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REVOLUTION IN THE HIGHLANDS *China's Jinggangshan Base Area*

Revolution in the Highlands

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Revolution in the Highlands

China's Jinggangshan Base Area

Stephen C. Averill

With a Preface and Introduction by
Joseph W. Esherick and Elizabeth J. Perry

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Abbreviations

CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CYL	Communist Youth League
GMD	Guomindang (Nationalist Party)
NRA	National Revolutionary Army
SYL	Socialist Youth League

Chinese Weights and Measures

dan (picul)	133 pounds (10 catties)
jin (catty)	1⅓ pounds
li	⅓ of a mile
mu	⅙ of an acre

Preface

When Stephen Averill passed away in September 2004, the China field lost one of its most knowledgeable and insightful scholars. Grief at the sudden death of a treasured colleague in the prime of his career was heightened by the fact that, although Steve had published a number of highly influential articles over the years, his long-awaited book on the origins of the Jiangxi Soviet (nearly three decades in the making) was still unfinished. The book had been accepted for publication in Rowman & Littlefield's "State and Society in East Asia" series, and Steve had been asked to undertake only modest revisions that would connect his impressive study more explicitly to recent secondary scholarship on the Chinese revolution. He was actively working on these revisions at the time of his death.

The two anonymous reviewers of Steve's manuscript were unambiguous in their assessment of its quality. One concluded, "This is an outstanding piece of scholarship and I strongly recommend its publication. . . . The present study benefits from the wealth of new material that has become available over the last two decades and represents a finely crafted processing of that material by a talented historian." The other wrote, "Steve Averill knows more about the Chinese Revolution . . . than any other Western scholar. Much of the material in this book is new. . . . It would make an extremely strong contribution to our knowledge of the history of Chinese Communism." While both reviewers enthusiastically recommended publication, they also noted a puzzling lack of references to other secondary work on the Chinese revolution by Western scholars. In his thoughtful and entertaining "Response to Reviewers—Comments on My Manuscript," written shortly before his death, Steve made clear that the omission of citations to recent Western scholarship was not an oversight. As he put it bluntly, "Truth

be told, I've not been overly impressed with the bulk of what passes for 'theoretical discussions,' general conclusions and literature reviews in existing works; many of them seem to be ornamental gestures or routine synopses. I'm not anxious to imitate these limp and inconclusive efforts, but at the same time I'm aware of the fact that if it were easy to write appropriately penetrating analyses, my predecessors would have done so; I'm not sure how much better I can do myself." Even so, he agreed to try: "In view of the reviewers' dissatisfaction, I am resigned to the failure of this 'mountaintopist' tactic, and prepared to try to connect my work more effectively to scholarly studies of other places and periods in the revolution's history. I am still considering how best to accomplish this goal."

Steve's untimely death precluded his completion of the promised revisions. Knowing that he was, however reluctantly, planning to revise the manuscript to relate his findings more explicitly to other existing scholarship, we have written a very brief introduction that attempts to situate the contributions of Steve's book within this literature. We are painfully aware that Steve would have accomplished this assignment far more adroitly than we have managed; we can only hope (perhaps naively) that he would not have judged our effort "limp and inconclusive."

Meticulous a scholar as Steve Averill was, there were still some rough spots in the notes and bibliography of the manuscript that required attention prior to publication. We are most grateful to Nancy Hearst, Fairbank Center Librarian, for her willingness to take on this editorial responsibility. We would also like to thank Susan McEachern, Editorial Director at Rowman & Littlefield, for her invaluable support and oversight of this project at all stages of production. We ourselves have undertaken responsibility for a very few petty editorial changes in the course of copyediting.

Steve himself was still working on a list of acknowledgments at the time of his death. It is clear that the following listing—reproduced verbatim from his files—is only a first draft of what he had in mind:

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While this list may identify many, if not most, of the individuals and institutions that helped out professionally with this book, we can be certain that Steve also intended to express a much more personal appreciation to the members of his family—especially his wife, Lisa Morrisette.

Joseph W. Esherick, La Jolla, California
Elizabeth J. Perry, Cambridge, Massachusetts

Editors' Introduction

Joseph W. Esherick and Elizabeth J. Perry

The history of the Chinese revolution is often painted with a broad brush on a large canvas. The revolution is conventionally grouped with the French and Russian revolutions as great social upheavals that fundamentally changed both state and society.[1] China's Communist revolution transformed a peasant economy into a system of planned collectivized agriculture that eliminated the landlord class, nationalized industrial and commercial enterprises, and decimated the nascent bourgeoisie. It established a party-state dictatorship that penetrated all aspects of social life, attacked the "feudal" culture of Confucianism, and launched a "proletarian" Cultural Revolution. It proclaimed gender equality and ended a century of interference in Chinese affairs by Western and Japanese imperialism. In many respects, Chinese society, politics, economy, and culture were utterly transformed. The accomplishments of the revolution were extraordinary, but the costs were enormous. Millions of alleged "counter-revolutionaries" were executed, imprisoned, or persecuted during the Communists' drive to power; and tens of millions more died as a result of Mao Zedong's Great Leap Forward and Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. Yet China also rose to become an atomic power under Mao, and is now a major world economy—a nation far removed from the "sick man of Asia" of a century ago.

It is often erroneously assumed, warns a prominent historiography text, that "big effects must have big causes."[2] The Chinese revolution was unquestionably a "big effect" and it has inspired many to search for commensurate grand causes. General comparativists stressed such structural factors as the weakness of the Chinese bourgeoisie, the preference of the landed elite for absentee landlordism over capitalist agriculture, the fragmented nature of the peasant community, the tactical power of the middle and peripheral

peasantry, and the fiscal crisis of the Chinese state under the impact of imperialism.[3] China scholars tended to emphasize peasant motivation rather than socioeconomic structure, but they too sought general explanations. An earlier generation of China specialists cited the role of peasant nationalism in response to the Japanese invasion of 1937,[4] the populist appeal of Mao's mass line as embodied in the "Yan'an Way,"[5] or the violation of the moral economy of the peasant by the modern state and the world capitalist economy.[6] There is little question that the structural features of China's state, society, and economy—the centralized bureaucratic government, the system of landlordism and small peasant production, the penetration of the market economy into peasant society, the active but politically weak commercial class—provided the tableau upon which the history of the Chinese revolution was written. It is also clear that—despite its urban origins—the Chinese revolution was won in the countryside and was in certain important respects a "peasant revolution." Nor can one deny the role of foreign imperialism and the fact that the revolution acquired a broad base of popular support only in the context of the national struggle to resist Japanese invasion in 1937–1945. It has, however, proven difficult to construct a convincing account of the Chinese revolution that proceeds either from a macro-structural perspective or from the motivational explanations of peasant nationalism, mass line, or moral economy, and is still consistent with the concrete facts of the revolutionary process as we now understand them.

Stephen Averill's authoritative study of Mao's first rural revolutionary base, a study that grows from his 1982 doctoral dissertation, demonstrates a scholarly sensibility that was well ahead of its time. Averill explores an early stage in the revolutionary process, long before its "big effects" became visible. This is an account of how a rural revolution begins, an analysis that meticulously reconstructs the complex micro-politics of the formative moment. His approach is distinguished by a keen appreciation of the actual, on-the-ground tensions and contradictions inherent in the development of revolutionary policy and practice. We are shown the unpredictable ways in which revolutionary paths were blazed by the competing interests and actions of flesh-and-blood individuals. Mountain bandits and country schoolteachers assume a place alongside ordinary peasants and Communist cadres as key protagonists in the revolutionary drama. Human agency and historical contingency work in tandem to create a tale replete with intrigue and mystery.[7] General explanations of revolutionary success are tempered here by a strong sense of the decisive interplay of chance and context.

The unusual delay in the appearance of this study is in large measure due to the steady appearance of new archival sources and published documents, memoirs, and scholarly research from China and Taiwan. Every year brought new materials to light and new opportunities to explore the regions where the revolution began. These newly available sources have greatly enhanced both this study and our overall understanding of the local and human dynamics of the Chinese Communist revolution, from its beginning following the May Fourth Movement of 1919 to its political victory in October 1949. The primary focus of this new scholarship has been on the periods before and after the era of the Jinggangshan base area (1927–30) that is the main subject of Averill's study. The bulk of research has been concentrated on the wartime years (1937–45). Chalmers Johnson's early monograph (based on Japanese military records) stressed the emergence of peasant nationalism in response to the brutal destruction of the Japanese invasion, but subsequent scholarship has questioned Johnson's notion of a spontaneous peasant mobilization of which the Communists were beneficiaries. Recent work, using newly available archival materials, has retreated from blanket explanations of peasant motivation to stress the importance of both regional variation and Communist instigation. Kathleen Hartford has noted that in many areas Japanese repression inhibited rural revolutionary activism.[8] Tetsuya Kataoka and Chen Yung-fa utilize internal documents of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to show the immense organizational effort required to gain the trust of the peasantry, neutralize local rivals in militia forces or secret societies, and mobilize the population for resistance to Japan. Their books are more sensitive to socioeconomic factors than Johnson's study and indicate that patriotic appeals were most effective when combined with class-based economic policies such as progressive tax systems or campaigns to reduce rent and interest.[9]

Because of the wealth of new documentation and the enormous size and unusual complexity of China's revolutionary movement, most recent scholarship has taken the form of detailed local or regional studies. This trend has permitted careful attention to the particularities of the multiple settings in which Communist revolutionary bases were established. Chen Yung-fa's focus on Northern Jiangsu sheds light on an area with fairly powerful landlords and active Guomindang and local elite competition for power. Pauline Keating reexamines the Northern Shaanxi base area around the Communists' wartime capital in Yan'an—an area removed from the front lines of the war and under secure Communist control. Despite the Communists' uncontested monopoly on power, Keating finds (and entitles her book) *Two Revolutions* based on different social ecologies within the base area—the more successful transformation coming in the sparsely populated areas with more recent migrants, fewer landlords, and more incentives to engage in the cooperative schemes that the party was promoting.[10] Odoric Wou's study of the revolution in Henan shows important ways in which the wartime and postwar revolutionary movement was able to build on prior personal and educational connections that Communist cadres enjoyed with key local elites.[11] Gregor Benton's study of the New Fourth Army's move into central China similarly details the skillful ways in which Chen Yi employed his cultural assets and

talent for poetry and fine calligraphy to penetrate elite networks and turn them against the party's Japanese and Guomindang rivals.[12] And David Goodman's work on the Taihang Base Area, noting the importance of studying a revolutionary *process* as much as its outcomes, stresses the ways in which Communist initiatives for social change were often circumscribed by local power holders.[13]

This new research gives us a much more fine-grained and variegated picture of the rural environments in which the revolution eventually took hold.[14] Averill's book on the earlier Jinggangshan revolutionary base area shares this ecological perspective and adds a humanized account of the ways in which Chinese revolutionaries of various backgrounds and beliefs adapted to one exceptionally harsh—yet ultimately hospitable—environment. Based upon nearly three decades of exhaustive research in newly accessible materials, Averill's account affords an intimate view of the painstaking process of revolutionary mobilization. We see Communist cadres in the Jiangxi highlands—most of whom hailed from nearby parts of the countryside—contacting rural school teachers, recruiting and re-educating bandits and secret society members, exploiting factional conflicts and lineage feuds, and cultivating new constituencies among youths and women. Neither large-scale structural conditions nor any generalized peasant mentality can explain this process. Moreover, the accomplishments of the revolutionaries were far from inevitable or irreversible; hard-won alliances often harbored the seeds of future betrayals.

The most important revolutionary involved in building the Jinggangshan base was of course Mao Zedong, whose boyhood home lay just to the northwest across the mountainous provincial border in Hunan. Averill's complex portrait of Mao's first years as a rural revolutionary—of his remarkable ability to comprehend, manipulate, and transform the local situation—fills an important gap in our understanding of the man who, more than anyone, shaped the history of twentieth-century China. Earlier scholarship focused on Mao's formative years as a provincial intellectual and youthful radical in Hunan,[15] or on the wartime Yan'an and PRC eras. A spate of recent biographies by Western journalists and scholars, intended for a general audience, indicate the continuing fascination with this famous figure.[16] Averill shows us a young Mao struggling with the military and political exigencies of building a revolutionary base, long before his preeminence in the Chinese Communist Party.

