

The chinese communist party in china



The research question that will be investigated in this essay is how the Long March helped in the rise of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in China. While the Long March was also a major factor of Mao's own rise to power within the CCP, it was interesting to research and include the overall effect of the Long March. Although, the Long March only lasted a period of over two years, it was necessary to broaden the scope of the investigation to also include the lead up to the Long March as well as a few years following the end of the Long March. This was done in order to clearly understand China's state of mind before and after the Long March. Also, it was to emphasize and describe the splitting of the Guomindang and Mao's own rise to power. The conclusion that was reached at the end of this investigation was that the Long March resulted in Mao's rise to power within the Chinese Communist Party and would eventually lead to the Chinese Civil War. This can be reflected in Mao's many agrarian reforms which resulted in the CCP acquiring the power of the peasants or the masses, a major influence in CCP's success over Guomindang in the later fatal Chinese Civil War.

Introduction

The outcomes of the Long March was not only the beginning of a long civil war, but also the rise to power of Mao Zedong, and within that power, a revision of China's long standing government. The Long March was an enormous military retreat undertaken by the troops and members of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in order to evade the pursuit by the Guomindang (Chinese Nationalist Party) army. The Long March was not one event, but it was composed of several retreats in which various Communist armies in the south attempted to reach the north and west. The harsh

obstacles of the Long March would eventually come to represent a significant chapter in the history of the Communist Party of China. In the following decades, this event would fasten the esteem of Mao and his followers as the new leaders of the CCP.

Although, the Long March consists of several marches across China made by the CCP, it is most commonly associated with the repositioning of the First Red Army from Yudu to Yanan. In this perspective, the Long March only lasted a mere one year period from October 16, 1934 to October 19, 1935. However in a broader sense, the Long March also included two other armies retreating under strain from Chiang Kai-Shek's Guomindang, the Second Red Army and the Fourth Red Army. The eventual retreat of all the Red Armies of the CCP would not be complete until October 22, 1936 in Shaanxi, where all three armies would eventually unite forces.

Mao's Rise to Power

Mao Zedong first began his entry into national politics in the year 1924, when he was sent to the Shanghai Party Bureau after being elected into the Central Executive Commission (CEC). Later on, at the Fourth Congress of the Communist Party in 1925, Mao would be excluded from the CEC and would thus become a bystander to the internal power struggles within Guomindang, in which Chiang Kai-shek would emerge as the victorious leader in 1926. Mao felt that the ideals and views of Chiang Kai-shek were not right and decided to diverge from the current Nationalist party. Thus he no longer found the current Communist Party suitable toward his own objectives, and thus he began to his rise of power within a new and reorganized Chinese political party. After a brief pause in his political career,

Mao rose again with a new determination of conquering the peasant masses. Mao's affair with peasants was not a sudden intuitive idea that was shed upon his mind. Instead, Mao merely reorganized what the first pioneers had forsaken. During Chiang's Northern Expedition to repress the rallying of southern militarists, the peasants decided to start a revolt in the absence of a powerful leader. During the winter of 1926-1927, Mao personally went and conducted a survey on the unsteady districts of northern Changsha. Through this tour of Changsha and the peasant revolution, Mao affirmed his faith in the strength and ancient role of the peasants. Mao's Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan was extremely exalted the peasants' strength to the state of disbelief.

" The Revolution is not a banquet between distinguished people...It is an uprising, an act of violence by which one class overthrows another."

This excerpt from Mao's report states his belief in the peasants' raw power and masses. Mao is also stating here that a revolution is not a formal meeting between imminent people, but instead when one class overthrows the current ruling class. This report of the peasant revolution was extremely significant in Mao's rise to power within the Guomindang because it showed his self-assertion.

" I particularly remembered one metaphor: the Red Army was the fish and the peasants the water. The fish would be dead out of water, and the water would be poorer without the fish. The support of the peasants was the secret weapon of Communist success."

In 1929, Mao and Zhu would force their way across Jiangxi, and eventually reach the mountainous terrains of Fujian. At Jiangxi, Mao would state in the conclusion of his report:

“ Our Congress is the supreme organ of state power of the whole country... Our Congress will make the Fifth Campaign end in utter rout, develop the Revolution in the whole of China, extend the territory of the Soviet to all regions ruled by Chiang Kaishek’s government, and unfurl the red flag throughout the country: Let us shout: Long live the Second National Soviet Congress! Long live the Soviet New China!”

Here, Mao is inspiring his follower with an exciting and inspiring speech. Mao is also emphasizing how their Communist party is the supreme and eventually their Revolution would allow them to expand their influence throughout all of China. This goes to show the extreme confidence that Mao brought forth in his campaigning which allowed for the success of the CCP.

Throughout this expedition, they left behind many violent agricultural reforms imposed from the top down.

