, who now [are] making [only] an ambiguous historical judgment.”²² These senior leaders also believed that if Mao were discredited completely in China, the foundation of the Party's rule would be undermined seriously. This is why Deng maintained

²¹ Wang Shoudao 王首道, “Dangshi gongzuo zhong de jidian jiben yaoqiu: zai Hunan sheng dangshi ziliao zhengji gongzuo huiyi shang de jianghua 黨史工作中的幾點基本要求——在湖南省黨史資料徵集工作會議上的講話” (Several suggestions on works concerning Party history: a speech at the Conference on the Collection of Party History Materials of Hunan), *Hunan dangshi tongxun* 湖南黨史通訊, 1984(4), pp. 16-20.

²² *Hu Qiaomu zhuan bianxie zu* 《胡喬木傳》編寫組 (The writing team of *Biography for Hu Qiaomu*), ed., *Hu Qiaomu tan zhonggong dangshi* 胡喬木談中共黨史 (Hu Qiaomu's works and speeches on Party history). Beijing: Renmin chubanshe 人民出版社, 1999, p. 75.

resolutely, “The Party and Chinese people will never do what Khrushchev did!”²³

In summary, the Party Center’s decision to reassess selected historical issues was based on two major goals—to explain all historical elements in a way that would benefit the political and social reality of the day, and maintain the image of the Party, and Mao, in particular. One problem is that these two goals sometimes were incompatible, and even conflicting. This incompatibility and conflict were most obvious in 1980 and 1981, when thousands of cadres were organized to discuss historical issues.

Senior Cadres’ Comments on the Draft of the “Resolution of 1981”

The first job of the newly established institutions mentioned above was to draft a resolution about several historical issues in the Party’s history. This project began in March 1980 and was completed in June 1981, when the “Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party Since the Founding of the People’s Republic of China” (hereafter the “Resolution of 1981”)²⁴ was passed at the Sixth Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee. The scale of participation and the depth of discussion throughout the drafting process were impressive. At least four thousand senior Party members from central state organs and local governments attended a series of meetings.²⁵ More important was the way in which these discussions were conducted. Participants were divided into groups of approximately thirty people. Everyone was required to voice his or her opinions while secretaries recorded and compiled them into newsletters that were then distributed to other groups. According to attendees’ recollections, three significant problems were discussed intensively: how to assess the history of the first seventeen years of the PRC, from 1949 to 1966, how to define so-called “Mao

²³ Leng Rong 冷溶 and Wang Zuoling 汪作玲, eds., *Deng Xiaoping nianpu (1975-1997)* 鄧小平年譜(1975-1997)(Chronological biography of Deng Xiaoping), Volume 1. Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubashe 中央文獻出版社, 2004, pp. 435, 441.

²⁴ “Guanyu jianguo yilai dang de ruogan lishi wenti de jueyi 關於建國以來黨的若干歷史問題的決議” (Resolution on certain questions in the history of our Party since the founding of the People’s Republic of China). Beijing: Zhongyang dangshi chubanshe 中央黨史出版社, 2010.

²⁵ Guo Daohui 郭道暉, “Siqian lao ganbu dui dangshi de yici minzhu pingyi 四千老幹部對黨史的一次民主評議” (A democratic evaluation of Party history by four thousand senior cadres), *Yan-Huang chunqiu* 炎黃春秋, 2010(4). pp. 1-7. If the fifteen hundred cadres studying in the Central Party School who were involved in the discussion were counted, there would have been more than five and half thousand people who participated in writing a historical resolution, which was unprecedented in the history of the CCP. See Huang Li 黃黎, “Guanyu jiangguo yilai dang de ruogan lishi wenti de jueyi qicao de taiqian muhou 《關於建國以來黨的若干歷史問題的決議》起草的台前幕後” (How the *Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party Since the Founding of the People’s Republic of China* was drafted), *CCP News Online*, <http://dangshi.people.com.cn/GB/144956/9070784.html> (last visited on May 9, 2015).

Zedong Thought,” and how to evaluate Mao’s rights and wrongs. Regarding these three problems, the draft of the resolution, written by Hu Qiaomu and others, was challenged strenuously by senior cadres at the meetings.

In the draft of the resolution, the first seventeen years of the PRC was portrayed as a period when the “correct line” was carried out on most occasions while both the Party and the country made great achievements. Attendees disagreed with this account because it ignored the obvious errors the Party had made during that period, especially the Anti-rightist Campaign and the Great Leap Forward. In the draft, “Mao Zedong Thought” was defined as being all the correct thought of Mao and other CCP leaders. Attendees also found it unreasonable and illogical to include other people’s “correct thought” while omitting Mao’s wrong thought from this concept. As for the issue of how to assess Mao, attendees exchanged their views freely. Deng and his colleagues, however, failed to find much praise for Mao in the conference newsletters submitted to them. As many cadres recalled Mao’s capriciousness and arbitrary actions, these discussion meetings became, to some extent, meetings that criticized Mao. Because senior cadres spoke out, Chinese intellectuals later highly praised these discussions about writing the resolution on historical issues. One attendee commented that “cadres enjoyed unprecedented intraparty democracy and freedom of speech,” and this fact “indicated that thought[s] were not controlled by Mao’s verdicts any longer.”²⁶ Ironically, the Party Center did not adopt the cadres’ suggestions to revise the resolution draft at all. Instead, the dissenting opinions that emerged during the discussion meetings were ignored entirely.

The final version of the “Resolution of 1981” was contradictory: it criticized the Party’s mistakes in a series of political movements, yet made a judgment that most of the time after 1949 the Party’s practices were correct, or at least basically correct. The resolution defined “Mao Zedong Thought” as the crystallization of the collective wisdom of the first generation of leaders, while also describing “Mao’s mistakes in his later years” (*Mao Zedong wannian cuowu* 毛澤東晚年錯誤) as irrelevant to “Mao Zedong Thought.” Finally, the resolution negated the Cultural Revolution completely, as well as Mao’s theory in launching it, but emphasized nonetheless that Mao had made so many contributions to China that his mistakes

²⁶ Guo Daohui, 2010.

were secondary.²⁷

At the time, Deng spoke highly of this Resolution. He assumed that it would help the leadership achieve its dual goals—to remove the contradiction between new policies and the Party’s principles, and to maintain Mao’s positive image. Ideally, this resolution would put the debates about Party History to an end, and the whole Party would “unite and look to the future” (*tuanjie yizhi xiangqian kan* 團結一致向前看).²⁸ It cannot be denied that this resolution had considerable influence in maintaining intra-Party stability, because it provided cadres with an official evaluation of Mao, while enjoining them to move on from their obsession with the issue. In the meantime, however, the resolution actually failed to cool senior cadres’ enthusiasm for specific historical problems. By adopting the “Resolution of 1981,” the Party Center unexpectedly inflamed the cadres’ passion to take part in investigations of Party history. On the one hand, senior cadres were summoned together to discuss historical issues broadly and intensively. By doing this, their desire to reassess Party history according to their understanding was aroused. On the other hand, because the Party Center did not adopt their views, these cadres had to look for other ways to fulfill their passion to rewrite Party history. As a result, after the “Resolution of 1981” was issued, even more questions about, and challenges to, official Party History emerged. A few years later, Deng admitted that the resolution had not done a good job of assessing Mao’s merits and demerits.²⁹ At that time, Deng may have realized that the resolution was not as satisfying as he had once imagined.

4.1.3 Senior Cadres Investigated Their Own Histories

At the beginning of the Reform Era, in addition to expressing their opinions on significant historical problems, senior cadres had two other ways to take part in rewriting Party history. One was to write memoirs or to be heroes of biographies, both of which required them to recollect their entire personal histories. Another was to attend “historical material collection meetings” or join teams that investigated historical problems and contribute their recollections of specific

²⁷ *Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party Since the Founding of the People’s Republic of China*, 2010, pp. 97-111.

²⁸ Deng Xiaoping 鄧小平, “Zai dang de shiyijie liu zhong quanhui yubei huiyi gezu zhaojiren hui shang de jianghua 在黨的十一屆六中全會預備會議各組召集人會上的講話” (Talk at the Conveners Meeting for the Sixth Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee) (on June 22, 1981), in Leng Rong and Wang Zuoling, eds., 2004, p. 750.

²⁹ Guo Daohui, 2010.

events. Compared to the situation in the Mao Era, in the 1980s, senior cadres had relatively more freedom to make arguments that expressed their own opinions about Party history, rather than simply repeat Mao's judgments of certain figures and events. Moreover, although the Party's archives remained inaccessible to ordinary people, for the first time, senior cadres and their aides had the opportunity to use primary materials to investigate the history in which they once had personally taken part. Therefore, although conducted under the Party's supervision, these projects led to some unexpected results.

At the time, the Party Center encouraged senior cadres to publish memoirs and biographies primarily because it needed propaganda. In the first sixty years of the PRC, the CCP tried three times to gain legitimacy by exploring its revolutionary history—in the early 1950s, when the Party had just assumed national power, at the beginning years of the Reform Era, and in the early 1990s, when the Tiananmen Massacre shook the Party's rule. Similar to the situation in the early 1950s discussed in the last chapter, at the beginning of the Reform Era, the Party Center again encouraged senior cadres to recall their revolutionary experiences. CCP senior cadres, however, were not as enthusiastic about writing memoirs as the Party Center had hoped. Having experienced so many political campaigns, and even having been exposed by close friends and family members, some cadres were hesitant to write anything serious. The Party Center attempted to mobilize their participation by assigning great importance to the collection of relevant historical materials, as well as by presenting powerful leaders as models.³⁰ Nonetheless, senior cadres' motivation remained low.

When the Party Center realized the limited effect of mobilization, projects were launched to encourage senior cadres to write autobiographies and biographies, beginning with the project for marshals. These projects were conducted as follows: the autobiographer dictated, while writers recorded and collected more materials in the archives; then, writers submitted drafts to the autobiographer to correct or approve before they finalized their writings and sent them to a particular institution for censorship. To which institution the draft should be submitted, and

³⁰ Then deputy director of the Party History Materials Collection Committee Xie Xiaonai said at a conference in 1982, "Comrade [Hu] Yaobang puts a high value on writing memoirs. He let senior comrades compare the importance of having a specific position in the Party with that of writing memoirs. In his opinion, the latter is more important." Xie also said, "Comrade Deng Xiaoping told us he had started recalling his history; Comrade Chen Yun is doing it too, with his secretary assisting him; elder sister Deng [Yingchao] is also recalling and has made some records." (Xie Xiaonai, 1982, p.14.) In fact, none of these three leaders published any memoirs.

whether the writings indeed needed to be censored by higher institutions, such as the Central Military Committee, depended on the autobiographer's career and position. In early 1980, the Central Military Committee ordered several universities and military regions to organize writing teams to make five sets of biographical materials for marshals.³¹ Although they did not launch such large-scale projects for other senior cadres, the Party Center also arranged for writers to interview them and record their recollections. As a result, for these "autobiographers," writing memoirs or autobiographies was more likely to have been a collective undertaking than a personal recollection.

The Party Center made this arrangement to guarantee that senior cadres' personal recollections were consistent with official Party History, i.e., to prevent their narratives from contradicting the Party's standard interpretations of historical events. Interestingly, in doing this, certain historical issues were raised again, and official interpretations of these issues were challenged. This made the Party Center uncomfortable. The issue of the WRA is one example and will be explored in the next section.³²

In contrast to the Party's original intention to publish senior cadres' biographical works to shape a positive image for the Party, the arrangement of allowing relevant cadres to recollect materials on certain issues served a totally

³¹ In 1955, ten military commanders were rewarded as Marshals of China. These ten commanders were: Zhu De, Peng Dehuai, Lin Biao 林彪 (1907-1971), Liu Bocheng, He Long, Chen Yi 陳毅 (1901-1972), Luo Ronghuan 羅榮桓 (1902-1963), Xu Xiangqian, Nie Rongzhen and Ye Jianying. By 1976 when Mao died, six of them had passed away. Among the six deceased marshals, Lin Biao, as an alleged traitor, did not deserve any set of biographical materials. Peng Dehuai's case was more complicated. Peng was purged by Mao in 1959 and died in 1974. Although he was rehabilitated, the Party Center thought it was still too sensitive to write a biography for him at that time. Therefore, this project actually included eight marshals. The set of biographical materials included biographical documents, biography, selected works, photograph album and memoirs. For the four deceased marshals, organizing people to write memoirs for them was unnecessary, but the compilation of the other four sets of materials was put into action successively. For each of the four marshals still living at the time, Liu Bocheng, Xu Xiangqian, Nie Rongzhen and Ye Jianying, the task of compiling all five sets of biographical materials started immediately. The Military Science Academy, the PLA National Defense University, Beijing Military Region and other institutions took part in this project. See Shu Yun 舒雲, "Canyu bawei yuanshuai zhuanjizu de yixie huiyi 參與八位元帥傳記組的一些回憶" (Memories about working in the writing team for biographies of eight marshals), *Dangshi bolan* 黨史博覽, 2014(8), pp. 42-46.

³² Another example: General Xiao Ke's recollection of the early years of the Central Soviet Region initiated the reinvestigation of the "Purging the 'Anti-Bolshevik Group' campaign" (*su AB tuan* 肅 "AB 團"). Xiao Ke's recollections on this issue were published in *Party History Research Material* in 1982 and became a foundation of further research on this issue. Heng Zhaoyang 衡朝陽, *Zhonggong dangshi yanjiu de xin wenxian he xin shiyu* (1978-2008) 中共黨史研究的新文獻與新視閥(1978-2008) (The new books and review on the history of the CCP), PhD Dissertation, Shanghai: East China Normal University 華東師範大學, 2008, p. 173.

different purpose. Political movements in the Mao Era had created complex relationships among cadres, and feuds within the Party had an adverse influence on the Party's new career in the Reform Era.³³ Therefore, the Party Center attempted to permit cadres to achieve consensus on certain controversial problems by holding "historical material collection meetings." Ultimately, however, these meetings were more effective in raising problems and triggering debates than in resolving issues. Consequently a number of research teams were assembled to conduct further investigations. Some were organized by local governments and conducted research under their supervision, while some elder comrades organized their own teams as well.³⁴ The subjects they researched were broad, and in most cases, their conclusions differed from the official historical narratives.

In short, although the Party Center launched several projects to write Party history in the early years of the Reform Era, their intention was to make use of revolutionary history to gain legitimacy, rather than to overthrow the former official History. These methods achieved undeniable results, but they also led to more and more questions about, and challenges to, the official historical narratives. How did the official Party History institutions and the top leadership respond to these challenges? This response was manifested fully in the case of the WRA.

4.2 The Emergence and Resolution of the WRA Issue

At the beginning of the Reform Era, a new interpretation of the WRA emerged. The first challenge to the orthodox interpretation was initiated by a teacher in a military college. His accounts gained immediate support from the survivors of the WRA and the Fourth Front Army. This situation drew the attention of ideological officials who decided to defend the orthodox interpretation, and as a result, debates between the two sides ensued. Shortly thereafter, top leaders in the CCP, Li Xiannian and Chen Yun, became involved in investigating the issue of the WRA and drew their own conclusions, although the ultimate decision would have been

³³ One of the most active Party ideologues, Deng Liqun 鄧力群 (1915-2015), once said, "When discussing actual issues, [comrades] inevitably mention historical issues, including the relationship between comrades. Leaders at all levels cannot help raising historical issues and debating who is right on these issues. Because these comrades once purged others, now this kind of problem [tangling historical issues with actual issues] is inevitable." Deng Liqun said the above words in a talk on the October 14, 1994. Cited from Xiao Donglian, 2008, p. 257.

³⁴ Feng Wenbin 馮文彬, "Jinyibu duanzheng dangshi ziliao zhengji gongzuo de zhidao sixiang 進一步端正黨史資料徵集工作的指導思想" (Streamline the directing thought of collecting Party history materials), *Sichuan dangshi yanjiu ziliao* 四川黨史研究資料, 1983(5), p. 12.

made by Deng Xiaoping. Scholars have pointed out that in the 1980s, the Chinese political system focused to a great degree on Deng's personal authority.³⁵ This section will show that the field of Party history was no exception.

4.2.1 Challenge and Resistance

The challenge to the orthodox interpretation of the WRA originated from the team writing Marshal Xu Xiangqian's biography. As related previously, the writing team was established in 1980 on instructions from the Central Military Committee, and each writer was responsible for one or two chapters of Xu's biography. A teacher of the Politics Institute of the PLA (*Jiefangjun zhengzhi xueyuan* 解放軍政治學院),³⁶ Zhu Yu 朱玉 (1933-), was assigned to write chapters about the Sichuan-Shaanxi Revolutionary Base (*Chuan-Shaan genjudi* 川陝根據地) period (1932-1935), and the WRA period. Zhu was also in charge of helping Xu recollect his experiences and the actual writing of the memoirs. Together with other writers, there was a period when Zhu spent considerable time in the Central Archives collecting primary materials.³⁷ After Zhu copied some telegrams sent to the WRA by the Party Center, he believed he had found contradictions to the official interpretation. The telegrams that Zhu mentioned were published in the 1990s, and have become basic primary materials for studies of the WRA's history. However, in 1980, after having been kept secret for decades, these telegrams stunned Zhu.

The first thing Zhu decided to do was write a short article, "Doubts about the WRA." The article was only two thousand characters long and provided no introduction to the problem. Obviously, it was written for veterans and Party historians, not for ordinary readers. The article did not present any argument explicitly; instead, it presented three contradictions in the official narratives. First, Zhu challenged the official interpretation of the WRA's original intention—to retreat to Xinjiang and build a route to the Soviet Union in order to achieve Zhang Guotao's personal ambition. Zhu emphasized the fact that the army did not stop marching north towards Ningxia until the Party Center named the army "Xilujun,"

³⁵ Harry Harding, *China's Second Revolution: Reform After Mao*. Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1987, p. 236.

³⁶ The Politics Institute of the PLA was combined with the PLA Military Institute and Logistics Institute and renamed National Defense University in 1985.

³⁷ Zhu was relatively privileged as the only writer who stayed with Xu's family in case the old Marshal would like to talk about his past at any time. He even joined the annual recuperating trips with Xu's family to famous health resorts. Xu Xiaoyan 徐小岩, interview, Beijing, October 15, 2013.

which means “the army that marches west.” He asked: “If the WRA had made up its mind to go west without the Party Center’s orders, why did it bother to go the long way round?” The second question Zhu raised was why had the official History condemned the army for fleeing from battlefields because of timidity, despite the fact that they had spent nearly two months building revolutionary bases in certain areas where the majority of the enemy had settled, rather than retreating to Xinjiang as soon as possible? The last contradiction concerned the record of the official History, according to which the WRA had ignored the Party Center’s orders and refused to return to the east bank of the Yellow River. Zhu asked why no evidence, such as telegrams between the Party Center and the WRA headquarters, was presented to support such a serious charge.³⁸ Interestingly, when he published his article, Zhu concealed the relationship between himself and Marshal Xu discreetly by using a homophonic pen-name, and explaining that he found the issue of the WRA debatable because he had “read some pamphlets recently,” rather than mentioning that he found material in the primary archives.³⁹

Although Zhu’s first article was more like a study note than an academic article and was not published publicly,⁴⁰ it attracted the attention of former WRA commanders and soldiers swiftly. Encouraged by their response, Zhu answered the questions he had raised in “Doubts about the WRA” systematically, and drew three major conclusions in his second article. First, he argued that the WRA’s goal was to connect with the Soviet Union to conduct the strategy of “opening an international route” (*datong guoji luxian* 打通國際路線). Further, Zhu contended that this strategy had been upheld and supported for several years by the Party Center and Mao. The fact that it became identified mistakenly as a product of the “Zhang Guotao Line” reflected leftist errors in the field of Party history and military history studies. Second, the decision to establish the WRA was made by the Party

³⁸ Zhu Yu 竹鬱, “Xilujun yi 西路軍疑” (Doubts about the WRA), *Dangshi yanjiu ziliao* 黨史研究資料, Vol. 74 (September 1983), pp. 25-27.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Zhu sent “Doubts about the WRA” to two authoritative Party History periodicals, but both rejected the submission. One of them was *Neibu weiding gao* 內部未定稿 (Internal draft), an internal periodical edited by the editorial department of *Lishi yanjiu* 歷史研究 (Historical Research). Although *Lishi yanjiu* was well-known at the time for its openness and boldness, the editorial department did not accept Zhu’s article but submitted it to “the most extreme leftist within the Party” (*zuo wang* 左王) Deng Liqun, then vice director of CASS, for examination and subsequently rejected the submission on the basis of Deng’s order. Eventually it was published in an internal magazine of the Chengdu Military Region with the help of a WRA survivor, Chen Mingyi 陳明義, who at the time was the Deputy Commander of Chengdu Military Region.

Center and the Military Committee on the basis of changing exigencies. Initially, the troops were ordered to march northward towards Ningxia, as part of the Ningxia Campaign. Two weeks later, because of several unforeseeable changes, the Party Center directed the army to go westward and titled it “Xilujun.” Third, the WRA made a significant contribution to the Red Army’s victory in northwestern China. Although it failed, it did so only in part, and was, in fact, an indispensable element in the overall victory.⁴¹ To summarize, Zhu sought to demonstrate the WRA’s legitimacy from three perspectives: political correctness, proper process, and beneficial outcomes.

Faced with such a bold challenge to official Party History, the Central Party History Research Office (hereafter CPHRO) asked a researcher in the office to respond to Zhu’s views, and they compiled this researcher’s article and Zhu’s second article into a mimeographed pamphlet published internally in November 1981. At the time, in the context of the nation-wide “liberation of thought movement” (*sixiang jiefang yundong* 思想解放運動), the CPHRO was determined to publish a series of such pamphlets, each with a controversial issue as the theme. They entitled this series *Reference Materials for Party History Studies*, indicating that their purpose was to “provide important reference materials and different views on controversial issues.”⁴² However, the first volume that focused on the WRA was also the last [Fig. 4-1].

In contrast to Zhu, Ye Xinyu, the CPHRO researcher who was assigned the task of investigating the issue of the WRA, insisted on the orthodox interpretation. According to Ye, the WRA’s existence was not related to the plan of “opening an international route” proposed by the Party Center and agreed to by the Comintern, because the plan was “to connect with Mongolia and the Soviet Union through Ningxia, not Xinjiang.” Neither was the WRA a part of the Ningxia Campaign Plan, as Zhu had insisted, because according to this plan, it was the First Front Army, not Zhang Guotao’s troops, that would march westward to obtain the Soviet Union’s assistance. With respect to the fact that the Party Center gave permission for the Thirtieth Army to cross the Yellow River, Ye pointed out that the army should have stayed near Jingyuan and Zhongwei 中衛, after it crossed the river, and it was

⁴¹ Zhu Yu 朱玉, “Ba lishi de neirong huaigei lishi—Xilujun wenti chutan 把歷史的內容還給歷史——西路軍問題初探” (Return the contents of history to history: a preliminary exploration of the WRA issue), printed copy, 1982.

⁴² “Fakan shuoming 發刊說明” (Editors’ words), *Dangshi cankao ziliao* 黨史參考資料, 1981, p. 1.

Zhang Guotao who took advantage of the Party Center's order and made the army go farther west. In short, in Ye's opinion, Zhang plotted all of those military actions because he "intended to retreat to Qinghai, Ningxia and Xinjiang as early as 1935 and insisted on doing so even though it had been pointed out as an error by the Party Center several times." In response to Zhu's argument that the WRA's establishment was under the Party Center's directive, Ye explained that the operations of the Fourth Front Army troops placed the Party Center in a dilemma:

[The Party Center] had no choice but to establish the WRA only after the Thirtieth, Ninth and Fifth Armies had already crossed the Yellow River under Zhang Guotao's orders. On several occasions the Party Center asked the WRA not to march west and ordered it to cooperate with armies on the east bank of the Yellow River. The Party Center never directed the troops to go to Xinjiang where they were disastrously defeated and had no possibility to return to the east bank.⁴³

To illustrate these points, Ye selected 220 pieces of information from archives and documents. Controversially, some primary materials that Zhu provided to support his views were also included in Ye's materials, which meant that these two researchers had used similar materials to draw diametrically opposed conclusions. Ye's article was the CPHRO's first, and only, formal response to Zhu's challenge.

Not long after, Zhu wrote a third article to refute Ye's views. He said that Ye had tried her best to argue against his opinions while ironically providing many materials that supported him. Zhu believed that if the telegrams Ye provided were rearranged chronologically, her views would collapse without being attacked.⁴⁴ Zhu sent his third article to Liao Gailong 廖蓋隆 (1918-2001), then vice director of the CPHRO. Liao agreed to publish it in the second volume of *Reference Materials for Party History*. At this point, however, Hu Qiaomu suggested that there be no further debate on the issue.⁴⁵ Thus, the debates about the issue of the WRA between Zhu and the CPHRO came to an abrupt conclusion.⁴⁶

⁴³ Ye Xinyu 葉心瑜, "Guanyu Xilujun wenti de ziliao xuanbian 關於西路軍問題的資料選編" (Selected materials on the issue of the WRA), *Dangshi cankao ziliao* 黨史參考資料, 1981, pp. 2-110.

⁴⁴ Zhu Yu, "Bei fouding de lishi yu bei lishi de fouding 被否定的歷史與被歷史的否定" (Negated history and negation by history), printed copy, 1982.

⁴⁵ Ibid.; Zhu Yu 朱玉, interview, Beijing, June 3, 2013.

⁴⁶ Besides these debates there were also some other papers representing the opinions of both sides

The contradiction between the two debaters focused on two main questions: whose order was carried out when a part of the Fourth Front Army crossed the Yellow River—the Party Center’s or Zhang’s? Whose order was followed when the WRA marched west towards Xinjiang along the Hexi Corridor—the Party Center’s or Zhang’s? The disparate answers to these questions led directly to different interpretations of Mao’s and the Party Center’s famous indictment that the WRA had carried out Zhang’s erroneous line.

From 1981 to 1982, the two sides maintained their own opinions firmly, and failed to achieve any consensus. It was not long before they realized that the involvement of two top leaders had made the situation even more complex.

4.2.2 “I Was Involved”: The Investigation of Top-ranking Leaders

As soon as the WRA became a subject of intra-Party debate, the Party’s Central Leading Group of Party History (*Zhonggong zhongyang dangshi gongzuo lingdao xiaozu* 中共中央黨史工作領導小組) realized the significance of the matter, and reassigned the Military Science Academy to compile primary materials on this issue in case the Party Center needed to discuss it.⁴⁷ Leaving the leadership to decide difficult historical problems was a convention of the CCP, and they anticipated a series of conferences, intra-Party discussions, and a new decision issued by the Party Center either supporting the new interpretation or maintaining the old one. Instead, on this issue, no convention was followed.

Three Party Leaders: Li, Chen, and Xu

Not long after Zhu published his article “Doubts about the WRA,” and sent it to

during this period. Zhu Yu’s good friend and colleague Cong Jin 叢進, for example, wrote an article to question the verdict made on the WRA in Mao’s article “Strategic Issues of Chinese Revolutionary War” which instigated a small-scale debate with Zhang Yimin 張亦民, an academic at the PLA Military Institute. Zhang Yimin published an article titled “Bo Zhang Guotao zai *Wode huiyi* zhong youguan Xilujun de miulun 駁張國燾在〈我的回憶〉中有關西路軍的謬論” (Refutation of Zhang Guotao’s ridiculous accounts about the WRA in his memoirs) in 1982 [*Dangshi yanjiu* 黨史研究, 1982(1)]. Cong Jin wrote an article to criticize Zhang’s views. [“Youguan Xilujun de jige wenti: yu Zhang Yimin tongzhi shangque 有關西路軍的幾個問題——與張亦民同志商榷” (Several issues about the WRA: to discuss with Comrade Zhang Yimin), *Dangshi yanjiu ziliao* 黨史研究資料, 1982(5), pp. 27-30.] After that, Zhang Yimin also tried to publish his article [“Lun Xilujun de shimo yu Zhang Guotao de zeren: da Cong Jin tongzhi 論西路軍的始末與張國燾的責任——答叢進同志”(The WRA’s history and Zhang Guotao’s responsibility: answers to Comrade Cong Jin’s questions)] in *Dangshi yanjiu ziliao* to debate with Cong Jin, but at this time, according to Zhang, the editorial department had received notice from upper organs about not debating the issue of the WRA any longer, and therefore his article was rejected by *Dangshi yanjiu ziliao*. Zhang later disseminated his article at some conferences and put his recollections on the debate with Cong Jin on some websites.

<http://club.kdnet.net/disppbbs.asp?boardid=1&id=8143354> (last visited on June 1, 2015).

⁴⁷ Xu Zhanquan 徐占權, interview, Beijing, September 11, 2013.

veterans of the Fourth Front Army, a copy arrived on Deng's desk.⁴⁸ Deng sent it to Li Xiannian, the former commander of the Thirtieth Army and then President of the PRC. After reading it, Li sought advice from Chen Yun. In 1937, Chen met Li and the remaining troops of the WRA at the Gansu-Xinjiang border and arranged for them to study technologies in Xinjiang. In response to Li's request for advice, Chen suggested that Li do some research on the subject and write a report.⁴⁹ Li followed his suggestion and began to investigate the WRA's history. At the time, it was a secret project unknown to most of the top leaders.⁵⁰

Chen played a significant role in supporting Li on the issue of the WRA, not only by encouraging him to write a report, but also by providing instructions through various means. According to Chen's official chronological biography, during this period, he thrice took up the issue of the WRA in conversations with Li and expressed his opinions explicitly. On the November 22, 1981, Chen said, "The WRA problem should not be skirted; the decision to let them cross the Yellow River was made by the Party Center, so it was wrong to call it a product of Zhang Guotao's separatist line."⁵¹ On February 27, 1982, Chen repeated this point of view, and recalled that he saw munitions the Soviet Union had prepared for the WRA on the border of Xinjiang and the Soviet Union. "It is an issue in which I was involved," he said to Li, "I am already 77 years old and have to make the things clear [before I die]."⁵² Chen's opinion of the WRA was significant to Li for two reasons. First, around the mid-1930s, Chen was part of the CCP leadership and once became the CCP's representative in the Comintern, while Li was still an ordinary commander in the Red Army. In this respect, although both had personal relationships with the WRA, Chen was more qualified to assess the WRA from a broader perspective. Second, in the 1980s, although Li's position was higher than that of Chen, the latter actually had greater influence within the Party.⁵³ As a result, to a considerable extent, Chen's opinion on a specific historical issue represented the attitude of the

⁴⁸ Xu Xiangqian's secretary, Li Erbing 李而炳 (1945-), said they had not figured out by which means the article was sent to Deng yet. Li Erbing, interview, Beijing, November 13, 2013.

⁴⁹ Li Xiannian 李先念, "Guanyu Xilujun lishi shang jige wenti de shuoming 關於西路軍歷史上幾個問題的說明" (Statement about several issues in the history of the WRA), printed copy, 1983.

⁵⁰ Zhu Yu, interview, 2013; Xu Zhanquan, interview, 2013; Li Erbing, interview, 2013.

⁵¹ Zhonggong zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi 中共中央文獻研究室 (The Party Literature Research Center of the CCP Central Committee), ed., *Chen Yun nianpu 陳雲年譜* (Chronological biography of Chen Yun), Volume 3. Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe 中央文獻出版社, 2000, p. 282.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 291.

⁵³ Among the six standing committee members of the CCP Politburo elected in the Twelfth National Party Congress in 1982, Deng Xiaoping and Chen Yun ranked the third and the sixth respectively, but they actually were the two most powerful figures in the Party.

top leadership.⁵⁴

In addition to Li and Chen, there was another important figure who was playing a subtle role in reassessing the WRA. This was Marshal Xu Xiangqian. Because Chen Changhao died in 1967, and Zhang Guotao defected long before, and died in Canada in 1979, Xu was the only surviving top commander of the Fourth Front Army. Although it was his memoir writer, Zhu, who challenged the official account, there is no indication in his chronological biography that Xu gave Zhu direction, encouragement, or acquiescence.⁵⁵ Evidence shows, however, that Marshal Xu did not distance himself from this issue. In 1982, when four CPHRO researchers interviewed him, Xu was quite unequivocal: “I led the Fourth Front Army to cross the Yellow River according to the orders of Chairman Mao, Zhou Enlai and Zhang Wentian, all sent by telegrams. [The WRA’s crossing of the Yellow River] was on the command of the Central Military Committee.”⁵⁶ During the interview, researchers mentioned a newspaper article published five years before on the first page of the *People’s Daily* under Xu’s name, to commemorate the first anniversary of Mao’s death. The article recalled conflicts between Mao and Zhang from 1935 to 1936 [Fig. 4-2]. With respect to the origin of the WRA, the article stated, “Zhang Guotao ignored the whole situation and insisted on the right-wing opportunist line, vainly attempting to occupy an area in west China and rule there.” The statement made it quite clear that Zhang had directed the Fourth Front Army without the Party Center’s approval.⁵⁷ During the interview five years after its publication, Xu told the interviewers that the accounts in the article were incorrect.⁵⁸ He said,

⁵⁴ As Xiao Donglian points out, at the time, although Chen and Deng held different views on some financial issues, they basically had a consensus on how to deal with intra-Party affairs. Xiao Donglian, 2008, pp. 239-337.

⁵⁵ At the time, Li Erbing, was in charge of the organization and coordination of the biographical project. Zhu Yu had Li Erbing’s support and assistance from the very beginning, but both of them firmly denied Xu Xiangqian’s involvement in challenging the official historical narratives. According to them, Xu had nothing to do with the writing and publishing of “Doubts about the WRA”. They said they deliberately kept Xu ignorant because they believed it was not the right time to ask for Xu’s opinion as they were not quite sure whether the conditions for discussing the WRA publicly were ripe. According to Li Erbing, Li Xiannian and Xu Xiangqian met frequently at the time, and Li Xiannian once conveyed Deng Xiaoping’s suggestion that Xu should not involve himself in the debate about the WRA; Xu was not aware of the details of the debate until Li finished the draft of his report and sent it to Xu for advice. Zhu Yu, interview, 2013; Li Erbing, interview, 2013.

⁵⁶ Liao Gailong 廖蓋隆, “Xu Xiangqian yuanshuai shengqian de feifu zhiyan 徐向前元帥生前的肺腑之言” (The sincere words of Marshal Xu Xiangqian), *Sichuan dangshi* 四川黨史, 1994(6), pp. 31-37.

⁵⁷ Xu Xiangqian 徐向前, “Yongyuan jianchi dang zhihui qiang de yuanze 永遠堅持黨指揮槍的原則” (Forever uphold the principle that the Party commands the Army), *Renmin ribao* 人民日報, the September 19, 1977, p. 1.

⁵⁸ One of Xu Xiangqian’s secretaries, Liao Chunfu 廖春福, explained: “At the time, the *People’s Daily*

“There were many restraints before; they all have gone now. Only if the restraints were broken, could right conclusions be drawn.”⁵⁹ Vice director of the CPHRO, Liao Gailong, attended this interview. Xu’s secretary, Li Erbing, recalled that Liao was influenced greatly by Xu’s remarks; he had supported the orthodox interpretation before the interview, but changed his mind thereafter.⁶⁰

Li Xiannian’s Report

With support from Chen and Xu, Li’s report was progressing well. In February 1983, after several months of collecting and compiling material, Li’s secretaries finished a report entitled, “Explanation of several issues in the history of the WRA.” This report divided the WRA’s military actions into four phases and proved subsequently that all of the troops’ actions—firstly the move northward, then the march westward and their occasional stationing in various regions—were in accordance with the Party Center’s directives, with telegrams as evidence.⁶¹ Because Li was the Political Commissar of the Thirtieth Army, he described some details of battles conducted by the Thirtieth Army as well. At the end, the report drew the following conclusions:

The foregoing historical facts have proved that the mission of the WRA was decided by the Party Center. From the very beginning the WRA was led by the Central Military Committee, who directed or approved all of the main military actions of the WRA. For this reason, the matter of the WRA is essentially different from the matter in which Zhang Guotao ordered the Fourth Front Army to march southward without the Party Center’s approval in September 1935. According to the Party Center’s directions, the WRA’s mission was to establish revolutionary bases in the Hexi corridor and to make a connection to the Soviet Union. Therefore, the WRA should not be

asked Marshal Xu to write an article for the first anniversary of Chairman Mao’s death. The newspaper office recommended a couple of comrades in the Military Science Academy to do it. They submitted a manuscript to me, and Marshal Xu asked me to read it first. I was not familiar with this history. I have to bear responsibility for this mistake.” Xu declared responsibility as well. See Liao Gailong, 1994.

⁵⁹ Liao Gailong, 1994.

⁶⁰ Li Erbing, interview, 2013.

⁶¹ The first phase was when the Ningxia Campaign Plan was made and the Fourth Front Army crossed the Yellow River according to it. During the second phase, the Ningxia Campaign Plan was abandoned, and the troops on the west bank were titled the “WRA” and told to march to Xinjiang. The third phase was before and after the Xi’an Incident when the WRA tried to settle in Wuwei and Zhangye. In the last phrase the army tried to build revolutionary bases in Linze and Gaotai.

condemned as “carrying out Zhang Guotao’s line”.⁶²

Although Li’s report clearly separated the WRA from the so-called “Zhang Guotao Line”, it did not try to defend Zhang and the line. With respect to whether Zhang had conspired to take advantage of the WRA to split the Red Army and the Party, this report strategically adopted an obscure expression:

As for Zhang Guotao, some comrades think that because Zhang split the Party and Red Army during the Long March period, he might be cunning enough to take advantage of the Party Center’s decision in order to advance his own power on the west bank of the Yellow River and to stand up to the Party Center. This theory is not unreasonable.⁶³

Moreover, Li’s report did not even attempt to deny Zhang’s influence on the WRA. When summarizing the reasons for the failure of the WRA, besides domestic and international circumstances, inappropriate tactics, and geographical difficulties, the influence of “Zhang Guotao’s Errors” were also listed.⁶⁴ In short, Li’s main point, which is also the major difference between his interpretation of the WRA and the official narratives, is that the Party Center directed the WRA, so that its failure could not be attributed to the “Zhang Guotao Line.” As for Zhang and his errors, Li adhered fully to the Party Center’s conclusions.

A New Interpretation of the WRA

Li’s report, together with Zhu’s articles, created a new interpretation of the WRA, one that still prevails in China today. In addition to the most obvious difference—the conflicting explanations about the relationship between the WRA and the so-called “Zhang Guotao Line”—this new interpretation also diverged from the orthodox version of the WRA’s mission and the reasons for its failure that dominated during the Mao Era (See Table 4-1).

In creating the orthodox interpretation, Mao and his writers provided only conclusions without any evidence. In contrast, advocates of the new interpretation emphasized the use of primary materials. Li attached fifty-two telegrams to his report, including correspondence between the Party Center, the Military Committee, the Red Army Headquarters and commanders of the WRA, and the

⁶² Li Xiannian, 1983, pp. 22-23.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 7.

⁶⁴ Ibid., pp. 25-26.

Second Front Army from late June 1936 to May 1937. This made Li's conclusions more persuasive. As also mentioned, the CPHRO's response to Zhu Yu also cited and attached a huge number of telegrams. Interestingly, both sides accused the other of misusing telegrams as evidence. Li's report was criticized in particular for selecting materials for its own purposes and misleading top leaders, such as Deng and Chen (especially in the 21st century; see Chapter 6).

Using telegrams as evidence is, in fact, questionable for three reasons: first, as pointed out in Chapter 1, the Party and the Red Army were experiencing an ever-changing situation on the battlefield between late 1936 to early 1937, and accordingly, their plans also changed constantly. Therefore, words in telegrams at the time could only represent the Party Center's decisions in part. They also were too concise to be understood fully without being put into a comprehensive context. Second, although the Central Archives provided most of the telegrams sent and received by the Party Center and the Central Military Committee that had been preserved, there was still a considerable number of them too sensitive to be read, even by the aides of top leaders.⁶⁵ Thus, drawing conclusions based principally on the existing telegrams was unreliable, and served only to advance the researchers' own purposes. Third, as for the main question—whether the WRA was part of the “Zhang Guotao Line”—there were no accepted criteria. Did the answer lie in whether Zhang directed the troops himself, or whether they retreated, or whether the major commanders explicitly claimed their break up with Zhang? In summary, in the early 1980s, both those who supported the new interpretation, and those who supported the main points in the orthodox interpretation of the WRA were using an inadequate body of evidence to prove a weak argument. As a result, both sides drew general and ambiguous conclusions. Therefore, it is unnecessary to determine which side is more reasonable.

4.2.3 Deng Xiaoping's Decision to Silence the Debates

Li Xiannian's report was circulated to all standing members of the Politburo in March 1983. Thereafter, it was filed in the Party's Central Archives and kept secret from other leaders, and certainly from ordinary Party members. On the surface, Li suggested dealing with it in this way;⁶⁶ Chen Yun agreed, and ultimately, it was

⁶⁵ Zhu Yu, interview, 2013.

⁶⁶ At the end of the statement, Li Xiannian said: “Nowadays as many facts have been figured out, accounts need to be revised according to those facts. It will help achieve [intra-Party] unity.” At the

approved by Deng Xiaoping. What it actually reveals are the principles and means by which “senior leaders” dealt with intra-Party historical problems.

As soon as Li finally finished his report, he sent it to Chen. After reading it, Chen wrote a letter to Li in which he commented, “All the attachments are historical telegrams,” and agreed to keep them in the Central Party History Research Office and the Party’s Central Archives. Chen also enjoined Li to submit the report to Deng before circulating it among other Politburo standing members, and Li again followed Chen’s advice. Deng’s comments were brief: “[I] agree with the statement [about the WRA submitted by Li Xiannian] and agree to keep [this statement and the materials attached to it] in the Central Archives.”⁶⁷ Subsequently, the report became the 891st circulating document of the CCP Central Committee; the other three Politburo standing members, Hu Yaobang, Ye Jianying, and Zhao Ziyang 趙紫陽 (1919-2005) circled their own names on the cover to indicate that they had read it, but made no written comments. Chen’s and Deng’s words, therefore, became the new verdicts on the issue of the WRA [Fig. 4-3; 4-4; 4-5]. Nevertheless, due to the vagueness of their language, the supporters of the new interpretation failed to make use of Deng’s and Chen’s comments to overthrow Mao’s orthodox interpretation of the WRA. This point will be discussed in Chapter 6.

We can draw two inferences from Chen’s and Deng’s comments: one was that they did not oppose Li’s statement. The other was that the new interpretation had to be limited to the top leadership, and was not to be delivered to ordinary Party members and others.

Why did the CCP leadership of the Reform Era deal with such a significant historical event in this way? For quite some time after 1978, the legitimacy of the reform policy and opening up relied on the repudiation and correction of the serious errors that the Party had committed after 1949. This might give the misleading impression that at the time, Party history in its entirety was about to be reinterpreted. The reality, however, was that resolution of a debate about a particular historical event before 1949—whether the orthodox interpretation

same time, however, he suggested not to discuss those “historical facts” publicly: “At present the whole Party and all Chinese people are busy constructing socialist modernization. The issue of the WRA has become a historical problem that should not be argued publicly.” He suggested the statement not be published, but instead, “if the Party Center thinks it feasible, it might be kept in the Central Archives and Central Party History Research Office as a reference for comrades who do research on the WRA, so that when referring to this issue people will notice the directives that the Party Center delivered and try their best to tally with historical facts.” Li Xiannian, 1983, p. 28.

⁶⁷ Deng Xiaoping’s handwritten comment on Li Xiannian’s report, 1983.

should be re-evaluated, maintained, or set aside—depended on the balance of interests between participants in those events and the whole Party.

Most of the reassessments of historical problems in the early years of the Reform Era were either initiated or supported by senior cadres who at the time had influence within the Party.⁶⁸ When there were conflicts about whether a specific issue should be reassessed, a decisive factor was which side could obtain the personal support of top leaders. It should be noted that the senior cadres who advocated reinvestigation were not necessarily the victims. Instead, in some cases, it was those who caused the injustices, directly or indirectly, who played a decisive role in instigating the reinvestigation of specific cases.⁶⁹ They had conducted purges in the Mao Era, but rethought their behavior after Mao died and made new judgments that differed from those they had been taught decades before. In this way, they in turn became drivers of new historical interpretations.

In addition to those people who had been involved personally in the historical issues, another group also cared greatly about reassessments of historical problems—the producers of the official Party History framework. Any challenge to orthodox Party History, especially that which might overthrow the verdicts Mao had made, was a serious affront to this group. As discussed in the last section, the new leadership of the Reform Era faced two challenging tasks simultaneously—to legitimize their reform policies and to maintain Mao's and the Party's authority. Both tasks were seen as essential. For those leaders who took charge of ideology,

⁶⁸ One example is the CCP's high-ranking intelligence official Pan Hannian's 潘漢年 case. In the early 1980s, Chen Yun intervened in the reinvestigation of Pan's case and directly helped rehabilitate Pan. See *Chen Yun nianpu*, Volume 2, 2000, pp. 254, 269. Song Renqiong mentions several other examples in his memoirs. See Song Renqiong, 2007, pp. 442-446.

⁶⁹ For instance, the famous victim of the Rectification Campaign in Yan'an, Wang Shiwei 王實味, would not have been thoroughly rehabilitated if Li Weihang had not insisted on reinvestigation. Wang Shiwei was a writer and translator in the Yan'an Central Research Academy (Yan'an zhongyang yanjiuyuan 延安中央研究院). He wrote an essay "Wild Lilies" (野百合花) to criticize the unfairness in Yan'an at the beginning of the Rectification Campaign and in 1946 was convicted of being a "counterrevolutionary Trotskyist" (反革命托派分子) and for spying. In July 1947 when the CCP left Yan'an, he was quickly killed. Li Weihang was a leader of the Yan'an Central Research Academy when Wang Shiwei was purged. In the early 1980s, Li tried his best to rehabilitate Wang. See Li Rui 李銳, *Li Rui koushu wangshi* 李銳口述往事 (Oral history by Li Rui). Hong Kong: Dashan wenhua chubanshe 大山文化出版社, 2013, p. 186. For more information about Wang Shiwei and his case, see Dai Qing 戴晴, edited by David E. Apter and Timothy Cheek, translated by Nancy Liu and Lawrence R. Sullivan, *Wang Shiwei and Wild Lilies: Rectification and Purges in the Chinese Communist Party, 1942-1944*. Armonk, N. Y.: M. E. Sharp, 1993; and Timothy Cheek, "The Fading of Wild Lilies: Wang Shiwei and Mao's Yan'an Talks in the First CPC Rectification Movement", *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, No. 11. (January 1984), pp. 25-28. For the rehabilitation of Wang Shiwei in the 1980s, see Wen Jize 溫濟澤, ed., *Wang Shiwei yuanan pingfan jishi* 王實味冤案平反紀實 (Actual records of the rehabilitation of Wang Shiwei). Beijing: Qunzhong chubanshe 群眾出版社, 1993.

however, the latter task was much more important. Li Honglin made the following observation about the ideological struggles in the Reform Era: “When Mao was alive, he personally launched almost every round of ideological struggles.... It was different in the new era, as most struggles were initiated by some second or third-tier theorists who considered themselves as the representatives of the Party.”⁷⁰ One possible explanation is that because it was these people’s lifelong careers to perfect and propagandize “Mao Zedong Thought”—and reforms had little to do with their interests—they showed great determination to maintain all the *fait accompli* concerning Mao, his thoughts, and his behaviors, as well as his interpretations of historical issues. Hu Qiaomu was one of the most important figures in this group. As the writer of “Thirty Years,” and one of the creators of the official Party History framework who had led the CPHRO since 1980, Hu was still in charge of writing official History during the Reform Era. Although he advocated removing strong language from official Party History, he tended to maintain Mao’s judgments on important issues.

Due to the above complicated relationships, the leadership’s primary concern when dealing with sensitive historical problems was to prevent different interest groups within the Party from bursting into conflict. To draw historical conclusions was a secondary, if not the least important, goal. During the period when erroneous cases were being rehabilitated and resolutions on historical issues were being discussed, Deng had discovered that any change to Mao’s decisions had the potential to trigger strong reactions among different interest groups. On the one hand, he was unable to maintain all of Mao’s judgments; on the other, he did not want Mao’s image to be damaged due to the necessary revisions of his verdicts.⁷¹ When confronted by this dilemma, Deng’s solution was to adopt ambiguous language.

⁷⁰ Li Honglin 李洪林, *Zhongguo sixiang yundong shi: 1949-1989* 中國思想運動史：1949-1989 (A history of thoughts in China, from 1949 to 1989). Hong Kong: Tiandi tushu youxian gongsi 天地圖書有限公司, 1999, p. 266.