Mao the theorist emerged only later, in the relative security of Yan'an, where in caves by candlelight he composed the texts that would become required reading for millions of party cadres and young activists.[17] The history of the Chinese revolution is inseparable from Mao, and there has been much important work analyzing the way in which the foundations of the Maoist state and its distinctive political style were laid in the Yan'an era. Chinese authors have especially focused on the party rectification campaigns with their false accusations, victimization of intellectuals, and the obsessive search for

enemies within the party.[18] David Apter and Tony Saich have presented a provocative, if over-theorized, analysis of the way in which Yan'an became the "simulacrum of a utopic community" in which a Mao-centered history of the revolution was enshrined in party orthodoxy, and rituals of obeisance to this orthodoxy assumed extraordinary affective power.[19] Much of this scholarship is shaped by our knowledge of such subsequent events as the Cultural Revolution—and indeed relies on memoirs written after the cataclysms of the 1960s. Its relevance for understanding Mao's role in Jinggangshan in the 1920s depends crucially upon whether one stresses continuity in Mao's character or differences in revolutionary context. Averill's balanced treatment of the earlier era, emphasizing at once the idiosyncrasies of the Jiangxi environment and the importance of Mao's contribution to the revolutionary effort, affords ample ammunition for both interpretations.[20]

Mao and the rural bases were not the only ingredients in the Communists' success. Increasingly, students of the wartime era have focused attention on the urban situation as well. Thanks to the exceptional holdings and accessibility of the Shanghai Municipal Archives, not to mention the signal importance of Shanghai in the unfolding of the urban wing of the revolution, that city has attracted an unusual degree of scholarly interest. Recent studies of collaboration, resistance, and terrorism, involving complex relationships among revolutionaries, intellectuals, businessmen, and ordinary citizens, have afforded new insight into the realities of occupied Shanghai and the Communist victory that would soon follow.[21] As in the countryside, the rise of urban Communism is now understood more as the fragile product of protracted and hard-won personal negotiations among unlikely allies, rather than the inevitable march of large-scale historical forces.

All of this scholarship on wartime China, whether rural or urban, focuses on a period when Mao enjoyed firm control of the CCP, the main Guomindang armies were preoccupied with defending against the Japanese invasion, and Communist guerrillas and underground operatives behind Japanese lines could appeal successfully to patriotic intellectuals, hard-pressed workers, and harassed peasants to join them in resisting the invaders. By contrast, the period and place upon which Averill trains his attention found the party in much more precarious circumstances that are often dismissed as emblematic of revolutionary failure. Both Chalmers Johnson and Tetsuya Kataoka stress that the Communist Party was defeated in Jiangxi. In Johnson's words, the revolutionary movement had "failed and was in its worst straits just prior to the Japanese invasion."[22] Though Odoric Wou points to important ways in which the wartime and postwar success of the CCP relied upon social networks and political capital from the prewar period, the thrust of research on the War of Resistance suggests that the war created an entirely new environment. Consequently, the latest generation of scholarship on the Chinese revolution—while sharing Averill's emphasis upon

local conditions—addresses a different situation and different set of questions from this study of Mao's first rural base in Jinggangshan.

If the wartime Yan'an era that followed the collapse of the Jiangxi Soviet has attracted the lion's share of recent research on the Chinese revolution, a second major area of inquiry has been the initial years of the Chinese Communist Party—the period leading up to the establishment of rural bases such as Jinggangshan. Here the first generation of serious scholarship was devoted to combating the Cold War myth of a Moscow-directed international Bolshevik conspiracy. It told the now familiar story of intellectual alienation from the Confucian tradition; the anti-imperialist nationalism of the May Fourth movement; the turn to anarchism, socialism, and Marxism-Leninism by some radical intellectuals; the founding of the Chinese Communist Party in 1921; and finally, the reorientation of that party under Mao toward a rural-based strategy of revolution. It was, in general, a convincing narrative of the indigenous intellectual origins of Chinese Marxism and the Chinese Communist Party.[23] It explained the appeal of the radical ideals that inspired the young students in Averill's account to return to the Jiangxi highlands to make revolution.

Recent work by Arif Dirlik has revisited those themes but stressed the critical role of the Communist International in building a Communist Party out of a diversity of socialist and anarchist cells among student and intellectual circles in China's major cities. For Dirlik, the founding of the CCP in 1921 under the direction of Comintern agents sounded the death knell to the more independent and spontaneous expressions of Chinese radicalism that had previously prevailed.[24] Much of the same ground is covered by Hans van de Ven in *From Friend to Comrade*, which chronicles the transformation of the personal networks of radical study societies into a disciplined Leninist organization. Stressing that it took years to overcome internal divisions within the CCP, however, van de Ven sees 1927, rather than 1921, as the critical moment when a Bolshevik model attained hegemony within the Chinese Communist movement.[25] The strongest claims for Comintern domination of the Chinese revolution are presented in a recent book by the Russian scholar of party history Alexander Pantsov, who (not surprisingly) detects the heavy hand of outside advisors in virtually every decision of the young Chinese Communists.[26] The recent biography of Mao Zedong by Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story*, extends this tale of Comintern and Stalinist manipulation to the entire history of the Chinese revolution.[27]

The earlier stress on the indigenous origins of Chinese Communism has not been entirely eclipsed by this recent scholarship. In fact, the collapse of the Soviet Union and attendant accessibility of the once-closed Comintern archives have breathed new life into the debate over Soviet intervention versus Chinese independence in the making of China's Communist revolution. A nuanced treatment of this issue, based upon substantial research in both

Russian and Chinese sources, can be found in the English historian Steve Smith's new study of the early Chinese Communist Party in Shanghai. Smith argues convincingly that—despite persistent Soviet efforts to shape the course of the Chinese revolution—the Comintern was itself so internally divided as to allow the young CCP a substantial degree of autonomy.[28] Tellingly, the Comintern makes virtually no appearance in Averill's account of Jinggangshan. By 1927, Moscow was dealing with its own intra-party disputes and having enough trouble trying to guide the decimated organs of China's party center. Brigands and local elites, not Soviet agents, were the salient authorities whose desires and dictates the Communist revolutionaries confronted as they sought to navigate between (conflicting) party directives and (confounding) parochial imperatives. This does not gainsay the importance of the Comintern in shaping central CCP policy, but it reminds us that the actual course of the Chinese revolution deviated substantially from the often-contradictory recommendations of Comintern advisors and urban-based Central Committee representatives.

Other recent social histories of the early 1920s highlight the mobilization of workers and women and underscore the distinctiveness of the Chinese Communists' recipe for revolution—in particular its emphasis on nationalism and feminism.[29] Both concerns reflected a direct continuation of the May Fourth agenda.[30] The widespread radicalization of Chinese intellectuals following the Sino-Japanese War of 1895, and especially after the country's descent into warlordism in 1916, nourished native roots of revolution. Increasingly, anarchists and Marxists displaced Confucian literati in schoolhouses and study societies alike.[31] In the aftermath of the patriotic May Fourth protests of 1919, many among this new breed of intellectual abandoned academia for full-time political work. The Chinese revolution was in large measure a product of this movement out of schools and into factories and farms.[32] Most relevant to the current volume is Yeh Wen-hsin's book on the role of Zhejiang intellectuals in the founding of the Chinese Communist Party. Her richly contextualized account describes how young radicals, born in "provincial backwaters" and educated in normal schools in Hangzhou and elsewhere around the province, graduated from heated cultural battles with the entrenched rural elite to participate in the establishment of the CCP in cosmopolitan Shanghai and turn their hand to urban labor organizing.[33] In the Jinggangshan case as well, Averill highlights the explosive intermingling of urban and rural expressions of discontent—mediated in no small part by local schoolteachers (including Mao himself) and other members of the rural elite.

China's first experiment in rural revolution came not in Hunan or Jiangxi, but in the Hailufeng Soviet in Guangdong. A trio of books on China's first rural soviet provides an important historiographic contrast to the present study. In Hailufeng, the scion of a prominent landlord family, Peng Pai,

became the Communist organizer of a powerful peasant movement. Peng's efforts in eastern Guangdong predated the Hunan peasant movement apotheosized in Mao's famous report of 1927 and were carried out initially with the support of a local warlord who shared many of Peng's radical sympathies, and then under the umbrella of the United Front with the Guomindang. An early study by Roy Hofheinz stresses the importance of support from local authorities in permitting radical mobilizing and underscores the significance of the Communists' "ultimate weapon—organization."[34] By contrast, Robert Marks sees the soviet growing from an agrarian crisis in which the world capitalist economy (here represented by a boom and bust in sugar production) threatened the moral economy of the peasant.[35] Fernando Galbiati's exhaustive narrative of the same history similarly sees a "traditional peasant revolt in a modern setting,"[36] an intriguing formulation but never rigorously developed. All three of these studies spotlight a problem that is explored with far greater rigor and finesse in the present study: how do communist revolutionaries interact with local and ongoing sources of conflict and violence to build a revolutionary base?

Stephen Averill's masterful study of the rise and fall of Mao's revolutionary base in Jinggangshan raises the social history of the Chinese revolution to a new level of sophistication and subtlety. The period from the end of the first United Front with the Guomindang in the spring of 1927 to the outbreak of full-scale war with Japan and the beginning of the second United Front a decade later has scarcely been treated in recent Western scholarship.[37] Those few scholars, aside from Averill, who have recently written on the course of the Chinese revolution in this period have generally concentrated upon the urban, rather than the rural, scene.[38] An earlier generation of scholarship on this era focused almost exclusively on intra-party struggles, especially the competition between Mao Zedong and the party center, represented in the 1930s by the Moscow-trained contingent known as the Twenty-eight Bolsheviks.[39] There were a few general accounts of the policies and political structure of the Jiangxi Soviet and several specialized studies of CCP land reform policies at this time,[40] but the key question that Averill addresses—how did the party establish a rural base in the face of the Guomindang's White Terror—is treated here for the first time in a comprehensive narrative.[41]

In much of the debate over the history of the Chinese revolution, a central issue has been the relative stress to be put on social conditions or external agents. In most cases, this has amounted to a debate over the comparative importance of rural actors or Communist Party military and political operatives. The "Wisconsin School's" moral economy scholarship has made the greatest effort to chart the peasants' "hand in the making of their own history."[42] The books by Robert Marks on the Hailufeng Soviet, Ralph Thaxton on the revolution in Henan, and Kamal Sheel on northeastern Jiangxi all grew from Wisconsin dissertations and all stress the threat to peasant subsistence posed by rapid commercialization accompanying foreign economic penetration, increased state exactions, and harsh tenancy regimes. In their view, the agrarian crisis brought about the revolution as "the climax of peasant initiatives."[43] Despite the significant contributions of these scholars to our understanding of modern China's rapidly changing peasant economy, they have not really managed to match their *longue durée* accounts of social and economic change to the specific contours of the revolutionary movement.[44] Sheel's book is a particularly telling contrast to the present volume, for it deals with another area of Jiangxi province in the same time period. Yet in Sheel's hands, the moral economy theory is so crudely imposed that it seems quite unrelated to the actual political dynamics of the revolution.[45] None of this scholarship has been particularly successful in demonstrating the autonomous agency of peasant actors as the primary force shaping the direction of the Chinese revolution.

At the other end of the analytical spectrum are scholars who stress the decisive importance of the organizational strength of the party—a school of scholarship that goes back to Philip Selznick's early work on the Communist Party as an "organizational weapon."[46] While much of this scholarship has been more kindly received than the Wisconsin School volumes, most researchers have sought a middle ground, some attributing more autonomous agency to peasants, bandits, radical intellectuals, or patriotic youths, and others stressing the role of the party in fomenting divisions and mobilizing support for its cause. In almost all cases, however, the story has been one in which party agents or Red Army soldiers recognize, analyze, exploit, and mobilize potential allies in the local population to advance their revolutionary agenda. Regardless of how much stress is placed on the underlying social conflicts and economic tensions of rural society, the party is typically reified as an autochthonous political agent standing outside the population it is acting upon. Such an analytical model may be justified by the mid-1940s—once the CCP was relatively unified, had a cadre of local officials tutored in party orthodoxy, controlled both a government and an army, and wielded powerful sanctioning mechanisms of self-criticism and rectification to maintain organizational discipline.[47] When rural bases were first being founded in the 1920s, however, such a rigid analytical separation of party agents and local society is quite indefensible.