“ Land reform was most often acknowledged as the basis of the CCP’s success in changing the social and economic organization of the rural areas.”

These harsh land reforms were the primary reason for the CCP’s success in successfully altering the social and economic establishments in the rural areas. This showed how Mao recognized what was important and needed to be changed in order for the masses to follow him. From the new base at

Jiangxi and Fujian, Mao attempted to politicize in order to win the masses' acceptance of communism.

If we save the mountain, we'll have wood.

If we save the river, we'll have fish to fry.

If we save the Revolution, we'll have our own land.

If we save the soviet, red flags will fly.

Such folk songs that were sung everyday would be helpful in spreading the prominence and benefits of Communism throughout the masses. This particular folk song emphasizes how the Revolution will bring the masses their own land and if the soviet is saved then red flags will be everywhere. This thoroughness of Mao would prove to be one of his hallmark political methods. Mao put much emphasize on the terrain, in which he collected precise knowledge through extensive inquiries. He then set out to invert the power relationships in the rural villages through " didactic operations."

" Rich peasants were the first objects of attack. Their property was confiscated and their buildings sealed for future distribution to the poor."

One of the main goals of the CCP was to redistribute the wealth among the masses so that everyone could be equally wealthy. Therefore, the first class that was attacked by Mao and his party would be the rich peasants. Their land and property would be confiscated and redistributed in the future for the poorer peasants. Mao's goal was to prove that the Communists were able to defend both the peasants and the rural elites. This reform of the

agrarian society was but only one goal of Mao Zedong's vast ambitions. His other goals included the emancipation of women through marriage reform and the ridding of ancestor worshiping. Although called contradictory by many, this was the beginning of Maoism and his rise to power in establishing a new government throughout China. One of Mao's main tools of power was education. Yet, as a result of his views and methods, Mao would soon be in direct conflict with leaders of the CCP. Afterwards, in 1933, Mao would be merely reduced to a bystander in the Communist leadership as a result of his military endeavors.

“ Having renounced urban communism after the disintegration of the First United Front, Mao lost control of the Jiangxi Guerilla Troops in 1933. The Long March then turned the tables in his favor.”

However, by the following year the situation would turn in his favor, largely in part due to the Long March. Mao's last phase in his rise to power would be marked by the events of the Long March and the Conference of Zunyi.

The First Red Army and Mao's Involvement

After Mao was forcefully demoted within the Communist Party due to his military tactics of guerilla warfare, he was replaced by a three man military leadership in which direct confrontation was their means of war. However, this direct attempt at warfare would result in heavy and significant losses for the Communist Party. By August of 1934, the main army of the CCP was nearly exhausted of its supplies and soldiers due to the lingering battle. Soon afterwards it was discovered that Chiang Kai-shek was gathering his forces in a massive offensive against the CCP base. This news led the CCP leaders to

strategize an escape plan in which all the separate Red Armies would flee and eventually regroup. The retreat would mark the beginning of the Long March of about 6000 miles that successfully saved the Communist Party in China.

In June of 1934, the first movements of retreat by the First Red Army began in a sudden breakthrough of the Guomindang front lines. These forces were led by General Fang Zhimin whose goal was not to win the battle but assure the escape of important and significant CCP leaders from Jiangxi. This sudden advancement of troops was a major surprise for Chiang Kai-shek and proved to be successful in diverting Chiang's attention because his Guomindang forces were not expecting any significant attacks on his immediate frontier. Under the leadership of Bo Gu and Li De, 130, 000 troops were sent to attack the Guomindang front lines in Yudu on October 16th.

"... the Red Army was to leave from Yudu, the southernmost county of the Jiangxi Red base, and then head west to join He Long's 2nd Army near the border of Hunan and Hubei."

This quote states that the original goal of the First Red Army was to eventually meet up with the 2nd Red Army near Hunan and Hubei. Eventually all of the Red Armies would be united and the Long March would be completed. However, due to interference from the Guomindang, communication between the separate Red Armies could not be completed. This caused confusion in the CCP in which the First Red Army was unaware of other Red Armies similar departure westward. Many significant members of the Chinese Soviet who had stayed behind were detained and executed by

Chiang Kai-shek. Of these members included Mao Zetan, brother of Mao Zedong. The elimination of several prominent leaders would also be a deciding factor in Mao's own rise to power.

At first, the First Red Army fought against various lightly defended Guomintang frontiers. When the First Red Army reached the Xiang River and passed through Guangdong province, it met with Chiang Kai-shek's Guomintang forces. Chiang Kai-shek had toughened his defense line at the Xiang River in preparation against a CCP army invasion. After two days of unceasing battle from November 30 to December 1, 1934, the First Red Army had lost approximately 40, 000 soldiers. These devastating losses preceding the battle of Xiang River greatly affected the morale of the soldiers and civilians, which shortly led to desertion in battle and of the party itself. On December 12, 1934, due to discontent with the leadership of Bo Gu, Mao Zedong began to assert a more dynamic role within the CCP.