⁷¹ Deng Xiaoping said the following words during a meeting with Hu Yaobang, Hu Qiaomu and Deng Liqun: “We rehabilitated Comrade Liu Shaoqi at the Fifth Plenum of the Eleventh Congress. After this decision was conveyed [to Party members and ordinary people] some people were confused. Some people opposed the rehabilitation of Comrade Liu Shaoqi, arguing that this rehabilitation was contrary to Mao Zedong Thought. Some other people considered the rehabilitation of Comrade Liu Shaoqi as showing that Mao Zedong Thought was wrong. Both of these opinions were wrong. We must eliminate these confusing opinions.” Deng Xiaoping 鄧小平, *Deng Xiaoping wenxuan* 鄧小平文選(第2卷) (Selected works of Deng Xiaoping, Volume 2). Beijing: Renmin chubanshe 人民出版社, p. 291.

Deng's Dictum

Specifically, Deng invented and followed a now well-known dictum to supervise the works associated with Party history: “It is better to be vague than meticulous (*yi cu buyi xi* 宜粗不宜細).” Party scholars have summarized the meanings of this dictum as follows.

To abstract the nature of things and sum up experiences and lessons [from Party History]; to capture the major contradiction and the main aspects of the contradiction instead of getting trapped by details and so to keep some problems off the table until history develops; to avoid some problems that conflict with current policies.⁷²

Although impressive, this summary has over-interpreted Deng. What he meant by this dictum was actually as simple as, “to avoid talking about those historical problems that we cannot deal with now.” In his own words, “For the problems that our generation cannot resolve, leave them to the next generation,” because, “things will become clearer and clearer with the passage of time.”⁷³ Deng’s close colleague, Yang Shangkun, made this point more explicitly:

Avoidance (*hui bi* 回避) does not mean to delete all the contents about this problem, but means not to research it in detail...For some serious and controversial problems, I think adopting the method of avoidance is feasible. Compiling internal materials [materials with restricted circulation] is also an option...If there still are different opinions about a problem, then it would be better to put this problem aside; for those problems on which consensuses have been achieved, we can draw conclusions.⁷⁴

By filing Li’s report in the archives while not openly supporting or opposing its contents, Deng allowed all of these three relevant groups of people to feel that they

⁷² Zhang Jiafang 張家芳 and Wang Xianjun 王先俊, “Dui Deng Xiaoping ‘yicu buyi xi’ yuanze de kaobian 對鄧小平宜粗不宜細原則的考辨” (Research on the principle of “it is better to be vague than meticulous”), *Beijing dangshi* 北京黨史, 2003(3), pp. 23-25.

⁷³ Zhonggong zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi 中共中央文獻研究室, ed., *Deng Xiaoping sixiang nianpu (1975-1997)* 鄧小平思想年譜 (1975-1997) (Chronology of Deng Xiaoping’s thought). Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe 中央文獻出版社, 1998, p. 92.

⁷⁴ Yang Shangkun 楊尚昆, “Guanyu zhengji dangshi junshi ziliao he bianzhuang junshi shiliao congshu de jige wenti 關於徵集黨史軍史資料和編纂軍事史料叢書的幾個問題” (Several issues on the selection of military history materials and the compilation of military history books), *Zhonggong dangshi yanjiu* 中共黨史研究, 1990(5), pp. 1-5.

had secured his support. On the one hand, Deng did not subvert the orthodox assessments; in this way senior cadres who advocated the authority of official Party History and Mao's verdicts would not be irritated. On the other hand, as the new interpretation was included in the official archives of the WRA, the WRA veterans' requirements were met to some extent. By doing this, Deng tried to maintain intra-Party stability, or in his own words, to make the Party "unite and look to the future." Li's and Chen's attitudes about dealing with the new interpretation indicated that their personal relationship with the WRA did not prevent them from addressing historical issues from the standpoint of the Party leadership.

After Deng wrote his comment on Li's report, his request to discontinue the debate was acted upon immediately. As a result, the comparatively free debates that occurred in 1980 and 1981 came to an end. In September 1983, the Party History Studies Office of the Chinese Revolutionary Museum decided to publish three articles by Zhu and Cong Jin in their internal periodical, *Party History Research Material*, which made the WRA the theme of the 74th volume. The editors wrote: "Research on the WRA has gained gratifying results."⁷⁵ Not surprisingly, this special volume was withdrawn in response to an order given by Yang Shangkun, the head of the Central Leading Group of Party History, who in the 1930s, was a high-ranking commander in the First Front Army, and in a short time, a new 74th volume was compiled and printed with entirely different contents.⁷⁶ It was because of this event that people with an interest in the WRA matter realized that debates on the matter had once again been placed under strict control.

The final point that needs to be noted is that, like other senior Party cadres, Deng also insisted on certain historical verdicts and used his authority to maintain or promote his preferred historical interpretations. Interpretations were chosen because they were advantageous to his image, a motivation he shared with Li, Xu, and other leaders who have been discussed previously. The two most obvious examples of Deng's personal concerns about historical issues are the "Gao Gang 高

⁷⁵ "Bianzhe de hua 編者的話" (Editors' words), *Dangshi yanjiu ziliao* 黨史研究資料, Vol. 74 (September 1983), p. 2.

⁷⁶ However, before this happened, the *Liberation Daily* (解放日報) based in Shanghai reported the publication of the internal periodical in its provocative tabloid *Baokan wenzhai* (報刊文摘) on October 4, 1983. The report was titled "Pleasing research outcomes have been gained on the WRA" (Xilujun yanjiu qude kexi chengguo 西路軍研究取得可喜成果). It was the first time that the new interpretation was released to the public. See Cong Jin, 2005.

崗 (1905-1954) and Rao Shushi 饒漱石 (1903-1975) Anti-Party Group Case,”⁷⁷ and the Anti-Rightist Movement. In the 1980s, Hu Yaobang was determined to rehabilitate Gao and Rao, but was stopped by Deng, who insisted on the conclusion that the two constituted an anti-Party alliance.⁷⁸ By the mid-1980s, almost all of the alleged “rightists” (*youpai* 右派) had been rehabilitated,⁷⁹ but the Anti-rightist Movement was still presented as an inevitable event in official Party History. One of the major reasons that these two matters could not be rehabilitated was that Deng had played an essential role in them.⁸⁰

Taiwanese scholar, Chen Yongfa, provides an illuminating analysis of Deng’s dual identity: as both one of the important leaders in the Mao Era and as the “chief designer” of the Reform Era:

In 1978 when Deng Xiaoping began to apply reform and opening up policies, he was actually carrying a heavy historical burden. Due to the new policies’ divergence from the established policies of the Mao Era, although people all over the country ostensibly supported Deng Xiaoping, his new policies indeed were facing serious resistance. As a result, there were both old and new elements in Deng’s policies: On the one hand, Deng gave up Mao’s theory of “continuous revolution” (*buduan geming* 不斷革命), attempting to create a new method that

⁷⁷ Gao Gang was the Minister of Planning Commission in People’s Government 人民政府計劃委員會 and Rao Shushi was the Minister of Organization Department of the CCP in 1953. They were charged with organizing an anti-Party clique and were ousted from Party memberships. Gao committed suicide in 1954. The case of Gao and Rao was one of the most serious false and unjust convictions in the PRC’s history. For more details about the “Gao and Rao Affair”, see Frederick C. Teiwes, *Politics at Mao’s Court: Gao gang and Party Factionalism in the Early 1950s*. Armonk, N. Y.: M. E. Sharpe, inc. 1990.

⁷⁸ Shi Jian 史鑾, ed., *Pingfan Gao Gang de xuanji* 平反高崗的玄機 (The mystery of rehabilitating Gao Gang). Hong Kong: Nanfeng chuang chubanshe 南風窗出版社, 2013, p. 13. Guo Dehong 郭德宏, “Zhonggong lishi shang ‘fangang jituan’ de jieju 中共歷史上「反黨集團」的結局” (The endings of anti-Party cliques in CCP’s history), *Yan-Huang chunqiu* 炎黃春秋, 2010(9), pp. 27-33.

⁷⁹ By 1980, among the 550,000 plus “rightists” only 96 of them remained “un-rehabilitated”.

⁸⁰ In existing scholarship on these two matters, considerable attention has been paid to Deng Xiaoping’s role. See Frederick C. Teiwes, 1990; Huang Jing, *Factionalism in Chinese Communist Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000; David S. G. Goodman, *Deng Xiaoping and the Chinese Revolution: A Political Biography*. London: Routledge, 1994; etc. Taiwanese scholar Zhong Yanlin 鍾延麟 published two articles specially discussing Deng Xiaoping’s role on these two matters. Zhong Yanlin, “Deng Xiaoping zai ‘Gao Rao shijian’ zhong zhi jue se yu zuo wei 鄧小平在「高饒事件」中之角色與作為” (Deng Xiaoping’s roles and activities in the Gao Gang-Rao Shushi Incident), *Renwen ji shehui kexue jikan* 人文及社會科學集刊, Vol. 22, No. 4 (December 2010), pp. 521-562. Zhong Yanlin, “Deng Xiaoping zai 1957 nian Zhonggong zhengfeng, ‘fan youpai’ zhong zhi jue se 鄧小平在 1957 年中共整風、「反右派」中之角色” (Deng Xiaoping’s role and activities in the Rectification and Anti-Rightist Campaign of 1957), *Zhongguo dalu yanjiu* 中國大陸研究, Vol. 50, No. 4 (December 2007), pp. 87-116.

differed from Mao's, in order to realize China's modernization. On the other hand, Deng clearly knew that he personally helped Mao to conduct his theories of "usurping power through revolution" (*geming duoquan* 革命奪權) and "continuous revolution", so he could not fully negate Mao and his revolutionary legacy [without hurting himself]. For this reason, Deng's speeches and decisions were contradictory and confusing, as he seemed to oppose the "leftist" views and to oppose Mao, while also opposing the rightist views and always standing up for Mao.⁸¹

The paragraph above targets Deng's reform policies, but Chen's analysis can be applied to Deng's control of Party History as well. Deng's method of eliminating historical issues was also confusing, as he seemed simultaneously to encourage and prevent new interpretations that would challenge Mao's authority. This contradiction reflects Deng's dual identity from the perspective of his policy on historical issues.

4.3 The New Interpretation of the WRA in the Official Party History

In theory, the issue of the WRA should have had a new standard interpretation after Deng, the most authoritative leader, expressed his opinion on it. As shown in the previous discussion, however, because of Deng's ambiguous attitude, supporters of both the orthodox and the new interpretations felt that there was space to negotiate.

After Li's report was filed in the Party's archives according to Deng's directive, the CCP's most senior agency on Party history—the Central Party History Leading Group—issued an instruction about narrating the WRA's history, including those that specialized in writing Party history, such as the CPHRO and institutions that were in charge of writing the histories of the Red Army and the People's Liberation Army. At the time, the Military Science Academy was writing a general military history of the CCP. When the Party Center's instruction about the WRA's history was conveyed to the writing team, these compilers read two major points into it. First, the Party Center considered the WRA to be a significant historical issue, so it had investigated it and drawn its own conclusions. However, the compilers were

⁸¹ Chen Yongfa 陳永發, *Zhongguo gongchan geming qishi nian* 中國共產革命七十年 (Seventy years of Chinese Communist revolution). Taipei: Lianjing chuban shiye gongsi 聯經出版事業公司, 1998, p. 10.

not informed what those conclusions were. Second, in future, all narratives about the WRA should avoid discussing the following three aspects of that history—how the troops crossed the Yellow River; the WRA’s mission, and the reasons for its defeat.⁸² This instruction was the Party Center’s way of signaling to the advocates of the new interpretation that their appeals had been noted. It also served to prevent the new interpretation from being disseminated to a wider audience.

From the perspective of official History writers, the above instruction actually represented a challenge for them, because discussions on some basic, but important, issues of this history were forbidden, making narration of the WRA’s history even more difficult than it had been during the Mao Era. These writers had no choice but to juggle with words in order to avoid criticism from both the advocates of the orthodox and the new interpretations. In 1991, the CPHRO compiled and published an official version of *History of the Chinese Communist Party*. In this book, the three questions above were avoided, and the WRA’s history was narrated simply as, “marched to the west bank of the Yellow River according to orders.” It was an exceedingly ambiguous account that failed to provide any indication of who gave the “orders.” At the time, Xu Xiangqian had passed away, but Li Xiannian was still alive. Li was irate and wrote a letter to the CPHRO immediately, urging them to revise relevant paragraphs in the book. Li wrote harshly: “‘Orders!’ ‘Orders!’ Whose in the hell’s orders were they? I wrote a report on the issue of the WRA and now it is kept in the CPHRO. Are you too ignorant to know the report was there? Or do you pretend to be ignorant?”⁸³ One solution Li suggested was to add several words to the book, pointing out explicitly that “the WRA carried out the Central Military Committee’s orders.” Ultimately, the CPHRO asked the publisher to withdraw all copies that had been delivered to distribution companies and bookstores and revised the paragraph according to Li’s demand.⁸⁴

Despite the interventions on the part of Li and the CPHRO, the new interpretation failed to replace the orthodox one and become the official version of the WRA narratives. Rather than following Li’s major points of view, the writers of official History tried their best to imply that the WRA had violated the Party Center’s directives. They achieved this goal by two main methods: one was to list

⁸² Xu Zhanquan, interview, 2013.

⁸³ Yuan Lishi 原立是 (A penname of Xia Yuli 夏宇立), *Xuese liming* 血色黎明 (Bloody dawn). Hong Kong: Jinling shushe chuban gongsi 金陵書社出版公司, 2008, p. 8.

⁸⁴ Cong Jin, 2005; Li Qingying, 2005.

selected primary materials without drawing any conclusions, but the materials listed suggested that the WRA disobeyed the Party Center's orders and any reader who was familiar with the historical background would easily grasp this suggestion. The authoritative version of the CCP's military history published in 1987 adopted this method.⁸⁵ The second was to display materials that might support the new interpretation in official publications, but to exclude the new interpretation's conclusions. For example, the official version of the *Chronological Biography of Mao* publicized Mao's agreement to dispatch troops to secure the Soviet Union's assistance and also included the telegrams Mao sent to the troops on the west bank of the Yellow River in order to name them the "Western Route Army," but refused to build any connection between Mao's intention to secure assistance and the WRA's military operations.⁸⁶ Such narratives in official Party History were confusing, because they admitted generally that the WRA was supervised by the Party Center, while implying that the WRA commanders had disobeyed the Party Center's directives; further, they admitted the authenticity of the supporting materials issued by the advocates of the new interpretation, but refused to accept the new interpretation's explanations of these materials. Meanwhile, control of the WRA archives became stricter and stricter, and the cables that had been used as supporting materials by advocates of the new interpretation and by their opponents have been inaccessible since the 1990s.

In contrast to the cautious accounts in official Party History, when matters concerned the evaluation of particular commanders, the WRA always was commended highly. For example, after Xu Xiangqian died in 1989, both the obituary and articles describing his life that were published in the *People's Daily* spoke highly of the WRA. One article stated:

After the three front armies joined in Huining, the Central Military Committee ordered a part of the Fourth Front Army to cross the Yellow River to conduct the Ningxia Campaign Plan. Later [Xu Xiangqian] became the chief director of the Western Route Army

⁸⁵ Junshi kexue yuan junshi lishi yanjiusuo 軍事科學院軍事歷史研究所 (Military History Institute of PLA Military Science Academy), ed., *Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun zhanshi* 中國人民解放軍戰史 (Military history of the PLA). Beijing: Junshi kexue chubanshe 軍事科學出版社, 1987, pp. 357-369.

⁸⁶ Zhonggong zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi 中共中央文獻研究室 (The CCP Central Literature Research Center), ed., *Mao Zedong nianpu* 毛澤東年譜 (Chronological biography of Mao Zedong), Volume 1. Beijing: Renmin chubanshe 人民出版社, Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe 中央文獻出版社, 1993, pp. 592-608.

according to the Central Military Committee's orders. [Xu] led the troops marching westwards and fought with the enemy in the Hexi Corridor. [Their operations] effectively assisted the military operations on the east bank of the Yellow River.⁸⁷

This evaluation was actually a concise version of the new interpretation of the WRA. Similar statements were repeated again and again on public occasions that commemorated Xu's 100th and 110th birthdays.⁸⁸ The history that had once troubled the old marshal became a hard-earned victory. Other WRA commanders, including Li Xiannian and Li Zhuoran also received positive posthumous evaluations and the statements in their official biographies were a consolation to their families.⁸⁹

In summary, generally speaking, the CCP's official narratives of the WRA dealt with this historical event by concealing criticism of it behind the exhibition of a huge number of historical facts, while also praising the relevant people's contributions to this historical event openly. This is still a common way that the CCP deals with intra-Party controversies.

Four Interpretations of the WRA

By the time the CCP made the changes above to official Party History, there had been four interpretations of the WRA in total. The first, which is referred to as "the orthodox interpretation" in this thesis, was created by Mao and his writers. The major point of this interpretation is that Zhang ordered the WRA to go to Gansu to further his own ambitions, and the WRA's defeat was because of Zhang's erroneous political line. The second interpretation emerged almost simultaneously. The WRA commanders held this point of view, deemphasizing the relationship

⁸⁷ "Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun de dizaozhe zhiyi Xu Xiangqian shishi 中國人民解放軍的締造者之一徐向前逝世" (One of the founders of the PLA, Xu Xiangqian, passed away), *Renmin ribao* 人民日報, on September 21, 1990, p. 1.

⁸⁸ See Jiang Zemin 江澤民, "Jiang Zemin zai jinian Xu Xiangqian danchen yibai zhounian zuotanhui shang de jianghua 江澤民在紀念徐向前誕辰一百週年座談會上的講話" (Jiang Zemin's speech at the Memorial Meeting for Xu Xiangqian's 100th Anniversary), *Xinhua wang* 新華網 (Xinhua News Agency Online) http://news.xinhuanet.com/news/2001-11/07/content_104289.htm (last visited on May 9, 2015).

⁸⁹ For senior leaders one of their major concerns in the Reform Era was to have their "historical flaws" removed when they were still alive. In all of the Party's previous political movements, the WRA had been used as an excuse to purge senior commanders. Thus the disconnection of this historical event with the so-called "Zhang Guotao Line" would help them to secure a much more politically privileged position. This goal was achieved when Li Xiannian's report was filed in the Party's archives. Li Erbing said that in conversations with Marshal Xu he once commented that Xu had a perfect life and the only flaw was the assessment on the WRA; Xu agreed with him. Li Erbing, interview, 2013.

between the WRA and the so-called “Zhang Guotao Line,” and emphasizing instead various reasons for the WRA’s defeat. The conflicts between the two interpretations above focused on the issue of the definition of the WRA, rather than on facts such as who gave the order to establish it. These relevant events happened not long before, so at the time, the factual problems that later bothered researchers were not problems at all. As was presented in Chapter 2, there was intense competition between these two interpretations in 1937 and 1938, and the orthodox interpretation prevailed.

At the beginning of the Reform Era, the third interpretation was raised by former WRA commanders and their aides. Although this interpretation contained considerable similarities with the second, a major innovation was that, for the first time, the advocates released cables that had been sent between the Party Center and the WRA, which provoked a direct challenge to the orthodox interpretation. To respond to this challenge, the official organ for Party History created a fourth interpretation. This interpretation agreed with Mao’s verdicts on the WRA, but was more flexible, making concessions on several points that some significant figures, such as Li Xiannian, demanded be changed, while insisting on other narratives. During the Mao Era, the orthodox interpretation remained unchallenged, while in the Reform Era, neither the “new interpretation” nor the “new-official interpretation” was able to secure a decisive victory. They compromised with each other and both were included in official Party History [Table 4-1].

The case of the WRA proves that Party historiography in the Reform Era was more complicated than that in the Mao Era. What did not change is that Party historiography still reflected intra-Party politics and, as a result, exploring Party historiography was still an effective way to understand the CCP’s political preferences and culture.

Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the emergence and resolution of the issue of the WRA in the 1980s, and answered the following two questions: why such debates on Party History took place in the early years of the Reform Era, and how the top leadership eliminated such problems. The answers to these two questions are critical in understanding the transformation of the Party historiography of the Mao Era into that of the Reform Era.

After the Cultural Revolution, the Party Center paid much attention to writing

Party history primarily for two reasons. One was to make official Party History consistent with the new policies, while the other was to maintain Mao's image as a great leader. Leaders at the time believed that by so doing, different factions within the Party could be mollified. Guided by this principle, the Party invested considerable effort in reinvestigating, reevaluating, and rewriting Party history. Although the leaders soon found that this rewriting had, to some extent, moved beyond their control and tried to stop it, there were already unexpected challenges to existing official narratives, and conflicts among supporters of different interpretations of a certain historical issue became a serious problem that the Party leadership needed to address.

The leadership's principle in dealing with these conflicts was a principle created and practiced by Deng: "It is better to be vague than meticulous." Just like Mao, Deng was also a strongman who exerted strict control over Party historiography, but the method he adopted was different from that of Mao. Mao controlled Party historiography in a prescriptive way, telling historians and writers what they could write. Deng's method was relatively passive. His leadership attended to every sensitive historical issue, but at the same time, attempted to avoid changing Mao's interpretations of Party history, and even listed issues that should not be discussed. In this regard, the role that Party history played had changed in the Reform Era. Mao used Party history as a powerful tool in intra-Party power struggles, but Deng viewed Party history as leverage to help him maintain the balance between different interest groups within the Party and avoid conflicts among factions. For this reason, even though many so-called taboos of history (or "black holes") were eliminated, and previously unknown historical facts were revealed to the public, the Party leadership still exerted close supervision of studies of these issues.

As for the issue of the WRA, Deng's goal was achieved to some extent, because both sides accepted the contradictory official narratives. This consensus, however, was built on the base of a small group of determined participants who held high positions. The balance between advocates of these two conflicting interpretations was unsteady and tentative. As the following chapters will show, since the late 1990s, by which time most of the first generation leaders had died and the then current Party leaders increasingly had less personal experience of events in Party history, the balance has gradually broken down and more drastic debates on a number of sensitive historical issues have staged a comeback. There is an old

Chinese saying: “When one’s coffin is closed, the evaluation on one is conclusive” (*gaiguan dinglun* 蓋棺定論). Historiography, however, especially that of the CCP, does not work in this way.

Table 4-1 Comparison of the Four Interpretations of the WRA

Mao Era		Time	Reform Era	
Orthodox Interpretation	Alternative Interpretation	Interpretations	New Interpretation	New-official Interpretation
Mao; Kai Feng; Hu Qiaomu; Tian Jiaying;	Zhang Guotao; Chen Changhao; Xu Xiangqian;	Writers	Zhu Yu; Li Erbing; Li Xianian's secretaries;	OCPHR; The Military Science Academy;
The Party Centre	The Fourth Front Army	Supporters	Chen Yun; Li Xiannian; Xu Xiangqian; The Fourth Front Army veterans	Yang Shangkun; Hu Qiaomu; The First Front Army veterans;
Conclusions only	Conclusions only	Method of arguing	Provided a huge amount of evidence	Provided a huge amount of evidence
To establish a new base for Zhang Guotao	To conduct the Ningxia Campaign Plan	Purpose	To build a connection with the Soviet Union ("open an international route") and gain military assistance	Ostensibly to carry out the Party Centre's plan, but actually to serve Zhang Guotao's ambitions
Ordered by Zhang Guotao. The Party Center did not know.	According to the Red Army Headquarters and the Party Center's directives	Crossed the Yellow River	Ordered by the Party Center (Mao)	The Party Center had to approve their operations because they had already crossed the Yellow River.
Commanded by Zhang Guotao	Commanded by the Red Army Headquarters and the Party Center	Military operation	Commanded by the Party Center (Mao)	Some orders were issued by the Party Center, but the WRA did not carry out these orders in the right way
The WRA carried out the "Zhang Guotao Line". The WRA did not overcome Zhang Guotao's erroneous thoughts. (Enemy had much stronger forces; The "United Front" method did not work on Ma brothers; Harsh conditions in Gansu; Tactical mistakes;	Reason of failure	Harsh conditions in Gansu; Enemy had much stronger forces; The Center's orders were changeable; underestimated the difficulties (which was a manifestation of Zhang Guotao's errors)	The WRA commanders had no confidence to defeat enemies by themselves; When confronting difficulties they chose to retreat;
The WRA was Zhang Guotao's "running dog."	The WRA was loyal to the Party Center rather than Zhang Guotao.	Relationship between the WRA and Zhang	The WRA was influenced by Zhang, but had nothing to do with the so-called "Zhang Guotao Line".	The WRA were Zhang's supporters, and their operations were consistent with Zhang's political line.
The final bankruptcy of the Zhang Guotao Line	N/A	Evaluation	An indivisible part of the overall victory	The WRA's operations had caused serious loss for the Party.
Official interpretation of the WRA in the Mao Era.	A dissenting opinion in 1937 and 1938; Disappeared from records after the early 1940s	Influence	A popular interpretation of the WRA in contemporary China; Some of arguments are included in the official Party History.	Held by some of authoritative organs

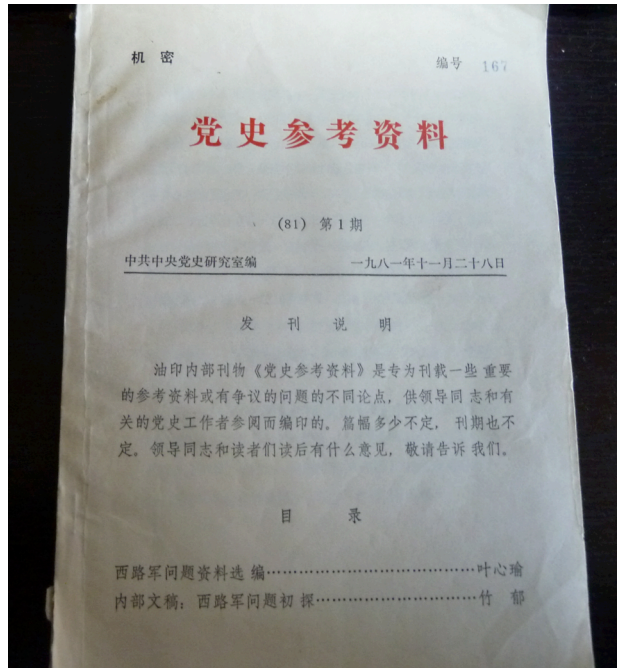


Fig. 4-1 Reference Materials for Party History (photo by author on August 1, 2013).



Fig. 4-2 The People's Daily of the 19th of September 1977, with Xu Xiangqian's article on lower part of the 1st page.

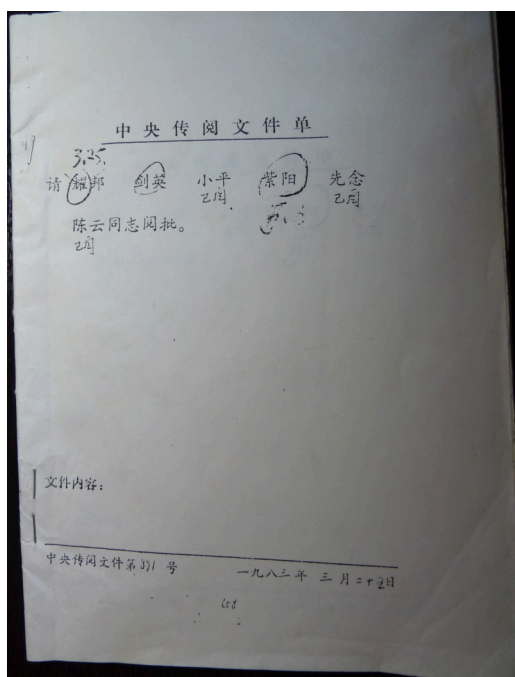


Fig. 4-3 Cover of Li Xiannian's report (photo by author on August 1, 2013).

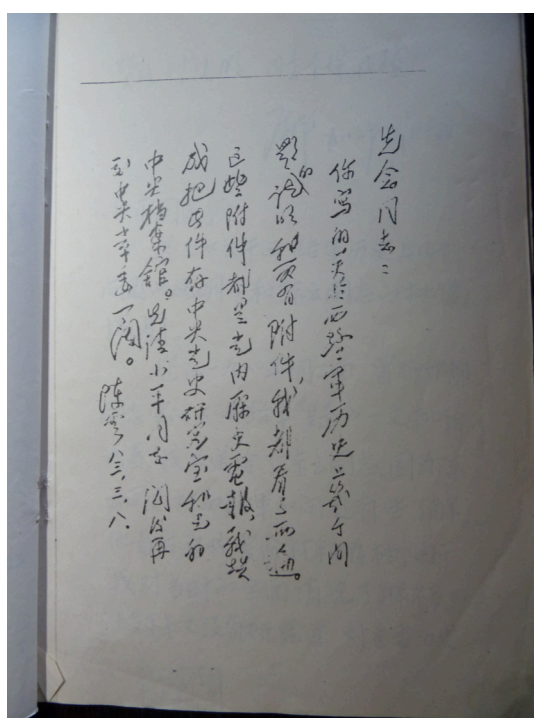


Fig. 4-4 Chen Yun's letter to Li Xiannian (photo by author on August 1, 2013).

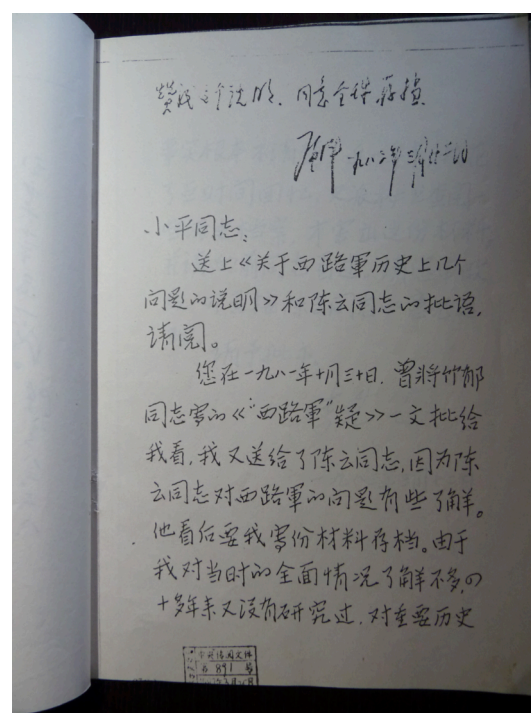


Fig. 4-5 Deng Xiaoping's comment on Li Xiannian's report (photo by author on August 1, 2013).

Chapter 5: Professional Historians and Their Responses to the Historical Issue of the Western Route Army

Introduction

This chapter divides professional Party historiography during the post-Mao period into three phases. In the first, professional historians built a cooperative relationship with politicians, criticizing the Gang of Four's historiography actively and taking part in rehabilitating the figures in Party History against whom certain accusations had been made erroneously. Their research at the time was basically in accordance with the Party Center's agendas.

During the first phase, the cooperation between Chinese academicians and politicians was smooth. When condemnation of the Gang of Four in political circles and academia gradually faded, however, scholars found themselves in such a politically weak position that they had limited access to primary materials and so were puzzled by the leadership's maneuvers in Party history writing. Thus, in the second phase, Chinese academics began to develop a profession of Party historiography. This did not mean that historians wanted to sever their relationship with politics and achieve absolute freedom to conduct research on Party history. In fact, they emphasized both serving the Party and being more professional, thereby attempting to create a balance between political needs and academic freedom. It was during this phase that scholars were pleased to see the emergence of the "new interpretation" of the WRA, which they considered to be an indicator that Party leaders had regained their courage to change Mao's verdicts on historical events, and also an indicator that to reveal historical facts was not necessarily contrary to the Party's interests. However, as the previous chapter has shown, the issue of the WRA was much more complicated than scholars believed, and their attention to this issue was interrupted immediately.

In the third phase, when a new generation of historians (usually those who were born after 1949 and entered higher education after 1978) had secured positions in academia, some historians distinguished their research explicitly from that which served political needs. In this phase, which is ongoing, some professional historians once again avoided topics like the WRA. They did this not because the Party Center forbade them from working on these topics, but because they believed that these topics were influenced strongly by political need, and thus they

could not be discussed using academic methods. During this same period, other professional historians emphasized their ability to meet political needs and uphold academic standards simultaneously. Thus, in the third phase, professional historians in the field of Party history divided themselves into two groups.

The three sections of this chapter address these phases. A scholar referred to frequently in this chapter is the retired CASS researcher, Chen Tiejian 陳鐵健 (1934-). Chen played an important role in criticizing the Gang of Four's historiography, and his research on Qu Qiubai was related closely to Qu's rehabilitation in the 1980s. This is a typical case of scholars taking part in rehabilitating political figures. Then, as described in the second section, in 1987, Chen first announced the "new interpretation" of the WRA to the broader field of Chinese historical studies. The conclusion of this chapter is based on analysis of a variety of materials. The fact that the above three examples center on a single historian serves to underscore that the three phases are continuous and connected closely.

5.1 Serving the Post-Mao Party Leadership (1976 to the Early 1980s)

Historical studies during the post-Cultural Revolution period began by criticizing historical studies during the Cultural Revolution, especially historical writings that were believed to have been supported by the Gang of Four. Most articles on history published during the first two years after the Gang of Four's downfall in late 1976 fell into this category. From 1977 to the early 1980s, when millions of cadres were in the process of being rehabilitated, some historians also took part in this nationwide movement. Criticizing the Gang of Four's historiography and helping rehabilitate certain historical figures were two of the main achievements of Chinese historians in this period. Participation in these two activities both revealed the political attitudes of the historians involved, as well as the mode of interaction between academia and politics during the early post-Mao era.

5.1.1 Criticizing "Innuendo Historiography"

During the Cultural Revolution, the majority of history articles were written by a number of "writing teams" (*xiezuozu* 寫作組). These organizations were established by official agencies and consisted of writers who specialized in different fields. The articles that they wrote were not for academic research, but

were designed to serve political purposes. After the end of the Cultural Revolution, this type of historical writing and manner of writing history was referred to as “innuendo historiography” (*yingshe shixue* 影射史學). Although the content of these articles was Chinese dynastic history, they referred to many Party figures from different periods. The criticism of these writing teams focused on their distortion of Party History, rather than on their views of dynastic history. As such, both innuendo historiography and its criticism are aspects of Party historiography.

Immediately after the Cultural Revolution, the Chinese academic world began to express its discontent with innuendo historiography. The pioneer in this wave of criticism was China’s most important history journal, *Lishi yanjiu* (*Historical Research* 歷史研究), headed by the prominent historian, Li Shu 黎澍 (1912-1988).¹ Li began his work by criticizing the two most famous and productive “writing teams”—“Liang Xiao” 梁效 and “Luo Siding” 羅思鼎.² Under Li’s supervision, a small number of young writers collected a large amount of material about the two teams and published a series of articles that provoked fierce debates from 1977 to 1978.³ Chen Tiejian was one of them. Scholars later

¹ *Historical Research* was the sole history periodical in China immediately after the Cultural Revolution. It was taken over by the Gang of Four for several years and returned to the Institute of Modern History of CASS in 1976. Chen Tiejian, phone interview, November 19, 2013.

² Liang Xiao was a pseudonym for Peking University and Tsinghua University’s Great Criticizing Team (*Beijing daxue Qinghua daxue da pipan zu* 北京大學清華大學大批判組). Liang Xiao is a homophone for *liangxiao* (兩校, two universities). This writing team was established in 1973, with academics in the Peking University, the Tsinghua University and the Renmin University as the main members. The total of thirty-plus writers were divided into several teams that took charge of history, politics, research on the *Dream of Red Mansion*, Marxist and Leninist theories, literature, international issues, the history of philosophy and the history of literature. Over three years, this team published 181 articles in the name of Liang Xiao and other pseudonyms. Luo Siding 羅思鼎 was the major pseudonym of the Shanghai Party Committee Writing Team (*Shanghai shiwei xiezu zu* 上海市委寫作組). Luo Siding is a homophone for *luosiding* 螺絲釘 (screw), which is a quotation attributed to Lei Feng 雷鋒 who said he wanted to be a revolutionary screw that would never rust. The team was formed in 1971, directly led by two members of the Gang of Four, Zhang Chunqiao 張春橋 (1917-2005) and Yao Wenyuan 姚文元 (1931-2005). It had a very large number of members, reaching more than 500 people by 1976. More than 800 articles were published on history, literature, philosophy and so forth. Ding Dong 丁東, “Wenge xiezuozu xingshuai lu 文革寫作組興衰錄” (The rise and fall of writing teams in the Cultural Revolution), *Wenshi bolan* 文史博覽, 2005(19), pp. 4-11.

³ Li Shu and *Historical Research* spared no efforts in criticizing these two writing teams. As a periodical based in Beijing, it sent editors to Shanghai to investigate and collect materials about Luo Siding and its journal *Study and Criticism* (*Xuexi yu pipan* 學習與批判). Chen Shizhi 陳石之 (Chen Shizhi is one of Chen Tiejian’s pennames), “Ping Sirenbang fayaren Liang Xiao 評四人幫發言人梁效” (Comments on the spokesman of the Gang of Four, Liang Xiao), *Lishi yanjiu* 歷史研究, 1977(4), pp. 3-11. Chen Shizhi, “Er ping Sirenbang fayaren Liang Xiao 二評四人幫發言人梁效” (Further comments on the spokesman of the Gang of Four, Liang Xiao), *Lishi yanjiu* 歷史研究, 1977(5), pp. 75-83. Chen Zhong 陳中 (Chen Zhong is one of Chen Tiejian’s pennames), “Ba Sirenbang zazhi ‘Xuexi yu pipan’ yashang shenpan tai 把四人幫雜誌《學習與批判》押上審判台 (Bring the Gang of

evaluated Li and his team highly, identifying *Historical Research's* criticism of innuendo historiography as the starting point of the Thought Liberation Campaign in the field of historical studies.⁴ Some even compared the influence of *Historical Research* at that time to *Xin qingnian* (*New Youth*; 新青年) before the May Fourth Movement.⁵

After a series of articles was published in *Historical Research*, a critical wave spread throughout the country. Very quickly, historians and researchers, as well as college journals and provincial periodicals, wrote a great number of critical articles about innuendo historiography. Their work focused on two points. First, scholars believed that the Gang of Four used history to purge senior cadres, especially Zhou Enlai. Second, they claimed that the Gang of Four had deliberately paid much attention to female leaders in China's history because they were planning to take over the Party's power and establish Jiang Qing 江青 (1914-1991), Mao's wife and a member of the Gang of Four, as the Empress of China.⁶

Criticism of innuendo historiography was a part of Chinese academia's criticism of the Gang of Four, and corresponded with the Party Center's overall strategy of eliminating their influence. At the time, the Party Center needed academia's participation in order to discredit the Gang of Four comprehensively.⁷ Historians did not disappoint Hua Guofeng and the new leadership, because their criticism of innuendo historiography was entirely consistent with the political line that the new leadership had advocated after Mao's death. This point can be illustrated from three perspectives.

First, historians portrayed the Gang of Four as opposing the Party, and thus argued that to attack the Gang of Four's historiography was a manifestation of loyalty for the Party. Chen wrote in 1977:

Four's magazine *Study and Criticism* to trial), *Lishi yanjiu* 歷史研究, 1977(1), pp. 29-39.

⁴ Chen Tiejian, phone interview, 2013.

⁵ Wang Xuedian 王學典, " 'Bashi niandai' shi zenyang bei 'chonggou' de? Ruogan xiangguan lunzhu jianping 「八十年代」是怎樣被「重構」的? 若干相關論著簡評" (How was the 1980s reconstructed: brief comments on several works), *Kaifang shidai* 開放時代, 2009(6), pp. 44-58.

⁶ Qian Zongfan 錢宗範, "Yingshe shixue de yige hei biao ben 影射史學的一個黑標本" (An evil example of innuendo historiography), *Guangxi shifan daxue xuebao (zhexue shehui kexue ban)* 廣西師範大學學報 (哲學社會科學版), 1978(2), pp. 34-38.

⁷ In his political report at the Eleventh National Party Congress in 1977, the Chief Secretary of the CCP, Hua Guofeng stated: "The Gang of Four needs to be criticized not only from political and organizational perspectives, but also from the fields of philosophy, political economics, social science and scientific socialist theory." Database of CCP Congresses, <http://cpc.people.com.cn/GB/64162/64168/64563/65449/4526439.html> (last visited on September 28, 2015).

The furious bark of the Gang of Four and their running dogs has proved that they are a group of counterrevolutionaries who have a deep class hatred of the Chinese Communist Party and our great leader Chairman Mao. Their ultimate goal was to overthrow and replace the Communist Party and conduct counterrevolution restoration to take China back to a semi-colonial, semi-feudal situation. The writings of those so-called history articles mostly were to serve this evil goal.⁸

Why did their treacherous plot fail? Historians said it was because “the Party Center, headed by the wise leader Chairman Hua [Guofeng], inherited the will of the great leader and tutor Chairman Mao, and smashed the anti-party clique of the Gang of Four.” Consequently, it was the academic world’s mission to “continue our triumphant advance and eliminate their politically, ideologically and theoretically pernicious influence.”⁹ In fact, it is ridiculous to portray the Gang of Four as being in opposition to the Party, because all of them were among the Party’s top leadership.¹⁰ The attitude on the part of academics at the time, however, was highly consistent with that of the Party Center, which emphasized the Gang of Four’s violation of, and Hua’s loyalty to, Mao’s intentions.

Second, scholars completely differentiated the Gang of Four and Mao, claiming certain decisions that had caused serious consequences were actually the result of plots by the Gang of Four, rather than Mao’s intentions. For example, consider “Criticize Lin Biao, Confucius and the Duke Zhou Campaign” (*pi Lin, pi Kong, pi Zhou Gong* 批林批孔批周公), which began in 1974. This campaign was the most intensive political movement in the 1970s, and the Gang of Four paid much attention to it. In the opinion of some scholars, this campaign needed to be divided into two parts, “Criticizing Lin and Confucius,” and “Criticizing the Duke Zhou.” According to them, Mao launched a movement to criticize Lin Biao and Confucius

⁸ Chen Zhong, 1977.

⁹ Xu Xiaoqi 許曉秋, “Sirenbang shi zenyang liyong Wang Anshi bianfa da zao fangeming yulun de si ren bang shi zenyang liyong Wang Anshi bianfa da zao fangeming yulun de” (How did the Gang of Four take advantage of Wang Anshi’s new policies to create counterrevolutionary public opinion), *Liaoning daxue xuebao (zhexue shehui kexue ban)* 遼寧大學學報 (哲學社會科學版), 1977(5), pp. 54-60.

¹⁰ Positions of the members of the Gang of Four in 1976: Wang Hongwen 王洪文 (1935-1992), Standing Member of the CCP Politburo, Vice President of China; Zhang Chunqiao, Standing Member of the CCP Politburo, Vice Premier, Head of the General Political Department of PLA; Yao Wenyuan, Member of the CCP Politburo, in charge of national public opinion; Jiang Qing, Member of the CCP Politburo.

for good reasons: Lin betrayed the country and the Party, and Confucius tried to restore the politics of the Zhou Dynasty in the Spring and Autumn period, an attempt that was counter to society's progress.¹¹ In contrast, as some scholars said, the Gang of Four had added "criticizing the Duke Zhou" for their own nefarious purposes. The Gang of Four nominally criticized the Duke Zhou, who lived 2000 years before, but their actual target was Zhou Enlai, who supposedly held a similar position within the leadership to that held by the Duke Zhou in the court of the Zhou Dynasty. As for the role Mao played in purging Zhou, scholars argued, "our great leader and tutor Chairman Mao had clearly seen through their [the Gang of Four] wild ambition of usurping power for a long time and had scathed them repeatedly."¹² According to the recollections of some members of the writing teams, as well as other records, Mao in fact had a close relationship with innuendo historiography. One piece of evidence is that the notorious Liang Xiao was instructed by Mao himself through a woman whom Mao trusted in his late years.¹³ Third, only innuendo historiography that served the interests of the Gang of Four was criticized. Of course, neither establishing writing teams nor using history to serve political goals was initiated by the Gang of Four. Historians, however, ignored those facts deliberately.¹⁴ Given these three factors, we can conclude that, in the first few years after Mao's death, criticism of the Gang of Four's "innuendo historiography" was neither fair nor comprehensive. This can be attributed in part to political pressure, because ideological control at the time was still intense. This unfair criticism also reflected the fact that at the time, Chinese historians still considered Mao and his words to be irrefutable. The results of thought remodeling conducted during the Mao Era would not be eliminated in a short time. Overall, "the end of an era of judging everything according to Mao's standards"¹⁵ had, at least in the field of Party history, yet to be realized.

5.1.2 Historians and the "Rehabilitation of Erroneous Cases"

Almost as soon as the Party Center began to rehabilitate "erroneous, fake, and

¹¹ For instance, Chen Shizhi, 1977.

¹² Qian Zongfan, 1978.

¹³ Ding Dong, 2005.

¹⁴ For example, Li Shu firmly argued, "Misinterpreting the concept of 'using the past to serve the present' and conducting innuendo historiography was a creation of the Gang of Four, in this way they replaced scientific argument with nonsense and made historiography their plaything." Li Shu, 1977.

¹⁵ Li Zehou 李澤厚, *Zhongguo xiandai sixiang shilun* 中國現代思想史論 (Chinese modern intellectual history and comments). Beijing: Dongfang chubanshe 東方出版社, 1987, p. 199.

unfair cases” in late 1977, historians took part in this movement, consciously or unconsciously. Among all the cases in which historians contributed their efforts, the case of Qu Qiubai is one of the most famous, and Chen Tiejian played a role in it. Given this, a review of Qu’s rehabilitation will help clarify the relationships among history, academia, and the political world in 1980s China, and will also help explain Chen’s lavish praise of Xu’s new analyses of the issue of the WRA several years later.

The Case of Qu Qiubai

Qu Qiubai 瞿秋白 (1899-1935) was one of the few leaders of the CCP in the Party’s early years. He held the position of Chief Secretary of the CCP from 1927 to 1928, but was criticized seriously in 1928 at the Sixth Congress of the CCP. When the Central Red Army and the Party Center decided to leave the Central Soviet Region in Jiangxi and started the Long March in 1934, Qu was ordered to stay in the Soviet Region and conduct guerilla warfare. Ultimately, Qu was captured by the Nationalist Party’s troops and executed after months of imprisonment. In his last few months, Qu wrote a twenty-thousand word article-cum-memoir, “Superfluous Words” (*Duoyu de hua* 多餘的話). Initially, as an ex-Party leader, Qu received a positive posthumous assessment by the Party Center in the 1940s.¹⁶ In 1963, however, almost thirty years after his death, he suddenly became a target of criticism, with the official Party History portraying him as a traitor. “Superfluous Words” was considered to be the main evidence of Qu’s betrayal. In the following years, the authorities banned all revolutionary exhibitions about Qu and closed the memorial halls built for him. The ultimate indignity came during the Cultural Revolution when the graves of Qu and his relatives were exhumed. In 1972, Mao included Qu’s “left”-leaning putschism officially in his definition of the “ten line struggles” in Party History (see Chapter 3). Mao said, “After he was captured by the Nationalist Party, Qu wrote ‘Superfluous Words’ and betrayed [the Party].”¹⁷

¹⁶ The Resolution issued in 1945 was the first document that officially made an assessment on Qu Qiubai. It described Qu as “one of the authoritative leaders in the Party, who did a lot of beneficial work even after being attacked within the Party. He heroically sacrificed himself in June 1935”. *Guanyu ruogan lishi wenti de jueyi* 關於若干歷史問題的決議 (Resolution on several historical issues). Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi chubanshe, 2010, p. 16.

¹⁷ “Mao zhuxi zai waidi xuncha qijian tong yantu gedi fuze tongzhi de tanhua jiyao 毛主席在外地巡查期間同沿途各地負責同志的談話紀要” (Chairman Mao’s talks with some comrades during his inspection), in *Zhonggong jimi wenjian huibian* 中共機密文件彙編 (Compilation of the CCP’s confidential documents). Taipei: Guoli zhengzhi daxue guoji guanxi yanjiu zhongxin 國立政治大學國際關係研究中心, 1978, pp. 31-37. This document is well known as “No. 12 Document”. It was one of the most broadly circulated and most influential documents during the Cultural Revolution.

After Mao's death, Qu's stepdaughter began her quest to rehabilitate Qu. With the help of a number of high-ranking leaders and celebrities who once had worked with, or were familiar with, her stepfather, in 1977, the young Qu succeeded in making the Commission for Discipline Inspection of the Central Committee establish a specific team to reinvestigate Qu's case.¹⁸ Almost simultaneously, *Historical Research* published an article by Chen Tiejian, "Re-evaluation of 'Superfluous Words'," in which he argued that Qu did not betray the Party and his goal in writing "Superfluous Words" was not to ingratiate himself with the Nationalist Party.¹⁹ Chen was invited immediately to join the investigating team and he participated in interviewing and writing. After joint efforts by Qu's relatives and certain Party leaders, Qu was finally rehabilitated at the Twelfth National Party Congress in 1982. Chen also benefited from this experience.²⁰ He published *The Biography of Qu Qiubai* in 1986 and became the top scholar in Qu Qiubai studies.

