

Majority Rule Is Iron

'Missionaries' Knit Chinese Reds' Great Nation-in-a-Nation

By John Roderick

YENAN, April 6 (AP).—How has the Chinese Communist Party, lacking wealth, adequate communications and outside help, maintained a firm grip for eight years on a third of China and a hundred million Chinese?

How could Yen-an, a rural town on the edge of the Gobi Desert, so small it cannot support an electric lighting system, have become the capital of this vast nation within a nation?

The answer to these questions lies partly in two words much employed in the party. They are "democratic centralization," a principle which exacts from every member unquestioning obedience to the will of the majority.

When the party congress or omnipotent Central Committee formulates a course of action, days, even weeks, of debate may precede its passage. Opposition may be loud and vociferous. But once the program bears the majority stamp of approval the former opponents are not permitted to stand by inactively or to continue their criticism. They are committed to support the approved plan as though it had been their own.

Thus, when Party Chairman Mao Tze-tung last April broached the idea of a coalition government for China, it had the force of law in the Communist-led areas. A total of 1,700,000 party members gave it personal, unstinting backing. That is why the principles of coalition government are known better throughout North China than anywhere else in the nation.

Boring From Without

THIS rule is so rigid that many Communist sympathizers prefer to function outside its sphere as nonparty critics.

On matters of everyday life, the outside world, literature and culture, party members exhibit resilient and active minds. But when party policies come under discussion the answers to all questions are unswervingly similar. No one makes an unconsidered statement for publication. Whenever even an anonymous spokesman is referred to in print you can feel certain he voices party opinion.

Devoid of an extensive communications network, how does the party disseminate its program throughout the far-flung regions it controls? The answer here is in one word—"cadres." That is, party men and women trained to assimilate the party dictates and make them known to the people.

On the ancient bed of the muddy Yen River, athwart the camel trails that wind throughout North China, a small group of men and women may cluster around crated belongings awaiting the signal to start a journey of hundreds of miles. These are not the usual migrants wending their way homeward after years of wartime refuge. They are the party cadres, who form a living link between Yen-an and the most remote villages.

Correspondence Courses

MOST of these political pilgrims have spent months at the central party school here, studying the theories of Karl Marx and Lenin and the problems of the communities they soon will enter.

It is impossible for others to travel the great distances to Yen-an. Some already hold office, are practicing some profession or cannot leave their jobs. Another large segment is in the army. For them there are programs of "study while you work" or "study while you fight."

Together, the two educational systems blanket the entire Red area.

"Without really concrete knowledge of the actual condi-

tions of the different strata of the Chinese society, there cannot be really good leadership," Mao Tze-tung has said.

Through investigations, constant questioning, numberless interviews with peasants, farmers, landlords and industrialists, the Communists frame a program around the general needs of a community. When these plans are introduced as legislation they have the advantage of being practical, carefully thought out and grounded on the wishes and necessities of the people themselves.

What the Communists have done approximates the American or British idea of legislators consulting their constituents. But the Reds do more than talk. They dig, analyze and evaluate every shred of popular opinion. Without the backing of the masses, they often say, they would perish.

Spot-Checking

MAO says general investigations of society are impossible and unnecessary, the most fundamental method of understanding the whole social fabric consisting of selecting a particular village and examining it closely from the Marxian standpoint.

The Communists begin their investigation program at the top, under the ruling Central Committee, which has a department for investigation and study. Similar departments are set up under the various party central bureaus, branch bureaus, district and provincial party organizations, and at high levels in the Eighth Route and new Fourth armies.

Research men study the relationships among landlords, rich peasants, farm laborers, poor and middle-class peasants, tradesmen, artisans, even loafers.

Part of the process requires collection of brief biographies of landlords and capitalists worth more than \$50,000.

Similar sketches are made of high officers in Kuomintang armies, magistrates in Kuomintang areas, well-known scholars, journalists and literary men in a particular district, leaders of religious sects, bandit chiefs, well-known actors, actresses, prostitutes and foreigners active in China. Photographs are sought when possible.

The Communists say they need these individual "case histories" because library facilities, and already-collected facts and statistics, are not available to them and the Kuomintang's files are more complete than their own. Without these hard facts the Communist Party could not plan intelligently, they assert.