“ Three weeks after the Tucheng battle, Mao led the 1st Army back across the Chi River and took Zunyi again, wiping out eight regiments belonging to the local warlord - this was the first victory the 1st Army had won since the Long March began.”

One major battle for the CCP was when Mao successfully led the 1st Red Army across the Chi River and recaptured Zunyi. This battle would mark the first victory that was won by the 1st Red Army since the Long March had begun. This amazing military feat also explains why Mao is so highly regarded and eventually is promoted as one of the top leaders of the party. As a result of these military losses, the Communists agreed to meet in Zunyi

(Guizhou province) from January 15-17, 1935 in order to restructure the CCP leaders. Even after the denouncing of the failed leaders, Bo Gu and Li De, Mao was still not able to gain a majority number of votes from the party leaders in order to gain complete control at the conference. Nevertheless, Mao was given position of General Secretary by Zhang Wentian due to his successful victory in retaking Zunyi. This in turn allowed Mao to receive enough influence to be elected as a member of Military Affairs Commission. In addition, Mao was regarded as the best in military affairs which effectively left Mao in control of the First Red Army at the conclusion of the Zunyi conference. This sudden rise back to the top of the ladder is significant in the strengthening of the CCP. Mao's goals and views would eventually lead the party to success even in the Chinese Civil War. Mao's major instrument of war throughout his battles against Chiang Kaisheks's Guomindang was guerrilla warfare.

“ For Mao and other CCP strategists, mobile warfare had been an integral part of the army's ' military tradition' since the early 1930s and an emphasis on the flexibility of its application was important to this tradition.”

Through the utilization of guerrilla warfare, the CCP was successful in waging war against the Guomindang. Afterwards, Mao continued to lead the army north, but his path through Sichuan was blockaded by Guomindang forces. Mao's major goal during the following months was to avoid direct battle with Guomindang forces, while also trying to continue northward in hopes of uniting with the Fourth Red Army led by Zhang Guotao. This important ideal of Mao is essential because his cautiousness led to the preservation of the Red Army and CCP. On May 8, 1935, Mao successfully led the First Red Army

across the Yangtze River. By this time, the CCP forces had already been on the Long March for a period of about seven months starting from their departure from Jiangxi.

Destruction of the Fourth Red Army and Second Red Armies Withdrawal

Eventually, Mao and his Red Army met up with the Fourth Red Army whose forces were led by Zhang Guotao. However, there soon came a conflict over which path to take between the two CCP leaders. Guotao favored the establishment of a refugee base within the proximity of the USSR. On the other hand, Mao felt the need to pass into the province of Shaanxi. Ultimately, the two Red Armies would split up and go their separate paths. Mao's calculated smart decision in not establishing a refugee base can be praised because it was a major save from obliteration by Guomintang forces. Guotao's route of south-west-north would eventually lead him right into the Guomintang forces where his Fourth Red Army would mostly destroyed. Survivals of the Fourth Red Army would in time meet and join force with the Second Red Army. The commander of the Second Red Army during the Long March was He Long. He led his army and departed from Hubei on November 1935. Chiang Kai-shek's forces would drive the Second Red Army further west than the First Red Army and result in the lost communication between the two Red Armies. The harsh and difficult lives of the marchers could be depicted in their trek from Yunnan province to the Yulong Snow Mountain and finally reach the western areas of Sichuan. This brutal and cruel life would result in a firm hatred toward the Guomintang and establish the rising power of the Chinese Communist Party. This retreat would also save the lives

of several prominent follower of the party and thus preserve the party from the demise of the Guomindang forces.

Unification of the Red Armies

On October 22, 1936, all three armies would meet up in the province of Shaanxi. By the end of the Long March there would be no member within the CCP that could be able to challenge the authority and power of Mao Zedong. This establishment of Mao's unearthly powers within the Communist Party is essential for the development and rise of the CCP in conquering the Guomindang. During the Long March, throughout their long retreat, the Red Armies were constantly demoting the rural leaders and landlords, while improving the lives of peasants and enlisting them to join their cause. After finally reaching Yanan in October 1935, encompassing a total of 368 days only one-tenth of the original troops survived the harsh and cruel journey.

Conclusion

When the Red Army finally reached their destination of Yanan in 1935 only about 6000-8000 people of the original 100, 000 people remained alive. However, this costly and cruel retreat was just right for the development and success of the Chinese Communist Party to strengthen itself and rebuild its foundation of leaders and troops. Also, through helping the peasants and masses by the land and agricultural reforms, Mao successfully gained the trust and raw power of the peasant mass.