The conceptual elegance of Averill's narrative in *Revolution in the Highlands* lies in the intricate interweaving of local networks and social cleavages of the hill country with the political structures and policy divisions of the party itself. The party here is truly part of local society, building on but also afflicted by its deep and violent divisions. Averill begins his account with the topography, the society, and the economy of the Jiangxi highland, focusing on the long-standing division between the old settler elites of the lowlands and the guest people (often Hakka) in the hills. We see the bandits and

brotherhoods, the militarization and escalating violence of the early twentieth century, the rise of gangs and militia, and the intense competition for turf. This may look like conventional scene-setting, laying out the ecological context for the revolutionary struggles that will follow. But it is much more, for we soon see that all of these factors also mold the revolutionary actors who will quickly dominate the stage.

When the revolution comes to the highlands, it is first in the form of local students returning from radicalizing experiences in larger urban centers. The iconoclastic ideals may come from the outside, but the agents are local, and they are imbedded in networks of schools, study societies, kinship, and patronage that protect them as they organize under the United Front. When the United Front ends and White Terror forces them to seek rural allies and military support, the activists turn to the bandit gangs, especially one bandit leader with some education and scholarly pretensions. As the revolutionary movement progresses from cultural competition to military confrontation, it is quickly absorbed in an escalating cycle of violence that feeds on and exacerbates long-standing feuds of the untamed hill country.

Mao enters the picture in October 1927, bringing with him a small armed force that will soon be augmented by the remnants of Zhu De's army from the Nanchang Uprising, and the revolution reaches a new phase. Averill is intensely aware of the "hagiographic haze" that surrounds Mao's role on Jinggangshan, but he manages to see through it with remarkable clarity—aided in no small measure by the writings of Chinese local historians who are anxious to make their own heroes visible alongside the great helmsman. The actors are remarkably human; the personal and the political are intimately intertwined. Such is the case when the two local bandit/communist leaders serve as intermediaries for Mao's marriage to a bright young communist activist, He Zizhen, a liaison that binds him to the local organization. Throughout Mao's brief stay in Jinggangshan, we see him struggling for some acceptable middle road between a party center pressing to send his army against urban centers and a local party that wants above all to secure its own base. It is a picture far more human and credible than the stock portraits of Mao either standing heroically against the errant party center or cynically exploiting the rude Jiangxi rebels for the glory of his revolutionary vision.

In the end, Mao will move on to establish a new base in southern Jiangxi, and Guomindang armies, attracted by the spreading revolution, will crush the Jinggangshan base. Even this, however, does not conclude the story, for the old political base of the party drawn from the educated early settler groups in the lowlands will in the end turn upon the guest-people-dominated military wing of the movement. The drama of this final confrontation is such that it would be inappropriate to foretell it here. Suffice to say that we see once again how the divisions of local society are refracted and reenacted within the party.

This is a complex tale reconstructed through patient and careful scholarship. The attention to detail is reflected in footnotes that succinctly indicate how the narrative has been pieced together from numerous fragmentary and conflicting sources. This study of the legendary Jinggangshan base, the first mountain foothold of Mao's tortuous revolutionary road, has been long awaited. The wait, it is now clear, has been richly rewarded. Any future attempts at grand theory will need to be grounded in the kind of attention to social context, the commingling of the social and political, the nuanced delineation of human motivations and interactions, and the seamless weaving of dramatic narrative and historical development that Averill has so deftly provided. "Big effects," he has convincingly demonstrated, may grow from seemingly small and indeterminate beginnings. With this culmination of his life's work, Steve Averill sets a new standard for the social history of the Chinese revolution.

NOTES

1. Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); Barrington Moore, Jr., *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 1966). For more general discussions in which the Chinese revolution figures centrally see also Nikki R. Kiddie, ed., *Debating Revolutions* (New York: New York University Press, 1995); and Chalmers A. Johnson, *Revolutionary Change* (Boston, Mass.: Little, Brown, 1966).

2. David Hackett Fischer, *Historians' Fallacies: Toward a Logic of Historical Thought* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), 177.

3. Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*; Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions*; Eric Wolf, *Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969); Joel Migdal, *Peasants, Politics, and Revolution: Pressures Toward Political and Social Change in the Third World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974).

4. Chalmers A. Johnson, *Peasant Nationalism and Communist Power: The Emergence of Revolutionary China* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1962).

5. Mark Selden, *The Yenan Way in Revolutionary China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971). See also Selden's reconsideration of his earlier views in *China in Revolution: The Yenan Way Revisited* (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1995).

6. Robert Marks, *Rural Revolution in South China: Peasants and the Making of History in Haifeng County, 1570–1930* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984); Ralph Thaxton, *China Turned Rightside Up: Revolutionary Legitimacy in the Peasant World* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1983); Kamal Sheel, *Peasant Society and Marxist Intellectuals in China: Fang Zhimin and the Origin of a Revolutionary Movement in the Xinjiang Region* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989). (It is worth noting that the confusing "Xinjiang" in the subtitle of this book is not the province in northwest China but the Xin River basin of northeast Jiangxi.)

7. For an excellent example of this approach to the Chinese revolution, set in a very different part of the country, see Keith Schoppa, *Blood Road: The Mystery of Shen Dingyi in Revolutionary China* (Berkeley: University of California Press: 1995).

8. Kathleen Hartford, "Repression and Communist Success: The Case of Jin-Cha-Ji, 1938–1943," in Kathleen Hartford and Steven M. Goldstein, eds. *Single Sparks: China's Rural Revolutions* (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1989), 92–127.

9. Johnson, *Peasant Nationalism*; Chen Yung-fa, *Making Revolution: The Communist Movement in Eastern and Central China, 1937–1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); Tetsuya Kataoka, *Resistance and Revolution in China: The Communists and the Second United Front* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974).

10. Pauline Keating, *Two Revolutions: Village Reconstruction and the Cooperative Movement in Northern Shaanxi, 1934–1945* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press: 1997).

11. Odoric Y. K. Wou, *Mobilizing the Masses: Building Revolution in Henan* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1994).

12. Gregor Benton, *New Fourth Army: Communist Resistance along the Yangtze and the Huai, 1938–1941.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

13. David S. G. Goodman, *Social and Political Change in Revolutionary China: The Taihang Base Area in the War of Resistance to Japan, 1937–1945* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000).

14. An early statement of the importance of local environment on the development of the Chinese revolution is Elizabeth J. Perry, *Rebels and Revolutionaries in North China, 1845–1945* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1980). For more recent applications of an ecological approach to the wartime base areas, see various contributions in the volume edited by Feng Chongyi and David S. G. Goodman, *North China at War: The Social Ecology of Revolution, 1937–1945* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000).

15. On the young Mao, see especially the classic account Mao himself gave to Edgar Snow in *Red Star Over China* (New York: Grove Press, 1961), part IV; Li Jui, *The Early Revolutionary Activities of Comrade Mao Tse-tung*, trans. Anthony W. Sariti (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1977); Angus McDonald, *The Urban Origins of Rural Revolution: Elites and Masses in Hunan Province, China, 1917–1927* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978).

16. Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2005); Lee Feigon, *Mao: A Reinterpretation* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2002); Phillip Short, *Mao: A Life* (New York: Henry Holt, 2000); Jonathan D. Spence, *Mao Zedong* (New York: Viking, 1999).

17. There has been a wealth of research on Mao and his revolutionary writings, perhaps the most important being Stuart R. Schram, *The Political Thought of Mao Tse-tung* (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Brantley Womack, *The Foundations of Mao Zedong's Political Thought, 1917–1935* (Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii, 1982); Maurice J. Meisner, *Marxism, Maoism and Utopianism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982); Raymond F. Wylie, *The Emergence of Maoism: Mao Tse-tung, Ch'en Po-ta, and the Search for Chinese Theory, 1935–1945* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1980); John Bryan Starr, *Continuing the Revolution: The Political Thought of Mao* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979); Benjamin I. Schwartz, *Communism and China: Ideology in Flux* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968). Stuart Schram is preparing an exhaustive translation of Mao's revolutionary writings in *Mao's Road to Power: Revolutionary Writings, 1912–1949* (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1992), seven volumes published to date. Stephen Averill served as guest associate editor for Volume IV, *The Rise and Fall of the Chinese Soviet Republic.*

18. Dai Qing, *Wang Shiwei and "Wild Lillies": Rectification and Purges in the Chinese Communist Party, 1942–1944*, ed. David Apter and Timothy Cheek, trans. Nancy Liu and Lawrence R. Sullivan (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1994); Chen Yongfa [Chen Yung-fa], *Yan'an de yinying* [Yan'an's shadow] (Taibei: Academia Sinica, 1990).

19. David E. Apter and Tony Saich. *Revolutionary Discourse in Mao's Republic* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994), quote from p. 10.

20. Another meticulously researched article by Averill throws important light on Mao's role in a bloody party purge that occurred in southern Jiangxi after he left Jinggangshan: "The Origins of the Futian Incident," in *New Perspectives on the Chinese Revolution*, ed. Tony Saich and Hans van de Ven (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1995), 79–115.

21. Poshek Fu, *Resistance and Collaboration: Intellectual Choices in Occupied Shanghai, 1937–1945* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1993); Wen-hsin Yeh, ed., *Wartime Shanghai* (New York: Routledge, 1998); Frederic Wakeman, Jr., *The Shanghai Badlands: Wartime Terrorism and Urban Crime, 1937–1942* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Christian Henriot and Wen-hsin Yeh, eds., *In the Shadow of the Rising Sun: Shanghai under Japanese Occupation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Parks M. Coble, *Chinese Capitalists in Japan's New Order: The Occupied Lower Yangzi, 1937–1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Timothy Brook, *Collaboration: Japanese Agents and Local Elites in Wartime China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005).

22. Johnson, *Peasant Nationalism*, 7; cf. Kataoka, *Resistance and Revolution*, 4–9.

23. Benjamin Schwartz, *Chinese Communism and the Rise of Mao* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1951); Joseph R. Levenson, *Confucian China and Its Modern Fate* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1958); Maurice Meisner, *Li Ta-chao and the Origins of Chinese Marxism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967).

24. Arif Dirlik, *The Origins of Chinese Communism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989). See also C. Martin Wilbur and Julie Lien-ying How, *Missionaries of Revolution: Soviet Advisors and Nationalist China, 1920–1927* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), which includes a wealth of documents confiscated from the Soviet embassy in Beijing.

25. Hans J. van de Ven, *From Friend to Comrade: The Founding of the Chinese Communist Party, 1920–1927* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

26. Alexander Pantsov, *The Bolsheviks and the Chinese Revolution, 1919–1927* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000).

27. Chang and Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story.*

28. S. A. Smith, *A Road Is Made: Communism in Shanghai, 1920–1927* (Richmond, Va.: Curzon, 2000).

29. S. A. Smith, *Like Cattle and Horses: Nationalism and Labor in Shanghai, 1895–1927* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2002); Christina Kelley Gilmartin,

Engendering the Chinese Revolution: Radical Women, Communist Politics, and Mass Movements in the 1920s (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

30. Chow Tse-tsung, *The May Fourth Movement: Intellectual Revolution in Modern China* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1967); Vera Schwarcz, *The Chinese Enlightenment: Intellectuals and the Legacy of the May Fourth Movement of 1919* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); Wang Zheng, *Women in the Chinese Enlightenment: Oral and Textual Histories* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

31. Helen R. Chauncey, *Schoolhouse Politicians: Locality and State in the Chinese Republic* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1992); Barry C. Keenan, *Imperial China's Last Classic Academies: Social Change in the Lower Yangzi* (Berkeley: University of California Institute of East Asian Studies, 1994).

32. Wen-hsin Yeh, *The Alienated Academy: Culture and Politics in Republican China, 1919–1937* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990); Ming K. Chan and Arif Dirlik, *Schools into Fields and Factories: Anarchists, the Guomindang and the National Labor University in Shanghai* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1991).

33. Wen-hsin Yeh, *Provincial Passages: Culture, Space, and the Origins of Chinese Communism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

34. Roy Hofheinz, Jr., *The Broken Wave: The Chinese Communist Peasant Movement, 1922–1928* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1977).

35. Marks, *Rural Revolution in South China.*

36. Fernando Galbiati, *P'eng P'ai and the Hai-Lu-feng Soviet* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1985), 361–62.

37. The principal exception to this generalization has been a series of articles by Stephen Averill himself, preludes to the volume introduced here, and cited in its bibliography.

38. S. Bernard Thomas, *Labor and the Chinese Revolution: Class Strategies and Contradictions of Chinese Communism, 1928–48* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Center for Chinese Studies, 1983); Elizabeth J. Perry, *Shanghai on Strike: The Politics of Chinese Labor* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1993); Gregor Benton, *China's Urban Revolutionaries* (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1996); Patricia Stranahan, *Underground: The Shanghai Communist Party and the Politics of Survival, 1927–1937* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998).

