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CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY - A PERIOD OF CONSOLIDATION

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After fifteen years of rapid growth during its revolutionary struggle for power, the Chinese Communist Party, the ruling bureaucracy in China today, has slowed down in its organizational expansion and is now engaged in a process of consolidation. In some areas of China the Party has temporarily stopped or limited recruitment of certain types of new members. In other areas, particularly in South China where a shortage of Party personnel still exists, expansion of Party membership is being promoted, but there is evidence that the Communists have not had spectacular success during recent months in attracting large numbers of new members.

The hasty expansion of the Party in earlier years created many problems, and the Chinese Communists are now trying to weed out undesirables, improve training and indoctrination, and tighten up party discipline. The change in the Party's status, from a growing revolutionary elite achieving success after success to a relatively stabilized ruling bureaucracy facing problem after problem, has created new organizational and morale problems. In general, the psychological atmosphere in which the Party works - as well as one can sense it from Hong Kong - seems to have undergone some subtle change. The high pitch of emotional fervor has waned perceptibly, and there is more talk of overwork and bureaucratic ossification.

Despite these facts, however, the unity, discipline and basic strength of the Chinese Communist Party seem unimpaired, four years after its rise to power, and the Party is continuing the process of consolidation. No major ideological schisms are visible, at least from the outside, and the Chinese Communists are still able to cope with the Party's internal problems primarily by indoctrination and organizational methods, and they still maintain unprecedented control over the entire country. Hong Kong, a refugee haven with a 22-mile common border with Communist China, has received no important political defectors from the Chinese Communist Party during the past four years.

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At the start of the Sino-Japanese War, the Chinese Communist Party was a relatively small organization, with perhaps 40,000 members concentrated in Northwest China, but

the political vacuum which Japanese invasion created in North China and the effectiveness of the Chinese Communists' guerilla tactics and rural program, led to a phenomenal expansion after 1937. By 1945, the Chinese Communists had 1,200,000 members. The momentum continued, and even increased, during the ensuing civil war period, and by the time the Communists achieved a predominance of power in China in 1949, Party membership had more than doubled over the 1945 figure. Rapid growth continued during the Communists' first two years in power, and by mid-1951 the official figure for party membership had reached 5,800,000.

This figure has been accepted., for lack of more . up-to-date information, until an announcement made this July by An Tzu-wen, Deputy-Director of the Organization Department of the Chinese Communist Party's Central Committee. An stated that the Chinese Communist Party now has a total of 6,100,000 members. In short, the net increase in the membership of the Chinese Communist Party during the past two years has been roughly five per cent - which compares with an increase of almost fifty per cent during the previous two years, immediately after the Communists came to power in China. Unless this trend is reversed, the Chinese Communist Party appears to be on the road toward stabilization as a ruling elite of between one and two per cent of the Chinese population.

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Actual trends within the Chinese Communist Party are not indicated simply by these overall membership figures, of course. The figures do not even reveal the total numbers of persons recruited during the last two-year period, because over half a million Party members were ousted in the same period during a single major purge, in an effort to improve Party discipline and efficiency.

Shortly before the Communists formalized their conquest of power in China in the fall of 1949, top Chinese Communist leaders began to show considerable concern about the effects of rapid party expansion and political victory. In March of that year, Mao Tse-tung made a speech on the subject which is still constantly quoted.

"In view of our victory", Mao stated, "there may appear within our Party such phenomena as conceit, pride, self-complacency and lack of desire to advance, aspiration only for personal welfare and pleasures, lack of desire to struggle further against difficulties and lead a frugal life."

He continued: "In view of our victory the people will be grateful to us. The bourgeoisie will flatter us. The enemy

cannot defeat us, this has already been proved. But weak-willed people in our ranks may succumb to the flattery of the bourgeoisie. There may be such Communists, who had never bowed to an armed enemy and who in the struggle against the **enemy** had proved worthy of being called a hero, but who now will not be able to **resist** those who attack them with "sugar coated" bullets, and will succumb to **them.**"

During the following two years, more and more questions were raised by Party leaders about the quality of party membership. It was asserted that standards for joining the Party had often been lowered, applicants had not been properly examined or indoctrinated, and "**alien elements**" had penetrated the Party, creating a "**serious threat to Party organizations**".

As a result, in March, 1951, a special conference called by the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party decided to launch a "**Rectification Campaign**" throughout the entire party. Today, over two years later this campaign is still in progress.