The Role of Historians in the Early Post-Mao Period

Because Chen Tiejian was involved in Qu's rehabilitation, and also because of the depth and influence of his research on Qu's life and thought, over the following decades, Chinese scholars considered the case of Qu to be a strong piece of evidence that academia, historians, and their research, in particular, could influence political decision-making. This point of view was popular among historians in the early 1980s, as evidenced in Weigelin-Schwiedrzik's study of Party historiography. On the basis of interviews with a number of Party historians that she conducted in the early 1980s, Weigelin-Schwiedrzik concluded that some first-rank historians who had leading positions in the Academy of Social Sciences, the Central Party School, and important universities "had access to primary materials and acted as advisors to the Central Committee on questions of Party History."²¹ Due to the limited access to materials in the early 1980s,

¹⁸ Qu Duyi 瞿獨伊, "Qu Qiubai shi ruhe pingfan de 瞿秋白是如何平反的" (How was Qu Qiubai rehabilitated), *Yan-Huang chunqiu* 炎黃春秋, 2010(9), pp. 34-37.

¹⁹ Chen Tiejian 陳鐵健, "Chongping 'Duoyu de hua' 重評《多餘的話》" (Reevaluation of "Superfluous Words"), *Lishi yanjiu* 歷史研究, 1979(3), pp. 25-35.

²⁰ During the reinvestigation of the case of Qui Qiubai, Chen Tiejian got access to some confidential materials, such as all the files on this case created by the Security Ministry. Chen Tiejian 陳鐵健, "Qu Qiubai an fucha jishi 瞿秋白案複查紀事" (The reinvestigation of the case of Qu Qiubai), *Yan-Huang chunqiu* 炎黃春秋, 2003(5), pp. 33-39.

²¹ Susanne Weigelin-Schwiedrzik once divided Party historians into three ranks reflecting differences in age, political background and training, based on her interviews and analysis of documents. According to her, the university professors of Party history and younger generations of

Weigelin-Schwiedrzik's research relied solely on interviewees' accounts. In this respect, her conclusion was indeed based on the self-identity of the Party historians whom she had interviewed, rather than on the role these historians really were playing in writing Party history.

The materials released later show that historians' influence from the late 1970s to the early 1980s was not as strong as Weigelin-Schwiedrzik believed. Specifically, in the case of Qu's rehabilitation, first, the investigation team asked Chen to join it only after it was sure that Chen's opinions were favorable. Thus, it was in fact political agencies that had the power to choose historians to serve them, rather than historians influencing political agencies through their research. Second, whether or not a researcher could gain access to primary materials was not determined by his/her academic position. Privilege was given to those who were carrying out the Party's assignments, and they were not necessarily high-ranking scholars. In most cases, scholars were allowed to investigate sensitive issues and use confidential materials only when they were asked to conduct the Party's missions. Strictly speaking, their research under these conditions was not academic. Just as Chinese scholar, Lei Yi, said: "By recalling the process of the origin of Qu Quibai's case, its determination and his rehabilitation, one could clearly see how power controlled and dominated historiography."²²

To summarize, in the first few years after the Cultural Revolution, the Party leadership allied with Chinese academia to eradicate the Gang of Four's influence and address historical problems. As scholars have commented, in the field of history during this period, "politics and academic research remained integrated and political appeals and academic concepts penetrated into each other."²³ When historiography is used as a tool in political struggles, however, it is always short-lived, because once the political struggle itself is resolved; historiography that is related closely to political needs will lose its value immediately. When the actual need to purge the Gang of Four faded, academia's criticism of so-called "innuendo historiography" also disappeared gradually and was gone by approximately 1983. Similarly, after the wave of rehabilitation ended, academia's

teachers as the second and third ranks were strictly kept away from such achieves. Susanne Weigelin-Schwiedrzik, 1993.

²² Lei Yi 雷頤, "Qu Qiubai yuan'an de qiyuan yu pingfan 瞿秋白冤案的起源與平反" (The origin of Qu Qiubai's unjust case and the rehabilitation of Qu), *Yan-Huang Chunqiu* 炎黃春秋, 2011(1), pp. 17-21.

²³ Wu Zhijun, 2011.

participation ended as well.

5.2 Attempts to Balance Political Needs and Intellectual Pursuits (1980s)

In the first half of the 1980s, many Party historians expressed their aspiration to serve the Party's needs and pursue academic values. Their discussion at the time about the relationship between the so-called "principle of Party spirit" and "principle of scientificity" was an expression of this aspiration. Their opinions on this issue, however, had changed by the end of the 1980s. This section will first examine professional historians' changing opinions on those principles. Then, the section will use the issue of the WRA once again as an example to explain further why some historians abandoned their attempts to balance political needs and intellectual pursuits.

5.2.1 From Emphasizing the "Principle of Party Spirit" to Highlighting the "Principle of Scientificity"

Searching for Scientific Elements in "Party Spirit"

Since the 1940s, the "principle of Party spirit" (*dangxing yuanze* 黨性原則) has been an official guideline for academic research in the humanities, arts, and social sciences. To comply with the "principle of Party spirit" was to accept serving the Party as a priority. A relevant, but sometime conflicting, concept is the "principle of scientificity" (*kexuexing yuanze* 科學性原則), which means that scholars should remain objective and apply scientific methods in their research. In this respect, when people discuss the relationship between the "principle of Party spirit" and the "principle of scientificity," they actually are talking about the relationship between politics and academic research. In the Mao Era, a considerable number of intellectuals advocated explicitly the idea that academic research on Party history should serve politics, or in their words, it should comply with the "principle of Party spirit." At the same time, however, there were claims that specialists in Party history should avoid commenting on, or being influenced by, political reality. The opinions historians expressed in the Hundred Flowers period (1956-1957) are evidence of this (see Chapter 3).

In most cases, historians who maintained that Party history research should not concern itself with political realities hesitated to involve themselves in the field of Party history studies. The experience of Li Shu is typical and cogent. In the mid-1950s, Li was invited by a leader of the CCP Central Propaganda Department

to write official Party History. At the time, Li knew that to compile Party History involved accepting leaders' speeches as decrees and interpreting them, rather than exploring issues independently on the basis of reliable materials. Finding himself in this situation, Li "profoundly understood that the 'principle of Party spirit' and the 'principle of scientificity' were incomparable" and as a result, he refused the high position that he was offered.²⁴

The new political situation after the Cultural Revolution prompted historians, such as Li, who had been trying to keep out of trouble for decades, to devote themselves to rewriting the history of the Party. Interestingly, when these scholars criticized "innuendo historiography" actively and rehabilitated maltreated cadres, they also sparked considerable discussion about the role that the "principle of Party spirit" had played in research on Party history, and their views about the "principle of Party spirit" changed subtly. The main argument that Li and other scholars advanced was that research on Party history could manage to comply both with the "principle of Party spirit" and the "principle of scientificity", and thus, it could serve politics, while also pursuing intellectual goals. To make this argument reasonable, historians strategically appropriated the multiple meanings of the Chinese term "*dangxing*".

"*Dangxing*" (黨性) was used originally as the Chinese equivalent of the Soviet term *partiinst*, a concept about the correlations between ideas and social groups. *Partiinost* was coined by Lenin in 1895, and recurred frequently to attack ideas put forward in the name of disinterested objectivity. From a Marxist-Leninist perspective, there is no true objectivity, because class interests and material conditions jointly determine ideology.²⁵ Although this term has been translated variously as "party spirit," "partisanship," "partyness," or "party-mindedness," the Russian *partiinst* is not related exclusively to the concept of "party" (especially the political one).²⁶ In the CCP's political discourse, however, Lenin's use of the term "party" in connection with "party spirit" gradually was taken literally, and

²⁴ Li Shu jinian wenji bianji zu 黎澍紀念文集編輯組 (Compiling Team of Collective Works for Commemorating Li Shu), *Li Shu shinian ji* 黎澍十年祭 (Commemorating the tenth anniversary of Li Shu's death). Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe 中國社會科學出版社, 1998, p. 274.

²⁵ C.D. Kernig, ed., *Marxism, Communism and Western Society: A Comparative Encyclopedia*, Volume 6. New York: Herder and Herder, 1973, pp. 203-210.

²⁶ *Partiinost* is also related to the term "part". Valerii Kuvakin, "The Phenomenon of *Partiinost*: Structure, Dynamics, and Dialectics: An Exposition", *International Phenomenological Society*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (September 1976), pp. 25-45. In Chinese, before the character *dang* had the meaning of political party, from at least Han times onwards, it was used to refer to partisan groups.

was used to refer to communist parties, and the CCP in particular. Since the 1940s, Chinese Communists have used the word *dangxing* to express both the original meaning introduced by Lenin, and the extended meaning that refers specifically to “serving the CCP.”²⁷ To avoid misunderstanding, in this thesis when “*dangxing*” refers to the original meaning of the Russian *partiinost*, it will be translated as “partisanship,” and when it is used to emphasize the CCP, it will be translated as “Party spirit.”

As noted above, by the early 1980s, Chinese intellectuals had for decades used “*dangxing*” as a synonym for “to do what the Party asks us to do” (*ting dang de hua* 聽黨的話). This time, however, historians reintroduced the original meaning of the word. They summarized the concept of *partiinost* as employed by Lenin: “Different social classes have different interests, and consequently hold different attitudes towards history and use different methods to study history. This is the role of partisanship (*dangxing*) in the science of history.”²⁸ Subsequently, scholars tried to build a connection between partisanship and scientificity. In a landmark article concerning Party history research, Li Honglin explained the relationship between partisanship and scientificity by comparing the situations of the exploiting class and the proletariat.

The exploiting class is constrained or forced by its own interests, so the exploiters are unable to use a scientific approach to study history. The exploiters always hide certain facts, while exaggerating or distorting other facts. They might even fabricate historical materials....This is how the partisanship of the exploiting class works in the field of history. This kind of partisanship is against

²⁷ Take two pieces of Mao’s writings as examples. In 1941 Mao said in his famous speech “Reform our study” (*Gaizao women de xuexi* 改造我們的學習): “If [a person] does not have scientific attitudes, or in other words, if [he] does not have a desire to unify Marxist-Leninist theories and practices, then he should be considered as not having *dangxing*, or as not having enough *dangxing*.” *Mao Zedong xuanji* 毛澤東選集 (Selected Works of Mao Zedong), Volume 3. Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1991, p. 800. In this context, *dangxing* means partisanship. In 1945, the Seventh National Congress of the CCP was held in Yan’an, where Mao handwrote four Chinese characters “*tigao dangxing*” (提高黨性, improve Party spirit) to direct Party members to continue to fight to achieve communism and to set examples for other people. Huang Youtai 黃有泰, “Mao Zedong haozhao ‘tigao dangxing’ zuo jianqiang de gongchan zhuyi zhanshi 毛澤東號召「提高黨性」做堅強的共產主義戰士” (Mao Zedong calls to ‘improve Party spirit’ and become strong-minded communist fighters), *Zhongguo gongchandang xinwen wang* 中國共產黨新聞網 <http://cpc.people.com.cn/GB/85037/85038/8619079.html> (last visited on October 25, 2015). Here the word *dangxing* means “Party spirit”.

²⁸ Li Honglin 李洪林, “Dapo dangshi jinqu 打破黨史禁區” (Invade the forbidden zones of Party history), *Lishi yanjiu* 歷史研究, 1979(1), pp. 20-32.

scientificity.... The proletariat's partisanship is consistent with scientificity, because the proletariat has no personal interest.... Only by faithfully reflecting historical facts can the proletariat achieve their interests.²⁹

In the opinion of Li and other scholars, scientificity is an inseparable part of the partisanship of the proletariat. On the basis of this argument, they made another, claiming that *dangxing* did not conflict with scientificity. The word *dangxing* in the second argument, however, meant "Party spirit" rather than partisanship.

From the end of the 1970s to the early 1980s, historians made considerable efforts to prove that Party history research supervised by the Party could be scientific and objective. This reflected their hopes to professionalize Party historical studies. At the time, however, Party historians still stressed that "Party spirit" was superior to scientificity, as they believed that only with the Party leadership's attention, approval, and direction could historians apply scientific methods to study the history of the Party. Concerning the specific way in which historians should do their job, they said "we not only need to study resolutions issued by the Party Center and speeches and writings by Party leaders, and take them as directives, but we also need to pay attention to historical facts and do further investigation."³⁰

The Science of Party History

However, by the end of the 1980s, Party historians' attitudes on the relationship between politics and academia had undergone an obvious change. The "principle of scientificity" approach to Party history research was receiving more emphasis and some historians began to treat this principle as an essential issue, rather than as a part of the so-called "Party spirit."

Remarks made by historians at a 1988 national conference on Party history research illustrate this change. First, scholars complained that Party history was not being treated as a science. At the conference, a senior Party historian, Zhang Jingru, stated that at least seventy percent of the existing official historical narratives must be replaced by new narratives, and before rewriting Party history

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Guo Dehong 郭德宏 and Li Mingsan 李明三, "Zhengque chuli dangshi yanjiu zhong dangxing yu kexuexing de guanxi 正確處理黨史研究中黨性與科學性的關係" (Handle the relationship between Party spirit and scientificity in Party history research correctly), *Lilun zhanxian* 理論戰線, No.123 (1981), pp. 1-5.

“the first thing historians need to do is to clarify that Party historiography is the science of history.”³¹ The question of how Chinese social science could achieve independence and autonomy has been a core concern of Chinese intellectuals since the end of the 1970s.³² To be independent and autonomous means to eradicate the influence of politics. Although Party history research is related inherently and closely to politics, intellectuals made no exceptions. Zhang’s words at the conference represented historians’ demands that the history of the CCP should be studied in an academic environment without any intervention from the authorities.

Second, historians argued that Party historiography was in crisis. In Chinese academia, discussions of the “crisis of historiography” (*shixue weiji* 史學危機) began in the early 1980s. Scholars believed that historiography in China was faced with an unprecedented crisis and that only by introducing Western theories on history and scientific research methodology, could Chinese historians find a way to overcome this problem.³³ Specialists in Party History were inevitably affected by this trend of thought. They said the so-called “crisis of historiography” in the field of Party History was indeed a reflection of people’s suspicions about the authenticity of official Party history.³⁴

Third, historians criticized the way in which Party History was studied. They said that the Party’s resolutions and Party leaders’ writings were supposed to be subjects of research, but they were in fact used as directives.³⁵ This critique was not at all new. Similar opinions had been held by historians as early as the 1950s. The difference in this case is that historians were not only referring to the resolutions issued in the Mao Era, but also to those created in the first few years of the Reform Era. As discussed in the previous chapter, the new Party Center created

³¹ Ding Xiaoqiang 丁曉強, “Dangshi xuyao chongxie: 1988 nian quanguo Zhonggong dangshi yanjiusheng yu daoshi xueshu jiaoliuhui shuping 黨史需要重寫: 1988 年全國中共黨史研究生與導師學術交流會述評” (Party history needs to be rewritten: review of the National Conference of Supervisors and Postgraduate Students of Party History of 1988), *Zhejiang xuekan* 浙江學刊, 1989(2), pp. 13-14.

³² Deng Zhenglai 鄧正來, *Yanjiu yu fansi : guanyu Zhongguo shehui kexue zizhuxing de sikao* 研究與反思: 關於中國社會科學自主性的思考 (Research and reflection: on the issue of the independence of Chinese social science). Beijing: Zhongguo zhengfa daxue chubanshe 中國政法大學出版社, 2004, pp. 1-35.

³³ For more information about how Chinese historians searched for change in historiography in this period, see Q. Edward Wang, “Historical Writing in 20th Century China: Methodological Innovation and Ideological Influence”, in Rolf Torstendahl, ed., *An Assessment of Twentieth-Century Historiography*. Stockholm: The Royal Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities, 2000, pp. 43-69.

³⁴ Ding Xiaoqiang, 1989.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

a new collection of official narratives in the early 1980s. In Wu Zhijun's words, the "Resolution of 1981" and the new historical narratives authorized by the new leadership provided historians with a new "meta-knowledge system" of Party history research.³⁶ As they found that the right to interpret significant and sensitive issues was still controlled tightly by the Party, historians began to require a greater separation from politics.

From highlighting the "principle of Party spirit" to emphasizing that Party history should be researched in a scientific manner, the shift in historians' attitudes in the 1980s is obvious. This shift reflects the attempts by Chinese academia to transform the writing of Party history from a highly subjective exercise serving a political agenda into an academic endeavor governed by its own scholarly norms and conventions.

Historians' attitudes did not change overnight, and it was not simply through rational thinking that some scholars changed their minds. In the 1980s, historians' attempts both to serve the Party and pursue academic values suffered setbacks. These experiences also contributed to historians changing their minds. The issue of the WRA provides a concrete example.

5.2.2 Between Politics and Academic Research: The Case of the WRA

In 1987, Marshal Xu Xiangqian published his memoirs. As noted in the previous chapter, Zhu Yu actually wrote Xu's memoirs, and it was while undertaking this task that Zhu found some evidence essential to a reinterpretation of the WRA's history, which drew the attention of Li Xiannian and Deng Xiaoping subsequently. All this was kept secret within the Party leadership, so that Xu's memoirs were the first public publication that conveyed the "new interpretation" of the WRA to academia and ordinary readers.

Chen Tiejian's Article "On the WRA"

Almost immediately after the publication of Xu's memoirs, Chen Tiejian wrote an article entitled, "On the Western Route Army: Notes on Xu Xiangqian's *Looking Back on History*" and published it in *Historical Research*. The main arguments Chen provided are consistent with Xu's accounts in his memoirs, but Chen cited some primary materials that were not included in Xu's book, and provided his own

³⁶ Wu Zhijun 吳志軍, "Xueshu hua chuantong de shengcheng: Ershi shiji bashi niandai tou sannian de dangshi yanjiu 學術化傳統的生成：二十世紀八十年代頭三年的黨史研究" (The creation and development of academic tradition: Party history research in the first three years of the 1980s), *Zhonggong dangshi yanjiu* 中共黨史研究, 2012(4), pp. 49-60.

analysis of certain key issues, which made his article not only a review of, but also a supplement to, Xu's memoirs. In this respect, Chen's article was actually one of the most significant aspects of the production and dissemination of the new interpretation of the WRA, because it argued the main points of the new interpretation in academic language and addressed these points to academia. In addition to his serious analysis, Chen's high praise of Xu's courage in providing a new interpretation of a sensitive issue in Party history impressed readers strongly. Chen wrote:

There are successes in one's experience, and failures as well. Writing about success is not easy; however, writing about failure is much harder. That the top commander of the WRA, Marshal Xu Xiangqian, with his profound thoughts as a proletarian strategist and his broad heart as a Marxist, produced such an educational work shows loyalty to history and to martyrs, which will be passed down to future generations. It is admirable.³⁷

Believing that Xu had written what he had truly experienced, Chen portrayed Xu as a role model for professional historians in writing Party history in the new era. He said, "I sincerely appreciate him and will learn from him and do my work well."³⁸

Chen's article attracted great attention from historians. They were encouraged and inspired by the rewriting of the history of the WRA because they saw a hope of rescuing Party history from ideology and transforming it into a genuine academic discipline. This view came from a consensus among scholars concerning the emergence of the "new interpretation" of the WRA: the new interpretation was drawn from Marshal Xu's personal experience, but Xu and other insiders were unable to speak about the facts until the new era allowed them to do so. Now that senior cadres within the Party leadership had begun to challenge the official Party History authorized by Mao, there was no longer any excuse to forbid intellectuals from delving into the Party's history.

Historians also attended to the issue of the WRA for a more practical reason. Chen Tiejian cited some essential primary materials that had never been released

³⁷ Chen Tiejian 陳鐵健, "Lun Xilujun: Du Xu Xiangqian 'Lishi de huigu' zhaji 論西路軍——讀徐向前《歷史的回顧》札記" (On the Western Route Army: notes on Xu Xiangqian's *Looking back on History*), *Lishi yanjiu* 歷史研究, 1987(2), pp. 3-15.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

before. As for the source of these materials, Chen admitted that he had read the articles written by Zhu Yu and published internally, and had been inspired by them. Considering the role that Zhu had played in writing Xu's memoirs, this meant that as more and more high-ranking leaders began to write such memoirs, the CCP's confidential archives would probably be released gradually and indirectly. This was definitely good news for Party history researchers who had suffered the lack of access to primary materials for decades.

In summary, historians at the time demanded to be able to examine the history of the Party objectively, but to a great degree, they based their hope for this on the open-mindedness of the Party leadership. Thus, they expected that the Party's official narratives would reveal more historical facts, or, in a more abstract way, they hoped that the implications of "Party spirit" for the field of Party History would become more compatible with scientific research. It was thus natural for historians to respond positively to the reinterpretation of sensitive historical problems, such as the issue of the WRA. Historians' enthusiasm about the WRA, however, was soon curbed by the authorities' responses to Chen's article.

The Authorities' Responses to Chen's Article

As noted in the previous chapter, the main opponents of the "new interpretation" among the leadership were Yang Shangkun and Hu Qiaomu, who represented the First Front Army veterans and Party theoreticians, respectively. On this occasion, the two again played a role in preventing the wide dissemination of Chen's article. As soon as he learned about Chen's article, Yang approached Hu Qiaomu, who ordered Hu Sheng 胡繩 (1918-2000), then director of the CASS, to take care of the problem. Hu Sheng summoned the editorial department of *Historical Research* and Chen to a meeting, at which Hu read them the comments on the WRA by Deng Xiaoping, Chen Yun, and Li Xiannian, and told the attendees that because Party leaders had already reached a conclusion on the issue, it was inappropriate to publish Chen's article. Surprisingly, Hu also said that neither Chen nor the editorial department of *Historical Research* could be blamed, because they were not informed about the circumstances above.³⁹ Yang's and Hu Qiaomu's attitude

³⁹ Chen Tiejian, phone interview, 2013. Chen Tiejian 陳鐵健, "Chen fan duobian gan qiuzhen: Hu Sheng xiansheng yinxiang 塵凡多變敢求真: 胡繩先生印象" (Searching for truth in the ever changing world: my impression of Mr. Hu Sheng), in Zheng Hui 鄭惠 and Yao Hong 姚鴻, eds., *Simu ji: huainian Hu Sheng wenji* 思慕集: 懷念胡繩文輯 (Commemorating Hu Sheng). Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe 社會科學文獻出版社, 2003, pp. 184-189.

towards Chen's article showed that sensitivity about this historical issue had not diminished at all during the previous four years since Deng wrote his comments on Li's report. The way in which Hu Sheng dealt with the problem, however, indicated that the low-key method Deng advocated had been implemented. The main consideration at the time was not to trigger any further debate on the issue of the WRA. This goal was achieved, because, although many intellectuals paid attention to the fact that Mao's orthodox interpretation was challenged by Xu's new accounts, there was almost no further research on this topic. Academic research on the WRA, an important and sensitive event in the history of the CCP, had been suppressed again in a subtle manner.

The case of the WRA was not an extreme example; however, it was through this kind of setback that some historians found that their attempt to balance political needs and academic endeavors had come to an end.

5.3 Academic or Political? The Split between Historians (since the 1990s)

When China's universities reinstated recruitment after the end of the Cultural Revolution, although Marxist theories and the official historical narratives were still part of the curriculum, undergraduate and graduate students gained access to alternative knowledge. Some senior historians who had received higher educations and begun their academic careers during the Republican period and were purged after 1949 because of their non-Marxist views, became the main force in teaching. These senior historians played an important role in the creation of a new generation of historians during the Reform Era. By the 1990s, historical methodology and certain viewpoints had, to different degrees, regained dominant positions. Fu Sinian's emphasis on the correct scientific methodology of historical research, and his point of view that historians should remain aloof from politics to safeguard their independence and objectivity exerted influence on young historians in particular. It is no wonder that Xie Yong summarized the tendency of 1990s' historiography as "going back to [the historical methodology of] Fu Sinian."⁴⁰ This is the phenomenon of "skipping a generation" (*gedai yichuan* 隔代遺傳) in Chinese academia.⁴¹ Further, students were allowed to study Western

⁴⁰ Xie Yong 謝泳, "Huidao Fu Sinian 回到傅斯年" (Going back to [the historical methodology of] Fu Sinian), *Ershiyi shiji* 二十一世紀, 2010 (10), pp. 151-153.

⁴¹ Peking University professor Chen Pingyuan 陳平原 is the person who first uses "skipping a generation" to describe the relationship between the academic research of the 1980s and that in

historiography, which inspired them to experiment with new methods from the West and to engage in critical reflections on historical studies after 1949.⁴²

Deriving methodology both from non-Marxist historiography in the Republican period and Western historiography, historians of the new generation became more critical and sensitive to the need to develop a new relationship with the state in order to achieve greater autonomy. Further, as scholars have pointed out, Chinese intellectuals' social position had been strengthened by the improved socioeconomic opportunities and relatively relaxed sociopolitical context in which they lived.⁴³ It was under these circumstances that some scholars deviated gradually from the official historical narratives, and tried to create a pure academic domain in which to study the CCP's history.

5.3.1 Creating “Academic Party Historiography”

Since the early years of the 21st century, there has been a new tendency to divide Party History research into two mutually exclusive categories. Although these two categories have been referred to by different pairs of names, either as “academic Party History research” (*xueshu de dangshi yanjiu* 學術的黨史研究) and “political Party History research” (*zhengzhi de dangshi yanjiu* 政治的黨史研究)⁴⁴ or as “unofficial research” (*minjian yanjiu* 民間研究) and “mainstream research” (*zhuliu yanjiu* 主流研究: sometimes “official research,” *guanfang yanjiu* 官方研究),⁴⁵ there is a consensus on the classification criteria. Scholars in universities and other professional research institutions belong to the first category, while researchers

the 1930s and the 1940s. That means 1980s' university students inherited the academic tradition of the scholars of Republican generation, rather than the generation of the 1950s and 1960s. See Zha Jianying 查建英, *Bashi niandai fangtanlu* 八十年代訪談錄 (The 1980s: interviews). Beijing: Shenghuo dushu xinzhishi sanlian shudian 生活讀書新知三聯書店, 2006, p. 146. This statement by Chen Pingyuan has been widely quoted by Chinese scholars.

⁴² For more about the enthusiasm of Chinese historians and students for Western historiography since late 1970s, see Q. Edward Wang, “Encountering the World: China and Its Other(s) in Historical Narratives, 1949-89”, *Journal of World History*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (September 2003), pp. 327-358.

⁴³ Mok Ka-ho, *Intellectuals and the State in Post-Mao China*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998, p. 228.

⁴⁴ Yang Kuisong 楊奎松, “Guanyu zhonggong dangshi yanjiu de teshuxing 關於中共黨史研究的特殊性” (The particularity of Party history research), *Jiaoxue yu yanjiu* 教學與研究, 2001(5), p. 9.

⁴⁵ Han Gang 韓鋼, “Zhonggong dangshi yanjiu de ruogan redian nandian wenti 中共黨史研究的若干熱點難點問題” (Several popular and problematic topics in the field of Party history research), *Gongshi wang* 共識網, November 15, 2012.

http://www.21ccom.net/articles/ljsj/ljsj/article_2012111571076.html (last visited on September 21, 2015). This article was originally published in 2005 as a book chapter. Zhou Ruijin 周瑞金, ed., *Yong tou xingzou* 用頭行走 (Walking on heads). Shanghai: Wenhui chubanshe 文彙出版社, 2005, pp. 87-105. Since then this article has been revised and expanded several times. The latest version was published on *Gongshi wang*.

who have positions in official agencies constitute the second category. As for the differences between the two categories of researchers, Han Gang's following comments are representative.

The latter ("official research" or "political research on Party History") is a part of the official ideology, directed by politics, aiming to prove the reasonableness and legitimacy of previous and current policies. The former ("unofficial research" or "academic research on Party history") is not expected to draw any political conclusions, as it pursues academic values, aiming to restore the truth and interpret history.⁴⁶

Advocates of this classification categorize themselves as members of the "unofficial" division, although they are professional historians and have positions in research institutes.⁴⁷ They prefer to set boundaries between themselves and those researchers who have an apparent connection with the authorities. By emphasizing their "unofficial" or "non-mainstream" status, they intend to underscore the academic characteristics of their research. According to these scholars, the essence of their work is to remain scientific and independent; independence is the most significant factor, because whether a scholar is able to conduct objective research depends on whether s/he has independent status.

With respect to specific aspects, scholars stress the following three points in defining their work as "academic research on Party history". First, apart from the top leadership, their research also focuses on the local level and the masses, and examines the implementation of policies, as well as the creation and issue of policies. Second, they rely on local and foreign archives, as well as other materials that have been scattered throughout the second-hand market and private collections. Third, they prefer empirical research and case studies.⁴⁸ These scholars show little interest in building a new framework of Party History or challenging the grand narratives created by the Party. They seem to believe instead that as long as they continue to pursue historical facts by conducting

⁴⁶ Han Gang 韓鋼, "Zhonggong lishi de minjian yanjiu 中共歷史的民間研究" (Unofficial research of the history of the CCP), *Shehui kexue bao* 社會科學報, June 16, 2011, p. 8.

⁴⁷ The Chinese word *minjian* 民間 (as an adjective) means both unofficial and nonprofessional.

⁴⁸ Han Gang, 2011. Han Gang, 2012. Han Gang 韓鋼, "Minjian dang'an he shizheng yanjiu 民間檔案和實證研究" (Unofficial archives and empirical research), *Beijing dangshi* 北京黨史, 2005(4), pp. 35-36.

empirical research and case studies, and to build objective historical narratives, the incorrect narratives eventually will be replaced.⁴⁹

Based on these ideas about Party history, since the early 1990s, a number of influential specialists in Party history have concentrated on mining historical materials and reconstructing historical facts.⁵⁰ The academic preference of leading scholars has influenced the research interests of young researchers greatly, and in recent years, a growing number of researchers fall into the category of “unofficial Party History.”⁵¹

While defining their own research as “unofficial,” these historians also comment on “official” or “mainstream” Party historiography. First, they defined “official” Party History research as an aspect of the political propaganda process. Because it necessarily serves politics, they claim, this type of research had always been controlled by power struggles, and thus was unable to make objective judgments on historical issues.⁵² They say that, in part because of this, “official” Party historiography has had little influence in international academia in recent years, despite the high position it enjoyed during the Mao Era.⁵³ Second, these historians maintained that official Party History research focused merely on the Party leadership, neglecting Party organizations at the local level, and society’s response to top-down decisions.⁵⁴ Third, and most importantly, these historians portray the official Party History framework as an ossified system. They claim that under the constraints of this framework, researchers can only select primary materials that support already existing conclusions.

These comments on the research of both “official Party historians” and “unofficial Party historians” are fair and reasonable. The problem is that, as a field that attempts to study the history of the ruling party, it is impossible for Party history research to exist in a vacuum apart from political reality, and therefore, it is unrealistic for professional historians to hold the illusion that they are absolutely

⁴⁹ Han Gang, 2012.

⁵⁰ Han Gang, Yang Kuisong, Shen Zhihua 沈志華 and late Gao Hua 高華 are representatives among these specialists. Heng Zhaoyang, 2008, p. 206.

⁵¹ As Han Gang observed, in recent years, more and more postgraduate students of Party history and modern Chinese history chose topics that fall into the “unofficial” category. (Han Gang, 2011) A cursory survey of Doctoral Dissertation Database on *Zhongguo zhiwang* 中國知網 (cnki.net) supports Han’s conclusion.

⁵² Yang Kuisong 楊奎松, “Wushi nian lai de Zhonggong dangshi yanjiu 五十年來的中共黨史研究” (Party historiography over the past fifty years), *Jindaishi yanjiu* 近代史研究, 1999(5), pp. 178-202.

⁵³ Han Gang, 2012.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

independent in this regard. Their declaration of incompatibility with politics is more a form of self-protection than an actual belief. As both observers and historians have to admit, research on the history of the Party today has experienced less pressure because the Party no longer forbids historical writings to express opinions that differ from those of official Party History.⁵⁵ Despite this, historians still perceive risk. As a prominent Party history specialist, Yang Kuisong, said, “Because [Party History] concerns the ruling party’s near contemporary history, any change of orthodox narratives might have an effect on certain current leaders or on their families’ emotions or interests.”⁵⁶ The way in which Yang dealt with the issue of the WRA evidences his fears. Two of Yang’s research projects—the relationship between Zhang Xueliang and the CCP, and the relationship between the Soviet Union and the CCP—are related directly to the WRA. The leading figures among advocates of the “new interpretation” of the WRA, including Zhu Yu, attempted to contact Yang, expecting to find ways to cooperate, but Yang declined.⁵⁷ Considering the way in which Yang and other historians define “official Party historiography” and “unofficial Party historiography,” it is not too far-fetched to say that from Yang’s perspective, the issue of the WRA is a political problem, not an academic one. By avoiding any connection with “political research on Party history,” historians, as represented by Yang, are trying to protect their research domain.

5.3.2 The “Hu Sheng School”: Using Academic Research to Serve Politics

Although the historians discussed in the last subsection, such as Yang and Han Gang, share the same views about writing the history of the CCP, they did not build any kind of structure, even a loose one, to strengthen their influence. Their self-identity as “unofficial” Party historians is based merely on a common aspiration of distinguishing themselves and their research from “official” Party historiography. In contrast, those researchers who have been categorized as “official” historians have a complete system through which to produce historical narratives. The bureaucratic center of this system is the CPHRO and the Central

⁵⁵ Zhang Yin Hai 張銀海, “Dangshi yanjiu ying you geng kuanguo de siwei: zhuanfang zhuming xiandaishi yanjiu zhuanjia, Huadong shida jiaoshou Yang Kuisong 黨史研究應有更寬廣的思維——專訪著名現代史研究專家、華東師大教授楊奎松 (Party history research requires broader thinking: interview of famous modern history specialist, Professor of Eastern China Normal School, Yang Kuisong), *Nanfeng chuang* 南風窗, 2011(11), pp. 26-28.

⁵⁶ Yang Kuisong, 1999.

⁵⁷ Zhu Yu, interview, 2013.

Party Literature Research Office (*Zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi* 中央文獻研究室). The research performed by these institutions has continued to proceed strictly in accordance with the official History framework and the official explanation of the history of the Party as analyzed in Chapters 3 and 4. This is reflected fully in two of the most important routine tasks of these institutions, commemorating late Party leaders and compiling their chronological biographies.⁵⁸ On sensitive issues, such as that of the WRA, official institutions repeated the standard explanations created according to Deng's principle of addressing historical problems cautiously, not daring to conduct any further studies. In only two cases did official historians permit themselves to be creative. First, every time the CCP leadership raised a new idea or concept about the history, reality, or future of China, official historians searched vigorously for historical evidence to support the CCP's idea or concept. The considerable amount of research on the so-called "China dream" (*Zhongguo meng* 中國夢) is a recent example. Second, historians allowed themselves to be creative when the Party Center asked them to explain certain historical issues, especially those that were important for propaganda, such as "whether the Anti-Japanese War lasted for eight years or fourteen years."⁵⁹

In this respect, the actual task of official researchers today does not differ essentially from what certain Party historians, such as Hu Hua, did in the 1950s, constraining themselves within the official Party History framework and endeavoring to perfect the ambiguous and sometimes unreasonable concepts put forward by the Party leaders, as analyzed in Chapter 3. There is, however, a difference in their goals with respect to their own positions. Since the beginning of the 21st century, as "unofficial" Party historians have become increasingly

⁵⁸ CPHRO is required to hold several ceremonies to commemorate Party leaders and senior cadres. There are strict regulations about the scale and form of commemoration. See Huang Xiaotong 黃小同, "Dangshi renwu jinian huodong diandi huigu 黨史人物紀念活動點滴回顧" (Commemorating historical figures in the history of the Party), *Bainian chao* 百年潮, 2010(7), pp. 10-11. When compiling chronological biographies, official researchers always delete content that they consider to be inappropriate. For example, when compiling the chronological biography for Zhu De, the following content was removed: criticism of prominent figures both within the Party and outside the Party, some telegrams deemed incorrect from a posthumous perspective, etc. See Li Qi 李琦, "Guanyu bianxie nianpu de jige wenti 關於編寫年譜的幾個問題" (On several issues about compiling chronological biographies), *Wenxian he yanjiu* 文獻和研究, 1986(4). Cited in Heng Zhaoyang, 2008.

⁵⁹ Yi Xiangnong 易向農, "Quanguo dangshi bumen dangshi zizheng gongzuo jingyan jiaoliu hui zongshu 全國黨史部門黨史資政工作經驗交流會綜述" (Review on the National Conference of Party History Research Divisions on the Work of Providing Advice), *Fujian dangshi yuekan* 福建黨史月刊, 2012(18), pp. 35-37.

influential, some “official” Party historians have begun to create a new self-identity. As with those historians who identify themselves as “unofficial,” these “official” historians are also attempting to strengthen their positions and protect their research domain by highlighting the value of their research.

The former deputy director of the CPHRO, Shi Zhongquan, has on several occasions in his writings and speeches, defined a school of Party history research that is composed of top historians who served or are serving in official organs, including Shi himself.

There are quite a lot of scholars conducting research on the basis of Marxist theories. Among them there is a [special] group of scholars, constituting a school [of Party History research]... Scholars of this school hold positions as leaders [of official agencies or institutions]. They not only write academic works, but also link up politics and academic research, studying and propagandizing Marxist theories, in order to meet the needs of the Party, of people and of our time.⁶⁰

Although in Shi’s accounts, two figures in particular—Hu Qiaomu and Hu Sheng—stand out for their contributions in shaping the contours of official Party History, for two reasons, it is Hu Sheng that Shi and other official historians have adopted as a role model in recent years. First, Hu Sheng was a prominent and productive historian. As Shi said, “[Hu Sheng’s] academic style has exerted a great influence on CPHRO researchers,” and “many other scholars also highly praise and try to follow this style.”⁶¹ More importantly, Hu Sheng spent most of his life conducting historical research. Although he once held positions as the director of CASS and CPHRO, he neither formed a close relationship with Mao, nor did he become a member of the Party leadership, as did Hu Qiaomu. Consequently, as a historian, Hu Sheng is representative of those scholars who were asked to take leadership positions because of their excellent performance in academic research. On the basis of Shi’s comments about this special group of Party historians, Heng Zhaoyang titled the school of history study appropriately as the “Hu Sheng School” (*Hu Sheng xuepai* 胡繩學派).⁶²

⁶⁰ Shi Zhongquan 石仲泉, *Wo guan dangshi* 我觀黨史 (My opinions on Party historiography). Jinan: Jinan chubanshe 濟南出版社, 2001, pp. 496-501.

⁶¹ Shi Zhongquan 石仲泉, “Wo shi de xueshu dianjiren Hu Sheng 我室的學術奠基人胡繩” (One of the founders of CPHRO, Hu Sheng), *Bainian chao* 百年潮, 2010(7), pp. 15-16.

⁶² Heng Zhaoyang 衡朝陽, “Shilun ‘Hu Sheng xuepai’ de Zhonggong dangshixue yiyi 試論‘胡繩學派’

Historians who identify themselves with the “Hu Sheng School” tend to emphasize that their research functions to serve politics. For many senior historians, such as Hu, who had been performing research on modern Chinese history or the history of the Party since the 1940s or the early 1950s, it was a natural and universal belief that “to study history is to serve present practices.”⁶³ More recently, whether or not a historian advocates such a belief is a major criterion used to differentiate official and unofficial historians. In the 1990s, to direct the work of Party historians, the Party Center led by Jiang Zemin 江澤民 (1925-) issued a new slogan—“to provide advice to the authorities and to educate people” (*zizheng yuren* 資政育人). According to the official explanation, in order to provide advice to the authorities, historians must summarize the Party’s experience in the past, “coming up with research outcomes that meet the needs of our time.” With respect to the goal of “educating people,” historians are expected to help cadres and the masses—the younger generation in particular—to “build stronger confidence to realize the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.”⁶⁴ Thus, it is fair to say that “to provide advice to authorities and to educate people” is the updated version of “using the past to serve the present.” Since then, some historians have considered that this slogan encapsulates the ultimate mission of official Party history research. What the former director of CPHRO, Ouyang Song, said is more plain and direct: “Whatever the Party needs, Party history should be written to meet this need” (*Dang you suoxu, shi you suowei* 黨有所需，史有所為).⁶⁵

These advocates of the “Hu Sheng School” believe that they have better knowledge of theory than do those historians who focus on historical facts. They also believe that, with regard to historical research, theory is much more essential than facts. Hu Sheng’s comment below represents one of their consensus views:

It is necessary to figure out what happened in history, and our

的中共黨史學意義” (The historiographical significance of the “Hu Sheng School”), *Dangshi yanjiu yu jiaoxue* 黨史研究與教學, 2010(3), pp. 72-77.

⁶³ Hu Sheng 胡繩, *Hu Sheng quanshu* 胡繩全書 (The complete works of Hu Sheng), Volume 3. Beijing: Renmin chubanshe 人民出版社, 1998, p. 594.

⁶⁴ Zhang Qihua 張啟華, “Cong dangshi de jingyan jiaoxun zhong jiqu zhihui 從黨史的經驗教訓中汲取智慧” (Draw lessons from Party history), *Liaowang dongfang zhouban* 瞭望東方周刊, 2011(25), pp. 20-21.

⁶⁵ Ke Wen 柯文, “Quanguo dangshi bumen dangshi zizheng gongzuo jingyan jiaoliuhui zongshu 全國黨史部門黨史資政工作經驗交流會綜述” (Review of the National Conference of Official Party History Researchers on How to Advise the Authorities), *Zhonggong dangshi yanjiu* 中共黨史研究, 2012(7), pp. 117-118.

research would in no way be scientific if we did not do so. Figuring out facts, however, is only the start of historical research. If a researcher has no knowledge about philosophy, economics or historical materialism, it is impossible for him to do serious research on history.⁶⁶

In the opinion of these official historians, acquiring a firm grasp of Marxist theories means that they are foremost “revolutionaries and soldiers,”⁶⁷ rather than mere professional scholars. Consequently, they expect their research results to be consistent with their status. To illustrate this issue, official historians since the 1990s have once again employed the concept of “Party spirit,” or its counterpart, “revolutionary spirit” (*geming xing* 革命性), arguing that their research on the history of the CCP is designed to achieve a high unity between “revolutionary spirit” and the “principle of scientificity.”⁶⁸

In summary, the difference between the ways in which “official” and “unofficial” historians position themselves is twofold. At a practical level, “official” historians stress the significance of Marxist theories, while “unofficial” historians emphasize academic training in history. A more essential difference is that “unofficial” historians declare that only a piece of research on the history of the Party that was performed independently of political considerations could be objective and scientific. “Official” historians hold the opposite opinion, arguing that their research, which was conducted under the Party’s supervision, and for the purpose of serving the Party, is at the same time both objective and scientific.

Conclusion

The end of the Cultural Revolution in 1976 and the reforms that began two years later, marked China’s transition into a new era. In this new era, research on the history of the CCP, just as with studies in other areas of the humanities and social

⁶⁶ Hu Sheng 胡繩, “Tan dangshi yanjiu gongzuo 談黨史研究工作 (On Party history research), *Dangshi tongxun* 黨史通訊, 1984(1), cited in Yang Kuisong, 1999.

⁶⁷ Gong Yuzhi 龔育之, *Gong Yuzhi huiyi: “Yanwang dian” jiushi* 龔育之回憶: “閻王店”舊事 (My memories of the “Palace of Yama”). Nanchang: Jiangxi renmin chubanshe 江西人民出版社, 2008, p. 1.

⁶⁸ A number of officials who were also specialists of Party history held this point of view. Shi Zhongquan, 2010. Gong Yuzhi 龔育之, “Lilun, dangxing, fangfa: guanyu jianguo yilai dangshi yanjiu de jige wenti 理論、黨性、方法: 關於建國以來黨史研究的幾個問題” (Theories, Party Spirit and methods: on some issues about Party history research after 1949), *Tequ lilun yu shijian* 特區理論與實踐, 1999(7), pp. 5-7.

science, underwent massive changes. These changes, however, did not usher in a new paradigm. As Weigelin-Schwiedrzik pointed out, in the field of history, “The Cultural Revolution itself did not bring a change of paradigm, overthrowing the consensus of the field.”⁶⁹ As examined in this chapter, in the field of Party history, the practices of Party historians from 1977 to the early 1980s reveal that they intended to restore the paradigm with which they were already familiar before the Cultural Revolution.

With the dramatic changes in Chinese society and academia in the 1980s, however, Party historians realized quickly that returning to the period of the pre-Cultural Revolution was not a solution to their problem. After criticizing “innuendo historiography” and rehabilitating classic Party History, some historians began to look for a way to make Party history a genuine discipline. This idea was consistent with the call by Chinese intellectuals at the time for the independence of academia. As Xiao Donglian argued, “These calls by intellectuals inevitably conflicted with [the interests of] some leaders who held actual power within the Party, and who, with Hu Qiaomu as a representative, at the time had a need to reconstruct their authority [through ideological control].”⁷⁰ This is the reason that historians’ efforts to pursue academic values in Party history research were to a considerable degree suppressed by some Party leaders.

Having experienced both excitement and disappointment in the 1980s, since the 1990s, some specialists in Party history have begun to stress the practice of writing Party history without any political pressure or purpose. On the other hand, official historians consciously emphasize the difference between themselves and those historians who conduct “purely academic” (*chun xueshu* 純學術) research. In this way, professional historians have gradually come to be divided into two camps. To some extent, the self-identification of historians is also a form of self-limitation, because one of the essential aspects of their self-identities is to exclude certain topics from their research. In the case of the WRA, those historians who define themselves as conducting research that is “useful” to the Party cautiously avoid creating any additional narratives, in case they might conflict with

⁶⁹ Susanne Weigelin-Schwiedrzik examined the discussion among Chinese historians on the relationship between historical materials and historical theory from 1957 to the 1980s and drew this conclusion. Susanne Weigelin-Schwiedrzik, “History and Truth in Chinese Marxist Historiography”, in Helwig Schmidt-Glintzer, Achim Mittag and Jörn Rüsen, eds., *Historical Truth, Historical Criticism, and Ideology: Chinese Historiography and Historical Culture from a New Comparative Perspective*. Leiden: Brill, 2005, pp. 421-464.

⁷⁰ Xiao Donglian, 2008, p. 10.

the ambiguous, but standard, explanations authorized by the Party Center. Those historians who insist on researching nonpolitical topics also refuse to include the WRA in their scope. In short, in recent years, although Party History has become more important in public discussions, professional historians largely have abandoned some topics. As a result, since the late 1990s, some nonprofessional historians have been rushing to fill their void. This will be examined in Chapter 6.

Chapter 6: Quasi-official Party Historiography and Debates on “Historical Nihilism”

Introduction

The previous chapter has shown that professional historians have reasons to avoid discussing certain aspects of the history of the WRA. Since the 2000s, however, stories about the WRA have become increasingly popular among the Chinese people, and at the same time, new debates have emerged. An interesting phenomenon is that many of these popular narratives and fierce debates are created by nonprofessional researchers. As will be discussed in detail in this chapter, these nonprofessional researchers publish their points of view as freelance writers, but they actually have connections with those who are involved personally in the issue of the WRA. This chapter will first present the new debates on the WRA, and will address the question of why this kind of historical issue remains significant in contemporary China. On the basis of this case study, I will define and analyze further the history writers who have emerged recently and their writings (“quasi-official Party historiography”). Subsequently, this chapter will analyze the criticism of “historical nihilism” that began in 2013. By presenting Party theoreticians’ and scholars’ arguments about this concept, this chapter argues that the Party leadership headed by Xi Jinping 习近平 (1953-) intends to silence these increasingly vocal debates, including the quasi-official historical narratives discussed in the first section, in order to avoid conflicts among factions. The current leadership is faced with a situation similar to that Deng faced in the early 1980s about assessing the Party’s past. However, the current situation is more complicated, so that attempts to emulate Deng’s method of managing historical problems are unlikely to be effective.

6.1 Quasi-official Party Historiography and the CCP’s Political Perspectives

6.1.1 The New Debates on the WRA

There are two popular opinions today concerning the WRA. Because the assessment of Mao is one of the core distinctions between these two opinions, and has been a major point in dividing advocates into two “factions,” this thesis refers

to these two opinions, and the two groups of advocates as the “pro-Mao faction” and the “Mao detractors.” These labels are created on the basis of the “orthodox interpretation” and the “new interpretation” of the WRA, respectively, which Party historians and some leaders debated fiercely in the early 1980s.