39. Jerome Ch'en, *Mao and the Chinese Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965); John Rue, *Mao Tse-Tung in Opposition, 1927–1935* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1966); Richard C. Thornton, *The Comintern and the Chinese Communists, 1928–1931* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1969); Hsiao Tso-liang, *Power Relations within the Chinese Communist Movement, 1930–1934: A Study of Documents* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1961). Thornton's and Hsiao's books make the perverse argument that Mao was actually closer to Moscow's line than the party center, a persistent theme of University of Washington scholarship in this period. One solid recent study using new materials on policies at the party center is Marcia R. Ristaino, *China's Art of Revolution: The Mobilization of Discontent, 1927 and 1928* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1987).

40. Hsiao Tso-liang, *The Land Revolution in China, 1930–1934: A Study of Documents* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1969); Ilpyong Kim, *The Politics of Chinese Communism: Kiangsi under the Soviets* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973); Derek J. Waller, *The Kiangsi Soviet Republic: Mao and the National Congresses of 1931 and 1934* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973); King-Yi Hsu, *Political Mobilization and Economic Extraction: Chinese Communist Agrarian Policies during the Kiangsi Period* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1980).

41. A pioneering effort to study the Jiangxi Soviet from a social history perspective was Philip C. C. Huang, Lynda Schaefer Bell, and Kathy Lemons Walker, *Chinese Communists and Rural Society, 1927–1934* (Berkeley: University of California, Center for Chinese Studies, 1978). But this slim monograph does not approach the depth of research undertaken by Averill. In addition there is the problematic study by Kamal Sheel, cited in note 6 above.

42. Marks, *Rural Revolution*, xxiv.

43. Thaxton, *China Turned Rightside Up*, xv.

44. For a devastating critique of Thaxton's book, see Chen Yung-fa and Gregor Benton, *Moral Economy and the Chinese Revolution: A Critique* (Amsterdam: Anthropological-Sociological Centre, University of Amsterdam, 1986).

45. Sheel, *Peasant Society and Marxist Intellectuals in China.*

46. Philip Selznick, *The Organizational Weapon; A Study of Bolshevik Strategy and Tactics* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1960). In studies of the Chinese revolution, the work of Roy Hofheinz cited above (n. 34) and Steven I. Levine, *Anvil of Victory: The Communist Revolution in Manchuria, 1945–1948* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987) are perhaps the best examples of this approach.

47. See, however, Joseph W. Esherick, "Deconstructing the Construction of the Party-State: Gulin County in the Shaan-Gan-Ning Border Region," *The China Quarterly*, no. 140 (December 1994): 1052–79, for important qualifications even in the 1940s.

Author's Introduction

The Jinggangshan massif is located 250 miles southwest of Nanchang and a stone's throw east of the Hunan border. More than a mountain, less than a range, it thrusts muscularly above the surrounding hills, a bulky, angular presence too massive to be ignored, too misshapen to be admired. High on its northwestern side, where a heavily wooded ridge begins an awkward sag away from the massif down into the valley below, lies a small, windswept promontory on which stands a substantial stone monument. The promontory is known as Huangyangjie, and the monument commemorates a victory won on the spot in 1928 by a small body of Red Army soldiers over a much larger force of government troops. On the monument is the short poem "Jinggangshan" by Mao Zedong, also written in 1928, and engraved on the stone in his own calligraphy.

Both poem and place are well known in the People's Republic of China. After 1949 new institutions and facilities provided improved access to a region long noted for its geographic and administrative isolation: portions of several surrounding counties were pieced together to form a new administrative unit named Jinggangshan City; a large hotel and spacious museum were constructed in its heart at the small village of Ciping; and a new road was built snaking up from the east out of the Gan River valley, curving around Huangyangjie, and coiling laboriously down the ridge into the low country beyond. The dramatic quality of the events that had occurred in the region, and the eventual national prominence of many of the personages involved in them, ensured that the heroic saga of the "struggle in the Jinggang Mountains" waged by Mao and the Red Army between 1927 and 1929 would become one of the most romantic, memorable, and oft-recounted tales of the early history of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). The growing "cult of

Mao" led hundreds of millions of Chinese to study the Chairman's writings on Jinggangshan, and transformed Huangyangjie and the dozens of other revolutionary sites in the vicinity linked to him from ordinary historical landmarks into objects of special sanctity and veneration. Later, the upheaval of the Cultural Revolution enabled hundreds of thousands of young Chinese, freed by events from the normal restrictions on their movements and activities, to make personal pilgrimages to these sites, re-creating for themselves in the process some dim sense of the drama and difficulty of an earlier revolutionary experience.

Monuments and poems, however, no matter how often visited or carefully studied, have their limits as historical artifacts. While the attention lavished on Jinggangshan has ensured that the events that took place there are in some ways among the most exhaustively chronicled of any in the course of the entire Chinese Revolution, this attention has often hidden as much as it has revealed. As the Jinggangshan massif itself towers over the surrounding lowlands, for example, so the brooding figure of Mao still dominates the revolutionary history of the region; too often he alone rises out of the hagiographic haze which smothers writing on the period as thickly as one of Huangyangjie's famous "cloud seas." Even when other figures—such as Peng Dehuai or Lin Biao—have been visible in the literature, the ups and downs of their post-1949 relations with Mao have often necessitated frequent reevaluation of their historical role in the struggle to establish the Jinggangshan base. Similarly, single-minded insistence on the symbolic importance of Jinggangshan as the site for the first full emergence of a peculiarly "Maoist" rural revolutionary strategy has not only sometimes led to neglect of other notable developments elsewhere in Jiangxi, but also obscured much that is interesting and significant about the CCP's interaction with local society in the Jinggangshan area.

One of the main aims of the present study is to dispel as much of this obfuscating cloud as possible and in the process to place the Communist experience in the Jinggangshan region into broader chronological and analytical perspective. Most interpretations of the Communist experience in the Jinggangshan region have focused their attention almost exclusively upon the heroic struggle of Mao Zedong and his small band of Red Army followers to establish a viable rural revolutionary strategy. In many accounts from the People's Republic the main antagonists to the Communists in this struggle appear to have been external natural and human forces—wind, rain, cold, and the massive armed forces of the Nationalist government.[1] In most Western accounts, on the other hand, the main struggle appears to have been internal—between emerging "Maoists" and their various opponents within the CCP hierarchy.[2] For both Communist and Western writers, however, the product of the Jinggangshan struggle was the same: the genesis of a new rural strategy combining skillful guerrilla warfare, innovative mass

mobilization techniques, and thoroughgoing land reform; a strategy that, much revised and elaborated, eventually culminated in Communist victory. The Communist historian He Ganzhi (Ho Kan-chih) evaluates the importance of this strategic shift in the following terms:

> The establishment of the revolutionary base at the Chingkang Mountains [i.e., Jinggangshan] had tremendous historical significance. . . . In a situation in which the revolution had suffered a temporary defeat, the revolutionary attack was correctly shifted to the countryside where the strength of the counter-revolution was relatively weak, class contradictions were more numerous, and the revolution was relatively well-entrenched. It was the most powerful attack on the enemy's most vulnerable spot. The march to the Chingkang Mountains opened up the only correct way for the advance of the revolution, the only way in which "a single spark" could start "a prairie fire" after the defeat of the revolution in 1927.[3]

He claims a bit too much, of course. In 1927–1928, Jinggangshan was far from being the only place where small bands of Communist forces were beginning rural struggle. If there is credit due for launching the CCP's rural strategy, it belongs to a host of little-known Communist leaders in Jiangxi and elsewhere, as well as to Mao, Zhu, and the others on Jinggangshan. In fact, one could make a case for the proposition that while on Jinggangshan, hemmed in by government armies in an isolated border region, the Zhu-Mao forces were actually *less* important to the eventual growth of major revolutionary bases than were Communist forces in Northeast Jiangxi and in the mountains further east in Jiangxi province. But we quibble. If He's statement is stripped of its rhetorical effusiveness, and if Jinggangshan is taken only as a symbol of the general shift in CCP strategy rather than as its major concrete manifestation, then his assessment is valid enough.

However, most Communist and Western assessments of Jinggangshan are still incomplete. Their near-exclusive concentration on the forward-looking and progressive aspects of the strategy that the CCP began there has caused them to lose sight of the degree to which Communist activities on Jinggangshan continued to be strongly influenced by patterns of social and political behavior long characteristic of the South China hill country. The Jinggangshan area was far from a *tabula rasa* on which the CCP could freely sketch in whatever revolutionary programs it wished. The existence of strongly developed patterns of local strongman rule, clientelist politics, lineage conflict and ethnic struggle provided the context within which the party had to compete for power and ensured that the revolutionary movement which grew up in the mountains on the Jiangxi-Hunan border would bear the imprint of the environment in which it was created.

In order to provide a more complete, complex, and locally contextualized account of Jinggangshan's revolutionary history, it is necessary not only to

reexamine the events of the fifteen-month period when Mao and his associates were personally present in the region, but also to explore developments both before Mao arrived and after he left the region. To this end, the study first provides in part I an account of the historical development and characteristics of the region's ethnically mixed, conflict-ridden society, with particular focus on socioeconomic cleavages, forms of collective action, and patterns of conflict that were of special relevance to the revolutionary movement.

As was true of many early base area sites, Jinggangshan was in many respects an archetypal Chinese "border area": a topographically rugged, administratively divided, and economically deprived region with a reputation as an unruly bandit lair. Intimately connected to these features yet analytically separate from them, the region was also characterized by mutually-reinforcing socioeconomic and ethnic fracture lines that separated two often antagonistic communities: a lowland society predominantly descended from earlier Han Chinese settlers of the region and a highland society dominated by descendants of later-arriving Hakka-speaking migrants. Much of part I is devoted to delineating the emergence and evolution of this regional dynamic and to foreshadowing its relevance to the revolutionary movement. Prominent in this discussion is description of the widespread bandit and sworn brotherhood activity in the region in the early 1920s, including the exemplary cases of two well-known local bandit chieftains named Yuan Wencai and Wang Zuo, who later became prominent local revolutionaries.

The final chapter of part I discusses the emergence of the revolutionary movement itself. As was true nationwide, Jinggangshan's revolution did not begin in the region itself, but rather spread there from distant cities such as Changsha and Nanchang, as part of a reorientation within the Chinese revolution that shifted its physical and ideological center of gravity from urban to rural. This transition was an extended two-stage process of geographical, cultural, and political diffusion: an initial movement of revolutionary ideas and organizations from China's major cities to the peri-urban world of county seats and market towns, and a subsequent movement from there into the villages of the rural hinterland.

In the Jinggangshan region, the first of these stages involved the activities of young local elites who became radicalized while sojourning in urban schools and then returned to assume jobs in the region's county seats and market towns. Once there, representing themselves as conscious political and social iconoclasts, yet still very much aware of and influenced by the region's deeply rooted, ethnically polarized political culture of local strongmen, they became active in local political arenas, often in competition with older and more established elite power holders. Gradually they then embarked on the second stage of the transition process, moving out from market-town schools and elite study societies to begin the complicated processes of mutual adaptation and conceptual mediation necessary

for elitist revolutionaries to ally with the region's bandits, sworn brotherhoods, and other established forms of peasant collective action.

These processes of elite-mediated political osmosis and adaptive compromises with local traditions were well underway but still not fully complete when the violent collapse of the United Front coalition of the Communist Party and the Nationalist Party (Guomindang or GMD) in 1927 dramatically changed the political and military environment. As uneasy alliance gave way to vicious civil war during the late spring and summer, young Communist cadres in the Jinggangshan region had burrowed deeply enough into the world of local strongmen and bandits to survive the first onslaught of the "White Terror," but they still had little clear idea of how to make use of their "local knowledge" to create a rurally based revolutionary movement that would have extra-local reach and impact.

It was at this point that Mao Zedong and the embryonic Red Army force he led arrived and began their intervention into the revolutionary politics of the Jinggangshan region. During their presence in the area between October 1927 and January 1929, Mao, his Red Army colleagues, and local cadres began to grapple with the manifold problems involved in creating, preserving and expanding one of the very first rural revolutionary base areas in all of China. In fact, in Mao-focused mainstream party histories Jinggangshan is viewed as *the* prototypical rural revolutionary base area, precisely because it was the place where Mao and many other future Party leaders were first led to engage with the full range of issues involved in using the Chinese countryside to mount a sustained challenge to the existing political and social order.