The campaign is one which involves a re-check and re-registration of every member of the Party. Carried out by basic Party branches, it involves first a review of the ideological development and actual work record of each member, which is carried out by criticism and self-criticism. If a member is found to be not fully qualified, he is subjected to re-education to correct his "**erroneous views**" and shortcomings. A member who is labelled as an "**alien element**", however, is expelled from the Party. This label is applied to eight types of persons: elements of an "**alien class**", former members of "**reactionary parties or reactionary religious sects**" who haven't severed "**organizational or ideological ties**" with them, persons "**suspected of being enemies of the Party**", speculators, former betrayers of the Party who **reinfiltreated**, persons hiding serious offenses in their political past, violators of state laws and discipline, and corrupt elements,

To-date this campaign has been completed in basic Party organizations within the government, and has been "completed for the most part" within urban Party branches such as those in schools and industries, but it still has a long way to go in rural villages, although it is scheduled for completion next spring,

In 1952 the Chinese Communist Central Committee also launched an intensive "**Three Anti Campaign**" against corruption, waste and bureaucratism, which ran simultaneously with the "**Rectification Campaign**" but was applied to all government institutions, mass organizations and army units as well as to the Party itself. This frenetic movement "**to purify our Party organizations**" and "**to defeat the attacks of the law-breaking**

elements of the bourgeoisie", resulted in numerous dismissals of persons from the Party, as well as reindoctrination of others, and reregistration of all Party members involved in the campaign (which was most intensive in cities),

One result of these two campaigns has been the purging of about ten per cent of the total Chinese Communist Party membership, or over a half-million persons. Of the ten percent, three to five percent were expelled as "alien elements", while five to seven percent "admitted lacking the qualifications required of a Communist and have voluntarily resigned", some of this latter group having been "advised to resign". There is no doubt that two campaigns have accomplished a good deal toward tightening up centralized Party control and discipline.

Another result, of perhaps equal importance, has been the reindoctrination of Party members and the furtherance of ideological conformity within the Party. This emphasis upon ideological struggle within the Party to achieve unity, and "reeducation" of as many wayward members as possible (instead of simply executing or exiling deviationists, which seems to be more nearly the rule in the U.S.S.R.), seems to be one of the distinctive characteristics of the Chinese Communist Party. Ever since the wartime Cheng Feng movement launched by Chinese Communists in 1942, not only have there been periodic campaigns for "ideological reform" within the Communist Party in China, but there has also been an almost constant struggle for ideological uniformity within the Party. The philosophical basis for this is most clearly expressed in a book (first given as a lecture in 1941) called On Inner Party Struggle, by Liu Shao-ch'i, a top Chinese Communist leader. Liu advocates continuous ideological struggle within the Party against all deviations, stating that, "The upholding of Party discipline and Party unity does not in the main depend on the punishment of comrades, (if they have to be upheld in such a manner it signifies a crisis in the Party), but rather on the actual unity of the Party in ideology and principle, and on the consciousness of the vast majority of Party members."

The process of Party consolidation, of which these campaigns are a part, is one of the most important aspects of Party developments in Communist China at the present time, and it is likely to continue to be so, at least until completion of the current "Rectification Campaign".

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The slow-down of Communist Party expansion in China has taken place primarily in the northern part of the country.

This is not surprising. The main growth of the Party took place in the North, and it was there that the Party first established its power. As a result, the Chinese Communist Party contains many more northerners than southerners, and despite distribution of Party members all over the country during the past four years there are still more Party members working in the North than in the South. In addition, since the Chinese Communists shifted the "center of gravity of Party work" from the countryside to the cities in 1949 they have desired to increase the proletarian element in their basically peasant proletarian party. Consequently, the admission of new Party members in the villages of "old liberated areas", which are in the North, has been "temporarily stopped", and even in "newly liberated areas" where personnel shortages are not acute admission of new peasant members has been "limited".

At present, attention is being concentrated on recruitment of industrial workers for Communist Party membership (most industrial centers in China are in the North). However, although there are reports of quite a number of industrial workers joining the Party the total urban working class in China is relatively so small that the Chinese Communists' possibilities along this line are limited. There is no doubt, therefore, that the basic character of the Chinese Communist Party as an organization of primarily peasant origin is unchanged, although the significance of this fact can easily be overestimated since there is equally no doubt that most of these ex-peasants have been, in a sense, "proletarianized" and seem to act like quite a different breed from the majority of peasants'.

The Communist Party's situation in much of South China is different from that in the North. South China is the "backward area" of Communist China; "liberated" last, the Central-South Administrative Region and Southwest Administrative Region are still behind most of the rest of the country on implementation of many Chinese Communist policies. And one of the basic problems in this region is the shortage of Party members and qualified political workers. Therefore, when the Central Committee of the Party last May issued instructions to strengthen Party-building, the problem of sizeable expansion in Party membership applied particularly to areas in China south of the Yangtze.

As the campaign to recruit new members got under way particularly in the Central-South and Southwest, numerous official reports revealed the existing weakness of Party organization in many areas. Discussing the Central-South, the Wuhan Yangtze Daily stated that in some government organs Party members constituted only 10.9 per cent of the staff, that in some universities there were few or no Party members among the teachers, and that it had been impossible to set up strong

Party branches in some business organs, The New China Daily in Chungking cited similar facts about the Southwest, and **admitted**, furthermore, that among over 20,000 hsiang (administrative villages) in the Region 93 per cent still had no Party branches.

The Party expansion campaign was carefully **organized**. A scale of priorities for recruiting new members **was defined**: "progressive elements" from **among** urban workers, "peasant activists" in rural **areas** where land reform had been completed, and activists in government organs and schools. Instructions were issued for designating responsible **Party members** both as full-time and as part-time organizers in the campaign. Propaganda was **extensive**. And detailed stipulations were made on the qualifications for membership and methods of selecting, **examining**, training, and finally **initiating** new recruits.