There are four main topics of disagreement between the “pro-Mao faction” and the “Mao detractors”:

First, the two factions hold extremely divergent opinions about the reasons for the WRA’s defeat. As discussed in Chapter 4, one of the main distinctions between the “new interpretation” and the “orthodox interpretation” of the WRA lies in the reason for its defeat. The two factions discussed in this chapter have constructed their arguments on the basis of the “new interpretation” and the “orthodox interpretation”, respectively, but both have extended these interpretations. As a result, their disagreement about the WRA’s defeat is even more serious than it was during the 1980s. The “pro-Mao faction” attributes the WRA’s failure to the so-called “Zhang Guotao line,” just as Mao did nearly eighty years ago. However, unlike Mao’s orthodox interpretation, which blamed Zhang and Chen Changhao, the “pro-Mao faction” believes that Xu Xiangqian bore a large responsibility. The “new interpretation” insists on the point that the WRA was directed by the Party Center, but it does not criticize the Party Center’s decision explicitly. In contrast, the “Mao detractors” claim clearly that it was Mao’s strategic mistakes that led to the army’s failure. Further, there are even some clues that Mao conspired to send the 22,000 troops to Gansu, in order to weaken his rival, Zhang’s, position within the Party. This idea is quite popular today. For example, when a Fourth Front Army commander’s son, Zhou Honglin, who also classifies himself as a WRA researcher, was interviewed by an official newspaper in 2012,¹ his analysis about the relationship between the WRA’s defeat and the campaign to criticize Zhang in 1937 led to the conclusion that the Party Center, led by Mao, had been motivated to frame the WRA. In fact, after the interview with Zhou was posted and reposted on Chinese websites, most commentators said that they believed that Mao sent the

¹ “Tiexue Xilujun: cong *Jingsha* shuo dao Xilujun de beizhuang lishi 鐵血西路軍:從《驚沙》說到西路軍的悲壯歷史” (The brave WRA: the movie *Jingsha* and the miserable history of the WRA), *Beijing ribao* 北京日報, March 28, 2011, p. 20. This article is the record of a collective interview. The interviewer is Li Qingying 李慶英, and three interviewees are Chen Tiejian, Xia Yuli and Zhou Honglin 周宏林, the son of Zhou Chunquan. Zhou Chunquan was the Commissar of the Thirty-first Army and Director of Political Department of the Fourth Front Army. Zhou did not attend the WRA, but was one of the Fourth Front Army commanders that were criticized in Yan’an after the WRA’s defeat in 1937 (See Chapter 2).

troops to be destroyed deliberately, as a sacrifice to his own ambition [Fig. 6-1]. In another article that has been disseminated widely in the cyber world, the most important writer of the “Mao detractor” faction offers a more direct accusation. He argues that the only reason that Mao, a militarist, committed mistakes in directing the WRA, lies in the fact that he prioritized power struggles. “Everything [that Mao did] was for intra-Party power struggles. In order to get the upper hand within the Party leadership, [Mao] did not hesitate to let the Red Army run risks.”² Whether it be condemning a marshal explicitly or charging the great leader Mao implicitly with a devilish conspiracy, the new interpretation advanced by either of these two factions challenges the official narratives to varying degrees.

Second, these two factions assess Mao in distinctly different ways. The “pro-Mao faction,” as the name implies, considers Mao to have been a leader superior to all other Party leaders, whether with respect to knowledge, understanding of China’s national condition, or political consciousness. Consistent with this idea, the faction argues that it was only under Mao’s leadership that the CCP could achieve the victory of revolution.³ In contrast, the “Mao detractors” see Mao as far from perfect. The most important writer in this faction stated that, when directing the WRA, Mao’s thoughts about military issues were not yet mature. He argued that the WRA’s defeat provided Mao with a lesson from which he learnt a good deal. As a result, Mao committed no similar mistakes during the Anti-Japanese War and the Liberation War (the Civil War).⁴

The perspective of the “Mao detractors” on the two disagreements above are contradictory. Among the “Mao detractors,” the same writer made two conflicting arguments. The first was that Mao’s deliberate goal was to destroy the WRA, while his second argument was that the WRA was destroyed because of Mao’s immature military strategies. Clearly, if the destruction of the WRA was the result of Mao’s inability, then it could not also have been the outcome of a deliberate intention to

² Xia Yuli 夏宇立, “Duoqu Ningxia jihua shoucuo yuanyin tanjiu 奪取寧夏計劃受挫原因探究” (On the reasons for why the Ningxia Campaign Plan was not realized), *Hong Kong chuanzhen* 香港傳真, 2009(30), p. 32.
http://www.strongwindhk.com/pdfs/HKFax/No_HK2009-30.pdf (last visited on September 19, 2015).

³ For example, in his book about the WRA’s history, Shuang Shi wrote: “[Zhang Guotao] aimed to avoid being involved in fights with invaders and sought to guarantee his own safety first. This attitude has simply nothing to compare with the wisdom of Mao, who tried to make his troops survive by taking part in the fight for national liberation.” Shuang Shi 雙石, *Fuqu lishi de chen’ai: Xilujun wenti zai kaobian* 拂去歷史的塵埃：西路軍問題再考辯 (Reinvestigating the issue of the WRA). Hong Kong: Dafeng chubanshe 大風出版社, 2013, p. 15.

⁴ *Beijing ribao*, 2011.

destroy them. In the previous chapters, we have seen that official Party History, both during the Mao and post-Mao Eras, made considerable efforts to close loopholes and create self-justifying narratives, although these efforts were sometimes unsuccessful. In contrast, the two factions discussed here do not seem to care whether their narratives are self-contradictory.⁵

Third, both sides see Deng Xiaoping's comment on Li Xiannian's report as an important piece of evidence to support their points of view, but they interpret his comment in opposite ways. The "pro-Mao faction" claims that both Li and Deng were deceived by a group of people headed by Zhu Yu (the actual writer of Xu Xiangqian's autobiography; see Chapter 4). They argue that it was because Zhu provided Li exclusively with primary materials that supported Zhu's opinion that Li's report drew incorrect conclusions.⁶ Similarly, advocates of the "pro-Mao faction" doubt the authenticity of Xu's autobiography. They refuse to believe that Xu truly attributed the WRA's defeat to the Party Center's directives and actual conditions at the time, claiming that Zhu must have fabricated the story.⁷ Interestingly, some advocates' enthusiasm for this issue is even stronger than is their enthusiasm about the WRA's history. In the past few years, some retired researchers from the Central Archives have continued to condemn Zhu by various means [Fig. 6-2].⁸ One of them printed pamphlets privately, designed specifically to "expose" Zhu's "crimes" [Figs. 6-3, 6-4, 6-5]. Controversially, the "pro-Mao faction" accuses Zhu of cheating Deng, while also insisting that Deng was wise enough to see through Zhu's conspiracy. As shown in Chapter 4, after he read Li's report, Deng wrote, "[I] agree with this *shuoming*." The Chinese word "*shuoming*" can be translated as "note," "explanation," or "interpretation," etc., depending on

⁵ On another occasion, this author said he disagreed with the opinion that Mao deliberately sent the WRA to be destroyed. Xia Yuli 夏宇立, "Ping *Fuqu lishi de chen'ai: Xilujun wenti zai kaobian* 評《拂去歷史的塵埃：西路軍問題再考辯》 (Comments on *Reinvestigating the Issue of the WRA*), *Gongshi wang* 共識網 <http://www.21ccom.net/articles/read/dushu/2014/0706/108926.html> (last visited on August 2, 2015).

⁶ As noted in Chapter 4, it in fact was Li Xiannian's secretaries that took charge of collecting primary materials and drafting the report about the WRA, not Zhu Yu.

⁷ Geng Zhonglin 耿仲琳, a retired Central Archives researcher wrote: "[Xu Xiangqian's accounts about the WRA] were deliberately created by Zhu Yu so as to condemn the Party Center and Chairman Mao. This was not the kind of thing that Marshal Xu Xiangqian would have done. Marshal Xu would have never uttered these kind of words....[Zhu Yu's] aim of staining Chairman Mao's and the Party Center's image will never be achieved. He, however, did exert a negative influence on Marshal Xu's reputation." Geng Zhonglin, *Bolao zazhi* 伯勞雜誌, privately printed.

⁸ In 2005, they compiled a book titled *Lantai gaocun* 蘭臺稿存 (internally printed, edited by Tian Fenglu 田逢祿). About a quarter of the articles in this book concern the WRA.

the context. The “pro-Mao faction” argues that in this case, “*shuoming*” could only refer to the short letter that Li wrote to Deng and attached to the report, rather than the report itself. According to this interpretation, Deng actually did not agree with Li’s account about the WRA’s history, and was determined to prevent this intra-Party problem from being made public.⁹ Quite naturally, the “Mao detractors” insist that the object of Deng’s “agreement” was the content of Li’s report. Thus, according to them, Deng agreed that the WRA was directed by the Party Center, and its defeat was not due to the “Zhang Guotao line.”¹⁰

The fourth disagreement concerns the reassessment of the WRA’s history by official Party historians. Official Party history has revised its assessment of the WRA; it no longer mentions the “Zhang Guotao line,” and also praises the WRA’s contribution. Chinese mass media has been propagandizing the WRA’s history according to this revision. Concerning this change, the “pro-Mao faction” and the “Mao detractors” respond differently. The “Mao detractors” argue that the revision of the WRA’s history was a manifestation of the Party’s respecting its history, which demonstrates that the Party is “great, glorious and correct.”¹¹ In striking contrast, the “pro-Mao faction” says the revision of official Party History on the issue of the WRA is a threat to the Party’s regime. There is no direct connection between the evidence cited and the conclusions drawn. The advocates of the latter faction present their argument in three steps. They argue first that reinterpreting the WRA is equivalent to “demonizing” (*yaomo hua* 妖魔化) Mao.¹² Because Mao was a national leader who was chosen by the Party and the Chinese people, they say that denying Mao’s contribution is tantamount to condemning the Party and the Chinese people’s choice for their future.¹³ Therefore, they argue that the legitimacy of the Chinese revolution in the 20th century is undermined. In this way,

⁹ Geng Zhonglin 耿仲琳, Jiao Chengyi 焦成毅, “Guanyu Xilujun wenti de huangyan yingdang chuochuan 關於西路軍問題的謊言應當戳穿” (To debunk the lies about the WRA), *Hongse lüyou wang* 紅色旅遊網, January 23, 2007.

<http://www.crt.com.cn/news2007/News/shmw/2007-1/23/01231339.html> (last visited on September 21, 2015).

¹⁰ Zhang Peirong 張佩榮, “Dianping ‘Guanyu Xilujun wenti de huangyan yingdang chuochuan 點評《關於西路軍問題的謊言應當戳穿》” (Comments on “To debunk the lies about the WRA”), *Hongse lüyou wang* 紅色旅遊網, February 15, 2007.

<http://www.crt.com.cn/news2007/News/shmw/2007-2/15/02156143.html> (last visited on September 21, 2015).

¹¹ Yuan Lishi, 2002, pp. 6-7.

¹² Gao Geli 高戈里, “Xilujun ‘datong guoji’ zhanlüe juece ‘bu cunzai fenqi’ ma? 西路軍「打通國際」戰略決策‘不存在分歧’嗎?” (Is there any disagreement on the strategic decision of the WRA about creating an ‘international route’?), *Hong Kong chuanzhen* 香港傳真, 2012(15), pp. 7-56.

¹³ Shuang Shi, 2013, p. 2.

they assert that those who are determined to revise the WRA's history and to condemn Mao's directives on this issue are indeed providing the anti-Party and anti-China forces, both domestic and foreign, with historiographical evidence to initiate "color revolutions."¹⁴

In summary, the two factions that have emerged in the past decade have, to different degrees, eliminated the constraints of official Party History. However, this does not mean that they have begun to study this history on a more rational or professional basis. Instead, their radical words, as well as the enmity they have expressed towards their opponents, indicate their obsessive concern with political assessments. Further, the last two points of disagreement reflect a shift in research focus. Both the first round of debates on the WRA that took place in the 1930s, and the debates in the 1980s, focused on the WRA's history. Although Li's report contained opinions divergent from the official narratives of the Mao Era, neither Li nor Deng attempted to criticize Mao's behavior concerning the WRA, or the Party Center's resolution issued in 1937. In contrast, the evaluation and analysis of Li's report and Deng's comments have become a new focus of both the "pro-Mao faction" and the "Mao detractors." This shift has made discussions about the WRA even more complicated, because now they concern not only the Mao Era, but also are related closely to Deng's decisions on historical issues.

The Formation of the Two Factions

The major points of view of the two factions above are expressed best in two monographs, both of which were published in Hong Kong, and are forbidden to be sold in Mainland China because of their sensitive themes [Figs. 6-6, 6-7]. One of the two authors, Zhou Jun (penname "Shuang Shi"), is a computer engineer at a Chengdu TV station. The other, Xia Yuli (penname "Yuan Lishi") is a freelance writer. Zhou and Xia are the most important writers of the "pro-Mao faction" and the "Mao detractors," respectively. Superficial observation gives the impression that they neither have anything to do with any of the figures involved in this historical event, nor with any figures who have taken part in writing this history. In fact, although it is difficult to determine whether these writers have made their

¹⁴ Writers usually use the phrase "color revolution" to refer to the movements that use nonviolent measures to overthrow leaders and request elections. Gao Geli, "Jiu *Beijing ribao* deng wei Zhang Guotao luxian fan'an zhi Beijing shiwei bing *Renmin ribao* she xin 就《北京日報》等為張國燾路線翻案致北京市委並人民日報社信" (A letter to the Beijing Committee of the CCP and the *People's Daily* on the Beijing Daily's attempt to reassess the Zhang Guotao Line), *Xianggang chuanzhen* 香港傳真, 2012(15), pp. 1-6.

arguments out of personal interest, it is evident that the dissemination of their writings, to a considerable extent, is due to the support of certain people who have close relationships with the participants in this historical event. Zhou's book is prefaced by Ye Jianying's nephew,¹⁵ while Xia has received support from many Fourth Front Army commanders' children, including Xu Xiangqian's son.¹⁶ Hypocritically, each condemns the other for being supported financially by people who are related to the WRA, especially from the "Xu family" (*Xu jia* 徐家) and the "Ye family" (*Ye jia* 葉家). The "pro-Mao faction" and the "Mao detractors" charge each other with failing to write history objectively in order to further their own financial interests and personal relationships, while refusing to accept the other side's criticism.¹⁷ There is insufficient evidence to make any judgment on this issue, but it is quite clear that Xu and Ye held the highest positions among those commanders whose offspring have taken part in the debates about the WRA.

Xu's personal connection with the WRA is obvious. But how is Ye related to this historical issue? It has to do with the complicated relationship between the Party Center and the Fourth Front Army in the 1930s, especially with the issue of the "secret cable" (*midian* 密電) that was sent during the Long March. As mentioned in Chapter 1, according to the official Party History, when Zhang Guotao planned to take over intra-Party power by military means in September 1935, it was Ye who discovered his conspiracy after he read a secret cable sent by Zhang to Chen Changhao, and then reported this to Mao. When Mao recalled this incident three decades later, he praised Ye as having saved him and the Party. Since the early 1980s, scholars and people who were involved in this issue have debated fiercely whether the so-called "secret cable" actually existed. This issue is as sensitive as is that of the WRA's history,¹⁸ and both are listed by Chinese scholars as among the

¹⁵ Ye Xuanji 葉選基, "Preface", in Shuang Shi, 2013.

¹⁶ Xia Yuli was a teacher in a small town when he was young. In the 1980s, a senior military officer who was a former commander in the Fourth Front Army, Wang Hongkun 王宏坤 (1909-1993), chose Xia Yuli to be his biographer. Since then, Xia Yuli has been writing memoirs and biographies for commanders of the Fourth Front Army, and doing research on the army's history.

¹⁷ Gao Geli, 2012, pp. 7-56.

¹⁸ In 2012 He Jiasheng 賀捷生, the daughter of one of the ten marshals of the PRC, He Hong, who was the Chief Director of the Second Front Army, published an article in the *People's Daily* to commemorate Xu Xiangqian. He Jiasheng recalled that she once witnessed Ye Jianying and Xu Xiangqian discussing the issue of the "secret cable" face to face in the 1980s. He Jiasheng implied that both Ye and Xu admitted that the "secret cable" did not exist. He Jiasheng, "Yi nü'er de mingyi 以女兒的名義" (Writing as his daughter), *Renmin ribao* 人民日報, January 11, 2012. <http://dangshi.people.com.cn/GB/16848412.html> (last visited on August 1, 2015). Not long after the publication of He's article, a notification in the name of "former officials in the Ye Jianying Office"

top ten most difficult problems in Party History.¹⁹ Ye neither directed the WRA personally, nor did he take part in writing or rewriting the WRA's history, but because of his close relationship to the issue of the "secret cable," and with the official assessment of Zhang and the Fourth Front Army, both he and his children have paid much attention to the issue of the WRA. In the 1950s, Marshal Ye wrote a poem to commemorate Dong Zhentang, who once worked with him, in which he said Dong died "on a wrong road."²⁰ This apparent condemnation of the Fourth Front Army made many former commanders angry.

In addition to supporting nonprofessional writers, the children of people who were involved in the WRA also express their points of view by other means. Several identify themselves as "WRA researchers," and are interviewed frequently in the media and articles posted on social media.²¹

In addition to the commanders' children, another group that exerts influence on the "pro-Mao faction" and the "Mao detractors" consists of professional Party historians. As discussed in Chapter 4, after Deng wrote his comment on the issue of the WRA, Party historians were ordered to keep silent about certain sensitive aspects of this history. These restrictions, however, have not prevented all Party historians from addressing this topic. Some, now retired, but still active, have provided significant support to these nonprofessional history writers. The nonprofessional writers do not necessarily need to follow the ideologically driven supervision offered by official agencies, in the way that historians who have positions within the Party's bureaucratic system must, so some historians have asked these writers to speak for them. Before he published his book in Hong Kong, Zhou Jun had received advice from several senior researchers from four authoritative institutions, the Central Archives, the Central Party History Research Office, the PLA Military Science Academy, and the Central Party School. When Zhou

(原葉劍英辦公室工作人員) emerged on some websites, which insisted that "from the start of the Cultural Revolution to the year when Marshal Ye passed away, Marshal Ye never went to Marshal Xu's home, and the statement about the two marshals discussing the issues of 'secret cable' is completely fictional". <http://club.kdnet.net/dispbbs.asp?boardid=1&id=8588708> (last visited on August 1, 2015). Ten months later when He published her article in a journal, the relevant paragraph was deleted. The statement and the revision of He's article indicate that the issue of the "secret cable" remains sensitive. He Jiasheng, "Yi nü'er de mingyi 以女兒的名義" (Writing as his daughter), *Xin xiang pinglun* 新湘評論, 2012(22), pp. 51-53.

¹⁹ Han Gang, 2012.

²⁰ Lin Xuelun, 2012.

²¹ Besides Zhou Hongling, already mentioned in this chapter, Cai Xiaoxin 蔡小心 (his father Cai Changyuan 蔡長元 worked in the Cavalry Division of the WRA) and Ren Xiaoping 任小平 (his father Ren Daoxian 任道先 was a soldier in the WRA) are two more examples.

was criticized by the “Mao detractors,” these senior researchers supported him in various ways. Xia Yuli has a close relationship with Zhu Yu, who has retired from his position in the National Defense University.

In assembling all of these pieces, we can see that none of the three groups of people who attempted either to change or sustain the orthodox narratives of the WRA in the early 1980s—people who once served in the First Front Army and the Fourth Front Army and who were involved in writing official Party history, as well as their families—have given up their appeals in the way that Deng and other Party leaders once expected and hoped. Today, these three groups are still exerting an influence on the writing of the WRA’s history. People related to the WRA and the Fourth Front Army support the “Mao detractors,” while those related to the First Front Army and to Party historians who once contributed to the official Party History of the Mao Era, support the “pro-Mao faction.” The new debates between these two factions should therefore be seen as a continuation of the debates in the early 1980s. In this sense, the Party leadership’s attempt to silence these debates by producing an ambiguous and eclectic official history has failed. More ironically, because of the official restrictions, most historians today avoid this topic, but sometimes encourage nonprofessional researchers, such as Zhou and Xia, to write about it. Because these nonprofessionals have no position in official agencies or universities, they are under less pressure, and as a result, enjoy the relative freedom of being able to produce new narratives. In short, the Party Center’s restrictions on writing History have led indirectly to the prevalence of these unorthodox historical narratives.

New Media and Old Habits

Although neither Zhou nor Xia is able to publish their books about the WRA in Mainland China, their writings are easily accessible to Chinese readers, thanks to the internet. Some parts of their manuscripts were even posted online before they were published in Hong Kong. An apparent reason for their preference to use the internet is the inability to publish their writings in official media. Although the internet is theoretically under the regime’s censorship, it provides a much broader platform through which to discuss sensitive topics. Another reason lies in the convenience of being able to discuss or debate what the new media has provided. Some nonprofessional history writers argue that they have more courage than do official historians because they dare to allow netizens to challenge their points of

view.²² On almost all Chinese websites about military issues, people can find discussions on the issue of the WRA.²³ The language these writers use on the internet is plain and powerful, and sometimes even rude and violent.

Interestingly, although both factions are investing great effort in exploiting the internet, they also adopt certain administrative methods, such as petitions, to ask the government to resolve their disagreement. Not long after the aforementioned interview, which attributes the WRA's defeat to Mao's conspiracy, was published in the *Beijing Daily* (*Beijing ribao* 北京日報), a retired official, Gao Geli, who is a son of a middle-ranking PLA commander, wrote to the Beijing Committee of the CCP, charging the interview with "attempting to change the Party Center's verdict on Zhang Guotao" and he asked for "an opportunity to speak out for Mao and other Party leaders [who struggled with Zhang Guotao]."²⁴ The "Mao detractors" have also applied administrative methods to stop the distribution of certain books that present opinions opposite to their own.²⁵

While the intensive use of the internet has become one of the main characteristics of the new debates about the WRA, the debaters' persistence in using administrative means reflects these new debates' close connection with certain old questions. It is because these old questions still have political significance that these debaters feel the government has reason to intervene.

²² Gao Geli, 2012, pp. 1-6.

²³ Take one of the most popular online military forums *Feiyang junshi* 飛揚軍事 (www.fyjs.cn) for example. There are several posts about the WRA's history in this website, some of which have kept active for a couple of years [Fig. 6-8; 6-9].

²⁴ Gao Geli, 2012, pp. 1-6. The Beijing Committee of the CCP did not reply, nor did the *Beijing Daily* allow Gao Geli to publish articles to refute the points of view of the interviewees. In the end, Gao Geli published his letter and an article in an internally distributed journal *Sunny Research Advance* (the Chinese name of this journal is *Xianggang chuanzhen* 香港傳真), which was edited by an official and was directly delivered to high-level officials and senior cadres every month. (This journal was managed by a company called "Sunny Research Limited", which was registered as a private company in Hong Kong in 2004, but the editorial department of this journal was based in Beijing.) Many children of the first generation revolutionaries like to publish articles in this journal. Before Gao's letter, this journal had published articles written by the "pro-Mao faction" and by the "Mao detractors". Despite the journal's relationship with some high-ranking officials, ten days after it published Gao's letter, this journal was announced to be an "illegal publication" and the editorial department was closed down by the Beijing government. The chief editor believed that this incident had everything to do with the issue of the WRA. Wang Jian 王劍, "Xianggang chuanzhen beijin beihou 香港傳真被禁背後" (Why *Xianggang chuanzhen* was banned?), *Boxun xinwen wang* 博訊新聞網,

<http://www.boxun.com/news/gb/china/2012/08/201208091515.shtml#.Vb3qw-vAaXI>

(last visited on August 2, 2015).

²⁵ For instance, the "Mao detractors" stopped a publishing house from reprinting a book about the WRA [Hu Chuangzhang 胡傳章, *Zhuiri ji* 追日集 (Chasing the sun). Wuhan: Hubei renmin chubanshe 湖北人民出版社, 2001], because the author of that book held different opinions with them. Zhu Yu, interview, 2013.

6.1.2 Quasi-official Party historiography

This thesis refers to the way in which Party History is written, as described in the last subsection, as “quasi-official Party historiography.” This term does not mean that these writers and their writings have any official status, but is intended to emphasize that there are some official elements in their narratives. Simply speaking, quasi-official Party History discusses the questions that were created in the Mao Era, but with answers not necessarily in accordance with official interpretations. To explain this point, it is necessary to return to the case of the WRA. As analyzed in Chapter 3, during the Mao Era, the official Party History framework consisted of two types of content, the Party’s contribution and the “line struggles” within the Party. Every selected historical event had a fixed position in this framework, as well as in their corresponding narratives. The WRA’s history belongs to the category of “line struggles” and the official conclusion stated, “The WRA was a result of the Zhang Guotao Line.” This conclusion implies that a political line, the “Zhang Guotao Line,” existed within the Party leadership. In 1937, and over the past thirty-odd years thereafter, almost all debates on the WRA centered on a single question: whether or not the WRA’s failure was a result of this political line. The supporters of the orthodox interpretation had to provide evidence to prove the connection between the WRA and the “Zhang Guotao Line,” while the advocates of the new interpretation tried their best to separate the WRA from the “Zhang Guotao Line.” As noted in Chapter 1, there is, however, no clear criterion to address the relationship between an historical event and this political line. Overall, the core question is: does the “Zhang Guotao Line” really exist, or is it actually a notion created to serve power struggles? Although in recent years, some nonprofessional historians, such as Zhou Jun and Xia Yuli, have created certain new narratives, these still center on the old question about the “connection between the WRA and the Zhang Guotao Line.” As long as they focus on this question, they are still serving the official Party History framework of separating events into wrong and right lines. It is in this sense that this thesis terms them “quasi-official.”

The New Importance of the Old Questions

Quasi-official Party History is popular in China today, and the issue of the WRA is among a number of topics debated intensely by nonprofessional historians. Why do questions such as “whether or not the WRA was related to the Zhang Guotao

Line” still matter in the 21st century, almost eighty years after the WRA’s defeat, and almost forty years after Mao’s death? To a great extent, the answer lies in the mentality and behavior of a group of people called the “second generation reds” (*hong er dai* 紅二代).²⁶

Generally speaking, children (and secretaries in some cases) of the deceased Party leaders or high-ranking officials who were involved in controversial issues in the Party’s history tend to pay the most attention to the rewriting of history and the reassessment of relevant figures. In addition to the issue of the WRA, the history of the New Fourth Army and that of the Northwest Revolutionary Base are two more examples.²⁷ Some of the “second generation reds” enthusiasm for historical issues is based on family. Although they are now in their sixties or seventies, these people still consider the maintenance or rehabilitation of their parents’ reputation as the most important issue in their lives. Some of the offspring of the first generation revolutionaries hold high positions within the Party or in the government. For them, their parents’ history is related directly to their

²⁶ A similar concept that has drawn more attention from Western observers is “Chinese princelings” (*taizi dang* 太子黨), which refers to “a cohesive group of current leaders who have family links going back to earlier generations of elite figures in the PRC”. (Kerry Brown, *The New Emperors: Power and the Princelings in China*. London: I. B. Tauris, 2014, pp. 16-17.) As Brown writes, “there was a decision in 1982 to ask leaders to retire from executive positions at the age of 70, but to allow each family to choose one younger member to carry on their interests....Therefore, there were a select group of new leaders who were the children of former senior leaders, and the concept of a Party family aristocracy took root.” The princeling faction is considered to be an important political power that is competing with the Shanghai faction and the China Youth League faction, two other intraparty factions. Several members of each faction currently or once held positions in the Standing Committee of the Politburo. Different from the princelings, who have blood links to senior officials who served at vice-ministerial level or above in previous administrations, the “second generation reds” are usually defined as the offspring of high ranking cadres appointed at “the thirteenth administrative level” position or above. (The Chinese government set up a criterion for wage levels. Cadres were divided into 24 levels. A deputy division commander in the PLA or a deputy director of a bureau was at the thirteenth administrative level, while a vice-minister was at the seventh administrative level.) This means a princeling must be a second generation red, but the reverse is not the case. The number of “second generation reds” substantially exceeds the number of princelings. Further, a princeling is supposed to hold a high position within the Party, in the government, in the PLA or in state-owned firms, while a “second generation red” is very likely an ordinary official. In other words, while the title of “princelings” emphasizes a transformation of political capital from a former elite leader to a younger generation, the title of “second generation reds” mostly focuses on the idea of “a bloodline inheritance”. Besides Brown’s above-mentioned book, there are other monographs about Chinese princelings and the “second generation reds”. For instance, John Garnaut, *The Rise and Fall of the House of Bo: How A Murder Exposed The Cracks In China’s Leadership* (Penguin, Kindle Edition, 2013).

²⁷ On the issue of the New Fourth Army, as Yang Kuisong observed, “many cadres who once worked in the New Fourth Army led by Xiang Ying 項英 (1989-1941) on the south bank of the Yangzi River and in the New Fourth Army led by Chen Yi and Liu Shaoqi on the north bank of the Yangzi River have participated in the debates about the New Fourth Army’s history, directly or indirectly. Once a researcher starts to discuss this historical issue, they usually are encouraged by one side while being criticized by the other side.” Yang Kuisong, 1999.

relationship with other “second generation officials” (some should be called “princelings,” as their fathers held vice-ministry positions or above). For this reason, these second generation officials also pay close attention to quasi-official Party History. In both of the cases above, these “second generation reds” have, to different degrees, inherited either the alliance or rivalry formed during the Mao Era when factional struggles occurred within the Party. Thus, it is fair to say that personal emotions and interests are an undeniable reason for the prevalence of quasi-official Party History. However, it is too simplistic to attribute such a complex phenomenon to this reason alone. To put it in a larger context, quasi-official Party History should be seen as a consequence of the conflicts between divergent views of the Party’s future political choices, which have divided some high-ranking officials, and some “second generation officials” in particular, into two factions.

The “Left Faction” and the “Right Faction”

In 2007, at about the time that the 17th National Congress of the CCP was held, a number of children of the founding fathers of the PRC assumed high official posts, and began to exercise immense influence on Chinese politics. Since then, political divisions have developed among them. There are two incompatible factions among the “second generation reds” today—the “left faction” and the “right faction”—with the latter advocating political reforms, while the former believe that political reforms would lead only to the subversion of the Party’s regime. A landmark incident in the conflict between these two factions was a quarrel in 2012 between Kong Dan 孔丹 (1947-)²⁸ and Qin Xiao 秦曉 (1947-).²⁹ Both Kong and Qin are sons of senior cadres, and the two had developed a close personal relationship since their childhoods. During the Cultural Revolution, they shared the leadership of a famous Red Guard organization. Despite a similar family constellation and their overlap in experiences, Kong and Qin hold extremely different opinions about Chinese politics. Although many Chinese media organizations based outside of the Mainland reported the quarrel between these

²⁸ Kong Dan’s parents, Kong Yun 孔原 and Xu Ming 許明, were high-ranking officials within the Party. Kong Dan was the president of CITIC Group Corporation, a state-owned company, and retired in 2010.

²⁹ Qin Xiao’s father, Qin Lisheng 秦力生, was a leader in the National Academy of Sciences. Qin Xiao was the president of China Merchants Group, a state-owned company, before he retired in 2010.

two “second generation reds” at a class reunion enthusiastically,³⁰ the real scenario was not made available to ordinary readers. Yet it is not hard to infer what happened, because their political differences have been expressed sufficiently on other occasions. Simply put, the “left faction”, with Kong as its representative, insists that “China’s development should follow a path that is chosen and led by the CCP,” rather than copying the values and political systems of Western countries.³¹ Thus, they refuse to adopt democracy or to pursue personal freedom and human rights, which they consider to be Western concepts. Instead, they emphasize the stability of Chinese society and national interests. The “right faction,” of which Qin serves as the spokesman, believes in “universal values,” another concept that the Party has forbidden to be mentioned, arguing that the ruling group should stop using economic development as the source of the legitimacy of political power and should stop adopting Marxist economics and the theory of class struggle to understand China and the world.³²

Because both factions of these “second generation reds” have a close personal connection with the CCP’s revolutionary past, and because their opinions are formed in part by their or their parents’ personal experiences, they very often have used Party History as evidence to support their arguments. Naturally, their narratives and explanations of Party History differ significantly. The clearest example is the issue of the Cultural Revolution. The “left faction” insists that if the Cultural Revolution had not taken place, then reforms and opening up would have been impossible, because it was the Cultural Revolution that made the Party and Chinese people consider eliminating those political, economic, and cultural thoughts and ideas that had led China down the wrong path. In short, they argue that, although the Cultural Revolution itself was an unprecedented disaster, it ultimately rejuvenated the nation greatly, and as a result, it should not be evaluated in a completely negative light.³³ The “right faction” advocates comprehensive criticism and retrospection with respect to the Cultural Revolution.

³⁰ Almost all these media reports were based on the accounts of Hu Dehua 胡德華, the third son of Hu Yaobang.

³¹ Wu Xiaoli zhuanfang Kong Dan 吳小莉專訪孔丹 (Wu Xiaoli interviewed Kong Dan), *Fenghuang weishi* 鳳凰衛視 (Phoenix TV), July 4, July 11, 2015. http://finance.ifeng.com/a/20150711/13833708_0.shtml (last visited on September 21, 2015).

³² Qin Xiao 秦曉, “Qu yishixingtai hua, huigui pushi jiazhi 去意識形態化 回歸普世價值” (To Get rid of the influence of [Marxist] ideology and to reclaim universal values), *Zhongguo gaige* 中國改革, 2010(10), pp. 102-104.

³³ “Wu Xiaoli interviewed Kong Dan”, 2015.

To emphasize this point, one representative of this faction, Hu Deping 胡德平 (1942-), the oldest son of Hu Yaobang, organized a seminar in 2011 to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the Party's second resolution on historical issues.³⁴ In addition to the issue of the Cultural Revolution, the two factions also hold distinct opinions on many other important events in the Mao Era, such as the Great Famine (1959-1961), and the split of China and the Soviet Union in 1956. In general, the "right faction" would like to reinterpret history, while the "left faction" tends to insist on Mao's verdicts on historical issues; both make use of historical narratives to legitimize their arguments about the Party's future. Thus, the divergence of perspectives about the CCP's future has become the second most direct cause for the prevalence of the quasi-official Party History.

"Red Complex"

Moreover, the prevalence of quasi-official Party historiography is also related directly to the psychological connection that some "second generation reds" have with Mao and his era—a mentality referred to in this thesis as the "red complex." The "second generation reds" in China can be divided into two categories according to their current social status. Red offspring in the first category have relied on their families to obtain certain resources or positions that were secured in the early years of the Reform Era. Today, they are enjoying favorable social and economic status, not because of their identity as "second generation reds," but because of the successful transformation of this identity into political or financial resources that occurred at least twenty years ago. People in the second category did not make such a transformation. They have felt increasingly unfulfilled in recent years, as the glory of the revolution has continued to fade, and because the perceived decline in their status has affected their social, political, and financial positions. Regarding themselves as a living link to the Party's revolutionary past, they associate with each other voluntarily to reinforce this self-identity. As Chinese media have observed correctly, "they take part in collective activities and actively express their opinions, and establishing a variety of associations and performing in choirs are their main vehicles to carry on their real existence and their sense of

³⁴ Li Weidong 李偉東, Cheng Min 程敏, "Jinian 'Guanyu jianguo yilai dang de ruogan lishi wenti de jueyi' fabiao sanshi zhounian zuotanhui zongshu 紀念《關於建國以來黨的若干歷史問題的決議》發表三十週年座談會綜述" (A summary of the Commemoration Seminar for the 30th Anniversary of the Issue of the *Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party Since the Founding of the People's Republic of China*"), *Yan-Huang chunqiu* 炎黃春秋, 2011(10), pp. 10-16.

mission.”³⁵

The majority of their forefathers were purged by Mao and most of these “second generation reds” suffered personally in different ways during the Mao Era, and especially during the Cultural Revolution. However, none of their suffering has helped them reflect critically on Mao and his administration. Obsessing about Maoist ideology and even Maoist lifestyle, some of them use their poverty as an indicator to claim that they are the real heirs of Mao’s regime. To a great degree, the behavior of these “second generation reds” proves what historians have said about history’s significance to certain contemporary people: “For those who do not have power or who feel that they do not have enough, history can be a way of protesting against their marginalization, or against trends or ideas they do not like.”³⁶

To protect their supposed status as “red heirs,” these people work against any serious reevaluation of the Mao Era. For the same reason, they are also sensitive to the possibility that the Party will gradually change its faith in Marxism and “Mao Zedong Thought,” and as a result, they voluntarily assume the responsibility of keeping the Party on its Maoist track. As a daughter of a PLA general, Xu Wenhui 徐文惠 (1939-) retired as an ordinary official a number of years ago.³⁷ Today, she holds the title of president of the Beijing Association for Promoting the Culture of the Founding Fathers of the Country (*Beijing kaiguo yuanxun wenhua cujin hui* 北京開國元勳文化促進會), and is active in organizing “second generation reds” who share the same admiration for Mao to sing “red songs” and attend other activities related to “red culture.” In a dialogue with a journalist, Xu often mentioned her concerns that the Party and the country were “going to change color” (*bianse* 變色), by which she means “to lose their faith in communism,” or “to change to other political systems.” Her words in the dialogue below reflect, among other things, that the behavior of the second generation reds results from obsession, rather than rational thinking:

Xu: Belief is the most important thing. We are going to pass on the

³⁵ Fan Chenggang 范承剛, “Guojia zhi zi 國家之子” (The sons of the country), *Nanfang zhoumo* 南方週末, November 11, 2013. <http://www.infzm.com/content/96083> (last visited on August 5, 2015).

³⁶ Margret MacMillan, *Dangerous Games: The Uses and Abuses of History*. New York: Modern Library, 2009, p. 53.

³⁷ Xu Wenhui’s father is Xu Haidong 徐海東 (1900-1970). Xu Wenhui and Hu Muying 胡木英, Hu Qiaomu’s daughter, are the most active organizers among the “second generation reds”.

red culture from generation to generation, preventing [our Party and our country] from “turning to other colors.”

Journalist: What do you think is threatening the red color [of the Party and the country]?

Xu: Everybody knows the USA would like to see future generations [of Chinese] abandon the red color.³⁸

The reason for their sensitivity to the potential of *bianse* is because, to a great extent, they have bound the reputation and social status of their parents and themselves to China’s “color,” which for them is reflected basically in the leadership and in the majority of Chinese people’s assessment of Mao and his era. This mentality has made them susceptible to the use of, and belief in, quasi-official historical narratives, and this emotional attachment has, in turn, been reinforced further by these kinds of historical writings. The following paragraph in the concluding section of Shuang Shi’s (Zhou Jun) book about the WRA, for example, attempts blatantly to provoke its target readers’ emotions.

Mao is a great political symbol, which represents the history of the Chinese revolution...[If the “second generation reds” criticize Mao,] then their parents will, in the near future, be labeled as “communist bandits” and will go to hell without any chance of rebirth. Just imagine what will happen if those people who have been deprived of their possessions by the Communists come back into power? When they start to slaughter “communist bandits,” they will not identify which faction [your forefathers belonged to]. To abandon Mao means also to abandon your forefathers and yourselves. I suggest people my age and young people be careful [when they deal with historical issues]!³⁹

To summarize, I have discussed here a total of three types of “second generation reds.” The first is constituted by those people whose families were involved in certain historical events, and their opinions depend on the role that their parents played in history. The second type of “second generation reds” hold clear ideas about Chinese politics, and their interpretations of historical issues are in accordance with their current political thought. The third set of “second generation

³⁸ Fan Chenggang, 2013.

³⁹ Shuang Shi, 2013, p. 444.

reds” are obsessed with protecting the Party and the country’s “color,” partially by means of maintaining Mao’s verdicts on historical issues.

The last two groups’ thoughts and practices require more attention, because they have wider social foundations and reflect China’s social reality more extensively. China never lacks requests for freedom and democracy. This trend of thought culminated in 2008 when the “Charter 08” (零八憲章) was issued. At the same time, there are many Chinese people who continue to sing the praises of Mao and the years under his rule. Although the “Mao Craze” of the 1990s⁴⁰ has faded, the “Red complex” phenomenon remains quite common among Chinese people. Thus, quasi-official Party historiography provides evidence of the argument of both of the social psychologies above.

Why Does Quasi-official Party Historiography Matter?

The majority of quasi-official Party historical writings centers on the questions that were created by Party leaders and historians during certain historical periods and for certain political purposes. The new explanations to these old questions are of no academic importance, but the fact that they have emerged in an age when revolutionary history should have faded, and the fact that they have attracted the interest of both top leaders and ordinary audiences is worthy of attention.

Most importantly, quasi-official Party historiography is an inseparable part of China’s contemporary politics because of its relationship with the “second generation reds.” No observer can afford to underestimate the influence that the “second generation reds” are exercising on Chinese politics, not only because some of them hold or recently held high positions, but also because they exert influence at a personal level on current leaders, Xi Jinping in particular. While both Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao 胡錦濤 (1942-) derived legitimacy from being supported and groomed by Deng,⁴¹ Xi has benefited greatly from the reputation and good personage of his father, Xi Zhongxun 習仲勳 (1913-2002). As a result, the opinions of the “second generation reds,” which are reflected in their debates on historical issues, are of special significance to Chinese politics in the Xi regime.

⁴⁰ For the “Mao Craze”, or *Mao re* 毛熱, see “The Irresistible Fall and Rise of Mao”, in Geremie R. Barmé, *Shades of Mao: The Posthumous Cult of the Great Leader*. Armonk, N. Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1996, pp. 3-73.

⁴¹ Kjeld Erik Brodsgaard, “China’s Communist Party and the Evolving Political Order”, in David Shambaugh, ed., *Charting China’s Future: Domestic and International Challenges*. New York: Routledge, 2011, pp. 13-21.

Moreover, these quasi-official historical writings are playing an essential role in shaping the Chinese people's political ideas. To a considerable extent, the prevalence of quasi-official Party historiography reflects the absence of political transparency. Because there is little opportunity and effective channels for both the elites and the masses to express their opinions, discussing Party History has become an indirect means for the Chinese people to participate in politics, even if it is sometimes only in a psychological sense. Because the workings and decision-making of the leadership are shrouded in much mystery, Chinese people have become sensitive to everything that the leaders and those who are close to them do. In the past few years, the activities of the "second generation reds," like singing "revolutionary songs" (or "red songs", *hongge* 紅歌) and apologizing for their practices during the Cultural Revolution, have aroused enormous interest. Their attitudes towards Party History are exerting influence on the Chinese people's understanding of the Cultural Revolution, of the 95-year history of the Party, and on the current administration of the CCP.

In this context, in 2013, the Party Center began to criticize "historical nihilism" as a response to the prevalence of quasi-official Party historiography and as a response to the pressure they face concerning historical problems.

6.2 Genuine vs. Fake "Historical Nihilism"⁴²

In the early 1990s, a wave of criticism was directed at "historical nihilism" (*lishi xuwu zhuyi* 歷史虛無主義). At the time, the primary target was the idea of "farewell to revolution" (*gaobie geming* 告別革命) raised by Li Zehou 李澤厚 (1930-) and Liu Zaifu 劉再復 (1941-), which represented the attempts to reinterpret modern Chinese history in a way that deviated from the CCP's historical materialist interpretation.⁴³ As Li Huaiyin argues, the historiography of modern China in the 1980s and 1990s underwent a paradigm shift in which the modernization paradigm shook the status of the traditional revolutionary

⁴² The first thing that needs to be clarified is that here the concept of "historical nihilism" has nothing to do with the concept of the same name that is found in the history of Western thought. The "historical nihilism" discussed in this thesis must be understood in the context of modern Chinese politics.

⁴³ These articles that were opposed to "historical nihilism" were later compiled into a book. Sha Jiansun 沙健孫 and Gong Shuduo 龔書鐸, eds., *Zou shenme lu: guanyu Zhongguo jin xiandai lishi shang de ruogan zhongda shifei wenti* 走什麼路：關於中國近現代歷史上的若干重大是非問題 (Which is our road: on several crucial issues in modern Chinese history). Jinan: Shandong renmin chubanshe 山東人民出版社, 1997.

historiography.⁴⁴ The first wave of criticism of “historical nihilism” was the authorities’ response to this shift. Compared to the criticism in the 1990s, the on-going campaign of criticism towards “historical nihilism” is more intense and has a high-level background, as it was launched officially in a document issued by the Politburo, and the relevant articles are published by some of the Party’s top official organs. China observers could not help but presume the Xi government’s reasons and goals for doing this. Scholars such as David Shambaugh see the document as evidence of a lack of confidence in controlling Chinese society.⁴⁵ As this section will argue, in addition to a lack of confidence, criticism of “historical nihilism” also has been generated by a series of dilemmas concerning historical issues that the Party leadership is facing.

6.2.1 Criticizing the So-called “Historical Nihilism”

Document No. 9, issued in April 2013, and referred to above, defined the concept of “historical nihilism” officially. According to this document, “historical nihilism” in contemporary China contains three aspects: (1) denying the importance of revolution, and claiming that the revolution led by the CCP has destroyed China [rather than enabled China’s construction]; (2) denying the historical inevitability of China’s becoming a socialist country, and considering the Party’s history and the PRC’s history as a series of mistakes, and (3) denying the existing evaluations of historical events and historical figures, and disparaging revolutionary predecessors and Party leaders.⁴⁶

Since 2013, Party theoreticians have produced more detailed descriptions of this concept. For example, they argue that the manifestations of “historical nihilism” include: denying the Party’s history as a whole by criticizing the Party’s mistakes; denying the importance of Mao’s entire life by criticizing the mistakes he committed in his last years, and denying the history of the international communist movement by pointing out the mistakes in the movement and the

⁴⁴ Li Huaiyin, 2010.

⁴⁵ David Shambaugh, “The Coming Chinese Crackup”, *The Wall Street Journal*, March 6, 2015. <http://www.wsj.com/articles/the-coming-chinese-crack-up-1425659198> (last visited on September 21, 2015).

⁴⁶ Zhonggong zhongyang bangongting 中共中央辦公廳 (The General Office of the CCP Central Committee), 2013.

defects of the Soviet Union model.⁴⁷ Combining all of these elements, Party theoreticians accuse “historical nihilists” of having adopted two incorrect methods to write Party History. One is to subvert the accepted conclusions about the Party’s history,⁴⁸ in particular the attempt to change the official assessments of Party leaders who are considered to have committed serious mistakes. The other is to reveal the mistakes that the Party committed, thereby “creating a general impression that the CCP did nothing good.”⁴⁹

The reinterpretation of the WRA in the 1980s is seen as a manifestation of historical nihilism. In the report of a research project sponsored by the Ministry of Education, a Wuhan University professor ranked the issue of the WRA together with two other sensitive events in the Party’s history—the Eliminating of the Counter-revolutionary Campaign in the Central Soviet Region and the Yan’an Rectification Campaign—among the topics most contaminated by historical nihilism.⁵⁰

What then, is the correct way to write Party History? The Party theoreticians who criticize “historical nihilism” quote Deng frequently: “generally speaking, our Party’s history is a glorious history.”⁵¹ They admit that the CCP and Party leaders have committed many mistakes, but they argue that, “this is due to a lack of experience and because of historical limitations, rather than because of the Party or socialism.”⁵² Following this argument, they state that historians should write about the Party’s contributions, rather than its mistakes. With respect to the question of how to assess Mao, which Party theoreticians consider to be one of the core issues of “historical nihilism,”⁵³ they believe firmly that Mao’s achievements

⁴⁷ Ma Xueke 馬學軻, “2014 nian yishixingtai lingyu shige redian wenti 2014年意識形態領域十個熱點問題” (The top ten subjects in the field of ideology in 2014), *Makesi zhuyi yanjiu* 馬克思主義研究, 2015(2), pp. 116-129.

⁴⁸ Gong Yun 龔雲, “*Yan-Huang chunqiu*: lishi xuwu zhuyi sichao de zhongyao zhendi 《炎黃春秋》: 歷史虛無主義思潮的重要障地” (*Yan-Huang chunqiu* is one of the main vehicles of historical nihilism). The author Gong Yun is a researcher of the Marxism Research Academy (馬克思主義研究院). This article became popular on some Chinese websites around 2012. On June 3, 2015, one day before the 26th anniversary of Tiananmen Massacre, the official media of the Central Military Committee of the CCP, *Jiefangjun bao* 解放軍報, republished Gong’s article and consequently aroused a new wave of debates about “historical nihilism”.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Yang Jun 楊軍, “Lishi xuwu zhuyi sichao bu cunzai ma? 歷史虛無主義思潮不存在嗎?” (Does not historical nihilism exist?), *Hongqi wengao* 紅旗文稿, 2014(18), pp. 21-24.

⁵¹ Deng Xiaoping, 1994, pp. 289-290.

⁵² Gong Yun, 2013.