Part II of this study examines the events of the "Maoist era" in Jinggangshan history that comprise the building blocks for this well-established characterization. The chapters in this section clearly affirm, as party histories argue, that the presence and actions of Mao and his colleagues played a major role in the construction and defense of the base area, in the gradual trial-and-error working out of policies on such topics as land reform, and in the initial recognition and articulation of larger conceptual and strategic issues involved in the rural struggle. What, after all, *were* base areas, and what was their proper role in the current phase of the revolution? What was the best way to employ the Red Army? What was the proper relationship between the party and the Red Army, and between the Red Army and local guerrillas? How inclusive should the revolution's social base be—how should its enemies be characterized and specified? These and many other basic questions were suggested by events in the Jinggangshan region, and discussion of them initiated among Mao and his colleagues, and between them and higher level party authorities.

At the same time, however, the chapters of part II also make clear that the sojourning Red Army's base-building activity did not take place in a social

and political vacuum, nor did these outsiders simply command the actions of a passive local party organization and population. Rather, the base-building effort involved complex interactions between the outsiders and local people, in which the influence of the social ecology and early revolutionary history described in part I was also readily apparent. For example, just as the pattern of social interactions and the political culture of pre-Communist Jinggangshan were significantly shaped by the often-antagonistic relationship between early settler and guest people communities, so also were the Red Army's efforts to interact with local revolutionaries in constructing a base area and implementing programs that were intended to alter the region's already contentious socioeconomic relationships. Moreover, the region's indigenous revolutionaries, whatever their ethnic background, had locally-flavored perspectives on social mobilization, power-sharing, and other issues that complicated their interactions with Mao and the other Red Army outsiders.

In January 1929, Mao and the Fourth Red Army left Jinggangshan in search of alternate base-building opportunities in southern Jiangxi and western Fujian provinces. Shortly thereafter, the Jinggangshan base was occupied and devastated for several months by enemy armies. Over the course of the following year or so, however, surviving local cadres slowly rebuilt and reoriented the base, and brought it gradually into the orbit of a loosely-interconnected network of other base areas and party organs that by late 1930 spread across southern and central Jiangxi province.

Part III deals with this period of reorientation and integration of the base into a larger revolutionary world. A major theme of the section is the increasingly serious tensions and ambivalences that appeared in both the discourse on and practice of rural revolution as the movement grew in reach and complexity. On the local level, as party cadres and Red Army officers sought to rebuild the Jinggangshan base, changed circumstances led them to reconsider a range of conceptions, behaviors, and institutional arrangements that had emerged from the exigencies of the base area's foundation. Where should the base area's operational core be located, for example: the easily defensible but isolated Jinggangshan massif, with its persistent regional associations with predatory guest people bandits, or a more vulnerable but accessible lowland site that was closer to population centers and resources needed for expansion? What level of public openness was most appropriate for party and government organs, given the need to demonstrate the stability and confidence of the revolutionary regime while still being able to survive enemy army incursions? How closely tied to a specific base area should a given Red Army unit be, and what claim should an expansion-minded Red Army have on personnel of guerrilla units needed for local defense? Regional leaders were forced to wrestle with these and a host of other difficult questions as they focused on rebuilding the base in its local context.

Jinggangshan cadres were of course not the only ones concerned with such issues. Local cadres in other emerging base areas confronted many of the same practical problems, as did—albeit at a higher level of generalization and abstraction—the party's top leaders. As local leaders sought to tie the base more closely into an emerging network of other bases and higher levels of party authority, they therefore became involved in a broader, ongoing discourse on revolutionary strategy and tactics.

As Part III indicates, this discourse was multi-faceted and multi-layered, and included recognition and informed criticism of the difficulties and unpleasant trade-offs as well as the advantages involved in a strategy that relied on mobile or guerrilla war waged from rural base areas. In the teleological view of the revolution prevalent in Communist Party histories (and influential on many Western scholars as well), it is at least implicitly assumed that because the revolution ultimately succeeded, this strategy must have been the proper one, and that those contemporary party members who questioned it must have been misguided. However, contemporary opinions on the rural base strategy were considerably more pluralistic and ambivalent than this retrospective judgment suggests. Moreover, critical comment was not confined simply to Shanghai-based national party leaders who were distant from and arguably out of touch with rural realities, but included as well experienced rural cadres from the Jinggangshan region and elsewhere. One of the aims of the present study is to restore this largely unheard local voice in the discourse on revolutionary strategy and practice.

At the same time, Part III reveals that even as local cadres were reaching out to link up with the ramifying revolutionary network in southern Jiangxi, a dangerous crisis was brewing within the Jinggangshan base itself. Although the circumstances of this crisis, which involved an ethnically charged confrontation between the forces of the guest people former bandits Yuan Wencai and Wang Zuo and those of the early settler–dominated regional party organization, were specific to this locality, the Jinggangshan events were exemplary of a more general crisis that was brewing within the base areas as a whole.

As revolutionary movements had become more rooted in rural areas, they had begun to shed some of the tradition-tinged ad hoc security arrangements and popular appeals of their early days in favor of more complex institutions and more systematic and fundamental reform programs. As they did so, the impact of the changes they undertook had become deeper and more widespread, affected more vested interests, and created more social turmoil. Meanwhile, the increasing destructiveness of Red Army activities made Communist suppression a more urgent priority for government officials and displaced local elites, while a temporary diminution in internecine warlord struggles enabled the allocation of stronger forces to this task. The result was a sharp intensification in military pressure and political intrigue directed at

the base areas, to which Communist cadres reacted with still more frenetic mobilization and counter-terrorist efforts. Whipsawed by this combination of growing external pressure, deepening internal reforms and intensifying mobilization, base area cadres and populations entered a state of prolonged crisis whose effects were not entirely overcome—either in the Jinggangshan region or elsewhere in Jiangxi—for the remainder of the base areas' existence.

When the revolutionary experience in the Jinggangshan region is thus contextualized and expanded to incorporate events and processes that occurred before and after as well as during the period of Mao's presence, the result is an account that is no less dramatic but considerably more sobering than the standard Mao-centered narrative. In light of the Jinggangshan experience, rather than being the initial stage of a single-minded, sure-footed march to inevitable victory through the Chinese countryside, the construction of rural revolutionary base areas appears to have been much more tentative, contentious, and ambiguous in its benefits than is commonly supposed.

The history of the Jinggangshan revolutionary movement provided here suggests an interpretation that differs significantly from the dominant myth popularized in standard party histories and older Western accounts. This is an alternate view that emphasizes the force of social tensions and internal conflicts instead of natural forces and external enemies as key obstacles for the revolution to overcome, and that portrays Mao and his fellow party leaders as people affected by fortuitous circumstance and opportunism rather than foresighted omniscience in their decisions to stay in and depart from the Jinggangshan area. It is a view in which the Jinggangshan experience epitomizes the inherent ambiguities and contradictions rather than the strategic genius involved in the CCP base-building strategy, and in which the clear-cut Manichean struggle between good and evil characteristic of party historiography generally is replaced by a fuzzier and more complex narrative framework. And it is a view in which Mao and his fellow national party leaders must share with local cadres and bandit chieftains the cramped summit of a Jinggangshan that now appears as a much less salient symbol in the history of the Chinese Revolution.

NOTES

1. For examples of this approach, see He Zhongren, "Xiang-Gan bianqu renmin de geming douzheng" [The revolutionary struggle of the people of the Hunan-Jiangxi border area], in *Zhongguo gongchandang zai Jiangxi diqu lingdao geming douzheng de lishi ziliao* [Historical materials on the revolutionary struggle in Jiangxi under the leadership of the CCP] (Nanchang: Jiangxi renmin chubanshe, 3 vols. 1958), 125-35; and the various anecdotal essays in *Hongse fengbao* [The red storm] (Nanchang: Jiangxi renmin chubanshe, 1958), especially vol. 2.

2. See, for example, John E. Rue, *Mao Tse-tung in Opposition, 1927–1935* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1966); Stuart Schram, *Mao Tse-tung* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1966); Benjamin Schwartz, *Chinese Communism and the Rise of Mao* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1951).

3. Ho Kan-chih, *A History of the Modern Chinese Revolution* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1959), 193.

I

JINGGANGSHAN BEFORE MAO

That great revolutions are made in a multitude of local contexts is a fact of which historians are perfectly well aware but remarkably often forget. One aim of this section is to ensure that no such contextual amnesia is possible when it comes to understanding the role of local place and people, as well as larger ideology and organization, in the making of the Jinggangshan revolutionary movement. Although Jinggangshan may have become a memorable icon of the Chinese revolution because of the presence and programs of Mao and his associates, its history most assuredly did not begin or end with their presence.

Jinggangshan was a quintessential Chinese "border area": a topographically rugged, administratively divided, economically backward, and violence-prone region with a reputation as an endemic bandit lair. As many commentators have noted, difficult terrain, distance from administrative and military centers, and conjunction of multiple jurisdictional boundaries made it difficult for the forces of the Chinese state thoroughly to control such regions. However significant as the tenuousness of the government apparatus and its control mechanisms may have been to facilitating the "lawlessness," moral deficiency, and vagrant instability that were the prime characteristics of such areas in the eyes of the state, the societies of border areas such as Jinggangshan cannot satisfactorily be described simply in terms of what was absent from them.

The people of such regions in fact created and maintained complex, vibrant, and active local subcultures—or counter-cultures—albeit ones infused by what one might term the "dynamics of desperation." The bandit gangs and sworn brotherhoods that typically swarmed through these regions, for example, preyed upon local people of all levels of wealth and social position,

including the poorest strata from whose ranks most bandit and brotherhood members came. Yet, as the following chapters clearly illustrate, banditry in regions such as Jinggangshan cannot be characterized simply as an oppressive scourge that had somehow fallen upon these social landscapes, but rather was a fully integrated part of regional societies and economies, supporting large numbers of people both in and outside of the gangs themselves, constituting significant sectors of local power structures, and through their reiterations of long-established cultural personae of "knights-errant" and "greenwoods boys," contributing to the constructions of dominant regional self images and political cultures.

Typical as the Jinggangshan region was of a classic "border area," it was somewhat unusual in its ethnic makeup and dynamics. About one-third of the total population of the several counties that made up the Jinggangshan area were Hakka-speaking descendants of people who had immigrated into the region during the late Ming and early Qing periods. Hakkas (*Kejia*, "guest families" or "guest people")[1] were not distributed evenly across the landscape, but rather concentrated disproportionately in mountainous uplands, and their relations with predominantly lowland-dwelling non-Hakka speakers (referred to in this study as "early settlers") were often conflictual. The persistent antagonism between the two communities added yet another significant fault line to the already fissured social landscape of the region.

These and other characteristics of the social ecology of the Jinggangshan region are discussed at length in the chapters to follow. Chapter 1 provides a general overview of the region's social characteristics and historical evolution, including migration and settlement processes and the socioeconomic patterns resulting from them. Chapter 2 tightens the focus somewhat to examine the bandit gangs and sworn brotherhoods that collectively constituted a prominent and influential component of the region's life and reputation, while Chapter 3 focuses in still more to concentrate on the biographies of two specific bandit chieftains—Wang Zuo and Yuan Wencai—whose careers are both particularly revealing of the rigors, risks, and occasional rewards of the lives of such local strongmen, and also intimately intertwined with the history of the revolution in the region. Chapter 4 then examines the early development of this local revolutionary movement, from its origins in a small cadre of sojourning students who were radicalized while participating in the "new culture" of May Fourth–era urban China, through the initial steps in the transition and translation of this urban-centered movement into the region's predominantly rural idiom, and down to the beginning of the Communist-Nationalist civil war and the arrival of Mao Zedong in Jinggangshan in late 1927.

It is important to view the social ecology of the region and the initial development of the revolutionary movement there not simply as scenic "background" against which the "real" action of the post-1927 revolutionary struggle took place, but rather as active forces that significantly influenced the particular shape that the revolution in the area took. Let us consider the matter of ethnicity, for example. Among the casual cultural characterizations that scholars of China commonly accept with little conscious reflection is that the subset of Chinese known generically as the Hakka are particularly pugnacious and prone to rebellion. One of the many territorially or ethnically based stereotypes widely held by Chinese themselves, the image of Hakka feistiness and rebelliousness was amply confirmed for nineteenth-century Westerners by observation of Hakka involvement in many lineage and ethnic feuds, the large-scale Guangdong "Hakka-Punti Wars," and the even more widespread Taiping Rebellion. The fact that the Taiping leader Hong Xiuquan and the core of his original followers were Hakkas—information that is stressed in virtually all accounts of the rebellion—has been particularly important in promoting the image of Hakka rebelliousness.