Apparently, however, there was no general rush to Join the **Party**. (The discipline of the Chinese **Communist** Party is **demanding**, to say the **least**. One of the "eight qualifications"^N for membership adopted by the **Party** in April 1951 requires that a recruit prove that he is "**determined** to carry on this revolution-**ary struggle** heroically for the rest of his **life**". Others require pledges to "**carry out** faithfully the resolutions of the **Party** and observe strictly the discipline of the **Party**" and to put "**the interests** of the **Party** above their own private interests".) The rather discouraging results led to **inevitable** recriminations. One explanation of the disappointing results which appeared in the New China Daily (similar statements appeared in official organs in other regions) was as follows: "In the first place, many Party Committees did not recognize the importance of Party expansion work and did not **want** to participate in the practical **leadership** of the work; and, in the second place, many Party members did not want to take the trouble and the responsibility of acting as the sponsors of active elements,"

The final results of the campaign last year were never officially revealed, but it is clear that the campaign did not solve the problem of personnel shortages; party expansion is still considered an important task in **many** southern **areas**, and there are still numerous **complaints** of too few **Party members** and inadequate recruitment. Undoubtedly, the Chinese **Communists** in time will be able to fill the gaps in their **Party's** ranks in South China, but the difficulties they have been having are an indication not only of the special problems they still face in the South (which often in the past has been a difficult region for Chinese central governments to control and rule), but **also** perhaps of a certain weariness and inability to maintain their ardor at peak intensity on the part of some members of the **Party**.

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Although the "Three Anti Campaign" against corruption, waste and bureaucratism last year purged large numbers of Chinese Communist Party members and gave the entire Party a vigorous shaking up, the struggle against these trends, and particularly against bureaucratism, still continues. It seems almost inevitable that the longer the Chinese Communists are in power the more factors there will be causing, the hardening of arteries involved in bureaucratization, but the Chinese Communists are still resisting this process. An Tzu-wen, in the same statement cited earlier, says that, "The 'Three Anti' movement was directed mainly against waste and corruption. The struggle against bureaucracy demands a much longer period, since the bureaucracy that exists now in China has deep historical roots and a broad economic foundation, and cannot be eliminated in one blow,"

Another source of current concern to Chinese Communist leaders is what they call "Commandism" - the inclination of Party members increasingly to employ arbitrary force and compulsion in their dealings with people. It is admitted that many Communists "rudely insult and beat up people". The Chinese Communists would not admit that their entire revolutionary program rests basically upon compulsion - which seems clearly to be the case if one recognizes the compulsive element in the many methods of "persuasion" which they use - but they apparently are worried about the alienation of people by excessive use of cruder methods of compulsion and by arbitrariness on the part of Communist Party members.

When problems of this sort come to the fore, Chinese Communist leaders respond almost automatically by starting a new campaign. The "Rectification Campaign" already described is not the only inner party struggle of this sort now going on, therefore. Combined with it is a "Campaign Against Bureaucratism, 'Commandism' and Violation of Laws and Discipline", which was inaugurated this January by the Party's Central Committee and is still being carried on,

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Struggle is the keynote in the life of a member of the Chinese Communist Party; as soon as he starts to relax his leaders begin to get worried and think up new things for him to struggle against - including his own tendency to relax.

Some observers of developments in China have wondered how long the Chinese Communists could maintain this state of exhausting; tension without some real relaxation. To-date there has been no indication of any general let-down, but in the past few months there have been hints that in some areas the

Communists realize they have piled too much onto Party members, and steps have been taken to lighten the load.

One of the most interesting cases of this is the current movement against "**Five Too Many**", in rural North China, which was started in June of this year. "What stands out most strikingly this year", stated the Peking People's Daily in an article on the movement soon after it started, "is the fact that too many urgent tasks assigned by superior organs have given rise to a series of problems such as 'five too many' - too many meetings, too many documents and forms, too many training courses, too many organizations, and too many posts for hsiang (administrative village) and ts'un (village) cadres. This phenomenon has not only added numerous difficulties to the hsiang and tsun cadres but has hindered peasants' production efforts." The article admitted that this situation has "caused discontent among a section of the peasants," and it urged that steps be taken against "blind enthusiasm", impatience and over-zealousness on the part of leading party organs responsible for this **state** of affairs.

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None of these trends indicate any real internal weakening of the Chinese **Communist** Party, however. All evidence points to the fact that the Party remains an effective totalitarian instrument which by-and-large has maintained the "iron discipline" and unity which **Lenin** prescribed as the essentials for a Communist Party's organization. But the trends do indicate adjustments and changes taking place as the Chinese Communist Party slowly becomes a relatively stabilized ruling bureaucracy, increasingly **subject** to all of the problems of "bureaucratism".

"In the future", says **An Tzu-wen**, "we must continue to struggle to raise still further the qualifications of **Party** members, to consolidate the **Party** organizations still more."

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