⁵³ Liang Zhu 梁柱, “Lishi xuwu zhuyi ‘chongxie lishi’ youhe suqiu 歷史虛無主義「重寫歷史」有何訴求” (What are the “historical nihilists” purposes of rewriting history), *Zhongguo shehui kexue bao*

outweigh his errors.

The criticism of historical nihilism not only targets the writings of Party History. Party theoreticians state that “historical nihilism” denies the entire knowledge system of Chinese history that was built according to Marxism. Specifically, they believe that many aspects of modern Chinese history, for example, certain significant incidents, such as the Boxer Movement, the Xinhai Revolution, and the Taiping Rebellion, have already been contaminated by “historical nihilism.” Two articles written by the Shanghai Research Center for the Theory of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics, which were published in two top-ranking official journals, accuse “historical nihilism” of the following: (1) advocating “farewell to revolutions” and denying the significance of all the revolutions in modern Chinese history; (2) preaching an idea that China’s modernization would only be realized through following those Western imperialists that invaded China; (3) believing that modernization equaled Westernization and insisting on realizing globalization and modernization through introducing ideas from the West; (4) reinterpreting historical figures and criticizing [some positive figures] such as Sun Yat-sen, Mao, and Lu Xun, and (5) beautifying the ruling class in modern Chinese history by reinterpreting figures like the Empress Dowager Cixi and Li Hongzhang.⁵⁴ In summary, the vast majority of research topics about modern Chinese history has been included within the scope of potential “historical nihilism.”

Party History and modern Chinese history are inextricably entwined, and Party theoreticians consider both to be important to political reality. The relationship between Party History and the Party’s regime is obvious. As Document No. 9 states, denying the Party’s historical status facilitates denying the Party’s legitimacy as a long-term governing party.⁵⁵ As for modern Chinese history, critics draw a similar conclusion. They argue that to deny the history of the Chinese people’s struggles against foreign aggressors or to assess the ruling class before 1949 positively also

中國社會科學報, April 23, 2014. Zhongguo shehui kexue Online, <http://www.csstoday.net/xueshuzixun/guoneixinwen/89185.html> (last visited on the August 24, 2015). The author Liang Zhu is a professor of the Research Center for Theoretical System of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics (中國特色社會主義理論體系研究中心) in The Peking University.

⁵⁴ Ma Xueke, 2015; Gao Qiqi 高奇琦, Duan Gang 段鋼, “Dui lishi de zijue zixin shi dizhi lishi xuwu zhuyi de jishi 對歷史的自覺自信是抵制歷史虛無主義的基石” (The confidence in [official] History is the main weapon to fight against “historical nihilism”), *Qiushi* 求是, 2013(1). Qiushi Online, http://www.qstheory.cn/zxdk/2013/201301/201212/t20121227_202428.htm (last visited on the August 24, 2015)

⁵⁵ Zhonggong zhongyang bangongting (The General Office of the CCP Central Committee), 2013.

is designed to weaken the CCP's legitimacy.⁵⁶ Thus, the criticism of "historical nihilism" can be reduced to the issue of the Party's legitimacy. Because China has adopted "reform and opening up" policies for nearly forty years, and has become the second largest economy in the world, many China observers see economic development as the major source of the CCP's legitimacy.⁵⁷ The Party leadership, however, believes it cannot afford to ignore its historical legitimacy.

The scope of the targets criticized as being tainted by nihilism continues to expand. For example, regarding methodology, case studies are criticized as a violation of the Marxist principles of observing societies and the world comprehensively.⁵⁸ Some literature and media programs are also accused of "historical nihilism," as they "attribute the occurrence of some significant events to fortuitous and novel reasons."⁵⁹ More importantly, a number of theoreticians refuse to believe that some scholars have misinterpreted the Party's glorious history in a negative way or have challenged the classic narratives about modern Chinese history merely for academic purposes. Instead, they argue that there are some "appeals behind [these writers'] writings"⁶⁰—that is, "to attempt to overthrow the socialist regime of our country."⁶¹ The former Director of the Chinese Academy of Social Science, Li Tieying 李鐵映 (1936-), who is also a "second generation red,"⁶² wrote, "There are many people who are determined to tamper with our history in order make us anxious." In Li's opinion, these people want to prevent China from developing and to prevent Chinese people from becoming wealthy, so they are deliberately fabricating history.⁶³ As for those people's ultimate aim, a popular opinion is that they want China to collapse, as did the Soviet Union, and become a capitalist country. Chinese theoreticians argue that these evil people's plan is quite feasible, given the fact that "historical nihilism"

⁵⁶ Gong Yun, 2013.

⁵⁷ Peter Sandby-Thomas, *Legitimizing the Chinese Communist Party since Tiananmen: A Critical Analysis of the Stability Discourse*. OX: Routledge, 2011, p. 6.

⁵⁸ Gao Qiqi and Duan Gang, 2013.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Liang Zhu, 2014.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Li Tieying's father, Li Weihan was one of the Party leaders in the early 1920s. After 1949 Li Weihan was assigned to be the Minister of United Front Work. Li Tieying's mother, Jin Weiying 金維映 (1904-1941), was also a revolutionary, and once was married to Deng Xiaoping in the early 1930s.

⁶³ Li Tieying 李鐵映, "Yao you ziji de lishi guan 要有自己的歷史觀" ([We] should have our own view of history), *Zhongguo shehui kexue bao* 中國社會科學報, Feb 27, 2015. http://sscp.cssn.cn/xkpd/xsyz/gn/201502/t20150227_1524895.html (last visited on September 19, 2015).

was prevalent in the Soviet Union before its collapse.⁶⁴

On the issue of the WRA, these criticisms of “historical nihilism” are similar to the arguments of the “pro-Mao faction,” which claims that those who are trying to change Mao’s verdicts on historical problems actually intend to challenge the CCP’s status as the ruling party. We should not, however, simply see this criticism as an attempt to maintain the official historical narratives created during the Mao Era. This campaign of criticism might have been launched as one step in stopping scholars and writers from arguing continually about historical issues, but it has deviated from its original intention, and it is probably the reason that more attention is being paid to sensitive aspects of Party History.

Xi Jinping’s Dilemma

China’s current leadership under Xi is facing more pressure concerning the problem of how to assess Party history than did its predecessors over the past twenty some years. First, as analyzed previously, the increasingly fierce discussions about historical issues among officials, “second generation reds,” writers, and ordinary people have put significant pressure on the leadership. Secondly, because of Xi’s personal connection with certain controversial issues, many people, from surviving senior cadres to ordinary Chinese people, expect him to be more motivated than are other leaders in reinterpreting Party History, especially with respect to those issues in which his father, Xi Zhongxun, was involved.⁶⁵

The situation that Xi is facing is to some extent similar to that Deng encountered from the late 1970s to the early 1980s, when both appeals within the Party and public opinion forced the new leadership to attempt to resolve historical problems almost immediately after they took power. The current leadership, however, is confronted by more difficulties, because it must assess two different eras—the Mao Era and the Reform Era. While Mao represents the legitimacy that the Party achieved from its struggles in the revolutionary years, Deng symbolizes the Party’s new path of “socialism with Chinese characteristics.” Because Xi and his colleagues

⁶⁴ Tian Jujian 田居儉, “Qizhi xianming fandui lishi xuwu zhuyi 旗幟鮮明反對歷史虛無主義” (Firmly oppose historical nihilism), *Qiushi* 求是, 2013(19), pp. 44-46. The author Tian Jujian is a research of the Research Center for the Theoretical System of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics (中國特色社會主義理論體系研究中心) in CASS.

⁶⁵ For instance, after Gao Gang’s widow and son were invited to attend the commemoration ceremony for the centenary of the birth of Xi Zhongxun, there was speculation that Xi Jinping might have been preparing to rehabilitate Gao, Xi Zhongxun’s close colleague in the 1930s at the Northwest Revolutionary Base.

have inherited the political legacy of both Mao and Deng, they need to face the difficult problem of interpreting these two prominent figures logically, and in a way that is acceptable to the majority of Party cadres and to as many Chinese citizens as possible. The current Party leaders might be happy to make some changes to the official narratives of certain events or figures, due to numerous appeals and public opinion, but they definitely do not want to risk making any conclusive assessments of the Mao or the Reform Eras. One more factor that has made the situation even more complex is that some thirty years ago, Deng made an official assessment of Mao that is neither clear nor logical. This means that when Deng's successors consider whether they should reassess Mao, they must think simultaneously about whether they are ready to evaluate Deng's assessment of Mao and how to do so.

Further, the Mao Era and the Reform Era are not completely separate periods. Those cadres, intellectuals, and ordinary Chinese citizens who are paying close attention to the leadership's attitude to the Mao Era also anticipate changes in the verdicts pertaining to certain figures and events under Deng's administration, with Hu Yaobang, Zhao Ziyang, and the Tiananmen Massacre as the three major candidates. The words of Li Rui, Mao's former secretary, and one of the most senior cadres still living, represent the expectations of a considerable number of influential figures. He said, "It is an ordeal for the new generation leaders [to assess the Party's past]. It depends on whether they have the courage to make the third resolution on historical issues, to resolve [historical problems], including the June 4th Incident."⁶⁶ Because the rehabilitation of Zhao Ziyang, Hu Yaobang, and the Tiananmen Massacre will definitely receive strong opposition from conservatives within the Party, and will also lead to more expectations of political reforms, the current Party Center has no desire to do this. As a result, although Xi and his colleagues have incentives to resolve certain historical problems that occurred during the Mao Era, they remain discreet when dealing with them.

As analyzed previously, Deng encouraged senior cadres to write Party History. In doing so, the pressure on the leadership to resolve historical problems was relieved in part. In the meantime, Deng promoted a dictum of "It is better to be vague than meticulous," in order to keep the challenges to Mao's orthodox historical narratives under his control. Under Deng's supervision, a number of

⁶⁶ Li Rui, 2013, p. 190.

verdicts were changed, but in the end, an official resolution once again defined a new Party History framework. Through this tortuous process, Deng reduced the number of debates within the Party temporarily, but left many unsolved problems to his successors. Looking at how the current Party leadership is dealing with debates on historical issues, Xi's attempts to emulate Deng's methods are evident. At the beginning of 2013, Xi pronounced an ambiguous principle about assessing the Party's past: "[People] cannot deny what was done before the 'reform and opening-up' period based on what happened after it, and vice versa"⁶⁷ (In the CCP's discourse this principle is called "double-cannot-deny," *liangge buneng fouding* 兩個不能否定). To put it more directly, Xi is actually telling people that the Party acted correctly both during the Mao and the Reform Eras. The strongest indication that Xi provides here is simply "Do not debate historical issues anymore." Three months after Xi produced the rule of "double-cannot-deny," the Party Center issued Document No. 9 and began its criticism of "historical nihilism." This might be one more manoeuvre that the Party has adopted to address historical problems. Because "historical nihilism" remains a very ambiguous concept, the authorities could easily redefine this concept in the future and make the critics the new targets of criticism. In doing this, the Party Center might have expected to silence all of them. However, and likely contrary to the authorities' expectation, the criticism of "historical nihilism" has not stopped scholars from discussing historical issues, but instead has provoked attacks by these supposed "historical nihilists."

6.2.2 Responses of "Historical Nihilists"

First, and quite naturally, scholars deny that their research amounts to historical nihilism. They argue that making adverse assessments of certain leaders or of the Party's work during certain historical periods should not be deemed historical nihilism. Even if there are different opinions on these issues, they are merely academic debates, rather than indications of a harmful paradigm.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Zhonggong zhongyang dangshi yanjiushi 中共中央黨史研究室 (The Central Party History Research Office), "Zhengque kandai gaige kaifang qianhou liangge lishi shiqi—xuexi Xi Jinping zongshuji guanyu 'liangge buneng fouding' de zhongyao lunshu 正確看待改革開放前後兩個歷史時期——學習習近平總書記關於'兩個不能否定'的重要論述" (To study the Chief Secretary of the CCP, Xi Jinping's account about "double-cannot-deny" and to rightly understand the two historical periods—before and after 1978), *Renmin ribao* 人民日報 <http://theory.people.com.cn/n/2013/1108/c40531-23472265.html> (last visited on August 24, 2015).

⁶⁸ Ma Longshan 馬龍閃, "Lishi xuwu zhuyi de lailongqumai 歷史虛無主義的來龍去脈" (The genesis of historical nihilism), *Yan-Huang chunqiu* 炎黃春秋, 2014(5), pp. 23-28. Ma Longshan is a

Refusing to accept the condemnations of them, these scholars in turn charge that those who criticize them are the real historical nihilists. The retired deputy director of the Theoretical Research Office in the Central Party School, Du Guang, divides historical nihilism into two categories. The first is referred to as “historical nihility,” which means avoiding discussing some historical issues in order to make people forget them. The other is called “nihilistic history,” which refers to the fabrication of historical narratives. According to Du, the CCP’s official Party History contains both of the above two categories of nihilistic historical narratives, with the “Purging the ‘AB Group’ Campaign” in the Central Soviet Region and the WRA as the most important examples in each category, respectively.⁶⁹

Scholars also underscore that historical nihilism was not only prevalent in the Mao Era, but also existed in the Reform Era. Ma Longshan writes that an extreme manifestation of “historical nihilism” in modern China is expressed by some people who assert that a new Cultural Revolution will help deal with the corruption of officialdom and destroy the “new capitalists” (*xinsheng “zou zi pai”* 新生“走資派”) in China. Ma considers that forbidding people from talking about the Cultural Revolution in order to make the new generation of Chinese people forget this history is a mild expression of “historical nihilism.”⁷⁰ Du Guang also criticizes “historical nihilism” in both the Mao Era and the Reform Era. With respect to the issue of the WRA, Du says that in the Mao Era, “historical facts were replaced with fictional lies. As a result people mistakenly took these lies as truth.” Du said that in the Reform Era, although the official Party History was changed in some ways, it is still taboo to discuss the reasons for the WRA’s defeat. In this sense, “the core of this historical issue is still kept nihilistic.”⁷¹

Moreover, the above-mentioned scholars’ targets of criticism not only include the official Party History, but also the Marxist system of theories. Yin Baoyun, a Beijing University professor, wrote: “The system adopts a nonexistent communist society as the sole standard to judge everything,” thereby “preventing people from appropriately understanding history and reality.” In a word, “it is a big obstacle to

researcher in the Global History Institute, CASS.

⁶⁹ Du Guang 杜光, “Lishi xuwu zhuyi de xuwu he zhuyi 歷史虛無主義的虛無和主義” (The nihilism of nihilistic history). <http://wlc01.tumblr.com/post/75029597326/杜光历史虚无主义的虚无和主义> posted on January 30, 2014 (last visited on August 24, 2015).

⁷⁰ Ma Longshan, 2014.

⁷¹ Du Guang 杜光, 2014.

[China's] reforms and opening up, as well as the progress of Chinese society."⁷² Similar to the criticism of "historical nihilism" discussed in the last subsection, these scholars also consider "historical nihilism" to be a contributing factor to the Soviet Union's collapse. By historical nihilism, however, they mean Marxist historiography, rather than intellectuals' dissenting opinions.⁷³

The most striking aspect of these scholars' criticism targets the CCP regime. First, they condemn the Party as having made use of the state's propaganda system to fight so-called "historical nihilism," a label that has been placed upon them artificially. They consider the anti-"historical nihilism" campaign to be a political movement, similar to the movements in the Mao Era and those conducted under Deng's supervision.⁷⁴ Secondly, these scholars' criticisms go beyond ideology, and consider other aspects of the Party's governance. They argue that because the authorities have failed to realize that they are the real historical nihilists, they have done many contradictory things. For example:

[They] emphasize that Marxism is a universal truth, while opposing "universal values." They talk a lot about the rule of law as well as the constitution, while considering the word "*xianzheng* 憲政" (constitutionalism) as sensitive and forbid the media to mention it. [They] highly praise the violent revolutions of the Chinese masses, while encouraging [local governments and other agencies] to forcibly destroy residents' houses and stop people from petitioning. [They] emphasize that the [Chinese] people are not qualified to be democratic, while claiming that the Chinese people are enjoying a high-level democracy and human rights.⁷⁵

Because these criticisms target ideological management and other parts of the Party's administration, it is only a matter of time before the authorities take further steps to eliminate the influence of these writers.

⁷² Yin Baoyun 尹保雲, "Yao jingtí shénmeyāng de lìshǐ xūwú zhuyì 要警惕什麼樣的歷史虛無主義" (What kind of historical nihilism should we pay attention to), *Yan-Huang chunqiu* 炎黃春秋, 2014(5), pp. 29-34.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Guo Shiyou 郭世佑, "Lìshǐ xūwú zhuyì de shí yú xū 歷史虛無主義的實與虛" (The substantial and meaningless parts of "historical nihilism"), *Yan-Huang chunqiu* 炎黃春秋, 2014(5), pp. 35-40.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

Conclusion

The official narratives that were created according to Deng's dictum, "It is better to be vague than meticulous," have been increasingly less effective since the 1990s. Because official Party History cannot meet the social demand for historical interpretations, the substitute for it—quasi-official Party History—has attracted more and more public interest. Quasi-official Party historiography seems to lack a direct connection with the political reality of contemporary China, as its subjects typically are events that took place long ago, and its writers are in many ways unlike Party historians in the ordinary sense. The discussion above has shown, however, that quasi-official Party History contains even more hidden meanings that must be decoded than did the official Party History written by the CROPH.

The emergence of quasi-official Party historiography is the result of the Party's evasive attitude towards sensitive historical issues. Despite this deliberate evasion, there are increasingly stronger demands to reinterpret these issues, both on the part of Party elites and ordinary citizens. Quasi-official Party History has provided an alternative set of historical interpretations to meet these demands. Once the Chinese people find that the official interpretations that they have been taught in school and in study sessions in *danwei* (單位, work units) are unreliable, they turn to quasi-official interpretations, which are novel, powerful, and comprehensible. This kind of historiography, however, prevents both scholars and the reading public from learning about and understanding the CCP's history. On the one hand, quasi-official historiography further prevents academic scholars from conducting research on sensitive issues concerning Party History. Scholars' accounts about the potential danger of discussing sensitive issues that were presented in Chapter 5 are evidence of this. On the other hand, quasi-official Party History constrains readers' concerns within certain frameworks, thus preventing them from achieving a deeper understanding about China's modern history. Thus, quasi-official Party History functions as a wall that separates academic historians and ordinary readers. In the case of the WRA, official Party historiography neither discusses the relationship between the Soviet Union and the CCP, nor the relationship between Zhang Xueliang and the Party. These important issues have been simplified and misinterpreted by the Party for decades. Actually, in the abstract sense, questions the Party avoids are, "Why did the CCP take over national power?," and "What did the CCP bring to China and what will it bring in the future?"

In this sense, the CCP's official Party historiography created in the Mao Era is still powerful, because it offers not only interpretations of historical events, but also a way for people to look at the Party's history.

In the meantime, quasi-official Party historiography has also caused problems for the Party. The Party's complex internal arguments about how it should articulate its history now have already offered one set of difficult questions since the late 1970s. In the early 21st century, the external arguments and demands for new interpretations of historical issues have only complicated the historical issues further. As the debates are too fierce and the demands are too significant to evade, the Party Center has chosen to categorize all narratives that might evoke conflicts as "historical nihilism" in order to silence the debates, rather than to create a new official Party History.

The Xi regime prefers to apply Deng's method of dealing with historical problems. The current situation, however, is different from that which Deng and his colleagues faced some thirty years ago. The most important difference is that, at the time, many first generation revolutionaries were alive, and the majority of them supported Deng's principle of avoiding conflict and reducing heated debates on historical problems. Second, in the late 1970s, the "Gang of Four" was a convenient target and by condemning them, the Party leadership was able to unify the majority of cadres and other people. It worked not only in the political domain, but also in the cultural field, and the academic world, with the criticism of "innuendo historiography," which was discussed in Chapter 5, as an example. It was under these special circumstances that Deng's method of dealing with historical problems had some effect and helped to balance conflicting views on controversial issues. However, with greater pressure and a more complicated situation, the current Party leadership has no chance to achieve its goals by applying Deng's method. In the near future, we might see even more quasi-official narratives, and even fiercer debates on historical issues between different factions. As such, the issue of the WRA is far from being resolved.



Fig. 6-1 The majority of comments on an interview about the WRA that was posted on *Gongshi wang* 共識網 (www.21ccom.net, last visited on August 24, 2015) advocates the interpretation that attributes the WRA's defeat to Mao Zedong's conspiracy. A Chinese idiom that these commenters use here is "jiedao sharen" (借刀殺人, to kill a person with a borrowed knife).



Fig. 6-2 The front cover and back cover of *Lantai gaocun* (photo by author on August 1, 2013).

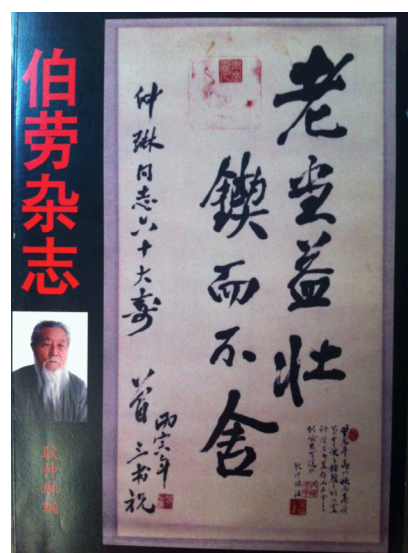


Fig. 6-3 A pamphlet privately printed by retired researcher Geng Zhonglin (photo by author on August 1, 2013).

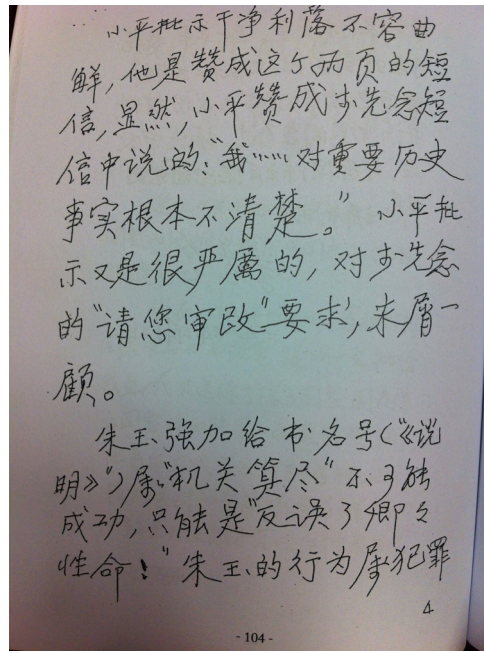
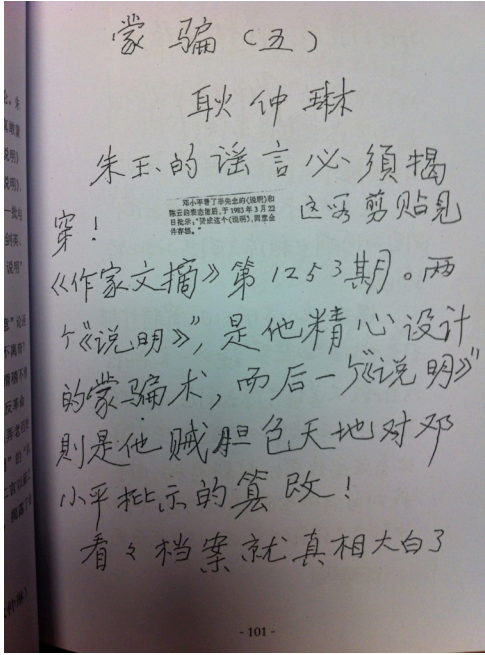


Fig. 6-4; 6-5 Geng Zhonglin charged Zhu Yu with “having committed crimes” in his privately printed pamphlet “*Bolao zazhi*” (photo by author on August 1, 2013).

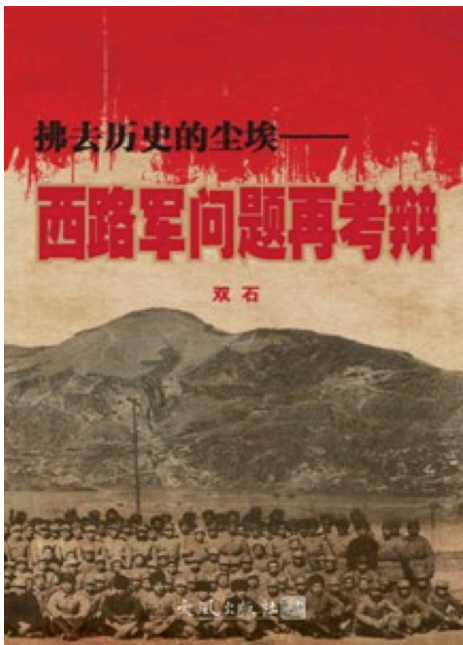


Fig. 6-6; 6-7 Two monographs that respectively represent the points of view of the “pro-Mao faction” and the “Mao detractors” were published in Hong Kong (photo by author on August 1, 2013).

TwoStones 发表于 2014-8-29 22:53 | 只看该作者 7楼

楚囚 发表于 2014-8-29 22:50
离开飞扬一年了，一年了，再次返回，发现有人还没成熟，还没长进。把电报贴上去，贴上去就贴上去吧，还把字 ...

嘿嘿嘿嘿，夏副秘，你读了多年电报——据说是三十五年？，就读出个“晋帅1983年才晓得有个宁夏战役而且还是抱故纸堆抱出来的”？你就不怕晋帅他老从坟头里坐起来煽你的大嘴巴？

再者说啦，念一哈肿么啦？念一哈是不是很难？很难很难很难？你不是一上来就掉书袋列电报么？肿么，别人儿一列就犯王法啦？这是你订的规矩？

SIGNATURE
旭日出东方，精彩在飞扬。飞扬军事 (fyjs.cn) 欢迎您~

回复 支持 反对 举报

楚囚 楼主 | 发表于 2014-8-29 23:05 | 只看该作者 8楼

11月8日

79 | 1771 | 11

雨客 发表于 2014-12-25 15:56 | 只看该作者 294楼

呵呵 搞笑，谁干啥，谁做实事不是一清二楚吗？你双石一再喷那些大人物，却不敢去最高法起诉 申诉，岂不是干啥？你在这里干啥有什么用？只能满足你 可怜的自尊心罢了，实际对所秉持的观点又何帮助？能传承历史的是党史，而不是论坛的口水轰炸。我看你白活这么大岁数了

点评

TwoStones 嘿呀！还最高法起诉呀，这搞得上么？要起诉也该翻案的人儿去起诉呀！得，双爷我没功夫陪你了，自己披着马甲玩儿吧！ 发表于 2014-12-25 16:01

SIGNATURE
旭日出东方，精彩在飞扬。飞扬军事 (fyjs.cn) 欢迎您~

回复 支持 反对 举报

雨客 发表于 2014-12-25 16:00 | 只看该作者 295楼

呵呵 或许 双石内心底气不足，您自个儿 也认为，资料不够，只能在这一亩三分地，“干啥”了。

所谓的“谁都不怕”这话我估计没人信，您能真去最高法院申辩，我都佩服您，但你能不？您 恐怕不能！

所以 您还是守着您这一亩三分地 干啥吧，看看有哪个幸的 被你可笑的论点祸害。

40 | 662 | 0
主题 | 帖子 | 精华

注册时间 2014-12-25
最后登录 2015-3-17

QQ交谈
发消息

Fig. 6-8; 6-9 Screen shots of *Feiyang junshi luntan*. The user named “TwoStones” in the upper picture is Zhou Jun. Zhou is arguing with another user “楚囚”, who Zhou believes is Xia Yuli’s screen name. (Xia denies this.) In the lower picture a user named “雨客” is refuting Zhou’s accounts about the WRA (last visited on August 24, 2015).

Chapter 7: The Western Route Army at the Local Level: Commemoration and Propaganda

Introduction

Party historiography at the local level is related to, but also distinct from, that at the central level. At the local level, the local Party History Research Offices (PHROs) are in charge of researching and propagandizing local Party history under the direct supervision of local Party Committees. Their research outcomes are disseminated primarily in the form of internal publications, but in recent years, they have become more and more interested in sponsoring or assisting other media productions (documentaries, TV series, picture-story books, etc.). Further, they also play a significant role in constructing and managing memorial sites, including monuments, cemeteries, memorial halls, and old battlefields,¹ making use of these vehicles to display their interpretations of the CCP's history.

Although the writing of local Party History and relevant propaganda at the local level plays a crucial role in Party historiography, there is little research in this area, except for a small number of articles written by officers to summarize their work and share their experiences. Because "red tourism" has flourished in China over the past ten years, much research on red tourism has been published both in Chinese and in English. Most of this research focuses on policy documents and the construction of exhibitions in the Party's holy lands, with few discussions on local leaders and local official agencies' activities in this field.

This chapter focuses on the motivations of local governments, agencies, and researchers in propagandizing Party history, and the approaches they have adopted. The first section traces the work of local official agencies in writing and propagandizing the WRA's history during the first two decades of the Reform Era, analyzing the reasons why they faced a crisis in the 1990s after having just enjoyed a golden era during the 1980s. With the benefit of hindsight, we will see that this crisis in local Party historiography was indeed a turning point. Since then, local officials have attempted to change their strategies. On the one hand, they have been successful in finding new focuses for their narratives. On the other hand, they have grasped the opportunity created when the Party Center encouraged local

¹ These memorial sites are usually jointly managed by local propaganda departments, civilian affairs bureaus and tourism bureaus.

governments to develop red tourism. The next two subsections of this chapter deal with the two processes above. The second section investigates memorial sites for the WRA, and the third section discusses the narratives of the WRA in local researchers' publications, local government propaganda, exhibitions, and oral interpretations at memorial sites.

This chapter focuses on Zhangye, a municipal borough of Gansu. Among those counties that have been involved in the history of the WRA,² I have chosen Zhangye because two counties in its jurisdiction, Gaotai and Linze, were those in which the WRA suffered crushing defeats; consequently, Zhangye has one of the highest concentrations of memorial sites to the WRA.³

7.1 From a Golden Era to a Crisis (the 1980s and the 1990s)

The onset of local-level Party historiography originated in the early 1950s. Not long after the CCP took power, nationwide education in Party history began, and so did the practices of collecting and studying Party history at provincial, municipal, and lower levels.⁴ In July 1951, the Party Center issued a notice about collecting Party history materials, according to which a number of provincial institutions for Party history research were established. In some provinces, these county-level PHROs became a part of the county-level committees of the CCP.⁵ The collection of materials about the WRA began in Gansu during this time, but only on a limited scale. The golden era of local Party history research did not come about until the early 1980s, when the Party Center again urged local governments to collect, or in the CCP's words "to save" (*qiangjiu* 搶救) primary historical materials that were

² More than twenty counties in Gansu, Qinghai and Xinjiang have been involved in writing and propagandizing the WRA's history. All the battles that the WRA took part in happened in Gansu, but after they were defeated the remaining 400 troops stayed in Xinjiang for months, and some of the captured troops were sent to Qinghai to do heavy labour. Therefore, apart from Gansu, there are also places that are related to the WRA's history in Xinjiang and Qinghai. These places have also become memorial sites in recent years.

³ This chapter relies on public and internal materials mostly compiled by the Zhangye Party History Research Office, as well as interviews and on-site observation, while also referencing relevant data about other regions, both within and outside Gansu Province. The data and observations that form the foundation of this chapter were collected in July 2013.

⁴ There is little research on local Party historiography, and there are some popular misunderstandings on this issue. For example, Geng Huamin of Renmin University argued that before the Cultural Revolution "there were almost no local Party history agencies in China", which is not true. See Geng Huamin 耿化敏, "Gaige kaifang qian Zhonggong zhongyang bianxie dangshi jiaokeshu de shexiang 改革開放前中共中央編寫黨史教科書的設想" (The CCP Central Committee's plans of compiling Party history textbooks in the pre-reform era), *Zhonggong dangshi yanjiu* 中共黨史研究, 2014(2), pp. 35-44.

⁵ Fujian Province is an example. See "Cheng Xu tongzhi de jianghua 程序同志的講話" (A speech of Comrade Cheng Xu), *Dangshi yanjiu yu jiaoxue* 黨史研究與教學, 1981(12), pp. 1-10.

scattered all over the country. These two subsections deal with local WRA research and propaganda in the 1980s and 1990s, respectively.

7.1.1 Local WRA Research and Propaganda in the 1980s

The turning point in the Party's new emphasis on collecting Party history materials at the local level can be traced precisely to May 1980, when the Central Committee for Soliciting Party History Materials (*Zhongyang dangshi ziliao zhengji weiyuanhui* 中央黨史資料徵集委員會) was established and the General Office of the CCP Central Committee (*Zhongyang bangong ting* 中共中央辦公廳) issued two documents that instructed local governments to devote themselves to research on Party history.⁶ At the time, the Party Center, led by Deng Xiaoping, was using a top-down approach to try to reinterpret the Party's past and create a new version of the resolution on several essential historical issues in order to maintain intra-Party stability and rebuild confidence in the Party among the people. In doing so, the Party Center realized that its historical legacy at the local level was equally worth exploiting. Consistent with the Party Center's directives, Soliciting Party History Materials Offices (*Dangshi ziliao zhengji bangongshi* 黨史資料徵集辦公室, hereafter, SPHMO) at the provincial, municipal, and county levels were established in 1981.⁷ Locals regarded the WRA's 180 days of fighting in Gansu as a "red historical resource," and therefore, the newly established SPHMOs began to collect WRA materials located in Gansu and Qinghai counties straight away.

Collecting Historical Materials about the WRA

In the 1980s, the main job of local SPHMOs at various levels was twofold. One major task was to find important facts and details about the operations of the Party and its armies in particular regions. The outcomes of their studies focused on topics that differed from those of researchers in central institutions. In general, local SPHMO's research on the WRA along the Hexi Corridor fell into three

⁶ These two documents were the No.11 and the No.33 Documents issued in 1981. As a result, 1982 witnessed a series of large-scale meetings on history material collection, including National Work Conference for Party History Materials Collection (全國黨史資料徵集工作會議, August 10-20, 1982, Beijing), Work Conference for Party History Materials Collection in the Five Provinces in Middle and Southern China (中南五省黨史資料徵集工作會議, March 1982, Changsha), Work Conference for Party History Materials Collection in the Seven Provinces in Eastern China (華東七省市黨史資料徵集會議, March 1982), Work Conference for Party History Materials Collection in the Four Provinces in Southwestern China (西南四省區黨史資料徵集工作會議, October 1982, Chengdu), etc.

⁷ Zhang Qihua 張啟華, "Nuli kaichuang dangshi ziliao zhengji gongzuo xin jumian 努力開創黨史資料徵集工作新局面" (Let us work hard to collect Party history materials), *Zhonggong dangshi yanjiu* 中共黨史研究, 2007(1), pp. 4-15.

categories. The first addressed the WRA's operations, which were sorted further into three topics: battles, casualties, and the WRA's off-battlefield practices, such as recruiting, securing food, and establishing local Soviet regimes. In contrast to the concise narratives in official Party History books mentioned in previous chapters, these offices explored much more detailed historical facts, such as the exact onset of a certain battle and the route the WRA took through a certain village. The reclamation of such historical details relied to a great degree on the recollections of local people. The second category concerned the assistance that local people provided the WRA, including accommodation, guides, food, and clothes when it was fighting against the local warlords' troops, as well as medical treatments and shelters after the WRA was defeated. The final category focused on the experiences of those former WRA soldiers who spent the remainder of their lives in the place where they fought because they were wounded or had lost contact with the army.

From a historiographical perspective, the materials that local officials and researchers collected during this period are valuable, because they might have made it possible to rebuild the WRA's narratives in a way that differed from the Party's official narratives. Although Party history researchers might lead interviewees to answer questions within the Party's official historical framework, these WRA soldiers or witnesses' recollections still might be useful in addressing a number of unexplored topics, such as the relationship between the Red Army and the Muslim people in Gansu and Qinghai, the influence of the short-lived Soviet regimes in Gansu, and the Communists' activities in Muslim warlords' prisons. As I discovered in my fieldwork in 2013, however, by then, most primary materials were still kept in storage by the local governments, having not been processed or published.⁸ One reason for this is, in part, the nationwide crisis concerning local Party history research that I will discuss later. In addition, there are two other essential reasons. First, because the Party's official narratives were ambiguous and simplified, it was difficult for local researchers to fit their detailed findings into the official Party History framework. Second, from the Party Center's perspective, such

⁸ In the 1980s local officials compiled some materials into internal publications. For instance, from 1984 to 1990, the Zhangye PHRO compiled seven columns of *Historical Materials of the WRA* (*Hong Xilujun shiliao* 紅西路軍史料); in 1980 the CCP History Research Unit of the Politics Department, Qinghai Ethnic Institute (青海民族學院政治系中共黨史教研室) edited *Compilation of Materials about the WRA's Activities in Qinghai* (*Hong Xilujun zai Qinghai youguan qingkuang diaocha cailiao huibian* 紅西路軍在青海有關情況調查材料彙編). But only a small part of materials that officials had collected were included in these compilations and these compilations were disseminated only within a limited community.

of policies designed deliberately to foster the development of those regions where the Party and its army once built revolutionary bases. The Party established Offices for Supporting the Old Regions (*fuzhi laoqu bangongshi* 扶植老區辦公室) in every province, and they were in charge of evaluating the historical positions of former revolutionary bases and deciding the amount of appropriation that should be used to help these regions. A large number of counties have benefited from this policy and historical research has played an indispensable role in it.¹⁰ West Gansu, however, is far from the Party's major revolutionary bases that flourished in the early 1930s. Throughout the Republican period, Muslim warlords controlled this region, and the CCP organizations had not done well there before 1949. Because of the trivial position that West Gansu occupied in Party history, the WRA was almost the only historical resource that the local governments there could use to demonstrate their relationships with, and contributions to, the Party's revolutionary career. During the 1980s, however, there was no policy that guaranteed that local governments in the Hexi Corridor would receive appropriations from the central government simply because the WRA once fought in those regions. Displaying their initiative, these local governments made good use of the WRA's history to build connections with the top leadership, thereby benefiting from this practice.

Sunan County's 肅南縣 celebration of the 30th anniversary of its establishment in 1984 is a good example. As one of the main arrangements for the anniversary, the government dispatched an official to Beijing to make contact with former WRA commanders, Li Xiannian and Xu Xiangqian. This official did not meet either Li or Xu as he had expected, but he obtained couplets personally inscribed by both Li and Xu, successfully using their secretaries as intermediaries. Undoubtedly, the WRA was the only connection between Sunan County and these two leaders, which Li Xiannian's couplet proved: "[Let us] carry on and improve the Western Route Army's revolutionary spirit, which encouraged it to fight bravely; [let us] work

¹⁰ For instance, in the 1980s, Yingshan County 應山縣 of Hubei Province submitted a report to the provincial government with historical evidence, arguing that Yingshan was a former revolutionary region (*geming laoqu* 革命老區). Consequently, Yingshan received a budget appropriation of 0.8 million *yuan* per year for the construction of the county, which definitely was a large amount money at the time. Li Guoqing 李國慶, "Xianji dangshi bumen de gongzuo zhineng ji danfu de zeren 縣級黨史部門的工作職能及擔負的責任" (Responsibilities of county-level Party history organs), *Dangshi tiandi* 黨史天地, 2008(4), pp. 50-52.

hard to construct socialist modernization in the Qilian region.”¹¹ Given Li’s position as the President of the PRC, this couplet added most effectively to the prestige of Sunan’s 30th anniversary. The official newspaper of the Gansu Committee of the CCP published Li’s couplet and the officer who went to Beijing for the correspondence received praise as “having made a great contribution to Sunan County.”¹²

Memorial Sites of the WRA in the 1980s

Not coincidentally, a number of memorial sites to the WRA were built along the Hexi Corridor during the 1980s. Almost all were initiated with the involvement of top leaders. In the case of Sunan County, the Sunan Committee of the CCP decided to build a monument to the WRA immediately after the anniversary celebrating the county’s establishment, and to put Li Xiannian’s inscription on it. This decision was understandable, because erecting a monument was one of the best ways to embody and perpetuate the attention a local regime received from the top leadership. With similar purposes and through similar processes, by the early 1990s, every county that the WRA once marched through had at least one memorial site to commemorate this historical event, every one of which had Li Xiannian’s or Xu Xiangqian’s couplet on its entrance or monument. The top leadership’s attention not only provided the local governments with impetus to build monuments and cemeteries for the WRA, but also brought investments that helped them extend these memorial sites further.¹³

Specialists on Chinese memorial sites have noticed that the majority of revolutionary memorial halls and monuments were built in the 1980s. Some have attributed this phenomenon to the Party Center’s new propaganda principles after the Cultural Revolution.¹⁴ Several scholars attributed “the restoration of old exhibitions and the establishment of new revolutionary history museums in the post-Mao period” as serving in general to “restore the Party’s image in the wake of

¹¹ In Chinese Li’s inscriptions is “Jicheng fayang Hong Xilujun yuxue fenzhan de geming jingshen, wei Qilian shanqu de shehuizhuyi xiandaihua jianshe shiye er nuli fendou 繼承發揚紅西路軍浴血奮戰的革命精神，為祁連山區的社會主義現代化建設事業而努力奮鬥”。

¹² Guo Menglin 郭夢林, *Xilujun xuezhu fengbei* 西路軍血鑄豐碑 (The blood-made monuments for the Western Route Army). Lanzhou: Gansu renmin chubanshe 甘肅人民出版社, 2006, pp. 369.

¹³ For instance, senior commander of the Fourth Front Army Hong Xuezhong visited the Gaotai Cemetery in 1988. After that Hong persuaded some organizations in Beijing to donate 400,000 RMB for the cemetery. Guo Menglin, 2006, pp. 269.

¹⁴ An Tingshan 安廷山, *Zhongguo jinianguan gailun* 中國紀念館概論 (Introduction of Chinese memorials). Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe 文物出版社, 1996, pp. 204.

the Cultural Revolution and to legitimize the authority of the Deng regime.”¹⁵ Both of the arguments above reveal certain aspects of the construction of memorial sites in the 1980s. However, the result of investigations of WRA memorial sites shows another dimension to the construction of memorials in the Reform Era. Local governments built monuments not only to fulfill the tasks assigned by the Party Center, but also to confirm and emphasize their relationships with authorities and to gain more financial and political benefits.

During the 1980s, in addition to memorial sites built by local authorities, local people in Gansu also built or maintained a number of memorial sites voluntarily to commemorate the WRA. A stele-style monument on the old site of the Liyuanku Battle is an example [Figs. 7-1, 7-2]. According to local officials, by the middle of the 1980s, people in the region had become richer due to the policies of reform and opening up. At the time, some local people proposed that because they had received benefits from the Party, they should dedicate some money to pay homage to revolutionary martyrs. In the end, they decided to build such a monument.¹⁶ Their behavior can be explained as a search for a sense of security during the Reform Era by showing respect to the dominant hierarchy’s revolutionary history. After decades of totalitarianism had come to an end, and especially when the free market economy replaced the former collective and planned economy, scholars were not surprised to find that people attempted to incorporate symbols of the state as a type of protection for their own religious or financial interests.¹⁷ In this sense, what these locals did was not unique. What I want to emphasize here is that, in addition to the local agencies that built memorial sites for their own reasons, ordinary people who had been considered indiscriminately to be passive receivers of political education also were active participants, a fact that should not be overlooked.

7.1.2 The Nationwide Crisis in Local Party History Research in the 1990s

Given the above-mentioned achievements in collecting historical materials and drawing the Party Center’s attention to them in order to benefit local governments,

¹⁵ Kirk A. Denton, “Museums, Memorial Sites and Exhibitionary Culture in the People’s Republic of China”, *The China Quarterly*, Vol. 183 (September 2005), pp. 565-586.

¹⁶ Zhang Yan 張雁, interview, Linze, July 15, 2013.

¹⁷ Gao Bingzhong 高丙中, “Minjian de yishi yu guojia de zaichang 民間的儀式與國家的在場” (Folk rituals and state presence), *Beijing daxue xuebao (zhexue shehui kexue ban)* 北京大學學報 (哲學社會科學版), 2001(1), pp. 42-50.

it is not an exaggeration to say that the 1980s was a golden era for local Party history research and propaganda. This era, however, was brief. Since the late 1980s, both relevant local institutions and memorial sites have been in crisis. The most obvious manifestation of this crisis was that local PHROs lost their independent position in the CCP's bureaucratic system.¹⁸ This situation made local Party history researchers confused about their future, and they hesitated to continue their research.¹⁹ Another difficulty that local Party research and memorial sites had been facing since the late 1980s was a lack of funds.²⁰ Due to financial difficulties since the late 1980s, staff of some memorial sites had to visit local enterprises one by one to persuade them to donate money to maintain the sites.²¹

Why did these organs, which seemed to operate so smoothly in the 1980s, suddenly encounter such a crisis? Most officers who devoted themselves to performing research on local Party history attributed the difficulties they were facing primarily to inattention on the part of local leadership. In the CCP's bureaucracy, the extent to which leaderships recognize the significance of a certain field determines to a considerable degree how much support this field will receive, both politically and financially. A further question is why local leaderships no longer cared about writing local Party History. This is worthy of discussion from two perspectives. As was analyzed in Chapter 4, from the Party Center's perspective, when the new leadership under Deng Xiaoping encouraged senior

¹⁸ Since 1988 SPHMOs were successively disbanded and their role was taken over by local Party History Research Offices. See Zhang Qihua, 2007. The local PHROs, unfortunately, did not have independent positions either. In a large proportion of municipal and county-level Party committees, PHROs were simultaneously editorials for local chronicles, which meant that staff members had to record local "great events" as well as local leaders' day-to-day agendas rather than studying Party history. In some cases, PHROs were asked to work under the supervision of the local Department of Organization, in charge of persuading university graduates to work in local governments and enterprises. Now the majority of local PHROs have regained their position as individual organs directly supervised by the local committee of the CCP.

¹⁹ Li Chuanhua 李傳華, "Dangshi gongzuo de duofangmian zhankai 黨史工作的多方面展開" (The infolding of Party history works) in "Sanshi erli: jinian Zhongyang dangshi yanjiushi chengli sanshi zhounian bitan 三十而立——紀念中央黨史研究室成立三十週年筆談" (The first thirty years of the CPHRO), *Bainian chao* 百年潮, 2010(7), pp. 4-19.

²⁰ Some of local Party history organs had no travelling allowance to collect materials in other counties while some could not even afford to make phone calls. Shen Liang 沈亮 and Zhang Xiangyu 張翔宇, "Dangshi yao shihua shishuo, guanfang cuidong disanci rechao: shouci zuigao guige dangshi huiyi zhaoshi zhizhengdang qiangdiao 'lishi caifu' 黨史要實話實說, 催動第三次熱潮: 首次最高規格黨史會議昭示執政黨強調'歷史財富'" (Party history must be told as it is; fostering the third wave of Party history research: the first high-level Party history conference reflects the Party's emphasis on "historical treasures"), *Nanfang zhoumo* 南方週末, July 30, 2010. <http://www.infzm.com/content/48248> (last visited on June 10, 2015).

²¹ Zhang Yan, interview.

cadres to record their experiences, and organized thousands of people from different fields to discuss historical issues, its major purpose was not to study historical facts, but to maintain intra-Party stability and exploit the Party's revolutionary past in order to fill the ideological vacuum after the Party Center negated the Cultural Revolution. In the second half of the 1980s, when historical issues were no longer the leadership's major concern, the Party Center showed diminishing enthusiasm in urging local authorities to write Party History. Because local leaderships were sensitive to this shift in the Party Center's focus, they invested less and less in Party history research.

The local leaderships had another reason to neglect the units in charge of writing Party History. During the first half of the 1980s, many senior cadres visited or expressed concerns about the regions where they once fought or worked before 1949. At this time, research by relevant units helped local authorities build connections with senior cadres. In the second half of the 1980s, when research on the Party's practices before 1949 was almost complete, according to the work plan made by the Party Center, local Party history research and propaganda needed to focus on the Party organizations' work in particular regions after 1949. The local leaderships discovered that this new emphasis would neither bring financial support from the central government, nor attract the attention of senior cadres. Thus, performing research on Party history was not as beneficial for local leaderships as it had been a few years before.

In this regard, if local Party history research organs wanted to rescue themselves from their predicament, exploring historical events and figures that were prominent in Party history before 1949 and making good use of these resources to benefit the local authorities seemed the best, if not the only, approach. A popular phrase in the field of local Party history research is a concise and subtle expression of this idea: "only by taking appropriate action can one secure the right position" (*youwei cai youwei* 有為才有位). Starting from this point of view, since the late 1990s, local Party history officers all over China have tried in a variety of ways to improve their situation.