Some scholars have revived and extended this characterization to cover Hakka involvement in the Communist-led revolution.[2] In a pair of provocative articles, for example, Mary Erbaugh has asserted the existence of what amounts to a "secret history" of disproportionate but unacknowledged Hakka contribution to what she terms "the Chinese Revolution as a Hakka enterprise." Hakka participation in the revolution, she argues, was not due simply to chance, but rather stemmed primarily from their socioeconomic characteristics:

> Hakka-speakers and peasants in Hakka regions . . . participated heavily in the very beginnings of revolution. Although Hakka have a widespread reputation for involvement in rebellion and warfare, their socioeconomic situation undoubtedly made socialist revolution attractive, helped them survive it, and even helped shape its course.
>
> . . . Hakka were highly mobile newcomers, poor, heterodox, militarily active, and had close links to minorities. As migrants, they had fewer local ties to discourage rebellion, and were more hardened for guerrilla war. But poverty is likely to have been the most important factor in attracting individuals from poor Hakka regions to revolution.[3]

James Polachek has also explored the connection between revolution and peasant characteristics in the mountainous, Hakka-dominated areas of Jiangxi and Fujian where many base areas developed.[4] Polachek notes that when building rural bases, Communist leaders faced two different social systems, each with different risk-sharing methods and notions of justice. On one side was a lowland "clan-village" society whose well-developed lineages and rice-based wealth enabled its members to dominate local affairs, and on the other side was a "hill village" society of Hakka peasants who used sworn-brother fraternities to compensate for weak lineages, and struggled to close the gap between themselves and their richer lowland neighbors. When revolution

came, Polachek suggests, "outside revolutionaries were usually pulled onto one or the other side in a polarized social setting, and were used to diminish the power of or to gain resources belonging to rival groupings."[5]

Despite considerable differences between them, both Erbaugh and Polachek agree that Hakka rebelliousness played an important role in Communist-led rural revolution, and that this rebelliousness stemmed primarily from resentment at the exploitation they suffered from the majority population of earlier settlers. However, there are troubling inconsistencies and contradictions between their sweeping arguments and conditions in the geographical areas in southern Jiangxi and western Fujian to which they are intended to apply. Major migration into these areas had ended by the late eighteenth century (earlier in many places), leaving them entirely or almost entirely populated by Hakkas. By the 1920s, the entire region had been part of the so-called Hakka "heartland" for several centuries, ample time for some Hakka migrants to have developed powerful lineages and wealthy landlords.[6] Therefore, across the broad swath of territory which lay at the core of the Central Base Area any oppression suffered by Hakka peasants was almost certainly inflicted *by other Hakkas*, whether landlords or lineages, not by *bendi* (early setters). This fact poses an obvious difficulty for analyses that explain Hakka rebelliousness as a response to discrimination and exploitation by non-Hakka inhabitants. Similarly, given that the main migrations ceased by the late eighteenth century, it is surely inaccurate to characterize (as Erbaugh does) the Hakka inhabitants of these areas well over a century later as "highly mobile newcomers" whose migrant lifestyle gave them "fewer local ties to discourage rebellion."

In view of these issues, one of the aims of the present work is to reexamine the role of Hakka ethnicity in the revolution through detailed study of a specific locale, one that was a prominent center of revolutionary activity and yet not an area where Hakkas totally dominated the population. The chapters in Part I primarily set the stage for this investigation by laying out the social history and contours of the Jinggangshan region; Parts II and III continue the theme by exploring the mutual interaction between ethnicity and the region's revolutionary movement, and the conclusion revisits the earlier scholarship in light of the totality of the accumulated evidence.

Another respect in which Jinggangshan's sociopolitical context is relevant to more general trends in the history of the Chinese revolution has to do with the complex cluster of issues involved in the revolution's transition from an urban to a rural center of gravity. Although the Chinese case is commonly referred to as a "peasant revolution," it is also widely recognized that it did not begin in rural areas, and that many of its early participants and leaders were intellectuals rather than peasants. Considerable scholarly attention has been devoted to the revolution's urban origins, and even more has been given to Communist Party interactions with peasants after the revolution became fully

ensconced in the countryside, but very little study has been made of the liminal moment of transition between these two states of relative rest.

This is unfortunate, for as will become clear from Chapter 4 and later parts of the present study, the extended and complex process through which revolution migrated from city to countryside had important direct and indirect effects on the cohesiveness and outlook of the region's early revolutionary leaders and also on the manner in which the revolution was received and conceptualized by the local population as a whole. Particularly noteworthy in these regards were the social composition of and the institutional venues used by the early radicals who were primarily responsible for the urban-to-rural conveyance of revolutionary ideas and organizations. If in its urban infancy the Chinese revolution was a revolution of intellectuals and in its rural maturity a revolution of peasants, during its transitional adolescence it was above all a revolution of local elites. More specifically, it was a revolution promoted primarily by educated young scions of local elite families, who worked through activities centered on schools, study societies and other education-related institutions to introduce a radical political and social agenda into local elite political cultures.

Details of how young radical elites introduced the revolution into the Jinggangshan region are given in Chapter 4. It is, however, worthwhile to pause here to provide a certain perspective on the larger socio-cultural context within which these activities took place. In particular, it is important to note the vital role that China's new post-1905 educational system played in the initial spread of revolutionary movements from urban to rural environments, and to realize as well that the shape and dynamics of this new educational system in turn were deeply affected by significant—albeit still imperfectly understood—long-term changes taking place in the sociology and cultural identities of China's rural elites.

It is now abundantly clear from studies of many different regions that China's educational system functioned as the key channel for the spread of revolutionary movements into the countryside.[7] In part, at least, the reasons for this go back to a group of synergistic changes that occurred during the late Qing. These included a notable rise in elite associationalism, the growth of new institutions and methods for the formation and dissemination of public opinion, and of course the replacement of most civil service examination-oriented Confucian academies (*shuyuan*) by schools based on a rather different educational and administrative model.

All of these developments were simultaneously manifestations of and further encouragements to changes in elite activities and attitudes that continued well into the Republican era. In the context of foreign pressures and the upsurge in elite-managed reconstruction projects that followed the mid-nineteenth-century rebellions, elites became increasingly organized and assertive in their dealings with government officials, in efforts both to look

after their own local interests and to safeguard national power and prestige. The introduction of new print media such as newspapers and journals led to more rapid and widespread dissemination of information and opinion about such issues, contributing to the growth of an elite discourse that was increasingly separate from and potentially in conflict with established traditions of government-centered discourse fostered by the civil service examination system. And the replacement of examination-centered Confucian academies by hierarchies of partially "Westernized" schools that taught more diverse subject matter and were less directly tied to government recruitment further encouraged fragmentation of the old gentry and production of new elites who were intellectually and organizationally more amenable to recruitment into political movements.[8] By the 1920s, after almost two decades of growth, multiple hierarchies of new schools constituted what was almost certainly the most comprehensive set of political communication networks in existence connecting urban and rural China.

Individual schools themselves played vital roles in these networks as nodes that both brought together and promoted interaction among capable, motivated people from different localities, and also nurtured and encouraged the propagation of new concepts and attitudes. Schools at various levels gave direction and impetus to the flow of people and ideas into and out of the countryside, yet they did more than inertly transmit human and conceptual raw materials from one geographical or mental location to another. They were also active politico-cultural combustion chambers in which volatile blends of divergent groups and ideas interacted, often with explosive consequences.

The main reason for this lay in the fact that a basic purpose of schools was thought to be the fundamentally conservative task of social and cultural reproduction: the preservation and transmittal of socially sanctioned knowledge and values to succeeding generations. The intimate association of a Confucian-based educational curriculum and government service fostered through the examination system meant that politics, education, and conservative moral values were particularly closely intertwined in China.

The end of the examination system and the imperial order changed the political environment, and encouraged the extended process of cultural soul-searching that was already underway, but these developments did not alter the basic idea that a major purpose of education was to inculcate core cultural values. This belief was as firmly held by young reformists as by the aging Confucian conservatives who attempted to use schools as bases for the preservation of their own livelihoods as well as of the old order. The difference between reformists and the conservatives—and the root cause of many of the battles between "new cliques" and "old cliques" in early twentieth century schools—was over the nature of the specific ideas to be defined and transmitted.

In addition to cultural socialization, the related issue of educational certification also contributed to the conflicts that raged in rural educational circles. Just as definitions of basic literacy and manipulations of access to it constitute powerful tools in the hands of those who seek to construct and defend clear distinctions between elites and peasants in societies such as China's,[9] so also can definitions of higher levels of educational competence and certification of their achievement serve states and/or elites themselves both to differentiate degrees of "eliteness" and to maintain a numerical equilibrium in elite production. In early twentieth century China, not only had many long-established educational definition and certification mechanisms been abandoned or called into question, but also the differentiation and fragmentation of the old gentry was accelerating. The coincidence of these developments encouraged an extended process of educational contestation as groups of elites differentially situated in terms of age, background, and ambitions competed to renew or solidify their status by (re)constructing the content, expectations, and control of educational achievement.

Conflicts over cultural reproduction and educational certification were of course not carried out simply in abstract terms. Instead they occurred in concrete and localized interpersonal, organizational, and political contexts, where persistent patterns of geographical, ethnic, and kinship distinction and shifting constellations of ambitious individuals interacted to structure specific dynamics of local elite conflict. Despite these variations, however, most early twentieth century local political cultures were broadly similar in the increasing salience in them of diverse types of informal elite organizations. The most ubiquitous of these organizational forms—the study society—was an amalgamation of several overlapping conceptual frames drawn from Chinese practices and Western models. Simultaneously embodying attributes of literary societies, academies, publishing houses, and government advisory bodies, study societies proved to be versatile vessels for "grouping" late Qing elites for many purposes. Under the Republic as well, this organizational versatility ensured that study societies remained useful and popular vehicles through which elites of different generations could express factional interests, explore new ideas, and defend established values.[10]

Study societies also served as entry points into parochial local arenas for political ideologies and organizations of national significance. Envisioned by reformers in the 1890s in part as culturally acceptable surrogates for Western-style political parties, study societies soon fulfilled this function by becoming foci for activities of various small, decentralized reformist and radical parties around the time of the 1911 Revolution. Urban study societies also served as incubators for anarchist groups and the early Communist Party in the late 1910s and 1920s. Rather than totally abandoning study societies as the CCP developed into a more centralized, hierarchical entity, however, party members continued to use them to expand into the countryside. As flexible,

widely used organizational forms, study societies were familiar and congenial transitional agencies that could attract potential recruits and attack the status quo in incremental ways which ran less risk of provoking widespread rural elite opposition. If networks of Western-style schools were major transmission routes and staging areas for the introduction of new concepts and movements into China's hinterland, study societies formed the essential interfaces through which these ideas and energies were "operationalized" and translated into concrete political action.[11]

Both through formal institutions such as schools and informal institutions such as study societies, therefore, local educational circles were centrally involved in the intensely conflictual local elite politics that characterized rural China in the 1910s and 1920s. Though some of the impulses for this conflict originated and were prominently articulated in urban areas, their rural expression was equally contentious in the short term and arguably equally significant in the long run. Rural educational circles stood at the intersection of far-reaching processes of cultural reevaluation, social redefinition, and political reorientation through which China's elites sought to negotiate an uncertain transition into the post-imperial era. Rather than passive bystanders or unthinking opponents of the changes impinging on them, elites comprising the educational circles of rural counties were active transmitters and shapers of the period's complex cultural and political discourse. The attitudes and career trajectories of post-examination system local elites, the diffusion and assimilation of the "new culture," and the spread of Communist-led revolution to the countryside, all were mediated to one degree or another by the educational institutions and agencies which dotted the rural Chinese landscape.

Setting the transition of the Chinese revolution from its urban to its rural stage in the broader context of the evolving sociology and cultural politics of early twentieth century elites is worthwhile in part because it usefully reminds us that study of the revolution ought not to be limited to the confines of the history of the Chinese Communist Party, for to do so is roughly analogous to assuming that Enlightenment society and culture are irrelevant to the study of the French Revolution. China was arguably in an extended, slowly-developing revolutionary situation from at least 1911 on, and the education-centered cultural politics of elites at all levels, both urban and rural and including even those in such peripheral areas as Jinggangshan, played important roles in shaping and sharpening the conflict.

