

MAO TSE-TUNG

Chinese Conqueror In Shabby Clothing

POLITICAL IDEALIST

(By JOHN RODERICK)

A modern day conqueror in shabby clothes stands across the body of prostrate Nationalist China.

He is Mao Tse-tung, chairman of the Chinese Communist Party. He is the leader of the greatest ideological and military struggle in the world at the moment. As this is written, his Communist armies are over-running a nation nearly as big as the continental United States. The face of 5,000 years old China will undergo a revolutionary change should he gain the ultimate victory.

The lives of 450,000,000 human beings will be affected.

Who is this soft-spokesman? How does he live? What is the secret of his enormous hold over the minds and bodies of millions?

Surrounded for years by an impenetrable wall of Government troops and official silence, buried in the flinty hinterlands of the remote Chinese North-west, his name until recently meant little to the outside world. I first met him at Yen-an, in the closing days of 1945. He was wearing the patched, padded clothing and carelessly tied boots of the peasants among whom he lived. A faded blue cap was perched rakishly on his massive head. At 55, he is a man of dreamlike quality in his soft, almost flabby waxen face and long slender hands.

Hunan Dialect

When he speaks it is with the roundness of the southern dialect he learned as a child in his native province of Hunan, "curious mixture of the peasant and intellectual, he is a product of the 1911 revolution.

A young man of peasant stock, he joined 11 companions at Shanghai in forming the Chinese Communist Party. The years that followed were hard and bitter. Those were days of co-operation with the Kuo-mintang. At the height of their joint success over the Northern warlord in 1927 he took part in the bloody fighting.

Later, driven underground, fleeing for his life, he helped to organise the party and advanced a new revolutionary idea that the peasants and not the working proletariat should form the basis of the Chinese revolution.

He incurred the displeasure of Moscow for this heresy. Later he broke with and defeated his chief Chinese opponent, Li Li-san, who fled to Russia in the 1930's.

Finally at the head of the party, harassed by the troops of Chiang Kai-shek, he launched one of the boldest retreats in history.

In one of the darkest and most forbidding areas in China, he set about to expand the hold of Communism. He did so by savage expropriation of landlords.

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holdings and redistribution of land to the peasants and a system of political and moral indoctrination.

Within 10 years his band of 10,000 had swollen to a million party men and he claimed for his group a third of **China's** land surface and population.

He won most of these adherents in the days of the Japanese war when he became the first to advocate an all-out struggle with the Japanese. On the strength of this he was able to reach a brief conciliation with the Kuomintang, forging the United Front which brought a period of success to Chinese arms. The freedom of action he gained by this internal peace gave him the chance, which he seized, to win thousands of converts among the students, professors and working classes of the depressed.

A bold stroke at the war's end gave him nearly the whole of Manchuria—with an undeniable bit of aid from Russia whose withdrawing troops left behind mounds of captured Japanese rifles.

When peace talks with the Kuomintang, encouraged by US General Marshall, broke down in 1947, Mao and his Communists vowed they would not stop making war until Chiang Kai-shek's power was broken.

To-day Mao's mind is obsessed with the belief that one day **China** will be completely Communist.

Likes The Opera

If Communism means sharing the burdens and poverty of the people, Mao and his followers are perfect examples of the term. In Yenan he lives in a one story three room house of mud and straw, he dresses as meanly as his peasant neighbours. And he travels in no expensive bullet-proof car. Usually he walks through the dusty streets, sometimes with a single bodyguard, often alone. At times he rides in a creaking aged ambulance fitted with hard wooden seats and—his lone concession to luxury—worn blue cotton curtains to keep out of the mountain sun.

Mao seems almost tireless. All night conferences in freezing rooms are commonplace. His chief relaxation is attendance at a four hour performance of the Chinese opera, usually given in a barn like hall open to the chill winds of winter.

He is a modernist who believes the status quo philosophy of Confucius holds back **China's** development.

Mao talks little of his personal life. Four times married, his present wife is a former Shanghai movie star who shares his simple way of life. She is a woman of admitted charm who does not smoke or use rouge, lipstick or nail polish.

Russian Doctrines

Schooled in the doctrines of Marx, Lenin and Stalin, Mao speaks little or no Russian. He has never been to Russia. To critics who say his party is one of agrarian reform only, he retorts sharply:

"Make no mistake about it, ours is a party of Communism. It must and will be our glorious goal."

He maintains that the Communists, once in power, will deal equally with Russia and the western democracies in foreign affairs. Next to the Kuomintang, he considers the United States his chief enemy, because of American military aid to Nanking.

A fearless man, driven by conviction, he probably would baulk at no measure which would ensure success.—Associated Press.