"Taking Appropriate Action"

As the Party Center advanced a new theory that research on Party history should be used to "provide advice to authorities and to educate people" (see Chapter 5), some local officials tried to improve their status in the CCP

bureaucracy by using Party History to provide evidence or advice to inform local leaderships' decisions. Specifically, these officers attempted to "work as consultants who provide theoretical and informative guidance to the decision-makers" and to "help the leaders by drawing lessons from Party history."²² Some even argued that they might sell relevant information and advice to local leaders in order to increase funding for further research. However, there is no evidence that any local PHRO profited by selling information related to Party history. Actually, the most effective way to advance the status of Party history research units is to attract direct funding from senior government agencies. An event that took place in Huidong County in Guangdong is a typical example of the way in which they secured such funding.

The CCP established a Soviet regime in Huidong in the 1930s. Before the 70th anniversary of this regime, Huidong's PHRO suggested that the county committee of the CCP hold a celebration ceremony. Initially, the county leadership hesitated, but they changed their minds after the PHRO received funds from senior government agencies to rebuild roads in the county in honor of the anniversary. Through a series of activities planned and managed by PHRO officials, the county leadership realized that the history of the Huidong Soviet Region was a valuable resource that deserved further exploitation.²³ In this case, the local PHRO succeeded in initiating a long-term project, because once the significance of a historical event has been identified, it will be commemorated annually in various ways, which means that the event will bring continuous benefits to the local authorities and PHRO officials.

Similarly, the local units responsible for Party history research along the WRA's route attempted to advance their status by promoting the WRA's history. However, a serious obstacle has prevented them from achieving this goal—continued sensitivity about the WRA's history. In the late 1980s, the Zhangye PHRO compiled a collection of the WRA survivors' memoirs, but the government censors rejected the work. Officials went to Beijing to argue their case, but were unsuccessful. Once

²² Wang Zhuguo 王柱國, "Dangshi gongzuo yao zhidao fuwu yu shichang jingji 黨史工作要指導服務於市場經濟" (Party history work must instruct and serve marketing economy), *Beijing dangshi yanjiu* 北京黨史研究, 1995(5), pp. 25-26. Wang Zhuguo works in PHRO of Zhangjiachuan County 張家川縣 in Gansu Province.

²³ Chen Hongjun 陳弘君, "Dangshi gongzuozhe de kunhuo yu chulu 黨史工作者的困惑與出路" (The confusion of Party history workers and the solution), *Guangdong dangshi* 廣東黨史, 1998(4), pp. 34-36.

again, they had to rely on interventions on the part of old cadres. After the *People's Daily* published the preface for the collection of memoirs written by Wu Xiuquan 伍修權 (1908-1997), a senior cadre, censors had no choice but to allow the book to be published in 1991.²⁴ Having experienced such difficulties, the Zhangye PHRO realized that the WRA was not only a historical resource, but was also a sensitive issue that could engender conflict. Accordingly, officials began to look for an alternative way to commemorate the WRA without triggering political trouble.

In the case of the WRA, this twofold pressure—financial and political—forced local PHRO officials to look for new approaches to their work; it was under these circumstances that they paid increasing attention to building memorial sites and created the current local-level WRA historiography, which will be discussed in detail in the next two sections.

7.2 Building Local Memorial Sites

Compared to written material, memorial sites are much more obvious vehicles with which to exhibit history. Local official agencies today consider promoting memorial sites a priority, and have invested more effort in this activity. In addition to the monuments built in the 1980s and mentioned in the last section, there are also a number of cemeteries in which WRA martyrs are buried. Almost all of these memorial sites underwent renovation in the first decade of the 21st century. Now they have become commemorative venues that not only function as modern museums, but also bear local characteristics. This section discusses the construction or renovation of these memorial sites, exploring how they became localized, and how they were incorporated into the WRA's historiography at the local level.

The first subsection takes the construction of Gaotai Memorial Hall for the WRA (*Gaotai Xilujun jinianguan* 高台西路軍紀念館, hereafter, GMW) as an example to examine the origins of existing memorial halls for the WRA. GMW is the largest and most famous of all the WRA memorial sites to date. Yet its large scale alone does not make it worthy of particular attention. There is another reason. Its predecessors, GMW and Gaotai County Cemetery for Martyrs (*Gaotai xian lieshi lingyuan* 高台縣烈士陵園), represent revolutionary memorial halls in the Reform Era and those in the Mao Era, respectively; therefore, taking a close look at this

²⁴ Ma Kun 麻琨, interview, Lanzhou, July 5, 2013.

example will help us understand the evolution of the CCP's revolutionary memorial sites.

The second subsection analyzes the layouts and exhibitions of the current WRA memorial halls. This subsection will argue that there are three stakeholder groups for these memorial sites: the central regime, local authorities, and the subjects of these memorial halls, which include the WRA martyrs and survivors, as well as their families. Each stakeholder group has its corresponding constructions or installations. Presenting the WRA's history to visitors is, of course, a major activity of a memorial hall, but an equally essential task is to demonstrate the relationship between each of these three stakeholder groups properly.

7.2.1 Constructing a Memorial Hall

There was a lengthy lobbying and negotiation process before the renovation of the Gaotai County Cemetery for Martyrs into a memorial hall. From 2002 to 2004, two retired cadres who had been employees in Zhangye government agencies kept trying, by different means, to persuade the Gansu leadership to build a memorial hall for the WRA.²⁵ Only later, however, did it transpire that the Gansu leadership had no intention to build such a hall.²⁶ At the time, the provincial leadership might have considered two factors. First, after the Tiananmen Massacre in 1989, the Party's control over ideology had become tighter. Given these circumstances, the Gansu leadership did not want to run the risk of committing any "political mistake" (*zhengzhi cuowu* 政治錯誤). This was quite possible, given the sensitivity of the subject of the WRA. Second, to build a memorial hall involved building roads and other facilities for electricity, water supply, and waste treatment, etc., which would require both human and financial resources. The first round of lobbying ended unsatisfactorily. The advocates persisted and conducted lobbying in 2005 on an even larger scale. On this occasion, the lobbying no longer involved just two individuals trying to persuade a provincial government; lobbyists had turned to

²⁵ They contacted former WRA soldiers in Beijing, asking them to write to Gansu leaders, and succeeded in submitting their proposal for constructing a large memorial hall for the WRA in the form of a bill to the Gansu People's Congress. Li Wenxin 李文信, ed., *Zhongguo gongnong hongjun Xilujun jinianguan jianshe dianshu* 中國工農紅軍西路軍紀念館建設典述 (The construction of a memorial hall for the Western Route Army). Lanzhou: Gansu renmin chubanshe 甘肅人民出版社, 2012, pp. 29, 32-33.

²⁶ "Zhonggong Gansu shengwei xuanchuanbu dui sheng shijie yici huiyi 398 hao jianyi (yi'an) de dafu 中共甘肅省委宣傳部對省十屆一次會議第 398 號建議 (議案) 的答覆" (A reply from the Propaganda Department of the Gansu Committee of the CCP about the 398th Proposal of the First Plenum of the 10th Provincial Congress), in Li Wenxin, 2012, p. 49.

the Zhangye municipal government associated with the Gansu PHRO. We will, however, never know what might have happened in the face of such large-scale lobbying, because a decision on the part of the central government suddenly changed everything. In 2006, the Gaotai Cemetery for Martyrs was nominated officially as a “Classic Red Tourism Spot” (*hongse lüyou jingdian jingqu* 紅色旅遊經典景區). As one of the few memorial sites in Gansu that had received such an honor and the only one dedicated to the WRA,²⁷ this cemetery drew immediate attention from the provincial leadership. Being designated a “Classic Red Tourism Spot” signified, on the one hand, that the WRA as a sensitive historical issue had gained sufficient legitimacy to be commemorated, and on the other hand, that the central government would support this site preferentially in the following years. This explains why the Gansu leadership suddenly changed its cautious attitude on the issue and became eager to enlarge the cemetery and renovate it to become a memorial hall. Three years later, in 2009, with ten million *yuan* of appropriation funds from Beijing, as well as millions of *yuan* in donations from the PLA Lanzhou Military Region, the enlargement project was finished.

The Construction of the Gaotai Memorial Hall for the WRA²⁸

In the 1950s, the CCP built a considerable number of cemeteries for martyrs all over the country to commemorate deceased Party members, commanders, and soldiers. The Gaotai County Cemetery for Martyrs, built in 1955, was one of these. These cemeteries were supposed to be permanent resting places for the WRA soldiers whose remains were unearthed in various regions, while also providing local students with places to receive revolutionary education. Compared to revolutionary memorial sites built after the 1990s, the function that these cemeteries assumed was simple, as reflected in the layout and the Chinese traditional decorations for graves that they adopted.

Before renovation, the entrance of the Gaotai Cemetery was a gate-like building with a heavy roof and open passageway [Fig. 7-3]. Behind the entrance, a sculpture of figures, a museum, and a tomb lay on the axis of the cemetery. The sculpture was named, “Fighting in Gaotai County” (*Xuezhàn Gaotai* 血戰高台). It included such figures as WRA commanders, junior soldiers, and nurses, as well as local people who came to assist the WRA [Fig. 7-4]. The museum was constructed in the

²⁷ Although this cemetery did not contain “the WRA” in its name, the majority of martyrs that were buried in it were WRA commanders and soldiers.

²⁸ Discussions in this section relate to the status of the Memorial as in July 2013.

form of a Chinese-style building guarded by two golden lions, which in Chinese culture symbolize dignity [Fig. 7-5]. The tomb for the Fifth Army, which was in charge of occupying Gaotai, and lost half of its troops there, was a larger version of traditional Chinese tombs—a black stele erected in front of a round mound. In addition to these main buildings on the axis, there were also four Chinese-style pavilions at the four corners of the cemetery, two of which displayed inscriptions written by leaders and veterans. The other two were memorial pavilions for Dong Zhentang and Yang Keming 楊克明 (1905-1937),²⁹ two high-ranking WRA commanders killed in Gaotai [Fig. 7-6].

The renovation, which began in 2008 and was completed in 2009, constituted the transformation of a cemetery into a memorial hall. In comparing monuments and memorials, W. Scott Howard argued that the major distinction between them lies in whether they have more to do with the present and the future than with the past; this distinction also applies to other memorial landscapes. As a place for mourning, a cemetery “strives toward historical closure.” In contrast, a memorial hall “concerns the ongoing struggles of the living who confront losses that have yet to reach points of resolution.”³⁰ As will be discussed later, memorial halls that concern the Party’s revolutionary history, usually express this “resolution” as a desire to inherit the spirit of the revolutionaries and work hard for the Party’s interests.

The 2008-2009 renovation incorporated three major changes: first, a modern gate replaced the gate-like entrance. The new exterior employs strong symbolism that embodies pain and suffering. Second, the old museum was demolished and the new space was reconstructed as a square on which a monument was erected. Third, a new modern museum was built behind the tomb. The twofold process of destroying/altering old structures and expanding/creating new buildings signified a shift from a place of mourning to a memorial site for representation, exhibition, and narration. As a result, the meaning of this memorial site was renewed.

In 2009, Gaotai Cemetery was renamed “The Gaotai Memorial Hall for the Western Route Army” (GMW) and became the largest memorial site for the WRA. Today, the main entrance of GMW is 80 meters wide, three times wider than the previous one. In the middle of the entrance is the memorial hall’s name, written in

²⁹ Yang Keming was the Director of Political Department 政治部主任 of the Fifth Army.

³⁰ W. Scott Howard, “Landscapes of memorialization”, in I. Robertson and P. Richards, eds., *Studying Cultural Landscapes*. London: Hodder Arnold, 2003, pp. 47-70.

Mao's calligraphic style. Next to the entrance is a 45-meter-wide relief wall, which depicts scenes of the WRA fighting [Fig. 7-7]. Standing between two parts of the relief wall is a sculpture of a young soldier holding a dead female comrade-in-arms [Fig. 7-8]. Grieved and indignant, this young soldier is the most striking feature of the exterior of GMW, and delivers a strong message to visitors that they are entering a sacred place where they will confront a painful history.

Once through the gate, visitors find themselves at the beginning of a 200-meter path [Fig. 7-9]. A comparison with the former layout shows that the path behind the entrance is significantly longer. Before presenting any more information, the memorial hall allows visitors to walk straight along the path, thereby creating an atmosphere of worship. The monument stands at the end of the path in the middle of a square.

The square is a newly created space. Its painstaking imitation of Tiananmen Square—the heart of the CCP's regime—is obvious. First, on the axis of this square, in sequence, lie the monument and the tomb for martyrs—a structure consistent with that in Tiananmen Square.³¹ Second, the design of the monument uses the Monument to the People's Heroes as a model.³² In the same way that the latter was built as a “‘monumental medium’ for Mao's inscription,”³³ this monument's major function is to display Li Xiannian's calligraphy—“the martyrs of the Western Route Army of Workers' and Peasants' Red Army of China will live in our hearts forever”³⁴[Fig. 7-10].

Behind the monument lies a huge tomb for martyrs of the Fifth Army. The old, Chinese-style stele was moved into the new museum, and now there is a modern stele in front of the round mound. Walking around the tomb, visitors then encounter the largest building in the memorial hall—the museum, which reportedly was built in the shape of an ancient beacon in northwestern China (although it did not give me that impression), implying that “the WRA's spirit keeps burning like a flame” [Fig. 7-11]. Inside the museum, the exhibition is arranged in a way standard to CCP revolutionary museums: eight exhibition units represent the WRA's history chronologically; historical documents, pictures, and

³¹ The Monument to the People's Heroes and the Memorial Hall for Chairman Mao are on the axis of the Tiananmen Square.

³² Information on GMW information board.

³³ Wu Hung, *Remaking Beijing: Tiananmen Square and the Creation of a Political Space*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005, p. 18.

³⁴ In Chinese: “Hong Xilujun lieshi yongyuan huo zai women xinzhong 紅西路軍烈士永遠活在我們心中”.

items are displayed in cabinets; modern representation techniques, such as the use of light, audio, and video are used to create a feeling of dignity and misery [Figs. 7-12, 7-13, 7-14]. The narrator of the on-site oral interpretation reads from a manuscript, ensuring the presentation of a standardized narration of the WRA's history. The contents of the exhibition and the oral interpretation are discussed in the next section, which focuses on the local narratives of the WRA.

In summary, although this memorial site retains some of the original structures, since the renovation, it is no longer a cemetery. Many essential components of a typical revolutionary memorial, such as a monument, and an exhibit with chronological narratives have been added. Almost all cemeteries in Gansu have undergone similar renovations in recent years. Reconstructions of some memorial sites are still in progress, but from reports by local media, we know that they will combine components of both a cemetery and a memorial hall. The reason the designers prefer such a mixed style might be that they need to endow their constructions with more meaning and implications, while still relying on certain traditional buildings, such as tombs, to demonstrate their concrete connection with the Party's revolutionary history. Therefore, the combination of the components of a cemetery and a memorial hall can satisfy official agencies, both at the central and local level, as well as other stakeholders in the historical event simultaneously. The next subsection will argue this point in detail.

7.2.2 Presenting Three Stakeholder Groups in Memorial Sites for the WRA

Those buried in the cemeteries built in the 1950s generally were identified as "martyrs." This title alone indicated the Party's positive assessment of these people, but the title had little to do with the Party's official interpretations of relevant historical events. By constructing cemeteries for martyrs, the Party led visitors to commemorate its revolutionary history as a whole, rather than paying much attention to particular events. Since the Mao Era, neither surviving veterans nor martyrs' families had the power to interpret history. Local official agencies merely played a role in maintaining the cemeteries, having no role or motivation to represent history from their perspective. However, this situation began to change in the early 1980s. When the local governments built the first of several official monuments to display the top leadership's praises of the WRA, their decision marked the starting point of active attempts to take part in the design and construction of memorial sites and consequently, marked their intention to take

part in interpreting the Party's history as well. In the following twenty-odd years, not only were the central authority's assessments introduced into the memorial sites through various means, but some new stakeholders as well were allowed to express themselves through these commemorative places.

Generally, the current design of memorial sites for the WRA reinforces in three ways their interconnected significance as officially sanctioned venues for an event in the Party's history. First, the design represents the WRA as an inseparable part of the Party's victory and its contribution to the nation. Second, it represents the local governments and veterans' offspring as successors to the Party's historical legacy. Third, it symbolizes that the central authority has endorsed these representations.

The Central Authority

Since the 1950s, when the Party renovated most of the traditional constructions in a new style, a ready-made model for the construction of revolutionary memorial sites has formed gradually. From the perspective of Party leaders, this new style could represent the new China and the Party's new power over the nation. That most memorial sites were renovated or built in such a "new traditional" style could be seen as the result of the central authority's influence. Specifically, monuments and squares, most of which were built in the Reform Era, are symbols of the Party Center in Beijing.

In a memorial hall, the monument usually represents a certain historical event and its position in history. As the monument conveys the official evaluation of that historical event, it works as a symbol of central authority in the memorial hall. In this respect, no matter the scale of a memorial hall, a monument is necessary.

Often built as a column, a monument provides limited space to convey information. Designers of the memorial sites for the WRA have fully developed these monuments' potential for storytelling and have imbued them with symbolic significance. First, designers use certain components, such as height, shape, and the number of steps, to indicate basic information about the monument's subject [Fig. 7-15]. Second, the inscription on the front of a monument is always the most concise evaluation of an historical event. Third, the inscription on the back, which usually is written in the name of local governments, often cites narratives in official Party History and emphasizes the relationship between the event memorialized and the local population.

In most cases, monuments are built in squares. Squares are not only places to exhibit the monuments, but also venues for rituals. At every anniversary of communist historical events, public commemorative rituals are held in memorial halls and cemeteries by local propaganda departments. Local administrative leaders always attend these rituals, showing their loyalty to the Party, while also expecting benefits for red tourism marketing by capturing the attention of the media.

There is also a considerable number of small-scale rituals held on ordinary days. People who attend these rituals fall into two categories. One category of visitors includes those organized by their work units and forced to receive political education at the CCP's historical sites. In China, employees of all official organs, schools, and state-owned enterprises are required to receive political education, and in recent years, visiting commemorative sites and attending rituals has become one of the major means of political education. Party members are often required to stand in front of a monument with their clenched right hands lifted beside their right ears and repeat the oath they made when they joined the Party. People recently approved as Party members are also brought there to swear their oath to the Party for the first time. These types of rituals in particular demonstrate the function of monuments and squares as symbols that represent the Party or the central authority. Another category of visitors goes to these memorial sites in a private capacity, but due to their identities—usually as family members of WRA veterans—this also requires the performance of rituals [Fig. 7-16].

Martyrs, Veterans, and Their Families

(1) Graves and tombs

Graves and tombs usually take up considerable space at WRA memorial sites. Nominally, they are places where martyrs were buried, but actually, they are more often symbols to connect veterans and their families with these memorial sites.

Through decades of research on the WRA's history, relying on primary materials and oral history, local researchers have determined many of the details about the WRA commanders' deaths in battles. Few of these commanders' corpses, however, were recovered. After 1949 (in some cases after the 1980s) numerous bodies were unearthed, but it was impossible to identify them because they were buried quickly after each battle. Therefore, a common problem the memorial sites confront is that martyrs' identities and the remains do not match. Local officials

have adopted two methods to resolve this problem. One is to build rows of steles for high-ranking and middle-ranking commanders who were killed there, without the martyrs' remains [Fig. 7-17]. Another is to build a collective tomb and bury all unidentified remains there. In this way, these memorial sites provide all families who were involved in the WRA with places to pay respect to their loved ones.

Because after 1937, the burial sites for WRA troops remained unmarked and unattended, some of them faded from public memory as time passed. To date, some sites still have not been found. Due to the symbolic significance of martyrs' remains, some newly established memorial sites invest considerable effort in collecting unfound remains, relying primarily on the locals to provide clues. In 2009, Jingyuan County initiated a project of establishing a "Park for the West March" (*xizheng gongyuan* 西征公園) to commemorate a WRA battle. Local media reported that it took the government several years to collect the remains of these Red Army martyrs. In the end, they found four WRA soldiers' remains and constructed a large-scale cemetery in 2012 to rebury them. By doing so, this newly built "park" has created a direct connection with the WRA.³⁵ In other cases, searching for and reburying martyrs' remains has become a regular ritual; tombs are designed to be easy to reopen, so that under specific circumstances, ceremonies to settle newfound remains can be held [Figs. 7-18, 7-19].³⁶

(2) Sculptures

In addition to tombs and graves, another way to represent martyrs is with sculptures. Just as a martyr's position determines whether s/he could be represented by a single stele or should be buried in a collective tomb, sculptures at memorial sites are also divided into two categories: statues for certain high-ranking commanders, and collective sculptures that portray ordinary soldiers. In addition to rank and position, his/her statue also represents the official assessment made of an historical figure. Zhang is the most obvious example. In the Stele Forest for Commanders of the Sichuan and Shaanxi Soviet Region (*Chuan-Shaan suqu jiangshuai beilin* 川陝蘇區將帥碑林) in Bazhong County 巴中縣, in Sichuan Province, statues for Xu Xiangqian, Chen Changhao, Wang Shusheng,

³⁵ Xinhua wang 新華網 (Xinhua News Agency Online) http://news.xinhuanet.com/mil/2012-08/08/c_123551197.htm (last visited on July 30, 2015).

³⁶ The Linze government reburied remains of some 1000 WRA soldiers in 1988. (Guo Menglin, 2006, p. 358.) Since then several remains have been unearthed every year, so when the county government built a new collective tomb in 2012, a special "gate" was designed so that the tomb could be reopened when necessary.

and Li Xiannian enjoy a prominent position on a platform that faces north. The statues for other, lower-ranking commanders stand in two rows slightly lower on two sides of the platform. The statue for Zhang is the only one that faces south, and is almost a full meter lower than the statues of his juniors. According to the official introduction of this layout, “the statue [of Zhang Guotao] faces a different direction showing that he held different opinions [from the other leaders],” while the low position of the statue “symbolizes his experience in the rest of his life [after he defected in 1938]” [Fig. 7-20].³⁷

At the WRA memorial sites, most sculptures portray collective figures rather than a single soldier. In contrast to those statues of individual figures chosen to represent the appearance of martyrs, collective sculptures usually adopt similarity as their design principle. The most famous relief sculpture in China—the one on the Monument to the People’s Heroes—portrays 170 figures with the same face. Many memorial halls have borrowed this method to imply the anonymity of Chinese revolutionaries. For example, in a sculpture in the Gao Jincheng Memorial Hall (*Gao Jincheng jinianguan* 高金城紀念館) in Zhangye, the faces of eight male and one female soldier are exactly the same [Fig. 7-21]. These figures therefore represent the WRA collectively, without revealing anything about the figures’ names and lives.

Overall, while tombs mark the closure of martyrs’ lives, sculptures enable these lives to be re-imagined. When high-ranking commanders achieved their posthumous assessments by being “buried” properly and portrayed as convincing individuals, those collective tombs and sculptures represent the anonymity of common soldiers. The combination of the two—of death and life, the leaders and the rank-and-file—constitutes a comprehensive representation of the WRA.

(3) Others

Since the 1990s, the children of veterans and senior cadres—the “second generation reds”—have become an important power that influences the writing of Party History. From their perspectives, the portrayal of their forebears in memorial sites is as important as is their assessment in official Party History publications. In recent years, many “second generation reds” have become keen to “retrace the routes of their forebears” (*chongzou xianbei lu* 重走先輩路), a kind of

³⁷ The website of Stele Forest for Commanders of the Sichuan and Shaanxi Soviet Regime <http://www.cssqjsbl.com/Article/ShowArticle.asp?ArticleID=66> (last visited on July 12, 2015).

activity during which they journey, usually by car, sometimes by motorcycle or bicycle, along some of the famous routes in Party history. Memorial halls, cemeteries, and old battlefields are must-see landmarks.³⁸

As mentioned previously, in the 1980s, many WRA veterans revisited Gansu, bringing local governments some substantial benefits. Some thirty years later, their offspring began to do similar things, trying to contribute to the locales in a variety of ways,³⁹ and their visits and donations always attract the attention of the local media.

Visitors to the WRA memorial sites today can easily observe the influence of “second generation reds” as new stakeholders, because certain things represent their concerns for the WRA. This is evident in such items as inscribed stones set in courtyards, donated trees, baskets of flowers inside the museums, etc. [Fig. 7-22]. Through stories published in local media and items at the memorial sites, these veterans’ offspring play a double role: as visitors to, and stakeholders in, memorial sites. Thus, they have become what Foucault has characterized as “observed spectators.”⁴⁰

In their research on memorials, scholars often divide monuments into two categories according to their materials. One includes constructions that are located precisely and constructed from concrete physical materials, while the other includes monuments that are comparatively short-lived and goal-specific.⁴¹ The items that these offspring donate belong to the second category, because they are easy to remove or relocate. This unstable position also reflects this stakeholder group’s position in Party historiography. These children of senior cadres began to

³⁸ As analyzed in the previous chapter, many offspring of the first generation of revolutionaries and a considerable number of ordinary people in China firmly believe that only by going back to its early history and exploiting its original ideology can the Party have a bright future. “Retracing the routes of their forebears” is one of their ways for the offspring to express their belief in communist ideology. In this regard, it is a behavior similar to that of the Red Guard pilgrimages to Beijing during the early years of the Culture Revolution as Rudolf G. Wagner described in his article “Reading the Chairman Mao Memorial Hall in Peking: The Tribulations of the Implied Pilgrim” (in Susan Naquin and Chün-fan Yü, eds., *Pilgrims and Sacred Sites in China*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1992, pp. 378-423.).

³⁹ There are several examples. For instance, the daughter of Wang Shushing, the deputy chief commander of the WRA, in 2011 persuaded the Chinese Disabled Persons’ Federation (CDPF, 中國殘聯) to donate 500,000 *yuan* to build a special school in Zhangye. Zhangye Hong Xilujun jingshen yanjiuhui 張掖紅西路軍精神研究會 (Zhangye Association of WRA Spirit Studies), ed., *Hong Xilujun zhuanji* 紅西路軍專題 (Research on the WRA), internal publication, Volume 3, 2012, p. 148.

⁴⁰ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. London: Tavistock Publications Ltd., 1970, p. 312.

⁴¹ Paul Virilio (translated by Daniel Moshenberg), *The Lost Dimension*. New York: Semiotextle, 1991, p. 22.

take part in writing Party History as late as the 1990s. Now, in the 21st century, they have become increasingly interested in influencing or commenting on the writing of Party History. However, no one can guarantee that they will continue to take part in these kinds of activities in the future. How long will their influence last? Will the third or fourth generation reds continue to play a similar role in the future? The answers to these questions will lead directly to changes in certain installations in memorial halls.

Local Authorities

The role that local governments are playing in memorial sites is equally worthy of discussion. By examining these local leaders' words and decisions, we can conclude that the major impetus for them to establish and maintain memorial sites is to build a connection between the victory of the Chinese Communists' revolution and their governance at the local level. A couplet at an old WRA battlefield provides an apt illustration of this:

You sacrificed your lives for our country and overthrew the “three mountains”⁴²— your loyalty has been recorded in History.

Creating prosperity for the local people and fulfilling martyrs' wishes—we will continue your great works.⁴³

為國捐軀推翻三座山，留得丹心照汗青
造福鄉里實現先烈願，繼承大業有後人。

While the first line refers to the WRA, and also to the CCP's history before 1949, the second line's subject is the local government, which is a part of the CCP's governance of China since 1949. The former is the nominal subject of commemoration, but the latter is what they actually intend to praise.

To highlight the close link between the Party's revolutionary history and its role in local governance, these local governments not only play a role as sponsors of memorial sites, but also present themselves as exhibition subjects. Almost all exhibitions to the WRA conclude with a unit presenting the achievements of the local government, emphasizing how prosperous the county has become in the Reform Era. They always attribute these achievements to the inspiration of “WRA spirit” (this concept will be analyzed in 7.3.2). To summarize, these exhibitions demonstrate that the local governments have inherited the WRA's spiritual legacy

⁴² “Three mountains” refer to imperialism, feudalism and bureaucratic capitalism.

⁴³ This couplet is inscribed in Gancheng village of Gansu.

and applied it to serve the local people and develop the local economy [Fig. 7-23]. Due to the existence of the above aspect of the exhibitions, the memorial halls to the WRA are not merely commemorations of the past, but also are vehicles by which to display the Party's present governance.

Every county that has some connection with the WRA has built at least one memorial site to commemorate that history. Actually, because of the similarity of the content of exhibitions, most have not added anything to the WRA narratives. Nevertheless, these sites are essential for the local authorities and people, not because they represent history, but because of the central-local and present-past relationships they convey.

7.3 Creating Local Narratives

Similar to the memorial sites mentioned above, historical narratives also have undergone renovation since the 1990s. On the one hand, local officials and researchers avoid discussing and displaying controversial aspects of the WRA. By reading information boards at memorial sites or propaganda materials compiled by local organs, one learns merely that the WRA's establishment and operations were in accordance with the Party Center's directives, and that the WRA's goal was to open the "international route." Those controversial questions around which debates still rage (see Chapter 6) receive no space here. On the other hand, local officials and researchers at this level have created three new themes with which to tell the WRA's stories. By promoting these local narratives, local organs have broken the barriers to discussing sensitive historical issues, and publications and mass media have already disseminated these local narratives widely.

7.3.1 The "WRA Spirit"

When local Party history researchers found that historical facts about the WRA were too sensitive to discuss, they turned to research on the so-called "WRA Spirit" (*Xilujun jingshen* 西路軍精神). Today, this concept has become the core of local research on, and propaganda about, the WRA. This shift in research focus from historical facts to "spirit" has allowed local researchers to continue their work. On the one hand, "WRA Spirit" is an abstract topic one can discuss without touching upon the sensitive aspects of this historical issue, such as the reasons for its failure. On the other hand, in contrast to research that deals with historical facts, research on such concepts as abstract as "revolutionary spirit" is more likely to serve the

immediate needs of local governments and other official agencies, such as enhancing morale among PLA soldiers, and educating ordinary people to work hard for the country, and so forth.

The CCP's "Red Spirit"

The "WRA Spirit" did not appear out of thin air; actually, it is an aspect of the CCP's "Red Spirit" (*hongse jingshen* 紅色精神). "Red Spirit" is considered a spiritual power, and by learning about it, people will be able to "fully realize the value of hard-won revolutionary victory and the significance of socialist construction, and therefore acknowledge that our socialist career is respectful and wonderful."⁴⁴

It is a common practice for both ordinary people and ruling elites to dissociate an historical figure or event from its background, simplifying the causal relationship and transforming a complicated subject into a relatively abstract symbol, in order to serve current goals.⁴⁵ By doing so, with the passage of time, the context or relevant facts deemed no longer useful in serving the present are stripped away gradually.

The "Red Spirit" promoted by the CCP includes a variety of themes. Every historical period before 1949 has been assigned its corresponding spirit.⁴⁶ Model figures propagandized widely after 1949 are also considered to convey specific spirits to the Chinese people.⁴⁷ Local propaganda departments are responsible for interpreting these spirits. Although they enjoy some degree of autonomy on this

⁴⁴ Zhang Ruimin 張瑞民, *Gansu sheng wenhua chanye fazhan baogao* 甘肅省文化產業發展報告 (Report on the development of cultural industry in Gansu). Lanzhou: *Gansu renmin chubanshe*, 2011, p. 152.

⁴⁵ For instance, scholars in Taiwan and Mainland China examined the representation and identification of two famous military commanders in China's dynastic history and found that modern states tended to "look at these two heroes from a perspective of eternal, universal ethical models and paradigmatic personalities". Huang Kewu 黃克武, "Shi Kefa yu jindai Zhongguo jiyi ji rentong de bianqian 史可法與近代中國記憶及認同的變遷" (Shi Kefa and the transformation of memory and identity in modern China), in Wang Di 王笛, ed., *Shijian, kongjian, shuxie* 時間, 空間, 書寫 (Time, space and writing). Hangzhou: Zhejiang renmin chubanshe, 2006, pp. 245-271. Huang Donglan 黃東蘭 and Sun Jiang 孫江, "Yue Fei xushu, gonggong jiyi yu guozu rentong 岳飛敘述、公共記憶與國族認同" (The narratives of Yue Fei, public memory and national identity), *Ershiyi shiji* 二十一世紀, 2004(12), pp. 88-100. That a king in ancient China, Guojian 勾踐 (about 4th century BC) was symbolized in various ways in different historical periods is another example. Paul A. Cohen, *Speaking to History: the Story of King Goujian in Twentieth-Century China*. LA: University of California Press, 2009.

⁴⁶ "Jinggang Mountain Spirit" (*Jinggangshan jingshen* 井岡山精神), "Yan'an Spirit" (*Yan'an jingshen* 延安精神), "Xibaipo Spirit" (*Xibaipo jingshen* 西柏坡精神), "Soviet Region Spirit" (*suqu jingshen* 蘇區精神), etc.

⁴⁷ "Lei Feng Spirit" (*Lei Feng jingshen* 雷鋒精神), "Jiao Yulu Spirit" (*Jiao Yulu jingshen* 焦裕祿精神) and "Kong Fansen Spirit" (*Kong Fansen jingshen* 孔繁森精神) are the best-known examples.

issue, local governments' and researchers' interpretations of such "spirits" align closely with a number of concepts that the Party Center has been promoting for decades, such as "being resolute of faith" (*jianding xinnian* 堅定信念), "truly care for the masses" (*xinxi qunzhong* 心繫群眾), "seek truth from facts" (*shishi qiushi* 實事求是) and "struggle against adversity" (*jianku fendou* 艱苦奮鬥). In most cases, local governments' innovation lies merely in rearranging these fixed phrases or changing certain words.⁴⁸

Creating the "WRA Spirit"

There is no official definition of the "WRA Spirit." Since 2005, researchers in Gansu provincial institutions, officials of the Lanzhou Military Region, and members of the Zhangye Association of WRA Spirit Studies have created dozens of definitions of the "WRA Spirit." Despite the large number of definitions, there is no essential distinction between them, because they all share similar ideas—attempting to prove that the WRA shared values common to those prominent events in the Party's history that have been praised explicitly by central authorities, while also being determined to identify some revolutionary traits unique to the WRA.

The "Long March Spirit" is recognized officially as the epitome of the "Red Spirit."⁴⁹ Because of the Long March's irreplaceable position in Party History, quite a number of Gansu local researchers have constructed their definition of the "WRA Spirit" based on the official evaluation of the "Long March Spirit." Hu Jintao's

⁴⁸ Take one of the CCP's most important revolutionary holy lands, the Jinggang Mountain, as an example. The Jinggang Mountain period (1927-1929) was a turning point for the Party, because it was in this period that the Party Center changed the strategy of seizing big cities and started occupying the countryside. The Vice-director of the Jinggang Mountain Cadres' Institute (*Jinggangshan ganbu xueyuan* 井岡山幹部學院), Li Xiaosan, summarized the so-called "Jinggang Mountain Spirit" as following: A spirit of seeking truth from facts and daring to explore new methods (實事求是, 敢闖新路的精神); a spirit of keeping the faith and never wavering in loyalty (堅定信念, 矢志不移的精神); a spirit of struggling against adversity and self-reliance (艱苦奮鬥、自力更生的精神); a spirit of relying on the masses and daring to be victorious (依靠群眾、勇於勝利的精神). See Li Xiaosan 李小三, "Jinggangshan: Zhongguo gongchandang ren yongyuan de jingshen jiayuan 井岡山: 中國共產黨人永遠的精神家園" (The Jinggang Mountain: Chinese Communists' spiritual homeland), *Guangming ribao* 光明日報, November 6, 2010, p. 5.

⁴⁹ Former Chief Secretary of the CCP, Hu Jintao described it as "the highest embodiment of the Chinese national spirit with patriotism as the core". Hu Jintao 胡錦濤, "Zai jinian Hongjun Changzheng shengli 70 zhounian dahui shang de jianghua 在紀念紅軍長征勝利70週年大會上的講話" (A speech at the Conference for the 70th Anniversary of the Victory of the Long March), *Xinhua wang* 新華網 (Xinhua News Agency Online) http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2006-10/22/content_5235987.htm (last visited on July 20th 2015).

authoritative interpretation of the “Long March Spirit” in 2005,⁵⁰ on the 70th anniversary of the end of the Long March, has become their model. Researchers believe that because the WRA consisted of troops who had just finished the Long March, the WRA undoubtedly inherited all the elements of the Long March Spirit. In addition to these elements, they also contend that “the WRA Spirit contains even more and richer content:”

[The WRA displayed] heroic characteristics by fighting their enemies to the end and [also displayed] revolutionary mettle by not yielding even when lives were threatened; they never abandoned comrades-in-arms even under very difficult conditions and they were always ready to contribute, [displaying a] spirit of mutual assistance; they bravely and cleverly protected themselves and returned undaunted to the revolutionary camp [displaying] a maverick spirit; they endured sufferings and never gave up their faith, and through a lifetime of revolutionary words and deeds they showed their loyalty to the Party and Chinese people.⁵¹

Here, the “WRA Spirit” is actually a summarized history of the WRA. In this sense, the “WRA Spirit” is more a new narrative approach to telling the story of the WRA’s history rather than the addition of any new content.

A Vehicle of Ideological Indoctrination

Distilling the WRA’s “spirit” is not the ultimate goal of propagandizing the WRA. In fact, the “Red Spirit”, with the “WRA Spirit” as a part of it, is merely a medium with which to link revolutionary history that occurred decades ago to political education in today’s China. Examining the Party’s propaganda of the “Red Spirit” reveals a tendency to obscure the relationship between historical facts and the corresponding “spirit.” There is also a tendency to emphasize the connections between an abstract “spirit” and people’s work and daily life. An article written by the Commander of the PLA Lanzhou Military Region, Wang Guosheng, reflects this

⁵⁰ Hu said: “[The Long March Spirit] is to put the fundamental interests of the Chinese people and the Chinese nation ahead of anything else, to firmly uphold revolutionary ideals and beliefs, believing that a righteous cause must be victorious. [The Long March Spirit] is to give up everything to save our country and the people, not sparing any hardship. [The Long March Spirit] is to cooperate with the masses closely, overcoming difficulties together.” Ibid.

⁵¹ Dong Hanhe 董漢河, “Xilujun geming jingshen de fengfu neihan 西路軍革命精神的豐富內涵” (The WRA contains rich content of revolutionary spirit), *Gansu lilun xuekan* 甘肅理論學刊, 2010(6), pp. 5-11.

tendency. Wang summarized six aspects of the WRA's spirit, but he emphasized taking advantage of these aspects to educate PLA soldiers. Take as an example one of the six aspects that Wang promoted—"a political quality of arduous struggle." For a reader who is familiar with the Party's political discourse and the WRA's history, what the nine Chinese characters above refer to is obvious—the WRA endured extreme difficulties and survived without food and medicine. However, even if a PLA soldier has no idea how the WRA "arduously struggled," the educational value would not be reduced in the slightest, because Wang used the WRA merely as an analogy, while his arguments are focused on the Lanzhou Military Region. Wang argued, "We are facing harsh natural conditions, inefficient social supports and the challenging tasks of maintaining the stability of the boundary regions." In this respect, learning from the WRA is necessary:

We should carry forward the WRA's revolutionary spirit of arduous struggle and selfless dedication [to the Party's cause]. We should advance in the face of known difficulties, encounter those difficulties head-on as we move forward, and treat hardship as an honor and a pleasure. We should rely on the available military facilities to win battles and creatively resolve problems on the battlefield. We should be frugal and oppose luxury and waste. In hardship, we should reveal our spirit, seek development and have outstanding achievements.⁵²

In this way, the medium of the so-called "WRA Spirit" has transformed the WRA's history into official directives.

In addition to publishing articles, other, more concrete approaches have been applied to propagandize the "WRA Spirit." For example, several "exhibition rooms for the WRA Spirit" have been built in military units in Gansu and serve as a means of political education. As scholars have pointed out, propaganda helps maintain the CCP and its control over the military.⁵³ Propaganda materials use the history of

⁵² Wang Guosheng 王國生, "Xuexi liaojie jicheng Xilujun geming jingshen, dali peiyang dangdai geming junren hexin jiazhi guan 學習了解繼承弘揚西路軍革命精神, 大力培養當代革命軍人核心價值觀" (To study, understand, inherit and promote the WRA's revolutionary spirit, in order to cultivate essential values of contemporary revolutionary soldiers), in *Tiexue zhengcheng qilian fengbei* 鐵血征程, 祁連豐碑 (A hard and bloody march, like a monument in the Qilian Mountains), internal publication, 2011, pp. 1-20.

⁵³ Wang Juntao and Anne-Marie Brady, "Sword and pen: the propaganda system of the People's Liberation Army", in Anne-Marie Brady, ed., *China's Thought Management*. OX: Routledge, 2012, pp.

the Party, especially its military history, extensively.

As well as among the PLA troops, the “WRA Spirit” is also a common subject of study in official agencies, schools, and in private enterprises in Gansu. Cadres, students, and staff are asked to connect the “WRA Spirit” to their work and daily life. Campaigns of writing and making speeches about the WRA are common and they reinforce the outcomes of such political education. These means have resulted in much more intense and wide dissemination of the “spirit” than historical facts could have accomplished. History definitely was degraded into a vehicle of ideological indoctrination in this case.

7.3.2 Displaying Suffering

In exhibitions at WRA memorial sites and in local publications, the WRA’s bravery and suffering occupy the most space. Unlike the so-called “WRA Spirit” created to conduct political education, the masses see the WRA’s suffering more informally or unofficially. Consequently, in contrast with the “WRA Spirit,” which is discussed primarily in official organs, in the PLA and in schools, the WRA’s suffering is well known.

The WRA’s suffering lies firstly in its serious defeat. While research and debates at the central level still focus on the WRA’s mission and its establishment, exhibitions and propaganda at the local level have exposed a wealth of details and images of the WRA’s miserable experience on the battlefields and during the period after their capture. Some of these accounts and images are quite shocking. In publications by local researchers, episodes such as the following are common:

Ma Ping’an (a middle-ranking commander in the Ma brothers’ army) bound a captured WRA soldier to a tree, cut his belly open to get his gallbladder and then ate it. Li Gui (another commander) killed six people and dipped a steamed bun in their blood before he ate the bun. Li also got two captives’ hearts and used a frying pan to cook them.⁵⁴

Visual measures are more effective in representing the WRA’s suffering, as well as their enemies’ brutality and inhumanity. Striking images are exhibited at memorial sites, some obviously too gruesome for young audiences. After the

122-145.

⁵⁴ Feng Yaguang 馮亞光, *Xilujun shengsi dang’an* 西路軍生死檔案 (The lives and death of the Western Route Army). Xi’an: Shanxi renmin chubanshe 陝西人民出版社, 2009, p. 19.

Communists took over Gansu in 1949, they captured some photos of WRA soldiers' corpses taken and kept by Ma Bufang and Ma Buqing's officials. Now every memorial site exhibits these photos, which have become the most representative images of the WRA. One of these famous photos displays the decapitated heads of three WRA commanders [Fig. 7-24], while another image highlights the leader of a WRA medical team being crucified on a tree in Gaotai County [Fig. 7-25]. The GMW not only exhibits the second photo, but a model tree as well [Fig. 7-26].

One distinguishing feature of the WRA compared to other branches of the Red Army is the considerable number of female troops in its ranks. Due to their lower combat capability, many were captured by the Ma brothers' troops. Official accounts of Party History avoid this point, but it has been the focus of interest for some Gansu researchers. Publications and exhibitions in memorial halls describe the suffering of these female captives, which included rape and torture, vividly. A documentary entitled "The WRA Female Soldiers" (*Xilujun nü zhanshi* 西路軍女戰士), produced in 2005 by the Women's Association of Gansu to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the Long March, focuses on this topic, and reveals several shocking details [Fig. 7-27].

Wang Quanyuan's Story

To exemplify the WRA's suffering, Wang Quanyuan's 王泉媛 (1913-2009) case is mentioned most often. Wang was a female commander married to a high-ranking Party leader. She was "abandoned" by the Party later, and her dramatic experience includes almost all of the attractive components of the WRA's suffering. Wang was once the head of the Women's Independent Regiment of the WRA, so media cite her recollections of the WRA's fighting frequently. The most popular part of Wang's story, however, is about her life after the WRA's defeat. By narrating this part of her experience repeatedly, Wang has been portrayed as a committed and unyielding Communist. Here is the most common version of Wang's experience following her capture:

A commander, Ma Jinchang, chose Wang Quanyuan from numerous female captives to be his concubine. At the time Wang had made up her mind that as long as she were still alive she would have a chance to escape [so she agreed to be Ma's concubine]. She did not find a chance to get away until March 1939 when she disguised herself as a man and went out through a window. After running 90 miles she

reached the main road toward Lanzhou. Unfortunately, she went to the CCP's agency in Lanzhou only to find out that she could not return to the revolutionary ranks because of the Party's regulations. The Party welcomed cadres who had lost contact with the Party for less than a year, while refusing those who had disappeared for more than three years. As for those who had been away for two years, the Party needed to investigate them before it could be decided whether they should be accepted. Wang Quanyuan's situation was more complicated than just being captured or losing contact with the Party for three years; she was also accused of being Ma Jinchang's concubine. The Party agency in Lanzhou gave Wang five dollars and sent her out. Wang had no choice but to go back to her hometown in Jiangxi, to where she again needed to walk along the Long March's route, however this time in reverse. She managed to get home by begging all the way. Since then she has been living an ordinary life in the countryside, not daring to mention her experience to anybody. Fifty years later, Wang Quanyuan was identified as a Red Army veteran and finally had a chance to meet her husband, then Vice-chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, Wang Shoudao. Wang Shoudao said: I waited for you in Yan'an for three years [before I married again]. Wang Quanyuan cried loudly.⁵⁵

Wang Quanyuan's story is classic and contains many components of the WRA narratives—fighting bravely, escaping from captors cleverly, being refused by the Party, and spending the rest of her life in loneliness, accompanied merely by memories and suffering. Referencing other materials, however, we can easily discover fabrications in Wang's standard biography. First, the story of Wang suffering among Ma Bufang's troops is questionable, because other sources show

⁵⁵ This paragraph is a summary of a report published in *Nanfang zhoumo* 南方週末: "Zhuixun nazhi xiaoshi de hongjun 追尋那隻消失的紅軍" (In search of the branch of the Red Army that disappeared) (November 23, 2006). Similar content can also be found in several other articles and books. In Dong Hanhe's 董漢河 book *Xilujun nüzhanshi mengnan ji* [西路軍女戰士蒙難記 (Female soldiers of the WRA in danger). Beijing: Jiefangjun wenyi chubanshe 解放軍文藝出版社, 1989], Wang Quanyuan's stories occupy one chapter. In 1998, a biography for Wang was published. Wang Xia 王霞, *Monan: Xilujun nü Hongjun tuanzhang de chuanqi* 磨難: 西路軍女紅軍團長的傳奇 (Sufferings: legends of a female regimental commander of the WRA). Beijing: Jiefangjun chubanshe 解放軍出版社, 1998.

that she might have played an infamous role in helping her enemies supervise her sisters-in-arms. According to the CCP's criterion, this behavior was definitely a betrayal to the Party. Even if one discounts this, Wang also betrayed her fellow female soldiers and friends, who did not forgive her.⁵⁶ This personal betrayal also disqualifies Wang as a model figure. Second, after Wang returned to her hometown, her life might not have been as "ordinary" as she claimed. Some evidence shows that she held a position in the local government and maintained contact with high-ranking cadres in Beijing, presumably because of her marital relationship with Wang Shoudao.⁵⁷ Despite the contradictions above, Chinese media continue to portray Wang as a committed Party member and Red Army soldier, who was unswerving in her loyalty to the Party even though she had suffered while trying to pursue the Party's goals.

Since the early 1990s, the media has not only disseminated Wang's story widely, but Wang herself has also told it repeatedly. Her home in Jiangxi became a regular venue for conducting political education and promoting red tourism. Every day, Wang sat in her yard, where reporters, students, soldiers, and other visitors from all over the country interviewed and listened to her until she died in 2009 at 96 years of age [Fig. 7-28]. Since then, Wang has remained a representative of the WRA and especially of its suffering.

Political Correctness and Narratives of Suffering

One of the CCP's major principles of propagandizing its own history is political correctness. In previous decades, the prominence of this principle was unchallenged. In the words of a senior official, the Party today still needs to ensure the correct political framing of, and guarantee the correct representation of, "the truth of the communist revolution history in a comprehensive and politically correct way."⁵⁸ The narratives about the WRA's suffering, however, reveal that

⁵⁶ Sun Shuyun reported in her book, *The Long March*, that in the Gansu provincial archives she read a series of statements by Mao Gelin, the former Commander of the Special Task Force of the Mas, which said Wang Quanyuan not only slept with Ma Gelin but also worked with him to manage the 130 women prisoners. Sun wrote that there were also other references to Wang with similar accusations. Sun Shuyun, 2006, p. 221.