Recognition of the central role of local elites in the urban-rural transition is also important as a step toward developing a more sophisticated and symmetrical understanding of what Roy Hofheinz once termed "the ecology of Communist success."[12] For a time a generation or more ago, Western scholars devoted considerable attention to this task, which involved the search for socioeconomic structures and processes and cultural behaviors that could

explain the achievements of the Communist-led revolution in China in ways that might challenge or supplement theories that emphasized ideology, organization, and the heroic deeds of great individuals.

Given the predominantly rural setting of the latter stages of the Chinese revolution, it is not surprising that much of this scholarly activity was devoted to the characteristics, attitudes, and behavior of rural inhabitants. Whether the topic was peasant nationalism, the moral economy of the peasant, the predatory and protective behavior of rural people under stressful conditions, the typology and causes of peasant collective action, or the long-term involutionary processes of the agrarian economy, scholars strove to relate them to the revolution. While this research did not in the end prove to the satisfaction of most scholars that some specific peasant grievance or pattern of socioeconomic change or behavioral pattern or attitudinal complex could be identified as a necessary and sufficient "cause" of the Chinese revolution, it did contribute to a general consensus that the state of China's twentieth-century peasant economy and society at least helped shape the way the revolution unfolded.[13]

What is true for the peasant socioeconomy is true for elite life as well. Issues of elite definition, certification, differentiation, and career patterns that developed or were intensified through the end of the civil service examinations and of the dynastic system all affected the early stages of the Chinese revolution. That is to say, discourse on these matters influenced the socialization and expectations of both the elites who became party members and those who became their main local opponents, helped shape the social, cultural and political milieux in which they interacted, and affected the nature of the conflicts among them. The sociology and cultural politics of local elite life is as important to study as ethnic relations and patterns of socioeconomic conflict in order to develop a well-rounded picture of the early development of the Chinese revolution.

NOTES

1. The term generally used in the Jinggangshan region is *keji*, which literally means "guest registrants," referring to the system of local household registration used under the imperial system. The earlier-arriving majority of the population was similarly known as *tuji*, "native registrants." Hereafter in this study I most commonly use the terms "guest people" and "early settlers" to refer to these two groups. Where I use the more generic term "Hakka," I am generally either referring directly to the dialect spoken by the guest people, or engaged in a discussion of other scholars' work that uses this nationally generic word.

2. Mary S. Erbaugh, "The Secret History of the Hakkas: The Chinese Revolution as a Hakka Enterprise," *The China Quarterly*, no. 132 (December 1992): 937–68; Mary S. Erbaugh, "The Hakka Paradox in the People's Republic of China: Exile, Eminence

and Public Silence," in *Guest People: Hakka Identity in China and Abroad*, ed. Nicole Constable (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1996), 196–231. The latter essay contains much material duplicated from the former article.

3. Erbaugh, "The Hakka Paradox," 208–9.

4. James M. Polachek, "The Moral Economy of the Kiangsi Soviet (1928–1934)," *Journal of Asian Studies* 42, no. 4 (August 1983): 805–29.

5. Polachek, "The Moral Economy," especially 822, 824–25.

6. Space limitation precludes comprehensive documentation here of the timing and routes of Hakka migration during the Ming-Qing transition, but for one source dealing with the Hunan-Jiangxi border area just north of the Jinggangshan region, see Chao Longqi, "Wanqing Xiang-Gan bianjie jiceng shehui jiegou de yanbian" [The evolution of basic-level social structure in the Hunan-Jiangxi border area during the late Qing], *Jiangxi shehui kexue*, no. 3 (1997): 101–6. Chao notes (101) that "most of the lineages that spread through the border area during the Qing had migrated into the area during the late Ming–early Qing. By the mid-Qing the lineages in the border area were already flourishing." Some other information on the topic may be found in Stephen C. Averill, "The Shed People [peng-min] and the Opening of the Yangzi Highlands," *Modern China* 9, no. 1 (January 1983): 84–126. See Erbaugh, "The Hakka Paradox," 200–201 for relevant maps, which, however, are somewhat incomplete and in some particulars inaccurate.

7. Among many other examples, see Odoric Y. K. Wou, *Mobilizing the Masses: Building Revolution in Henan* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1994), 116; Kathleen Hartford, "Fits and Starts: The Communist Party in Rural Hebei, 1921–1936," in *New Perspectives on the Chinese Revolution*, ed. Tony Saich and Hans van de Ven (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1995), 146–47; Wen-hsin Yeh, *Provincial Passages: Culture, Space, and the Origins of Chinese Communism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); Stephen Averill, "The Cultural Politics of Local Education in Early Twentieth Century China" (paper delivered at the Association for Asian Studies annual convention, Washington, D.C., April 2002).

8. Mary Backus Rankin, *Elite Activism and Political Transformation in China: Zhejiang Province, 1865–1911* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1986); Joan Judge, *Print and Politics: "Shibao" and the Culture of Reform in Late Qing China* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1996); Marianne Bastid-Bruguière, "Currents of Social Change," in *Cambridge History of China*, vol. 11, part 2, ed. John K. Fairbank and K. C. Liu (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 535–602; Marianne Bastid, "Servitude or Liberation? The Introduction of Foreign Educational Practices and Systems to China from 1840 to the Present," in *China's Education and the Industrialized World*, ed. Ruth Hayhoe and Marianne Bastid (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1987), 3–20; Sang Bing, *Wanqing xuetang xuesheng yu shehui bianqian* [Late Qing schools, students, and social change] (Taibei: Daohe chubanshe, 1991).

9. Alexander Woodside, "Real and Imagined Continuities in the Chinese Struggle for Literacy," in *Education and Modernization: The Chinese Experience*, ed. Ruth Hayhoe (New York: Pergamon Press, 1992), 23–45.

10. Min Jie, "Wuxu xuehui kao" [A study of study societies during the 1898 Reforms]. *Jindai shi yanjiu,*, no. 3 (1995): 39–76; Li Wenhai, "Wuxu weixin yundong shiqi de xuehui zuzhi" [The organization of study societies during the 1898 Reform Movement], in *Wuxu weixin yundong shilunji* [Collection of historical essays on the 1898 Reform Movement], ed. Hu Shengwu (Changsha: Hunan renmin chubanshe, 1983), 48–78.

11. Averill, "Cultural Politics."

12. Roy Hofheinz, Jr., "The Ecology of Chinese Communist Success: Rural Influence Patterns, 1923–1945," in *Chinese Communist Politics in Action*, ed. A. Doak Barnett (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1969), 3–77.

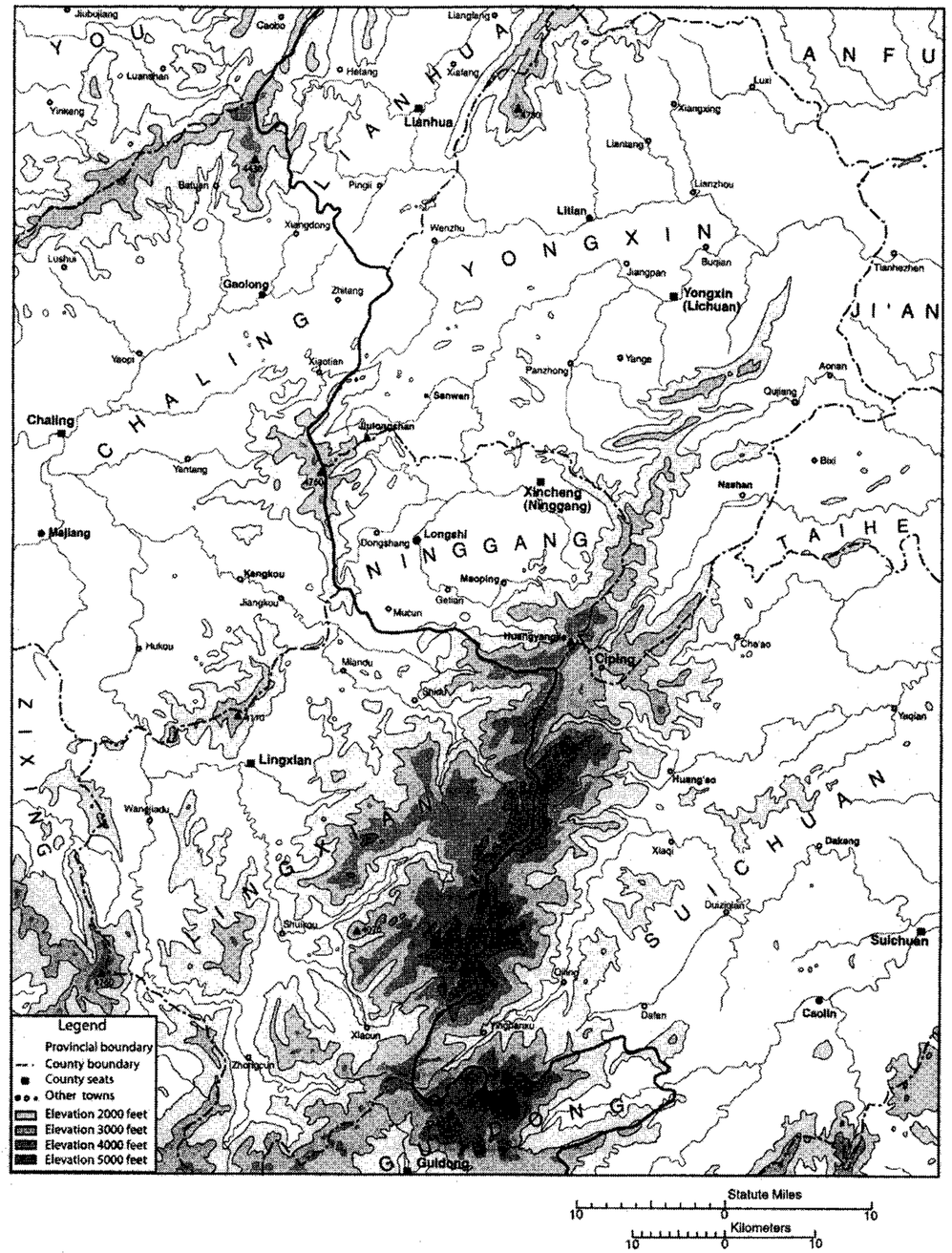
13. For examples of this scholarship, see Chalmers A. Johnson, *Peasant Nationalism and Communist Power: The Emergence of Revolutionary China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1962); Robert Marks, *Rural Revolution in South China: Peasants and the Making of Haifeng County, 1570–1930* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984); Ralph Thaxton, *China Turned Rightside Up: Revolutionary Legitimacy in the Peasant World* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983); Elizabeth J. Perry, *Rebels and Revolutionaries in North China, 1845–1945* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1980); Lucien Bianco, *Peasants Without the Party: Grassroots Movements in Twentieth-Century China* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2001); Phillip C. C. Huang, *The Peasant Economy and Social Change in North China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1985). [editor's note]

1

Jinggangshan Society and Economy

In their general outline and many of their specific features, the society and economy of the Jinggangshan region were broadly typical of conditions prevailing throughout the rugged hill country of Jiangxi and neighboring provinces such as Hunan, Guangdong, and Fujian. In Jinggangshan, as elsewhere in this broad swath of territory, a centuries-long interplay between enduring geographical features and the ebb and flow of human population movements had led to the formation of an economically diversified, mobile, and contentious regional society whose particular characteristics and dynamics would powerfully affect the revolutionary movement that ultimately grew up in its midst.

The main purpose of this and the other chapters of Part I is to delineate the main features of Jinggangshan society and economy, focusing in particular upon those aspects of life in the region that were of special relevance to the eventual development of the revolutionary movement. Thus, the present chapter begins by tracing the history of Han Chinese settlement in the region, with emphasis upon the major wave of migrants from Fujian and Guangdong into the region between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, and then considers in some detail how the arrival of these migrants and their interaction with the existing local population deeply influenced the emergence of the general socioeconomic structure and the particular patterns of social conflict characteristic of the region in the early twentieth century. Subsequent chapters focus in greater depth upon specific population subsets: the bandits and brotherhoods, endemic to the region, that provided both socially familiar organizational analogues to and numerous armed recruits for the revolutionary movement; and the young rural intellectuals who were the first regional inhabitants to join the revolution, and who were largely responsible for its spread into the countryside.