⁵⁷ Wang's contact with senior cadres in Beijing deliberately failed to be mentioned in almost all exhibitions and media reports. The only exception is the Gao Jincheng Memorial Hall in Zhangye, where a photo of Wang and then Health Minister Zhang Qinqiu taken in the 1950s is exhibited.

⁵⁸ Shao Qiwei 邵琪偉, "Qianghua renshi, wenbu tuijin, quebao hongse luyou chixu jiankang fazhan 強化認識, 穩步推進, 確保紅色旅遊持續健康發展" (To strengthen understanding and to advance stability, in order to make sure that red tourism will sustain healthy development), *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo guojia luyouju wangzhan* 中華人民共和國國家旅遊局網站 (Website of China National Tourism Administration)

although guaranteeing the political correctness of propaganda is still claimed to be a priority, the meaning of this principle has already changed in two ways.

First, the Party forbade discussion of some aspects of its history previously, but those restrictions have now been lifted. During the Mao Era, the Party portrayed its army as invincible. As a result, defeats as serious as that of the WRA were deemed inappropriate for propaganda purposes. In recent years, although the Party Center has continued to direct ideological organs primarily to praise the Party's victories—in the Party's official words, to present “our Party's glorious history and the lofty spirit and heroic vestiges of the old generation of revolutionaries”⁵⁹—the WRA's failure is no longer a taboo subject.

Second, some narrative approaches the Party criticized previously have become popular in recent years. In the Party's propaganda system, emphasizing the price paid by the Communists and their families in the pursuit of revolution was once considered to be “distorting elder revolutionaries' thought and emotions,” “distorting the image of revolutionary martyrs' families,” and “promoting capitalist individualism and the capitalist theory of human nature.”⁶⁰ Thus, the Party forbade writers to put an individual's well-being above the revolutionary cause, much less to attribute the loss of well-being to conflicts within the Party. Investigations of the narratives of the WRA, however, indicate that these narrative approaches that the Party criticized previously are now applied widely. Is this a violation of the Party's directives? Official Party accounts issued in recent years show that it primarily has a twofold expectation for the outcomes of its propaganda on Party History. One is that it will educate the people, and the other is

http://www.cnta.gov.cn/html/2008-6/2008-6-2-18-20-11-619_1.html (last visited on May 24, 2015).

⁵⁹ Li Shenglin 李盛霖, “Tuijin hongse luyou quanmian fazhan 推進紅色旅遊全面發展” (To work for the development of red tourism), *Renmin ribao* 人民日報, April 3, 2005, cited in the website of China Red Tourism

<http://www.crt.com.cn/news2007/News/quanwei/2006-5/30/00008969.html> (last visited on July 26, 2015).

⁶⁰ For example, writer Wang Yuanjian 王願堅 published a novel titled *The Beloved* (*Qinren* 親人) in the 1960s. This novel tells a story about a general's sharing the same name as a particular martyr, leading to the martyr's father mistaking the general for his son. In the end, the general decided to treat the martyr's father as his own father. At first this novel was well received and was included in some textbooks for middle school students. However, later it was seriously criticized and was charged with having committed all the errors listed here. See Hu Yanlin 胡艷琳, “Cong geming huiyilu dao jiti jiyi de yinggou: jianlun Wang Yuanjian de geming lishi xiaoshuo chuanguo 從革命回憶錄到集體記憶的營構：簡論王願堅的革命歷史小說創作” (From revolutionary memoirs to the construction of collective memory: a brief discussion of Wang Yuanjian's revolutionary historical novels), *Hunan wenli xueyuan xuebao* 湖南文理學院學報, 2007(4), pp. 102-105.

that it will make the masses advocate for the Party.⁶¹ Compared to these seemingly clear goals, the method to achieve them is ambiguous. Both the Party Center and Party Committees at the local level have no clear understanding about what kind of propaganda is good for the Party's image. Directed by ambiguous principles, the local agencies have chosen to focus their narratives of the WRA on its tragic experience. It is a safe option, because both the advocates of the orthodox interpretation of the WRA and those who advocate the new interpretation have to admit that the WRA suffered terribly. As long as these narratives avoid discussing the question of who caused these sufferings and who should be blamed for the WRA's tragic experience, the narrators and their supervisors are able to regard them as politically correct materials to educate the masses and to promote the Party's image.

7.3.3 Local Anecdotes and Legends

Writing history is never the exclusive privilege of a select group of experts. While historians and official writers are producing academic or official History, ordinary people are also recording history and telling stories in their own way. The history of the CCP's revolutions is no exception—in addition to official narratives and the different accounts of participants in historical events, the locals also create and disseminate stories. These often focus on certain aspects with which official narratives do not concern themselves, yet they often also contradict the official narratives.

Local Anecdotes

These local stories fall into two categories depending upon whether they contain supernatural elements. One category has no supernatural elements, and in this thesis, they are called "local anecdotes." Local anecdotes concerning the Party's history usually praise the Communists' bravery, dedication to the nation, and their affection for and willingness to help the local people. These themes are consistent with the Party's propaganda principles and as a result, have become an inseparable part of the Party's historical narratives. Because of their storytelling quality and variety, these local anecdotes supplement official Party History

⁶¹ As the then deputy director of the National Development and Reform Commission Li Shenglin said, "The glorious history of the CCP and the heroic deeds of Chinese Communists are precious materials for our ideological and political education. They can help our citizens, especially the younger generation to understand that the CCP and the socialist polity is the only correct choice for the Chinese nation, to form a wise worldview and personal philosophy and to consolidate confidence in socialism." Li Shenglin, 2005.

effectively and thus, the Party has disseminated them widely, especially during the past decade, when “red tourism” has flourished with the central government as its main sponsor. In the Hexi Corridor, anecdotes about the WRA focus on the relationship between soldiers and civilians. The story about Old Wang and the Little Sichuanese is an example.

Wang jia dun, Old Wang, and the Little Sichuanese

In the 1930s, people in Gansu lived in houses called “*dun*” (墩), which were built of mud and straw. The WRA troops borrowed these houses to serve as fortresses. The *Wang jia dun* (汪家墩, “the Wang family mud house”) was one of a few remnant houses occupied by the WRA. At the time, more than one hundred soldiers stayed in this house, which belonged to the Wang family, for two weeks, until most of them died, with a few survivors breaking through the enemy’s siege. The fighting was extremely fierce, but *Wang jia dun* is famous not just for its battles. There are two more anecdotes concerning this mud house that took place after the WRA’s defeat, and they are even more popular than are the accounts about the fighting that occurred in 1937.

The first story concerns an event that occurred in the 1980s. One day, when the Wang family was farming around *Wang jia dun*, they dug up a human skeleton. The father identified it immediately. When the WRA was there, the father was still a young boy. He and a young Sichuanese soldier of his age spent a great deal of time together and became close friends. Unfortunately, this young soldier died in battle and was buried quickly. As time passed, the Wang boy grew up to become “Old Wang,” but he never forgot his friend, the “Little Sichuanese.” When Old Wang saw the human skeleton, he knew instantly that it was the little Sichuanese. With sadness and respect, the Wang family solemnly reburied him.

The other event took place ten years later, when Old Wang lay on his deathbed. His son tried to close his father’s eyes, but was unable to do so. The son realized that his father must still be concerned about the Little Sichuanese, so he went to burn spirit money in front of the latter’s grave. When the son returned home, his father had passed away peacefully.⁶²

The case of *Wang jia dun* reflects the endless changing and updating of local anecdotes. Naturally, new stories are told with the passage of time, but their emergence is also the result of the local officials’ assiduous enquiry and collection.

⁶² Guo Menglin, 2006, p. 311.

Now, the *Wang jia dun* stands as it was 80 years ago and has become one of the WRA memorial sites. Old Wang's son is living in a new house next to *Wang jia dun*, and is in charge of taking care of the old house, which has been awarded the title "county-level cultural relic unit." Besides its original site, *Wang jia dun* was also duplicated in the Liyuankou Battle Memorial Hall, where the anecdote about the "Little Sichuanese," as well as other stories about Old Wang, have become indispensable features of the narrators' job. [Figs. 7-29, 7-30]

Local Legends

The other category of local stories, referred to as "local legends," contains those that incorporate supernatural elements. Although local anecdotes are more numerous, local legends are more noteworthy, because belief in supernatural power in historical processes deviates from Marxist historical materialism. The local legends about the WRA have two themes—supernatural power, and death, each of which can be divided further into several motifs.

Supernatural Power

The most important motif in Red Army legends is that the Communists possessed supernatural powers.⁶³ Although the defeat of the WRA was the most serious military failure in the CCP's history, there are still such legends concerning the WRA in Gansu. According to one story:

The WRA had run out of bullets, and many of the troops were injured, with enemy bullets in their bodies. At this moment, Xu Xiangqian and the Red Army soldiers swung themselves over and suddenly all the bullets came out of their bodies. Xu and his troops used these bullets to shoot their enemies, finally winning the battle. It turned out that all the WRA soldiers were invulnerable and no sword or gun could hurt them.⁶⁴

By portraying the WRA as troops with supernatural powers, such legends imply that the Party and the Red Army were destined to be victorious. Sharing the same implication, some legends claim that local animals had the ability to distinguish good people from bad. Because of this ability, these animals helped the WRA defeat

⁶³ Chen Zhengping 陳正平, "Chuan Shaan geming genjudi de hongjun jiangshuai chuanshuo 川陝革命根據地的紅軍將帥傳說" (Legends about Red Army commanders in the Sichuan-Shaanxi revolutionary base), *Chuandong xuekan (shehui kexue ban)* 川東學刊 (社會科學版), 1997(7), pp. 4-10.

⁶⁴ Guo Menglin, 2006, p. 368.

its enemy. A story about a wild horse submitting itself to a WRA commander is one example.⁶⁵ Similarly, inanimate landscapes are also anthropomorphized; in one story, a spring helped the WRA while punishing the Ma brothers' troops.⁶⁶

Sacrifice and Death

Because of the WRA's serious defeat, sacrifice and death have become the most popular themes of local legends, and blood and spirit are the two common motifs within this theme.

There are many legends concerning WRA soldiers' blood. For example, after the WRA suffered a disastrous defeat in Gaotai County, local people buried the corpses of Red Army soldiers in a remote place and named it, the "red lump" (*hong geda* 紅疙瘩). The people said that every spring, bloody water oozed out of the soil, turning the land red. People also said that flowers would bloom from the Red Army soldiers' corpses and attract swarms of butterflies.⁶⁷ The Danxia (*danxia* 丹霞) landform in Zhangye is famous for its red-colored sandstones and conglomerates. It is a unique type of petrographic geomorphology, but local people also connect it with the WRA, arguing that the land became red because of the WRA's blood. In addition to oral dissemination, local official agencies also exhibit some of these legends implicitly. For example, the Danxia landform is interpreted in the Liyuankou Battle Memorial Hall as "a magical landscape that has been colored into red by the martyrs' blood."

Another motif related to sacrifice and death is the immortality of spirits. As Communists do not believe that people can assume other forms after their death, these stories obviously are inconsistent with the Party's propaganda principles. Ironically, official agencies, in fact, do disseminate a considerable number of these "superstitious" stories. At almost all of the memorial sites to the WRA, especially old battlefields and cemeteries, visitors have an opportunity to hear stories about the ghosts of WRA martyrs said to haunt the area still. Administrators claim that they often hear WRA soldiers singing songs together at midnight and doing exercises in the morning. A narrator in Linze County described a dream she had when she started her job several years before. Although she was recalling something unreal—a dream—it apparently contained elements that featured the immortality of the WRA martyrs:

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 366.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 368.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 258.

When I had just started my job as a narrator in this cemetery, my colleagues and I were collecting the WRA's martyrs' remains. One night I had a dream. In my dream a couple of the WRA soldiers crawled out of their graves and talked with me. They said they had two wishes for me—one was that I would try my best to propagandize the WRA, making more people know that the WRA served a great cause; the other wish was that civil administration agencies would deal with their remains properly. My elder brother works in the County Civil Administration Bureau, so they asked me to convey their second wish to him.⁶⁸

The worship of ghosts has been a part of folk belief in China for thousands of years, and stories about communicating with spirits abound. Spirits that appear in dreams and make requests is also a common theme in Chinese classical and folk literature. When the old motifs of spirits and “appearing in dreams” (*tuomeng* 托夢) was mixed with new themes, such as serving the Party's cause and meeting the needs of the old generation revolutionaries, a new “red legend” was created. The narrator who had the dream above said that during the past decade, she had been inspired by this dream a great deal and continued to tell the story to visitors from all over China in order to explain her enthusiasm for her job. Unconsciously, that may be so, but she was also producing red legends.

Exploring “Party Elements” in Local Legends

In contrast to local anecdotes—the content and forms of which are consistent with the Party's propaganda principles—the Party criticizes supernatural legends explicitly. For example, the National Travel Bureau has stated repeatedly, “superstitious messages are incompatible with the values and norms advocated in red tourism,” and as a result, people should avoid presenting these messages.⁶⁹ These regulations, however, not only conveyed the Party's insistence on a materialist view of history, but also indicated the existence, and even the prevalence of, such “superstitious messages.” “Superstitious interpretations” of the Party's revolutionary history are particularly common in the hometowns of Party leaders, where tour guides tend to “focus on the *fengshui* of leaders' former residences, rather than on their great careers and how they struggled arduously

⁶⁸ Zhang Yan, interview.

⁶⁹ Shao Qiwei, 2008.

for China's liberation." For example, guides tell visitors that there were auspicious signs in the sky when great figures were born, or that certain supernatural phenomena occurred when political incidents took place at the central level.⁷⁰ Some of these unorthodox interpretations have evolved naturally, or have led consciously to, idolatry. Mao's birthplace, Shaoshan 韶山, is a typical example. As described by Yu Luo Rioux, quasi-legendary mysteries are quite common there.⁷¹

Unlike the situation in Shaoshan, in the case of the WRA, there are neither legends concerning idolatry of the CCP leaders, nor has there been any attempt to pursue personal interest by paying respect to the WRA. This is because such a military defeat has nothing to do with personal interest, such as promotion and becoming rich. In the case of the WRA, however, we can see clearly that official agencies consciously transformed "superstitious messages" that emerged among local people into propaganda materials. By explaining legends in a more acceptable way, the Party has integrated them into the official propaganda system to promote the WRA's history. A good example is the legend of the "Red Army poplars" (*hongjun yang* 紅軍楊). A type of poplar in northwestern China, its branches have a five-pointed star shape when cut open in cross section, and local people explain this poplar's uniqueness by connecting it with the WRA. One explanation is that the enemy forced captured WRA soldiers to plant trees. The brutal Ma brothers threatened that if any of the trees died, they would execute all of the prisoners; as a result, the WRA soldiers watered the trees with their own blood, which consequently left a red star inside them.⁷² An official of Zhangye PHRO interpreted such a legend in a less magical way:

Gradually I understood that this beautiful legend is actually [a reflection of] local people's memories and recollections about the Red Army...I do know that [the existence of the so-called Red Army poplars] is only a coincidence [rather than a miracle]. Nevertheless,

⁷⁰ Zhang Dongbin 張冬斌, "Hongse lüyou buyi datan fengshui 紅色旅遊不宜大談風水" (It is inappropriate to talk about *fengshui* in red tourism sites), *Qianjin luntan* 前進論壇, 2007(2), p. 48; Wang Xuejiang 王學江, "Mo rang hongse lüyou bianwei 莫讓紅色旅遊變味" (Do not lead red tourism astray), *Zhengong yanjiu dongtai* 政工研究動態, 2005(11), p. 9.

⁷¹ Yu Luo Rioux, "Pilgrim or Tourist? The Transformation of China's Revolutionary Holy Land", In Tim Oakes and Donald S. Sutton, eds., *Faiths on Display: Religion, Tourism, and the Chinese State*. Lanham: The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, 2010.

⁷² Han Xiaodong 韓曉東, "Feng Yaguang: Lishi yongzhi buwang 馮亞光: 歷史永誌不忘" (Feng Yaguang: never forget the history), *Zhonghua dushu bao* 中華讀書報, April 29, 2009, p. 5; Guo Menglin, 2006, pp. 240-242.

deep inside my heart I would rather believe that [the core of the Red Army poplar] is really the Red Army soldiers' blood and the WRA soldiers' spirits. [Inside the poplars] is also the faith that Zhangye people never gave up during the past seventy-odd years.⁷³

According to the best-known definition of legend, one essential element is that it is "believed" by its bearers, that although it deals with supernatural events, it is believed to pertain to the real world of the narrator and his audience.⁷⁴ Thus, although sometimes a tale is obviously unreal, people believe it to be true, and this belief makes the tale a legend. In the case of the "Red Army poplar," the official of Zhangye PHRO admitted the story was unreal, but by doing so, he explained the legend according to the Party Center's propaganda principles.

Indeed, it has become a new practice for Party History officials at the local level to collect anecdotes, legends, or other materials from local people, and then revise or reinterpret them in a way that they believe is helpful to the Party's reputation. A number of local officials have shared such experiences at conferences and in articles. In one of these articles, a local official in Guangxi province referred to "Party elements" (*dangxing yaosu* 黨性要素)⁷⁵ as those elements in local legends that are helpful for propaganda and for educating the masses. He said:

There are numerous "Party elements" in local Party history materials that reflect local people's love of the country, of the Party and of socialism. These "Party elements" are the soul of Party history materials, and they need Party history researchers to discover (*faxian* 發現), process (*jiagong* 加工) and rationally shape (*heli suzao* 合理塑造) them.⁷⁶

Through the investigation of legends concerning the WRA, we can see both the results and the process of discovering, processing, and shaping so-called "Party

⁷³ Li Gang 李綱, "Xunzhao hongjun yang 尋找紅軍楊" (Searching for Red Army poplars), in Zhangye hong Xilujun jingshen yanjiuhui 張掖紅西路軍精神研究會 (Zhangye Association of WRA Spirit Studies), ed., *Zhonggong Zhangye shi ziliao Hong Xilujun zhuanji* 中共張掖史資料紅西路軍專題 (Materials of CCP's history in Zhangye: the Western Route Army), internal publication, 2012, pp. 139-141.

⁷⁴ Heda Jason, "Concerning the 'Historical' and the 'Local' Legends and Their Relatives", *The Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 84, No. 331 (January-May 1971), pp. 134-144.

⁷⁵ Two definitions of Chinese words *dangxing* have been analyzed in Chapter 5.

⁷⁶ Wei Lifu 韋禮夫, "Difang dangshi gongzuo jianchi dangxing yuanze he kexue jingshen de tongyi de sikao 地方黨史工作堅持黨性原則和科學精神的統一的思考" (Local Party history work should insist on both Party spirit and the principle of scientificity), *Chuan Cheng* 傳承, 2012(15), p. 66.

elements.” Actually, from the “WRA Spirit” and the WRA’s sufferings, to supernatural legends, all the local narratives about the WRA discussed in this section contain content that seems unsuitable for official propaganda. Nonetheless, local official agencies, the PHROs in particular, make use of materials that they collected from the people to convey the values that the Party Center is promoting. In this way, local people’s memories and the Party Center’s requirements are connected.

Conclusion

There have been two periods during the Reform Era to date when the Party Center felt it necessary for local governments to exploit revolutionary history. The first was during the early 1980s, when the Party leadership’s enthusiasm for writing a comprehensive Party History that incorporated certain new perspectives caused relevant research at the local level to flourish. When the Party leadership reduced its emphasis on this field, however, some organs faced a crisis. After almost a decade, at the beginning of the 21st century, the Party leadership once again has realized the significant role that local organs play in promoting the history of the Party and in enhancing the Party’s image. This time the Party Center has advanced development in this field by sponsoring so-called “red tourism,” while also encouraging local governments to exploit tourist resources related to Party history.

During both of these periods, the local leaderships have been enthusiastic about propagandizing the WRA’s history. On the one hand, by doing this, they have strengthened their own authority and legitimacy as inheritors of the “red spirit” of the Party’s first generation of revolutionaries, and on the other hand, have manifested their loyal to the Party and willingness to serve the Party Center.

One of the reasons the Party Center directed and encouraged local governments to exploit Party history is that the leadership believes in the irreplaceable role of Party History as an essential instrument to integrate its regime ideologically. The local governments’ response to these directives and encouragement demonstrates that achieving ideological integration by studying, writing, and propagandizing Party history is not only the goal of the Party Center, but of the local governments as well. The local leaderships also expect to build closer ideological connections to the Party Center and enhance their political status through activities related to

Party history. Since 1978, the reformation of the relationship between the central and local governments has focused on the decentralization of power, especially financial power.⁷⁷ In this situation, the two-way process that results from attempts by both local and central government to achieve ideological integration is significant.

Both the form and content of local Party historiography differ from that found at the central level. In the WRA's case, there is little academic research in Gansu, but there are many stories. The content of these stories does not include details about the top leadership's decisions and the WRA's operations. Instead, these stories focus on ordinary soldiers and local people's lives. Local people created many of these stories originally, after which local officials collected them. This process of producing Party historical narratives also differs from the process at the central level.

Although they focus on different aspects of the WRA's history, the local narratives discussed in this chapter do not challenge or destabilize the official narratives, because, despite the huge differences between them, there are also common links. All of the stories told by local people and officials, whether logical or illogical, advocate, praise, or express affection for the Party, sometimes in a more direct and simple way than do narratives produced by central agencies. In fact, today, these local stories serve as the CCP's new myths. While many of the previously unquestionable myths have become diluted gradually, these new myths are increasingly important to the Chinese state. Moreover, as this chapter has shown, local Party historiography is more flexible, as both the content and form can always be changed in response to immediate exigencies. In this sense, local memorial sites and narratives about the Party's revolutionary history—which seem to show obedience to the CCP's standard way to propagandize Party history—strengthen the ideological functions of local agencies.

⁷⁷ Lok Wai Kin, "The Relationship Between Central and Local Governments Under the Unitary State System of China", in J. C. Oliveira and P. Cardinal, eds., *One Country, Two Systems: Three Legal Orders Perspectives of Evolution*. Berlin: Springer, 2009, pp. 527-540.



Fig. 7-1 A monument for the Liyuankou Battle built by locals in the 1980s (photo by author on July 15, 2013).



Fig. 7-2 The reverse side of the monument (photo by author on July 15, 2013).



Fig. 7-3 The entrance of the Gaotai Cemetery for Martyrs before the renovation in 2008 (from Gansu National Defense Online, <http://www.gscn.com.cn>, downloaded on July 24, 2015).



Fig. 7-4 "Fighting in Gaotai County" sculpture (photo by author on July 16, 2013).



Fig. 7-5 The museum in Gaotai Cemetery for Martyrs before renovation (from Gansu National Defense Online, downloaded on July 24, 2015).



Fig. 7-6 The memorial pavilion for Dong Zhenzhang (photo by author on July 16, 2013).



Fig. 7-7 Entrance of GMW and reliefs (from <http://forum.china.com.cn>, downloaded on July 24, 2015).



Fig. 7-8 Sculpture between two parts of reliefs (photo by author on July 16, 2013).



Fig. 7-9 Path towards the monument
(photo by author on July 16, 2013).



Fig. 7-10 The monument is in middle
of the square
(photo by author on July 16, 2013).



Fig. 7-11 Museum in GMW
(photo from <http://www.gthryx.com>,
downloaded on July 24, 2015).

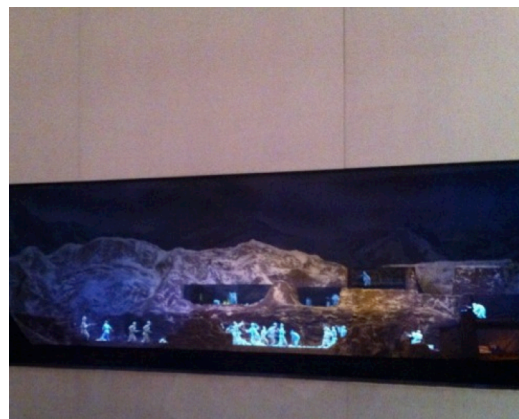


Fig.7-12 In order to recreate a living
scene of the WRA fighting in Gaotai,
the museum installed a multimedia
device (photo by author).



Fig. 7-13, 7-14 Inside the museum (photo by author on July 16, 2013).



Fig. 7-15 The monument in Jingyuan County 靖遠縣 (photo by author on July 6, 2013)

The monument is 15.36 meter high. The number "15.36" implies the fact that the WRA was established in 1936, the 15th year of the CCP. The main body of the monument consists of three trapezoids, respectively representing the Fifth Army, the Ninth Army and the Thirtieth Army. The base of the monument is 2.18 meter high, representing the 21800 troops of the WRA. There are in total eleven steps in front of the monument. This alludes to the fact that the WRA marched through eleven counties in Gansu.



Fig. 7-16 Visitors bowing to the monument in Gaotai WRA Memorial Hall (photo by author on July 16, 2013).



Fig. 7-17 A row of steles for martyrs in Liyuankou Battle Memorial Hall of Linze (photo by author on July 15, 2013).



Fig.7-18, 7-19 Collective tomb at the old battlefield of Liyuankou battle, built in 2012; the back side of the tomb is easily reopened (photo by author on July 15, 2013).



Fig. 7-20 The statue of Zhang Guotao (right) is located one meter lower than statues of other commanders of the Fourth Front Army (from the website of the Stele Forest for Commanders of the Sichuan and Shaanxi Soviet Regime: <http://www.cssqjsbl.com>, downloaded on July 24, 2015).



Fig. 7-21 A sculpture in the Memorial Hall for Gao Jincheng (Zhangye) (photo by author on July 12, 2013).



Fig. 7-22 A tree donated by offspring of the WRA soldiers (photo by author on July 16, 2013).



Fig. 7-23 An exhibition board in GMW about the agricultural and economic development of Gaotai (photo by author on July 16, 2013).

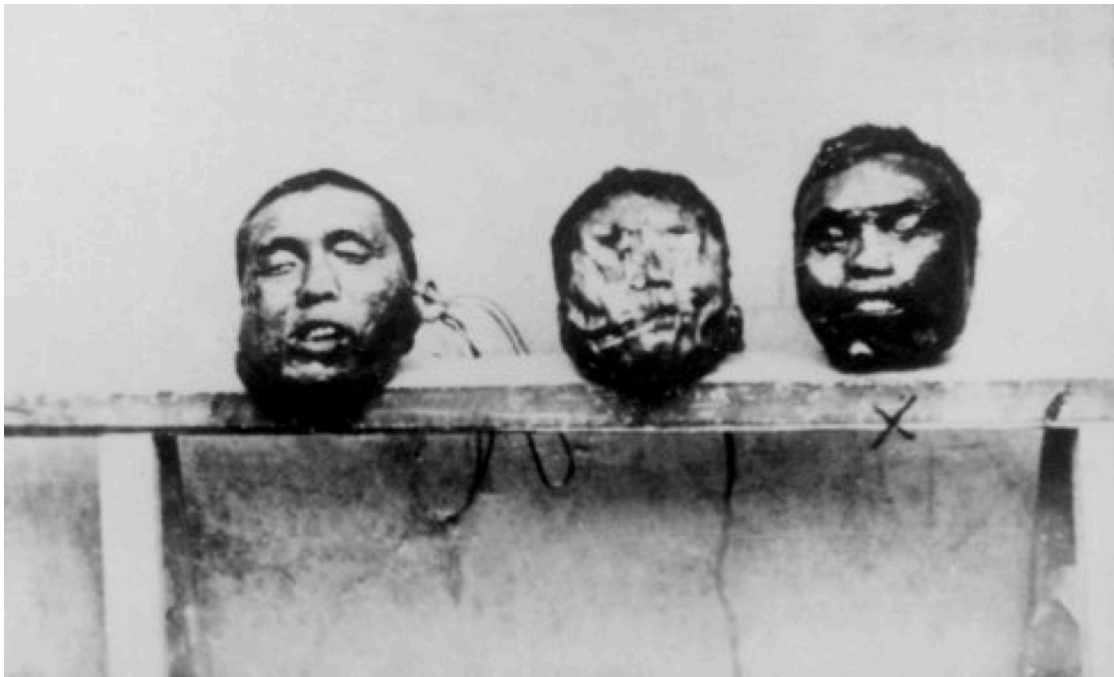


Fig. 7-24 One of the most widely disseminated photos of the WRA: heads of three WRA commanders (from www.dwnews.com, downloaded on July 24, 2015).

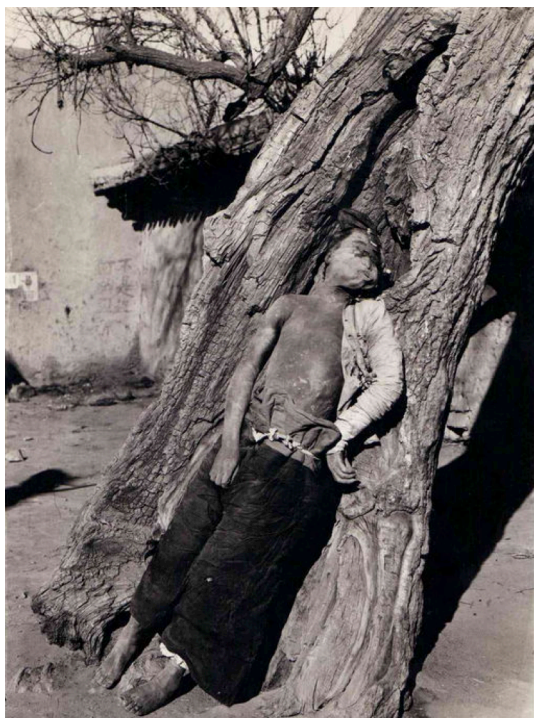


Fig. 7-25 (left) One of the most widely disseminated photos of the WRA: a WRA soldier's body was crucified on a tree (from www.crt.com.cn)

Fig. 7-26 (right) A model of the tree in GMW (photo by author on July 16, 2013).



Fig. 7-27 WRA soldier Wu Qingxiang 吴清香 is relating her tragic experiences in the documentary “The WRA Female Soldiers” (from www.youku.com, downloaded on July 24, 2015).



Fig. 7-28 Wang Quanyuan interviewed by visitors (from China Red Tourism Online, www.crt.com.cn, downloaded on July 24, 2015).



Fig. 7-29 Now *Wang jia dun* is a “cultural relic unit under at the country level” (photo by author on July 15, 2013).



Fig. 7-30 Narrator Zhang Yan is telling the story about the Little Sichuanese and Old Wang at the original site of *Wang jia dun* (photo by author on July 15, 2013).

Conclusion

Creating history is a long-running process in which many contributors play different roles. Although Party History concerns the CCP, making this history is not simply an affair internal to the Party. Ironically, the deep involvement of the Party leadership in producing historical interpretations, particularly that of the two most prominent leaders, Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping, has, until quite recently, discouraged serious investigation into the real process of creating Party History. Instead, a complicated process was simplified and presented as one controlled by a few people.

The ferment over the history of the CCP that has swept across China in recent years, however, urges us to examine the ways in which the narratives of its history that are popular today were produced. This is because these fierce debates about Party history are due, in large measure, to deep disagreement about the extent to which popular historical interpretations are consistent with historical facts. Only by identifying the real process of the creation of these interpretations is it possible to place current developments in context and understand China's fascination with her recent past.

The Creation of Party History

Five Watershed Periods and Four Groups of People

Throughout the eighty-plus years during which Party History was created, there were five watershed periods that no research about Party historiography can afford to ignore. Their significance is two-fold: first, changes in the assessment of historical events and figures typically occurred in each of these five periods. Second, Party historiography as a whole underwent changes or progress in each period, as new groups of people participated in writing history, or as new perspectives emerged about that history. Thus, each period had a direct influence in shaping what we call Party History today.

The first of these watersheds was from the early 1920s to the late 1930s, when many different explanations of Party history coexisted in the absence of a genuine "official" version. During this period, usually more than one explanation about a certain event emerged when the event occurred or immediately after it ended. These different explanations competed with each other, and although the Party

Centre supported, or even approved, some to varying degrees, neither support nor approval could guarantee that those explanations would not be challenged or even reversed completely. In this respect, the first period was that in which original narratives and interpretations formed gradually, and to some extent, “freely.”

The second crucial period was that from the late 1930s to the early 1940s. During this period, Mao began to consolidate control over the writing of Party History, and by the end of the period, in 1945, after the Yan’an Rectification Campaign, Mao finally won supreme authority over writing official Party History. The Party produced two types of historical narratives during this time. The first addressed intra-party power struggles and education, while the other targeted people outside the Party and focused on the Party’s contributions to the country.

During the third watershed, after the CCP became the ruling party in 1949, it combined the two forms of narratives above, which formed during the Yan’an period, to create an official Party history framework. In this way, in the first decade of the PRC, Mao and his Party historians finalized official Party History, which became an element indispensable to his totalitarian regime.

The fourth noteworthy period was the first decade of the Reform Era, from 1978 to the end of the 1980s. During this period, rewriting Party History played a pivotal role in repackaging the CCP. Although Deng’s new Party leadership changed the manner in which historical issues were addressed, it still tried to control the writing of Party History firmly.

The fifth watershed, which began in the early 1990s, is ongoing. In this present era, we observe two apparently contradictory tendencies. First, the increasing multiplicity of historical narratives is obvious, as many aspects of Party history excluded from propaganda materials during the Mao Era have now become popular topics. Second, a large number of the new debates about history actually concern “old questions” that *were* included in the official framework of the Mao Era. While the first tendency reflects a shift in the Party’s focus on propaganda, which will be summarized in the next section, the second results from the continual tension between various interest groups who favor different explanations about the past or different perspectives about the future.

Throughout these five periods, the following four groups of people played prominent roles in creating Party History. The CCP leadership and senior cadres

who were involved deeply in the history of the Party have played important roles in making Party History since the very beginning. Today, their aides and offspring have inherited their status as spokesmen of history to some extent. The participation of the third group, professional historians, became crucial in the 1950s, as they managed to integrate narratives that had been previously scattered, into a framework used to create Party history textbooks. The division of this group of people in the 1990s into those who emphasized that Party History should be academic and those who advocated that it should “serve politics” reflects the emergence of new tensions among professional historians. Nonprofessional writers began to write Party History in the 1980s and those writings became influential in the 1990s. To a considerable extent, their works are a continuation of the debates among different interest groups.

Philosophers of history, such as R. G. Collingwood and E. H. Carr, asked people to “study the historian” before studying the history.¹ Looking at such people, we can see clearly the interaction between their knowledge and social environment. As individuals, the writers of history were also products of history and society.

Four Patterns

By investigating these five periods and four groups of people, we can identify four patterns by which historical representation relates to the historical realities of the CCP.

In the first, authors recorded and attempted to explain the history that they experienced personally. They might have written these materials to complete tasks assigned by their superiors, but their primary goal was to justify certain theories or ideas in which they believed. To this end, they sometimes assessed their own behaviors positively, while at other times they criticized themselves, depending on the main point that they tried to argue. Therefore, it is fair to say that their different interpretations of the past (or, in many cases, their different interpretations of the present from their perspective) could be both true and false. They were true because each interpretation recorded a fragment of the larger picture of history that mirrored historical realities to some extent. They were, however, false for two reasons. First, these authors experienced only a small part of history personally, and therefore, their assessments were usually biased. Second,

¹ E. H. Carr, 1985, p. 23.

to different degrees, mainstream Party interpretations influenced these authors. Indeed, with the passage of time, their narratives might have focused increasingly on official interpretations that they had accepted, rather than on objective observations and personal memories. Halbwachs asserted that all personal memories form and are organized in collective contexts, because society always provides the framework for individual beliefs.² This is especially true in the field of Party history.

The second pattern that emerged did not focus on individual events, but was designed to build a grand narrative about a long-term historical process, in which events that were selected and narrated purposefully functioned as the bricks in a massive building. With a large portion of manmade concepts, the History created in this way reflects not realities, but the ideological situation and power structure of the time when the History was written. This type of endeavor on the part of the CCP began during the Yan'an period and concluded in the 1950s, when a Mao-centered framework was established. The rewriting of Party History in the 1980s that Deng directed also adopted this pattern. The difference was that the changes in the assessment of Mao and his era led to renewed versions of narratives about individual events.

According to the third pattern, interpretations of the Party's past are connected explicitly to its future political choices. Thus, before explaining what happened in the past, the writers already held certain ideas about the future. In order to develop these ideas they first had to share their ideas of the past. Today, we are witnessing an ongoing wave of debates about Party history and the proper way in which to look at it. These debates, which center on the ambiguous concept of "historical nihilism," are the latest examples of the third pattern of Party History creation. This pattern does not develop explanations of history. Instead, it creates certain relationships between the explanations of history and the Party's present and future. There is no more obvious example of the topic of using history to serve explicit present-day purposes than the radical historiography of the Cultural Revolution. In this age of extremes, Party history was rewritten arbitrarily, forsaking historical realities altogether. In recent years, because the Party leadership seems to have invested more effort in maintaining certain official

² Maurice Halbwachs, translated by Lewis A. Coser, *On Collective Memory*, University of Chicago Press, 1992.

narratives that are obviously untrue, some intellectuals have warned against a return of the Cultural Revolution. Given that the CCP led by Xi Jinping has been increasingly emphasizing this third pattern of writing Party history, there are serious grounds for these intellectuals' concern.

The fourth pattern concerns academic objectivity, in which historians uphold objectivity in historical research. On the one hand, advocates of this pattern set boundaries with the third pattern and emphasize their aloofness from politics. On the other hand, they differentiate themselves from the practitioners of the second pattern, and focus on writing source-oriented history. In order to claim an interest in "pure academic" research, historians emphasize their detachment from present-day politics. Some historians have been working on this pattern since the early 1990s, but bringing discipline to Party history remains a work in progress.

Before the Party established the official framework of its history in the 1950s, two types of conflict existed concerning how to explain the history of the CCP. The first concerned different interpretations of history, all of which belonged to the first pattern. The second existed between the first and second patterns, and reflected the tension between the endeavor to maintain individual historical accounts, and the tendency to fit all historical narratives into an official framework.

Since the 1950s, the second and third patterns have held the dominant position in turn. Today, on the one hand, the Party maintains the official version of Party History that was created according to the second pattern, while on the other hand, it adopts the third pattern to assign new meanings to the orthodox narratives. As "academic Party history research" grows more and more appealing to some scholars, we are likely to witness more conflicts between the third and fourth patterns in the future.

Party Historiography and Chinese Historiography

Although this thesis has focused on the creation of Party History, it is also necessary to situate Party historiography in the context of modern Chinese historiography.

From the late 19th century to the 1940s, Chinese historiography experienced a transformation that led to the establishment of a modern, academic historical discipline that stands next to and separate from philosophy and politics.³ Before

³ Brian Moloughney and Peter Zarrow, "Making History Modern: The Transformation of Chinese

1949, different views of history and historiography coexisted, with Marxists' Historical Materialism School as one example. Whereas other historians (such as Hu Shi and Fu Sinian) preferred to re-evaluate China's past with the help of modern scientific methods or relied on various aspects of China's traditional culture to define the core of the Chinese nation (such as Qian Mu and Chen Yinke), Marxist historians stipulated that history is driven by the development of the forces of production and characterized by a linear progress towards the next mode of production. From the late 1930s to mid-1940s, when these academic schools worked hard to develop themselves, another greatly different historiography was created in a relatively academically isolated region—Yan'an. This historiography also claimed that Marxist theory was the theoretical basis for history studies, but that it was, in fact, a product of Maoism. This Maoist historiography provided extremely simplified explanations of history and bundled them with the rulers' authority, indoctrinating the people through administrative and educational systems. The standard explanations of the CCP's history constituted the core contents of this historiography.

The conflicts between Marxist and non-Marxist historiography continued after 1949. The tension between them is a key to understanding Chinese historiography during the first seventeen years of the PRC. Party historiography, however, is difficult to fit into this picture because from the Maoists' perspectives, both Marxist and non-Marxist historiography needed to be revised according to the model of Party historiography. Since 1949, two forces have profoundly shaped the historiographical landscape. The first attempts to write all history following the way in which official Party History was written. The other searches for historical principles, rules, and regularities, and tends to pull all history research, including highly politicized fields, such as Party history, onto the academic track.

In the 1960s, when the new generation of historians who were raised under Mao's red banner and were backed vigorously by him, became the successors of the senior generation of historians, the sinicized Marxism—Mao Zedong Thought was accepted finally as the sole guidance for historical research. This was a victory

Historiography, 1895-1937", in Brian Moloughney and Peter Zarrow, eds., *Transforming History: The Making of a Modern Academic Discipline in Twentieth-Century China*. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2012, pp. 1-45. Axel Schneider and Stefan Tanaka, "The Transformation of History in China and Japan", in Stuart Macintyre, Juan Maignashca and Attila Pók eds., *The Oxford History of Historical Writing (1800-1945)* Vol. 4. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, pp. 491-519.

for the Maoist historiography that had originated in the CCP's Yan'an period, rather than a victory of Marxist historiography.

Since 1978, Chinese historiography has become a more diversified, open, and uncontrollable field. Nevertheless, while social and economic history, and other fields of specialized historiography are gaining momentum, and oral history circumvents the CCP and respective state organs' close control of archives and sources, Maoist historiography continues to play a pivotal role. This point is evidenced in the analysis of Party historiography presented in this thesis.

A Transformation

The case of the WRA not only allows us to investigate the process of creating Party History systematically, but also provides a different perspective on the current leadership's control over historiography. One question this thesis has tried to answer is the extent to which the CCP still controls the writing and propaganda of Party history and by which methods it manages to do so.

Holding or Losing Control over Party Historiography?

Scholars have almost reached a consensus that the manipulation of History, including Party History, played a critical role in the CCP's gaining national power and controlling the political system throughout the Mao Era. This argument is generally true, but it claims too often that the Party leadership could easily tell stories in its preferred way. As this thesis has indicated, even after Mao obtained the supreme position, he still could not persuade his colleagues and subordinates to accept his version of history until he adopted various means of education, fraud, and intimidation.

This consensus claims stereotypically that over the past two decades, the CCP has lost control in creating Party History. Although since the early 1990s, propaganda as a traditional instrument of control has "atrophied and eroded considerably over time,"⁴ Party history, as one of the main subjects of its propaganda system, has continued to exert influence on Chinese people in both traditional and new ways. We can illustrate this in three ways.

First, although the official historical narratives created in the Mao Era and in the early years of the Reform Era have been challenged repeatedly and have begun to

⁴ David Shambaugh, *China's Communist Party: Atrophy and Adaptation*, University of California Press, 2008, p. 3.

lose influence, the official Party history framework continues to rule, both in name and in fact.

Second, an explosion of new information gave people the impression that the propaganda about the history of the Party was declining, but if we take into account local level propaganda, it is fair to say that this is not the case, and that, if anything, it has increased. A considerable portion of propaganda content has been revised according to a “softer” style. For example, through attractive plots and close connections with local people, some revamped narratives give people the impression that those stories are more about local history rather than that of the Party.

Third, with respect to narrative style, certain well-defined stories have gradually replaced the former chronicle-like historical writings. A parallel process is that those messages of revolutionary class struggle have lost their position and been replaced by more humanistic themes, such as suffering, friendship, and love.

Highlighting the Glorious Past

In addition to these three points, there is a more essential reason to claim that Party history still occupies center stage: the focus of the CCP’s propaganda has shifted from portraying a bright future to highlighting a glorious past. In Mao’s time, the CCP built its ideology on the promise of a communist society. Due to the urgent need to claim that Marxist theory concerning the five types of social structures⁵ was applicable to China, historians had to resolve a series of problems about the development of “modes of production” in Chinese history, such as whether and when slave-based societies once existed in China. The answers to these questions related directly to the primary question concerning whether a communist society—the ideal social form demonstrated by Marxists—would be realized in China. This explains why the landscape of PRC Marxist historiography from 1949 to 1966 was dominated by five main topics, or the “five golden flowers,” as Chinese historians called them, referring to a famous Chinese film.⁶

The promise to build a utopia, however, has disappeared from the Party’s propaganda. Now, the Chinese revolution is framed consistently as a nationalist

⁵ Primitive communism, slave society, feudalism, capitalism, and communism (with socialism as its early stage).

⁶ These five topics are historical periodization, the origin of the Chinese nation, peasant rebellions, the vicissitudes of feudal landownership, and the emergence of the so-called “capitalist sprouts” in late imperial China.

revolution, and the key theme of propaganda is the contribution that the Party made in its “great, glorious and correct” history. Thus, while the Party used to base its legitimacy on the future, it now bases it on the past.

This transformation in the theme of propaganda reflects the flexibility inherent in the CCP’s ideology. Compared to other examples in which the CCP consolidated its control over ideology by creating new slogans or concepts, such as “the primary stage of socialism” (*shehui zhuyi chuji jieduan* 社會主義初級階段) and “four civilizations” (*sige wenming* 四個文明),⁷ mining the Party’s revolutionary past is a more consistent and enduring method, because it helps produce new myths from within the existing ideological system, rather than having to introduce new and relatively strange discourses. In the case of the WRA, we can see that after officials of ideological work largely abandoned the myth that Mao represented the only correct political line within the Party, new myths about the WRA’s persistence and bravery became ever more popular. These new myths are imperative for the Chinese state, as many of the previously unquestionable and unshakable myths have gradually been diluted in the minds of the Chinese people.

As for the motivation behind the CCP’s ideological shift, many analysts have explained it as a response to an ideological crisis during the post-Tiananmen period.⁸ This thesis, however, asserts that this shift is indeed part of the policy transformation that began in the late 1970s. Because Deng was determined to achieve two contradictory aims simultaneously—to change the economic system of the Mao Era dramatically, while maintaining Maoism as the orthodox ideology—he had no choice but to avoid the issue of realizing Communism and shift the focus of propaganda instead towards the Party’s revolutionary history. In this sense, it is not far-fetched to say that this shift was actually an aspect of the dynamics of China’s reform.

Thus, we can summarize the logic of the CCP’s new narrative as follows: the

⁷ For more about these two slogans, see the following research: Alan R. Kluver, *Legitimizing the Chinese Economic Reforms: A Rhetoric of Myth and Orthodoxy*. New York: State University of New York Press, 1996, p. 77. Nicholas Dynon, “Four Civilizations’ and The Evolution of Post-Mao Chinese Socialist Ideology”, *The China Journal*, No. 60 (July 2008), pp. 83-109.

⁸ For example: Zhao Suisheng, “Chinese Intellectuals’ Quest for National Greatness and Nationalistic Writing in the 1990s”, *The China Quarterly*, No. 152 (December 1997), pp. 725–745. Tony Saich, “Discos and Dictatorship: Party-State and Society Relations in the People’s Republic of China”, in Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom and Elizabeth J. Perry, eds., *Popular Protest and Political Culture in Modern China*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1994, pp. 246-68.

Party paid a high price for the victory of its revolution; as a result, it is reasonable to allow this Party to rule the country. In September 2015, after Wang Qishan admitted in front of dozens of foreign leaders and scholars that “the CCP gained its legitimacy from history” this idea has no longer been tacit, but is now an authorized statement. It is easy for this idea to gain the support of certain interest groups, such as the “second generation reds.” Actually, many “second generation reds” have expressed similar ideas in the past few years in order to emphasize their connection to the CCP regime. This is quite understandable because, as long as one considers that the basis of the current political power is the decades of revolution before 1949 and the victory in 1949, the offspring of senior cadres have a reason to ask for a share of the power. For Chinese people, relating the current regime to the history of assuming national power is a familiar way of thinking. There is a Chinese saying: Whoever seizes political power by force should assume the ruling position (*da jiangshan, zuo jiangshan* 打江山, 坐江山). Therefore, when Wang Qishan stated that the CCP gained its legitimacy from history, although he adopted the Western concept, “legitimacy,” he was actually talking about a Chinese idea concerning the relationship between seizing power and being in a position to exercise that power.

Loving the Motherland or Loving the Party?

A side effect of portraying the CCP as the savior of China is that the distinction between the concepts of “the Party,” “the PRC,” and “China” has to a great degree been blurred. As a result, the following argument has become quite common: If you love the motherland—China—you should support the CCP. For some scholars, because the CCP no longer offers an inspiring vision of China’s future, the Party is increasingly “seen by many groups and individuals in society as being largely irrelevant in their daily lives.”⁹ In fact, to the extent that the Party has become a synonym for “the nation,” it has become even more indispensable. Therefore, we should not underestimate the Chinese people’s emotional attachment to the CCP.

It is not far-fetched to argue that, to date, the CCP has been able to remain at the helm due in large part to its success in making Chinese people, in the main, take its rule for granted, and to a lesser extent, due to its delivery of economic goods. This

⁹ Richard Baum, “China’s Road to ‘Soft Authoritarian Reform’”, *US-China Relations and China’s Integration with the World*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (2004), pp. 15-20.

does not, however, mean that everyone in China has been persuaded, and therefore believes the ruling party represents the Chinese nation. Since the early 1980s, there has been a discussion about the relationship between “loving China” and “loving the Party” (or “being loyal to the Party”).¹⁰ Recently, official media claimed that these two concepts are identical,¹¹ but the prevalence of a new rhetoric of irony about “the people of family Zhao” (*Zhao jia ren* 趙家人)¹² represents resistance to false patriotic propaganda and indicates that the tension between confusing the concepts of “China” and “the Party” and defining them clearly will definitely continue.

As has been discussed in this thesis, the case of the WRA has a number of unusual features. For example, theoretically speaking, a serious military defeat does not deserve propaganda, not to mention the superstitious elements found in the narratives. However, the shift in the Party’s focus on propaganda and ideology explains all of these features. When the Party portrayed the realization of communism as its highest ideal and ultimate goal, all of the sacrifice was accepted. Moreover, as a Party that would lead the Chinese people to communism, it, and its army, had to be invincible. Because of their loss, the WRA could only be a target of criticism, rather than a propaganda tool. In contrast, to highlight its contribution to the past, the CCP now tends to talk about the sacrifice and failures of Chinese Communists, repeating the stories about how the Party members suffered in order to achieve the victory of the revolution. By emphasizing the content above, the

¹⁰ For example, in 1981, a Chinese writer, Bai Hua 白樺 (1930-), was criticized by Deng Xiaoping because his film script expressed a view of patriotism “as simple love of country, having no necessary relationship to the Communist Party and socialism”. Paul. A. Cohen, 2009, pp. 188-189.

¹¹ “Sheping: Bixu dizhi ba aiguo, aidang duili qilai 社評：必須抵制把愛國、愛黨對立起來” (Editorial: The practices of putting “loving China” and “loving the CCP” in opposite positions must be firmly forbidden), *Huanqiu wang* 環球網 (Global Times Online), September 10, 2014. <http://opinion.huanqiu.com/editorial/2014-09/5126337.html> (last visited on November 20, 2015). Chen Xiankui 陳先奎, “Aiguo he aidang zai Zhongguo shi yizhi de 愛國和愛黨在中國是一致的” (In China “loving China” are the same with “loving the CCP”), *Huanqiu wang*, September 10, 2014. http://opinion.huanqiu.com/opinion_china/2014-09/5132838.html (last visited on November 20, 2015)

¹² “Zhao jia ren” or “Zhao family” resurfaced in late 2015 as a disparaging term for China’s rich and politically well-connected. “Zhao family” derives from Lu Xun’s celebrated novella “The True Story of Ah Q”. Ah Q is from a poor rural family. He bullies those weaker than himself while currying favor with the powerful, who despise him. When Ah Q cheers with the Zhaos, a rich landlord family whose son has just passed the imperial examination, the Zhao patriarch slaps him and asks: “Do you think you are worthy of the name Zhao?” (*Ni ye pei xing Zhao?* 你也配姓趙?) This sentence has been frequently cited as rhetoric with an implication that some rich and powerful families control the power and wealth of China. Netizens also use “their country” to refer to China, which reflects a deliberate separation of the “China” where they are living and the “China” of patriotic propaganda.

Party is indeed conveying a message that it deserves to rule.¹³ In this respect, as long as a story can tell people how much hardship the CCP endured, even if that hardship came from intra-Party power struggles, the story can still be used for propaganda. Similarly, as long as a story tells people how much the Chinese love the CCP, even if it is illogical or superstitious, it benefits the Party.

This shift in the focus of propaganda helps explain, but does not eliminate, the peculiarities in current popular historical narratives. The CCP is still trying to use its monopoly on power to suppress open debates of history, but it seems that the officials of ideology and propaganda do not have an overall plan about their official versions of historical narratives, much less a plan about how to promote them. When the authorities need to achieve more than one purpose, they usually tailor propaganda plans for each, and are less concerned about the contradiction between those plans. The latest example is the commemoration of former CCP leader, Hu Yaobang, in November 2015.¹⁴ Similar to the case of the WRA, the Party leaders also conveyed ambiguous and seemingly contradictory attitudes towards Hu and his reforms. The Party leadership reminded its people of the WRA's sufferings and loyalty to the Party, while attempting to stop debates about the history of the WRA because it has been used as a piece of evidence in discussions of the Party's future political choices. Similarly, the leadership also wants people to remember Hu's contributions to the reforms, and how they loved him, yet it tries simultaneously to prevent people from connecting Hu and Zhao Ziyang to the

¹³ To some extent, this tactic of propaganda has been successful. As Timothy Cheek points out, "even though various people in China today dismiss the extreme claims of revolutionary correctness or question the gaps in official Party histories, the CCP is broadly credited with saving China from imperialism, warlords, and poverty. For many in China, the greatest achievement of the CCP, for which Mao is the embodiment, is the establishment of the Chinese nation-state and the restoration of order in 1949. The many sins committed by Mao and the CCP since then have not-yet-utterly overshadowed this singular achievement." Timothy Cheek, *Living with Reform China since 1989*. Nova Scotia: Fernwood Publishing, 2006, p. 43.

¹⁴ In 1987, Hu Yaobang was removed from the post of Party General Secretary. Two years later, Hu's death led to the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989. After the Tiananmen Massacre, Hu's successor Zhao Ziyang was purged and placed under house arrest until his death. Since then, Hu and Zhao's names became taboo in Mainland China. In November 2015, quite surprisingly for many people, Xi Jinping and other CCP leaders held a large-scale meeting to commemorate the centenary of the birth of Hu Yaobang. Some people felt encouraged by this meeting, because they thought it was a prelude to the rehabilitation of Hu Yaobang, Zhao Ziyang and the Tiananmen Incident. A couple of days later, in a documentary produced by the Chinese Central TV station for the centenary of the birth of Hu, when an edition of *People's Daily* with the names and photos of all those members of the CCP Politburo's standing committee was displayed, audience found that Zhao Ziyang's name was removed and Zhao's photo was replaced with a photo of another leader. This raised a new round of speculation about Xi's attitude towards Party history.

question of whether the Party needs political reforms.

To Take History Back

As previously discussed, some people stipulate that the current Party leaders' manipulation of its history, especially the campaign that has criticized "historical nihilism" since 2013, is a response to a legitimacy crisis. In fact, because there is no free public sphere where the ruled can express their disapproval of the government, it is difficult to identify such a crisis in China.¹⁵ In this respect, rather than struggling with this legitimacy issue, which has a methodological pitfall, perhaps we should raise more questions from other perspectives. One such question is what role historians can play in the field of Party history. This question, of course, has no standard answers. Nevertheless, few people can afford to deny that contemporary China requires professional historians to act vigorously to present a more comprehensive and complete picture of the Party's history.

Rarely has a generation in China had the same opportunity as the current cohort of educated people to be able to rethink the relationship between the CCP's history that they learnt in school and historical reality. With the release of more and more new materials over the past thirty years, new narratives and some seemingly disparate interpretations presented themselves all at once. In this environment, conflicts between different explanations, and disagreements about how to assess orthodox and well-accepted interpretations, have taken center stage in public discussion.

This thesis focused on the production of History, rather than its reception, so it did not present any systematic research on public acceptance of the official version of Party History and the various new interpretations. Based on observations in everyday conversations and online comments of political coverage, I found that a considerable number of Chinese have become trapped in a sort of historical ambivalence. On the one hand, the idea that "history is written by the victors" is well accepted. This, however, is not a positive and scientific attitude towards history, because although it reveals the difference between historical interpretations and facts, and admonishes people about the possible political attention that influences the creation of History, it also tends to rule out the

¹⁵ Ding Xueliang, *The Decline of Communism in China: Legitimacy Crisis, 1977-1989*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 4

existence of any objective history at all. It amounts to total skepticism, that History is fabricated in a way similar to that accomplished by the “Ministry of Truth” in George Orwell’s dystopian novel *1984*, such that nothing in History is true.¹⁶ By claiming that the CCP, the “victors,” produced or even fabricated History, many people seem to have abandoned the pursuit of that aspect of history that the great nineteenth-century German historian, Leopold von Ranke, summarized as finding out “what really happened.” On the other hand, when these same people have to comment on history, they tend to retell the stories that they learnt from official Party History—those of the Mao Era and of the Reform Era—and sometimes a mixture of the two.

China has been compared to the Soviet Union often during the past twenty-plus years. Western scholars and observers at first expected to witness the collapse of another socialist regime, but later tried to determine the CCP’s secrets of survival. Considering people’s full and ruthless assessment of the past as one factor related closely to real change in a communist party and a country, Pulitzer Prize winner, David Remnick, recorded the responses of various people in the Soviet Union, from soldiers and intellectuals to ordinary people, to the explosion of brutality during the Stalin Era. According to Remnick, when the empire, which Stalin created as a vast room with “its door locked” and “its windows shuttered,” was exposed in a return of historical memory, many people felt deceived, and the entire country dissolved “in a state of mass disorientation.”¹⁷ Similar to the Soviets, Chinese people have been blinded for decades, and have now become aware of the gaps in official Party History. In recent social news, we can already see a kind of anxiety and confusion concerning the historical assessments of the Party and certain of its leaders.¹⁸ This, then, is an era in which historians should play their proper role. I

¹⁶ In fact, in the 2000s, the Central Propaganda Department was often mentioned as the *Zhenli bu* (真理部, the “Ministry of Truth”) by Chinese netizens. But now this word is among the blacklisted keywords that the Chinese government considers to be politically sensitive.

¹⁷ David Remnick, *Lenin’s Tomb: The Last Days of the Soviet Empire*. New York: Random House, 1993. For Russian’s response to the explosion of history in the late 1980s, see the first part of his book: “By the Right of Memory”.

¹⁸ It is common to find Chinese people quarrelling about how to assess some first generation leaders, such as Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai. In some cases, people found that only physical conflicts could solve their problem. The following news item relates how two factions of laid-off workers fought with each other and got hurt because of their different opinion on the assessment of Mao Zedong. *Zhengsheng wang* 正聲網 http://www.redzs.com/UpFile/template/contentpage/zsw_tylm/item.aspx?id=40128&p=0 (last visited on February 29, 2016).

am not saying that by rewriting history, historians should lead China to a social and political transformation similar to that experienced by the Soviet Union in 1991, or, that historians should prevent this kind of transformation from taking place in China. My point is simply that historians should work on and challenge the myths that they themselves have disguised as “history.” As an alternative way of “knowing” the past, myth is in constant tension with historians’ reconstructive work.¹⁹ In the words of the eminent British historian, Michael Howard, the disillusion brought about by exposing myths “is a necessary part of growing up in and belonging to an adult society.”²⁰

Whether it be challenging the prevalent myths or bringing discipline to the field of Party history, one of the most basic, if not the most important, job for the historian is “to discreetly investigate the formation of the prevalent historical interpretations, as well as the formation of the primary materials based on which these interpretations were created.”²¹ As this thesis has shown, the formation of prevalent interpretations of Party history is a dual process of creation and concealment.

As this history was rewritten repeatedly, new narratives were continuously created, replacing previous ones. However, every “layer” of historical representation conveys certain historical facts. In discussing ways to discover ancient Chinese myths, historian Gu Jiegang 顧頡剛 (1893-1980) wrote: “Although we cannot tell the exact condition of these mythical events, we can discover their earliest forms.”²² Thus, rather than comparing different historical accounts to decide which is truer than are the others, Gu suggested investigating how Chinese history was presented at different times. This “stratification theory” is applicable to ancient history and to modern Chinese history as well.

At the same time, the Party concealed narratives incompatible with the official version of its History, and these became similar to what Prasenjit Duara referred to as “dispersed histories.”²³ Only by exploring how complex historical realities were

¹⁹ Paul A. Cohen, *China Unbound: Evolving Perspectives on the Chinese Past*, New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003, p. 200.

²⁰ Michael Howard, *The Causes of Wars and Other Essays*. Harvard University Press, 1962, p. 190.

²¹ Ishikawa Yoshihiro, 2015.

²² Gu Jiegang 顧頡剛, *Gushibian zixu* 古史辨自序 (The Author’s Preface for Critiques of Ancient History). Shijiazhuang: Hebei jiaoyu chubanshe 河北教育出版社, 2000, p. 4.

²³ Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.

appropriated or concealed, can we recover the concealed parts and so establish a “bifurcated” Party History.

R. G. Collingwood stated, that the past the historian studies is not dead but is “a past which in some sense is still living in the present.”²⁴ If we look at this argument from the perspectives of Gu and Duara, we may say that the past is not dead, but one that in some sense lives in each and every “bifurcated” “present.” By discovering and investigating layer after layer of the relics and “dispersed” aspects of the CCP’s past, not only can we contest the one-sided, even false, histories in the public domain, but we also can approach (although never restore completely) the knowledge of what really happened.

²⁴ Robin George Collingwood, *An Autobiography*. Oxford University Press, 1939, p. 97.

Appendix: Selected Telegrams

Cable 1: “Zhongyang dui Si fangmianjun zhanlue fangzhen de zhishi dian 中央對四方面軍戰略方針的指示電（1935年11月12日）” (The Party Centre’s directive to the Fourth Front Army on strategies, on November 12, 1935), in *Zhongguo gongnong hongjun disi fangmianjun zhanshi ziliao xuanbian, Changzheng shiqi* 中國工農紅軍第四方面軍戰史資料選編·長征時期 (Selected materials on the history of the Fourth Front Army in the Chinese Red Army of Workers and Peasants, the Long March period, hereafter SMHF). Beijing: Jiefangjun chubanshe 解放軍出版社, 1992, pp. 267.

Cable 2: “Zhang Guotao yi ‘Dang tuan zhongyang’ mingyi zhi Peng Dehuai, Mao Zedong deng dian 張國燾以「黨團中央」名義致彭德懷、毛澤東電等（1935年12月5日）” (Zhang Guotao’s cable to Peng Dehuai, Mao Zedong and other comrades on the behalf of “Party Centre and Central Youth League”, on December 5, 1935), in SMHF, p. 286.

Cable 3: “Lin Yuying guanyu weihe dangnei tuanjie, yizhi fandui diren deng wenti zhi Zhang Guotao dian 林育英關於維護黨內團結、一致反對敵人等問題致張國燾電（1935年12月22日）” (Lin Yuying’s cable to Zhang Guotao on unifying the Party and opposing the enemies, on December 22, 1935), in *Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun junshi kexue yuan* 中國人民解放軍軍事科學院 (PLA Military Science Academy) and *Zhongyang dang’an guan* 中央檔案館 (Central Archives), eds., *Hongjun Changzheng wenxian* 紅軍長征·文獻 (Reference on the Red Army’s Long March, hereafter RRAL). Beijing: Jiefangjun chubanshe 解放軍出版社, 1995, p. 845.

Cable 4: “Zhang Guotao yi ‘di’er zhongyang’ mingyi zhi guoji daibiao Lin Yuying dian 張國燾以「第二中央」名義致國際代表林育英電（1936年1月16日）” (Zhang Guotao’s cable on behalf of the “alternative Party Centre” to the representative of the Comintern Lin Yuying, on January 16, 1936), in SMHF, p. 331.

Cable 5: “Lin Yuying guanyu Gongchan guoji wanquan tongyi Zhonggong zhongyang de luxian zhi Zhang Guotao, Zhu De dian 林育英關於共產國際完全同意中共中央的路線致張國燾、朱德電（1936年1月24日）” (Lin Yuying’s cable to Zhang Guotao and Zhu De that the Comintern fully agrees with the CCP Party Centre’s line, on January 24, 1936), in SMHF, p. 328.

Cable 6: “Zhongyang wei dangnei tongyi jiejuo dang de zuzhi wenti zhi ×× dian 中央為黨內統一解決黨的組織問題致××電” (The Party Centre’s cable to somebody on the issue of the Party’s organization, on January 24, 1936), in SMHF, p. 329. (The name of the receiver is missed in the cable copy. The compiler of SMHF says the receiver might be Zhu De.)

Cable 7: “Zhang Guotao zhuzhang yi guoji daibiao tuan zan dai Zhongyang zhi Lin Yuying, Zhang Wentian dian 張國燾主張以國際代表團暫代中央致林育英、張聞天電（1936年1月27日）” (Zhang Guotao’s cable to Lin Yuying and Zhang Wentian to suggest that the CCP be provisionally managed by the representative group in the Comintern, on January 27, 1936), in SMHF, pp. 331-332.

Cable 8: “Lin Yuying, Zhang Wentian er tongzhi zhi Si fangmianjun dian 林育英、張聞天二同志致四方面軍電（1936年2月14日）” (A cable by Comrade Li Yuying and Comrade Zhang Wentian to the Fourth Front Army, on February 14, 1936), in SMHF, pp. 371-372.

Cable 9: “Mao Zedong guanyu Si fangmianjun guanxi ji diqing bianhua wenti zhi Peng Dehuai dian 毛澤東關於四方面軍關係及敵情變化問題致彭德懷等電（1936年5月29日）” (Mao Zedong’s cable to Peng Dehuai on the relationship with the Fourth Front Army and enemies’ situations, on May 29, 1936), in SMHF, p. 525.

Cable 10: “Zhang Guotao jianchi yi Guoji daibiaotuan daibiao Zhongyang he jiang Zhongyang gai cheng Beifangju zhi Lin Yuying dian 張國燾堅持以國際代表團代表中央和將中央改稱北方局致林育英電（1936年5月30日）” (Zhang Guotao’s cable to Lin Yuying to insist that the Representative Delegation in the Comintern should replace the Party Centre and the Party Centre should be renamed as the North Bureau, on May 30, 1936), in RRAL, p. 869.

Cable 11: “Zhu De, Zhang Guotao deng guanyu Er Liu juntuan yu Si fangmianjun zai Ganzi shengli huishi zhi Zhongyang he Yi fangmianjun shouzhang dian 朱德、張國燾等關於二、六軍團與四方面軍在甘孜勝利會師致中央和一方面軍首長電（1936年6月27日）” (Zhu De, Zhang Guotao’s cable to the Party Centre and top commanders of the First Front Army on the union of the Fourth Front Army and the Second and Sixth Army Corps in Ganzi, on June 27, 1936), in SMHF, p. 545.

Cable 12: “Zhongyang guanyu Er Si fangmianjun xunsu chu Gannan zhi Zhu De, Zhang Guotao, Ren Bishi dian 中央關於二、四方面軍迅速出甘南致朱德、張國燾、任弼時電（1936年7月22日）” (The Party Centre’s cable to Zhu De, Zhang Guotao and Ren Bishi that the Second Front Army and the Fourth Front Army should march to Gannan quickly, on July 22, 1936), in SMHF, p. 580.

Cable 13: “Zhong ge junwei xunwen Er Si fangmianjun xingdong qingkuang zhi Zhu De, Zhang Guotao, Ren Bishi dian 中革軍委詢問二、四方面軍行動情況致朱德、張國燾、任弼時電（1936年7月28日）” (The Central Military Committee’s cable to Zhu De, Zhang Guotao and Ren Bishi about the Second Front Army and the Fourth Front Army’s operations, on July 28, 1936), in SMHF, p. 581.

Cable 14: “Zhu De, Zhang Guotao, Ren Bishi guanyu Er Si fangmianjun xiang Tao, Min, Xi, Gu xingdong zhi zhongyang dian 朱德、張國燾、任弼時關於二、四方面軍向洮岷西固行動致中央電（1936年8月1日）” (Zhu De, Zhang Guotao and Ren Bishi’s cable to the Party Centre on the Second Front Army and the Fourth Front Army’s movement to Tao, Min, Xi and Gu regions, on August 1, 1936), in SMHF, p. 611.

Cable 15: “Zhongyang wei relie huanying Er, Si fangmianjun beishang zhi Zhu De, Zhang Guotao, Ren Bishi dian 中央為熱烈歡迎二、四方面軍北上致朱德、張國燾、任弼時電（1936年8月3日）” (The Party Centre’s cable to Zhu De, Zhang Guotao and Ren Bishi to welcome the Second Front Army and the Fourth Front Army’s decision of marching north, on August 3, 1936), in SMHF, p. 621.

Cable 16: “Zhonggong zhongyang lingdaoren guanyu jinhou zhanlue fangzhen de jianyi zhi Zhu De, Zhang Guotao, Ren Bishi dian 中共中央領導人關於今後戰略方針的建議致朱德、張國燾、任弼時電（1936年8月12日）” (A cable by the CCP leaders to Zhu De, Zhang Guotao and Ren Bishi on future strategies, on August 12, 1936), in Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun lishi ziliao congshu shenbian

weiyuanhui 中國人民解放軍歷史資料叢書審編委員會 (Committee for compiling historical materials of the PLA), *Gonggu he fazhan Shaan Gan suqu de junshi douzheng* 鞏固和發展陝甘蘇區的軍事鬥爭 (Consolidate and develop the military struggles in the Shaanxi-Gansu Soviet Region, hereafter CDMS), Volume 1. Beijing: Jiefangjun chubanshe 解放軍出版社, 1999, pp. 597-599.

Cable 17: “Zhongyang guanyu Hongjun xingdong fangzhen zhi Wang Ming dian 中央關於紅軍行動方針致王明電(1936年8月25日)” (A cable by the Party Centre to Wang Ming on the Red Army’s strategies, on August 25, 1936), in SMHF, pp. 661-662.

Cable 18: “Gongchan guoji shuji chu guanyu tongyi zhanling Ningxia quyue he Gansu xibu jihua zhi Zhongyang dian 共產國際書記處關於同意佔領寧夏區域和甘肅西部計劃致中央電(1936年9月11日)” (A cable by the Comintern Secretariat to the CCP Party Centre to agree the Red Army occupy Ningxia and west Gansu, on September 11, 1936), in SMHF, p. 693.

Cable 19: “Zhongyang guanyu zhanling Ningxia de bushu zhi Zhu De, Zhang Guotao, Ren Bishi dian 中央關於佔領寧夏的部署致朱德、張國燾、任弼時電(1936年9月14日18時)” (The Party Centre’s cable to Zhu De, Zhang Guotao and Ren Bishi on arrangements of taking over Ningxia, at 6pm on September 14, 1936), in RRAL, pp. 1124-1125.

Cable 20: “Zhu De, Zhang Guotao, Chen Changhao guanyu Jingning, Huining zhanyi gangling zhi Xu Xiangqian dian 朱德、張國燾、陳昌浩關於靜寧、會寧戰役綱領致徐向前電(1936年9月18日)” (Zhu De, Zhang Guotao and Chen Changhao’s cable to Xu Xiangqian on the “Outline of the Jingning and Huining Campaign”, on September 18, 1936), in RRAL, pp. 1132-1133.

Cable 21: “Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, Peng Dehuai guanyu jizhong xian zhanling Ningxia wenti fu Zhu De deng dian 毛澤東、周恩來、彭德懷關於集中先佔領寧夏問題復朱德等電(1936年9月19日)” (A cable by Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, Peng Dehuai to Zhu De on concentrating on taking over Ningxia and other issues, on September 19, 1936), in RRAL, pp. 1134-1135.

Cable 22: “Zhang Guotao, Xu Xiangqian, Chen Changhao guanyu Wu jun renwu zhi Dong Zhentang, Huang Chao dian 張國燾、徐向前、陳昌浩關於五軍任務致董振堂、黃超電(1936年9月22日22時)” (A cable by Zhang Guotao, Xu Xiangqian, Chen Changhao to Dong Zhentang and Huang Chao on the Fifth Army’s task, at 10pm on September 22, 1936), in SMHF, p. 714.

Cable 23: “Zhang Guotao, Xu Xiangqian, Chen Changhao guanyu Si fangmianjun cong Xunhua Yongjing duhe xijin zhi Zhong ge junwei dian 張國燾、徐向前、陳昌浩關於四方面軍從循化永靖渡河西進致中革軍委電(1936年9月22日)” (A cable by Zhang Guotao, Xu Xiangqian, Chen Changhao to the Central Military Committee on the Fourth Front Army’s plan of crossing the Yellow River in Xuhua and Yongjing, on September 22, 1936), in SMHF, p. 715.

Cable 24: “Peng Dehuai bu tongyi Zhang Guotao xijin zhi Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai dian 彭德懷不同意張國燾西進致毛澤東、周恩來電(1936年9月26日12時)” (Peng Dehuai’s cable to Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai to disagree with Zhang Guotao on marching westward, at 12pm on September 26, 1936), in SMHF, p. 721.

Cable 25: “Zhonggong zhongyang shujichu guanyu sange fangmian jun huihe hou de tongyi zuozhan zhihui jue ding zhi Zhu De, Zhang Guotao bing ge fangmianjun lingdaoren dian 中共中央書記處關於

三個方面軍會合後的統一作戰指揮決定致朱德、張國燾並各方面軍領導人電（1936年10月10日20時）”（The CCP Central Secretariat’s cable to Zhu De, Zhang Guotao and leaders of front armies on the three front armies’ united command after union, at 8pm on October 10, 1936), in CDMS, p. 777.

Cable 26: “Zhongyang ji Junwei guanyu shi yuefen zuozhan gangling zhi Zhu De, Zhang Guotao bing Er, Si fangmianjun dian 中央及軍委關於十月份作戰綱領致朱德、張國燾並二、四方面軍電（1936年10月11日）”（A cable of the Party Centre and the Central Military Committee to Zhu De, Zhang Guotao and the Second Front Army and the Fourth Front Army on the military plan for the tenth month, on October 11, 1936), in SMHF, pp. 813-814.

Cable 27: “Mao Zedong guanyu anzhaoshiyue zuozhan gangling zuo hao ge xiang zhunbei zhi Peng Dehuai dian 《毛澤東關於按照十月作戰綱領做好各項準備致彭德懷電（1936年10月13日17時）》”（Mao Zedong’s cable to Peng Dehuai on making preparations for the military plan of the tenth month, at 5pm on October 13, 1936), in CDMS, pp. 783-784.

Cable 28: “Zhu De, Zhang Guotao guanyu wanquan tongyi shi yuefen zuozhan gangling he junshi, zhengzhi, waijiao zhishi zhi Dang zhongyang ji Junwei dian 朱德、張國燾關於完全同意十月份作戰綱領和軍事、政治、外交指示致黨中央及軍委電（1936年10月14日）”（Zhu De and Zhang Guotao’s cable to the Party Centre and the Military Committee to fully agree with the ‘Outline of the Military Plan for October and other military, political and diplomatic orders of the Party Centre, on October 14, 1936), in RRAL, p. 1186.

Cable 29: “Mao Zedong guanyu tongyi Peng Dehuai Ningxia zhanyi jihua zhi Peng Dehuai bing Zhu De, Zhang Guotao deng dian 毛澤東關於同意彭德懷寧夏戰役計劃致彭德懷並朱德、張國燾等電（1936年10月24日24時）”（Mao Zedong’s cable to Peng Dehuai, Zhu De and Zhang Guotao to agree with Peng’s plan of taking over Ningxia, at 0am on October 24, 1936), in CDMS, p. 800.

Cable 30: “Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai guanyu jipo nanmian zhi di de bushu zhi Zhu De, Zhang Guotao, Peng Dehuai bing Er Si fangmianjun lingdaoren dian 毛澤東、周恩來關於擊破南面之敵的部署致朱德、張國燾、彭德懷並二、四方面軍領導人電（1936年10月25日）”（Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai’s cable to Zhu De, Zhang Guotao, Peng Dehuai to commanders of the Second Front Army and the Fourth Front Army on fighting the enemies in south areas, on October 25, 1936), in CDMS, pp. 804-805.

Cable 31: “Zhongyang junwei guanyu Sanshi jun, Jiu jun duhe hou de xingdong wenti zhi Zhu De, Zhang Guotao, Peng Dehuai dian 中央軍委關於三十軍、九軍渡河後的行動問題致朱德、張國燾、彭德懷電（1936年10月26日1時半）”（The Central Military Committee’s cable to Zhu De, Zhang Guotao and Peng Dehuai on the Thirtieth and Ninth Army’s operation after they crossed the Yellow River, at 1:30am on October 26, 1936), in SMHF, p. 842.

Cable 32: “Xu Xiangqian, Chen Changhao guanyu yin di yu Lanzhou chizhi Hui, Ding diren zhi bingli bushu zhi Zhu De, Zhang Guotao, Peng Dehuai dian 徐向前、陳昌浩關於引敵於蘭州遲滯會、定敵人之兵力部署致朱德、張國燾、彭德懷電（1936年10月26日）”（Xu Xiangqian and Chen Changhao’s cable to Zhu De, Zhang Guotao and Peng Dehuai on attracting enemies to Lanzhou and stopping enemies in Hui and Ding regions, on October 26, 1936), in SMHF, p. 843.

Cable 33: “Zhu De, Zhang Guotao guanyu chu yi guohe zhi Sanshi jun, Jiu jun wai qiyu budui tingzhi guohe zhi Xu Xiangqian, Chen Changhao bing Zhongyang junwei dian 朱德、張國燾關於除已過河之三十軍、九軍外其餘部隊停止過河致徐向前、陳昌浩並中央軍委電(1936年10月27日5時)” (Zhu De and Zhang Guotao’s cable to Xu Xiangqian, Chen Changhao and the Central Military Committee that armies apart from the Thirtieth and the Ninth Army should stop crossing the river, at 5am on October 27, 1936), in SMHF, p. 845.

Cable 34: “Xu Xiangqian, Chen Changhao dui shixian Ningxia zhanyi jihua ji budui duhe zhi yijian zhi Zhongyang junwei dian 徐向前、陳昌浩對實現寧夏戰役計劃及部隊渡河之意見致中央軍委電(1936年10月27日)” (Xu Xiangqian and Chen Changhao’s cable to the Central Military Committee about their opinions on the Ningxia Campaign Plan and letting troops cross the Yellow River, on October 27, 1936), in SMHF, pp. 846-847.

Cable 35: “Zhonggong zhongyang ji Zhongyang junwei guanyu sange fangmianjun jinkao zuozhan zhengqu shengli zhi Zhu De, Zhang Guotao, Peng Dehuai deng dian 中共中央及中央軍委關於三個方面軍緊靠作戰爭取勝利致朱德、張國燾、彭德懷等電(1936年10月28日12時)” (The Party Centre and the Central Military Committee’s cable to Zhu De, Zhang Guotao and Peng Dehuai on the cooperation of the three front armies, at 12pm on October 28, 1936), in CDMS, pp. 812-813.

Cable 36: “Zhu De, Zhang Guotao guanyu Sanshiyi jun ying chengji duhe zhi Xu Xiangqian, Chen Changhao bing Zhongyang junwei dian 朱德、張國燾關於三十一軍應乘機渡河致徐向前、陳昌浩並中央軍委電(1936年10月28日16時)” (A cable by Zhu De and Zhang Guotao to Xu Xiangqian, Chen Changhao and the Central Military Committee that the Thirty-first Army should cross the river, at 4pm on October 28, 1936), in SMHF, p. 848.

Cable 37: “Zhu De, Zhang Guotao guanyu sange fangmianjun xie jian Hu di zhi xingdong bushu 朱德、張國燾關於三個方面軍協殲胡敵之行動部署(1936年10月28日19時)” (Zhu De and Zhang Guotao’s arrangements on the cooperation of the three front armies to annihilate Hu Zongnan’s troops, at 7pm on October 28, 1936), in CDMS, p. 815.

Cable 38: “Zhu De, Zhang Guotao guanyu quanjun bushu yijian zhi Zhongyang junwei ji Xu Xiangqian, Chen Changhao dian 朱德、張國燾關於全軍部署意見致中央軍委及徐向前、陳昌浩電(1936年10月28日19時15分)” (A cable by Zhu De and Zhang Guotao to the Central Military Committee and Xu Xiangqian, Chen Changhao on arrangements of the Red Army, at 7:15pm on October 28, 1936), in SMHF, p. 849.

Cable 39: “Zhu De, Zhang Guotao guanyu zai Haiyuan yinan xiaomie Hu di xiantou budui zhi Xu Xiangqian, Chen Changhao deng dian 朱德、張國燾關於在海原以南消滅胡敵先頭部隊致徐向前、陳昌浩等電(1936年10月28日20時)” (Zhu De, Zhang Guotao’s cable to Xu Xiangqian and Chen Changhao on the plan of annihilating Hu Zongnan’s troop in the area south of Haiyuan, at 8pm on October 28, 1936), in SMHF, p. 851.

Cable 40: “Zhongyang junwei guanyu Sanshiyi jun keyi liji duhe dian 中央軍委關於三十一軍可以立即渡河電(1936年10月29日12時)” (The Central Military Committee’s cable to order the Thirty-first Army to cross the river immediately, at 12pm on October 29, 1936), in SMHF, p. 853.

Cable 41: “Zhu De, Zhang Guotao guanyu Wu jun renwu ji duhe shiyi zhi Xu Xiangqian, Chen Changhao dian 朱德、張國燾關於五軍任務及渡河事宜致徐向前、陳昌浩電（1936年10月29日15時）” (A cable by Zhu De and Zhang Guotao to Xu Xiangqian and Chen Changhao on the Fifth Army’s task and arrangements to cross the river, at 3pm on October 29, 1936), in SMHF, p. 853.

Cable 42: “Zhongyang junwei guanyu zhansheng Hu di xingdong bushu zhi Zhu De, Zhang Guotao dian 中央軍委關於戰勝胡敵行動部署致朱德、張國燾電（1936年10月30日）” (The Central Military Committee’s cable to Zhu De and Zhang Guotao on the operations against Hu Zongnan’s troops, on October 30, 1936), in SMHF, p. 855.

Cable 43: “Zhu De, Zhang Guotao guanyu yi Yi Er fangmianjun zhuli ji Sanshiyi jun jijie Machengbao fujin xiaomie tujin zhi di zhi Xu Xiangqian, Chen Changhao dian 朱德、張國燾關於以一、二方面軍主力及三十一軍集結麻城堡附近消滅突進之敵致徐向前、陳昌浩電（1936年10月30日10時半）” (A cable by Zhu De and Zhang Guotao to Xu Xiangqian and Chen Changhao on the arrangements that major forces of the First and Second Front Armies and the Thirty-first Army will gather around Machengbao and annihilate enemies, at 10:30am on October 30, 1936), in SMHF, p. 856.

Cable 44: “Peng Dehuai guanyu zai Haida dadao yibei xunji jiandi zhi Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai dian 彭德懷關於在海打大道以北尋機殲敵致毛澤東、周恩來電（1936年11月1日）” (Peng Dehuai’s cable to Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai on annihilating enemies in north areas to the Haida road, on November 1, 1936), in CDMS, p. 827.

Cable 45: “Gongchan guoji shujichu ji Wang Ming, Chen Yun guanyu gaibian yuanzhu fangfa zhi Zhongyang shujichu dian 共產國際書記處及王明、陳雲關於改變援助方法致中央書記處電（1936年11月3日）” (A cable of the Comintern Secretariat and Wang Ming and Chen Yun to the CCP Party Centre Secretariat on changing methods of providing assistance, on November 3, 1936), in SMHF, p. 862.

Cable 46: “Zhang Wentian, Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai deng guanyu zuozhan xin jihua zhi Zhu De, Zhang Guotao, Peng Dehuai deng dian 張聞天、毛澤東、周恩來等關於作戰新計劃致朱德、張國燾、彭德懷等電（1936年11月8日）” (Zhang Wentian, Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai’s cable to Zhu De, Zhang Guotao and Peng Dehuai on the new military arrangements, on November 8, 1936), in CDMS, pp. 840-841.

Cable 47: “Zhongyang ji Junwei guanyu zuzhi Xilujun ji qi lingdao jigou de bianling 中央及軍委關於組織西路軍及其領導機構的電令（1936年11月11日10時）” (The Party Centre’s directive on the establishment of the Western Route Army and its leadership, at 10am on November 11, 1936), in SMHF, p. 878.

Cable 48: “Xu Xiangqian, Chen Changhao guanyu Xilujun qingkuang zhi Zhongyagn junwei, Zongbu dian 徐向前、陳昌浩關於西路軍情況致中央軍委、總部電（1936年11月12日）” (Xu Xiangqian and Chen Changhao’s cable to the Central Military Committee and the Red Army Headquarters on the Western Route Army’s situations, on November 12, 1936), in SMHF, pp. 881-882.

Cable 49: “Zhu De, Zhang Guotao guanyu Xilujun xu duli wancheng datong yuanfang renwu zhi Xu Xiangqian, Chen Changhao bing Zhongyang junwei dian 朱德、張國燾關於西路軍須獨立完成打通遠方任務致徐向前、陳昌浩並中央軍委電（1936年11月14日）” (Zhu De and Zhang Guotao’s cable

to Xu Xiangqian, Chen Changhao and the Central Military Committee that the Western Route Army should connect with the Soviet Union independently, on November 14, 1936), in SMHF, p. 884.

Cable 50: “Xu Xiangqian, Chen Changhao guanyu jinzhan Yongchang Ganzhou zhengqu xiuzheng buchong zhi Zhongyang ji Zhu De, Zhang Guotao dian 徐向前、陳昌浩關於進佔永昌甘州爭取休整補充致中央及朱德、張國燾電(1936年11月19日9時)” (Xu Xiangqian and Chen Changhao’s cable to the Party Centre and Zhu De and Zhang Guotao on occupying Yongchang and Ganzhou, at 9am on November 19, 1936), in SMHF, p. 889.

Cable 51: “Xu Xiangqian, Chen Changhao guanyu Xilujun jin yue lai jianyuan qingkuang ji dui xingshi fenxi zhi Zhongyang bing Zhu De, Zhang Guotao dian 徐向前、陳昌浩關於西路軍近月來減員情況及對形勢分析致中央並朱德、張國燾電(1936年11月21日)” (Xu Xiangqian and Chen Changhao’s cable to the Party Centre and Zhu De, Zhang Guotao on depletion of numbers of the Western Route Army and their analysis on the situations, on November 21, 1936), in SMHF, p. 894.

Cable 52: “Xu Xiangqian, Chen Changhao guanyu Sishilipu zhankuang deng zhi Zhongyang junwei dian 徐向前、陳昌浩關於四十里鋪戰況等致中央軍委電(1936年11月23日20時)” (Xu Xiangqian, Chen Changhao’s cable to the Central Military Committee on situations in Sishilipu, at 8pm on November 23, 1936), in SMHF, p. 897.

Cable 53: “Xu Xiangqian, Chen Changhao guanyu diwo qingkuang zhi Zhu De, Zhang Guotao bing Zhongyang dian 徐向前、陳昌浩關於敵我情況致朱德、張國燾並中央電(1936年11月24日)” (Xu Xiangqian and Chen Changhao’s cable to Zhu De, Zhang Guotao and the Party Centre on situations of the Western Route Army and the enemies, at 11pm on November 24, 1936), in SMHF, pp. 899-900.

Cable 54: “Mao Zedong dui Xilujun zuozhan bushu zhi Xu Xiangqian, Chen Changhao dian 毛澤東對西路軍作戰部署致徐向前、陳昌浩電(1936年11月25日24時)” (Mao Zedong’s cable to Xu Xiangqian and Chen Changhao on the Western Route Army’s operations, at the 0am on November 25, 1936), in SMHF, p. 902.

Cable 55: “Xu Xiangqian, Chen Changhao deng guanyu Xilujun kuochong hongse qibing zhi ge jun ji Zhongyang junwei dian 徐向前、陳昌浩等關於西路軍擴充紅色騎兵致各軍及中央軍委電(1936年12月4日)” (Xu Xiangqian and Chen Changhao’s cable to armies of the Western Route Army and the Central Military Committee, on December 4, 1936), in SMHF, p. 904.

Cable 56: “Xu Xiangqian, Chen Changhao guanyu ge jun xingdong qingkuang ji jiaqiang Jiu jun zhi cuoshi zhi zhongyagn dian 徐向前、陳昌浩關於各軍行動情況及加強九軍之措施致中央電(1936年12月9日)” (Xu Xiangqian and Chen Changhao’s cable to the Party Centre on each army’s operation and managing the Ninth Army, on December 9, 1936), in SMHF, pp. 909-910.

Cable 57: “Zhou Enlai, Bo Gu guanyu Yu jun xu jinli shou Lanzhou bubian fenbing xi gu zhi Zhongyang dian 周恩來、博古關於于軍須集力守蘭州不便分兵西顧致中央電(1936年12月15日20時)” (Zhou Enlai and Bo Gu’s cable to the Party Centre that Yu’s troops should control Lanzhou rather than marching westward, at 8pm on December 15, 1936), in SMHF, p. 910.

Cable 58: “Mao Zedong guanyu qing shang Yang Hucheng dian Ma Bufang tingzhi gongji Xilujun zhi Zhou Enlai, Bo Gu dian 毛澤東關於請商楊虎城電馬步芳停止攻擊西路軍致周恩來、博古電(1936

年 12 月 31 日)” (Mao Zedong’s cable to Zhou Enlai and Bo Gu on asking Yang Hucheng to persuade Ma Bufang to stop attacking the Western Route Army, on December 31, 1936), in *Jiefangjun junshi kexueyuan* 解放軍軍事科學院 (PLA Military Science Academy), *Mao Zedong junshi nianpu* 毛澤東軍事年譜 (1927-1958) (Military chorological biography of Mao Zedong, 1927-1958). Nanning: Guangxi renmin chubanshe 廣西人民出版社, 1991, p. 164.

Cable 59: “Xu Xiangqian, Chen Changhao, Li Te guanyu Xilujun xingdong qingxing zhi Junwei ji Zongzheng dian 徐向前、陳昌浩、李特關於西路軍行動情形致軍委及總政電 (1937 年 1 月 4 日)” (Xu Xiangqian, Chen Changhao and Li Te’s cable to the Central Military Committee and the General Political Department on the Western Route Army’s situations, on January 4, 1937), in SMHF, pp. 920-921.

Cable 60: “Xiujun junzheng weiyuanhui guanyu shili ji xingdong fangzhen zhi Junwei zhuxituan dian 西路軍軍政委員會關於實力及行動方針致軍委主席團電 (1937 年 1 月 6 日)” (A cable of the Western Route Army Military and Political Committee to the Central Military Committee on the Western Route Army’s capacity and operations, on January 6, 1937), in SMHF, p. 922.

Cable 61: “Xu Xiangqian, Chen Changhao guanyu zai qingqiu Sanshiyi jun, Si jun xiang Liangzhou jin yi jiaji diren zhi Zhongyang dian 徐向前、陳昌浩關於再請求三十一軍、四軍向涼州進以夾擊敵人致中央電 (1937 年 1 月 8 日)” (Xu Xiangqian and Chen Changhao’s cable to the Party Centre to ask the Thirty-first Army and the Fourth Army to go to Liangzhou and attack the enemies, on January 8, 1937), in SMHF, pp. 923-924.

Cable 62: “Junwei zhuxituan guanyu Xilujun jizhong jiandi tuanjie yizhi jinsou bianzhi renziweizhan zhi Xu Xiangqian, Chen Changhao dian 軍委主席團關於西路軍集中殲敵團結一致緊縮編制人自為戰致徐向前、陳昌浩電 (1937 年 1 月 9 日)” (The Central Military Committee’s cable to Xu Xiangqian and Chen Changhao that the Western Route Army should focus on annihilating the enemies, unify and reorganize the troops, and fight independently, on January 9, 1937), in SMHF, p. 927.

Cable 63: “Mao Zedong, Zhu De, Zhang Guotao guanyu wang su shang Yu Xuezhong bu jieying Xilujun dongjin zhi Zhou Enlai, Bo Gu dian 毛澤東、朱德、張國燾關於望速商于學忠部接應西路軍東進致周恩來、博古電 (1937 年 1 月 24 日)” (A cable by Mao Zedong, Zhu De and Zhang Guotao to Zhou Enlai and Bo Gu on asking Yu Xuezhong’s troops to assist the Western Route Army to return to the east, on January 24, 1937), in *Mao Zedong junshi nianpu* 毛澤東軍事年譜 (1927-1958) (Military chorological biography of Mao Zedong, 1927-1958), 1991, p. 170.

Cable 64: “Junwei zhuxituan guanyu xingdong fangxiang zijue zhi Xu Xiangqian, Chen Changhao dian 軍委主席團關於行動方向自決致徐向前、陳昌浩電 (1937 年 1 月 24 日 24 時)” (The Central Military Committee’s cable to Xu Xiangqian and Chen Changhao to ask the Western Route Army to decide its own operations, at 0am on January 24, 1937), in SMHF, p. 937.

Cable 65: “Junwei zhuxituan guanyu Xilujun junshi fangzhen zhi Xu Xiangqian, Chen Changhao dian 軍委主席團關於西路軍軍事方針致徐向前、陳昌浩電 (1937 年 1 月 25 日 24 時)” (The Central Military Committee’s cable to Xu Xiangqian and Chen Changhao on the Western Route Army’s operations, at 0 am on January 25, 1937), in SMHF, p. 938.

Cable 66: “Zhou Enlai guanyu Nanjing dui wofang tiaojian keke de yuanyin ji duice gei Zhang Wentian, Mao Zedong dian 周恩來關於南京對我方條件苛刻的原因及對策給張聞天、毛澤東電（1937年1月26日1時）” (Zhou Enlai’s cable to Zhang Wentian and Mao Zedong on the reasons and resolutions of Nanjing side’s severe conditions in the negotiations, at 1am on January 26, 1937). Zhongyang dang’an guan 中央檔案館 (The Central Archives), *Zhongguo gonghandang guanyu Xi’an shibian dang’an shiliao xuanbian* 中國共產黨關於西安事變檔案史料選編 (Selected historical materials of the CCP on the Xi’an Incident). Beijing: Zhongguo dang’an chubanshe 中國檔案出版社, 1997, pp. 351-352.

Cable 67: “Pan Hannian guanyu yu Guomindang tanpan Hongjun fangdi wenti zhi Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai dian 潘漢年關於與國民黨談判紅軍防地問題致毛澤東、周恩來電（1937年1月26日）” (Pan Hannian’s cable to Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai on the negotiation with the Nationalist Party on the Red Army’s stations, on January 26, 1937), in SMHF, pp. 1088-1089.

Cable 68: “Xilujun junzheng weiyuanhui wei wancheng xijin renwu de xin tiyi zhi Zhongyang dian 西路軍軍政委員會為完成西進任務的新提議致中央電（1937年2月13日24時）” (A cable of the Western Route Army Military and Political Committee to the Party Centre on a new proposal of marching westward, at 0am on February 13, 1937), in SMHF, p. 943.

Cable 69: “Zhongyang shujichu, Junwei zhuxituan guanyu Xilujun zhanlue fangzhen zhi Xu Xiangqian, Chen Changhao dian 中央書記處、軍委主席團關於西路軍戰略方針致徐向前、陳昌浩電（1937年2月17日）” (A cable of the Party Centre Secretariat and the Central Military Committee to Xu Xiangqian and Chen Changhao on the Western Route Army’s strategies, on February 17, 1937), in SMHF, p. 945.

Cable 70: “Zhongyang shujichu dui Xilujun de zhishi dian 中央書記處對西路軍的指示電（1937年3月4日）” (The Party Centre Secretariat’s directive to the Western Route Army, on March 4, 1937), in SMHF, p. 960.

Cable 71: “Xu Xiangqian, Chen Changhao, Li Te yaoqiu su pai yuanjun zhi Zhongyang junwei dian 徐向前、陳昌浩、李特要求速派援軍致中央軍委電（1937年3月4日）” (Xu Xiangqian, Chen Changhao and Li Te’s cable to the Central Military Committee to ask for reinforcement, on March 4, 1937), in CMHF, pp. 959-960.

Cable 72: “Xu Xiangqian, Chen Changhao guanyu Xiliugou Liyuanbao Kanglongsi zhandou zhi Zhongyang junwei dian 徐向前、陳昌浩關於西柳溝梨園堡康龍寺戰鬥致中央軍委電（1937年3月12日1時）” (Xu Xiangqian and Chen Changhao’s cable to the Central Military Committee on battles in Xiliugou, Liyuanbao and the Kanglong Temple, at 1am on March 12, 1937), in SMHF, p. 965.

Cable 73: “Xilujun junzheng weiyuanhui jue ding Xu Xiangqian, Chen Changhao tuoli budui deng zhi Zhongyang ji Junwei dian 西路軍軍政委員會決定徐向前、陳昌浩脫離部隊等致中央及軍委電（1937年3月14日）” (A cable by the Western Route Army Military and Political Committee to the Party Centre and the Central Military Committee on the decision that Xu Xiangqian and Chen Changhao leave the army and other issues, on March 14, 1937), in SMHF, pp. 967-968.

Cable 74: “Zhongyang ji Junwei guanyu tongyi chengli Gongweihui bing fen san lu youji gei Li Xiannian, Li Zhuoran dian 中央及軍委關於同意成立工委會並分三路游擊給李先念、李卓然電（1937年3月17日）” (A cable of the Party Centre and the Central Military Committee to Li Xiannian and Li Zhuoarn to approve of establishing the Works Committee and conducting guerilla warfare, on March 17, 1937), in SMHF, p. 969.

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