Map 1.1. The Jinggangshan Region on the Hunan (west)–Jiangxi (east) Provincial Border

THE SETTLEMENT OF THE JINGGANGSHAN REGION

Chinese settlement of the Jinggangshan region had begun as early as the Han dynasty, when a few settlers had started to push out from the Gan River valley and up various tributaries into the most accessible and fertile parts of the region, there to begin the long process of displacing, absorbing, or killing the indigenous Yao and She peoples. Somewhat heavier and more widespread Chinese settlement of the region's valley and basin land occurred later, during the late Tang, Five Dynasties, and Song periods, and the oldest of the region's villages still in existence today trace their founding back to one or another point during this several-century period. Given the important role played by the passage of time and the proliferation of descendants in the development of corporate lineage wealth, it is not surprising to find that the ancestors of some of the largest and most dominant lineages also moved into the region during the Tang-Song period.[1]

By the end of the Song, Chinese settlements appear to have been scattered broadly across most of the basins and valleys of the Jinggangshan region, though still with a low overall population density and considerable space between villages. These empty spaces were gradually filled with new villages during the following dynasties, especially in the Ming and early Qing periods. Information presented in a detailed, village-by-village survey of Yongxin county published in the 1980s indicates that most of these new villages were founded either by local people moving from other (presumably overcrowded) villages in the same county, or by short-range migrants from neighboring counties.[2] Taken together, the inhabitants of these predominantly lowland villages made up the bulk of the region's population, and constituted the group locally referred to as the "early settlers" (*tuji*).

In addition to settling in the more accessible valley and basin lands, local tradition has it that as early as the late Tang there were already a few pioneering Chinese families who had begun to cultivate land on the Jinggangshan massif itself, and the same may have been true for other mountainous and isolated parts of the region as well. Early settlers living in the lowland valleys and basins also doubtless claimed and used some of the surrounding hills as sources of timber, medicinal herbs, and other mountain products. Despite these modest inroads, however, the bulk of the region's thickly-wooded mountains remained largely uncultivated and unsettled by Han Chinese until a new wave of migration rolled over this and many other parts of the highland regions south of the Yangzi during the two centuries or so spanning the end of the Ming and the beginning of the Qing dynasties.[3]

A very high percentage of the migrants into the Jinggangshan highlands during this period came from northern Guangdong and western Fujian provinces, either directly or after intermediate stops at one or more places in southern Jiangxi.[4] Coming from heavily settled mountainous areas with extensive repertoires of mountain products (including crops of New World origin such as peanuts, sweet potatoes, and maize) and long experience in opening and cultivating steep, wooded hillsides, the migrants were both attracted by the large amounts of open land in the Jinggangshan region and undeterred by its ruggedness.

Relatively little information survives on the specific circumstances of guest people migration into the Jinggangshan area, but it probably differed little if at all from the patterns prevailing elsewhere in Jiangxi and surrounding provinces. In this region as a whole, migration typically took place through several different mechanisms, which often overlapped and proceeded simultaneously. Some individuals or families simply packed up and abandoned their old homes to wander off in search of more inviting opportunities elsewhere or were deliberately resettled inland by local officials as part of the anti-piracy coast-clearing campaigns of the early Qing. Others, particularly during the turbulent decades of the Ming-Qing transition, roved across the country in large bandit bands or uprisings whose members occasionally made a place for themselves somewhere and settled down as cultivators.[5]

Still others were deliberately recruited by individual and corporate landlords from the early settler population, who were alerted by the example of early migrants to the new possibilities for profit from hill lands that they had hitherto nominally claimed but scarcely utilized. By hiring outside "guest people" to clear and cultivate this land, early settler landlords could hope to realize both short-term income from sales of timber cut during the clearing process and long-term revenue from renting out the productive land thus created. For these reasons, "mountain lords" (*shanzhu*), as those who claimed possession of hill lands were generally known, worked on their own or through intermediate hiring agents with connections in the areas of guest people origin to contract for the services of large numbers of guest people.[6]

In many parts of Jiangxi, and probably in the Jinggangshan area as well, many of those hired were single male seasonal laborers who spent several months each year working in new regions and then returned to homes in Fujian and Guangdong.[7] After becoming familiar with the new area and tired of their itinerant existence, large numbers of these seasonal laborers eventually brought their families and settled permanently in the region. They and other migrants who gradually sifted into the region on their own sought to rent hill land on which they could grow the variety of marketable mountain products with which they were familiar.

An essay in a Suichuan county (known as Longquan during the Qing period) gazetteer describes the settlement process in this part of Jinggangshan:

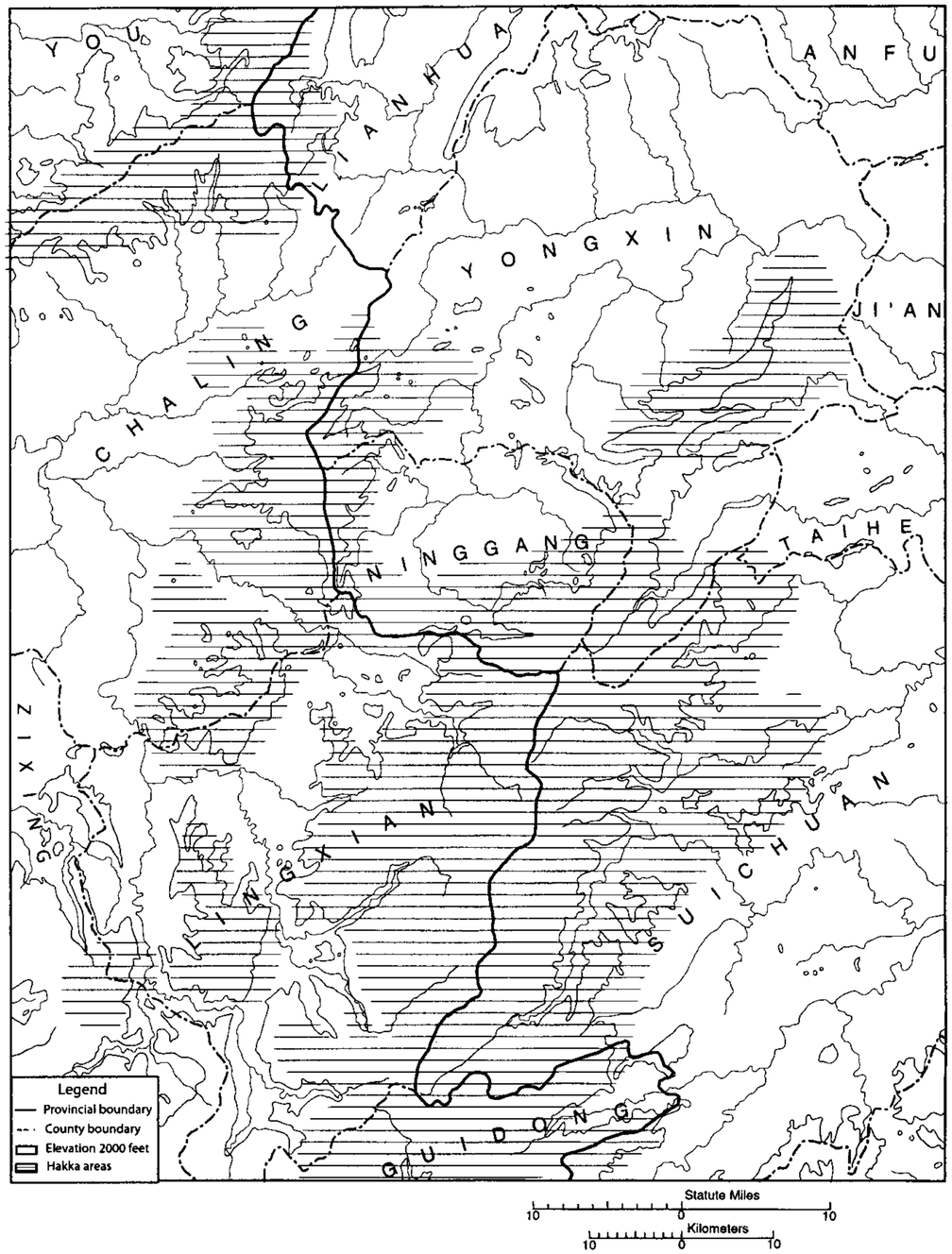
> During the Kangxi period [1662–1722] poor people from Fujian and Guangdong learned that Longquan had mountains they could till, so they gradually entered the area one by one and asked landlords for mountains to tenant, promising to plant *shan* [Chinese fir, Cryptomeria] seedlings and wait for them to mature [and then sell them], splitting the proceeds evenly with the mountain lords. The mountain lords were happy to oblige.
>
> The tenants drew upon the mountains [for materials] to build shacks. They used the first five years to open the waste land, planting crops such as dry rice, beans, potatoes and yams. After five years the soil was rich, and they began to plant *shan* seedlings; while the seedlings were not yet tall, food crops could still be cultivated. In this way the migrants invested and saved for ten years, taking wives, building houses and secretly laying a good foundation [of wealth].
>
> Then after twenty years the trees were sold for a great profit.[8]

Through this sort of industrious activity, even the most inaccessible parts of the Jinggangshan region were opened up by guest people migrants and put to productive uses. Across the bottoms of the tiny, hill-girded basins that pockmarked the highlands, along the numerous steep ravines and narrow streambeds that gashed the mountainsides, up the walls of the high valleys that slid smoothly out between the hills, and virtually anyplace else that terrain and water supply permitted, sinuous strips of paddy fields rose in terraced stacks on formerly wooded and brush-choked land. Narrow paths crisscrossed the surrounding mountain slopes, providing access to small hillside plots of sweet potatoes, peanuts, tea, and other dry crops, and to the large stands of timber and bamboo where wood products and medicinal roots were harvested.

By the time guest people migration into the Jiangxi hill country declined to a trickle in the late eighteenth century, almost all of the mountainous portions of the Jinggangshan region appear to have been at least thinly settled by the new arrivals, and the main patterns of socioeconomic relations that were to characterize life in the region down into the twentieth century were already in place.[9]

Through the subsequent generations some people continued to move to the region from elsewhere in Jiangxi and other parts of the country, and intra-regional population increase also led to some local migration and the establishment of new settlements. Some further clearing, reshaping, and molding of the land for new terraced fields and other cultivation needs and the development of at least a few new market towns doubtless occurred to support the expanding population.

Over the years, deforestation and erosion also became progressively more significant. Deforestation was slowed by the relatively primitive timbering technology then in use, the difficulty of getting wood to market from this inaccessible region, and some natural or planned regrowth, but it gradually occurred nonetheless. By the twentieth century, though the region as a whole still had a number of large areas of dense evergreen and bamboo forest, particularly in rugged mountainous country such as the Jinggangshan massif, vegetation on many of the low hillocks and ridges bordering the more densely populated areas had been reduced to a sparse cover of grass, straggling bushes, and occasional heavily pruned saplings. As the ground cover decreased, flooding and other erosion-related problems also progressively developed. One of the most consequential of these was a gradual silting up of the region's larger streams and rivers that by the twentieth century had severely curtailed their usability by boats or large timber rafts.[10]



Map 1.2. Approximate Areas of Hakka-speaking People

The gradual population increase and expanding land use, the market town growth, and environmental degradation that accompanied it had a substantial cumulative effect on the region and its people. Although the statistical information necessary for a definitive historical analysis is lacking, comparison of conditions in the early twentieth century with anecdotal descriptions of those at the time of the guest people migrations indicates that the population of the region grew faster than its cultivated land and renewable resources. Moreover, the combination of silted-up waterways, mountainous terrain, and distance from major markets and trade routes kept the area from establishing strong enough connections to the outside world to make up fully for its own shortcomings.

As the region's population increased without concomitant growth in local resources or in commercial contact with the outside world, regional competition for resources certainly became much more intense, and opportunities for upward social mobility and new economic growth considerably less available. As will soon become apparent, the intensity of competition and the distribution of opportunities were deeply influenced by persistent patterns of socioeconomic interaction and conflict laid down during the original period of guest people settlement. Before examining these influences, however, it is first necessary to describe the economic and social structure of regional life in the early twentieth century.

TWENTIETH-CENTURY JINGGANGSHAN SOCIETY AND ECONOMY

At the most general level, twentieth-century patterns of regional socioeconomic differentiation revealed themselves topographically, as they had since the time of the guest people migration, in the contrast between conditions in the relatively productive and settled valley- and basin-lands whose inhabitants earned most of their living from the cultivation of rice and other grains, and the rugged hinterlands whose people supplemented their scanty grain harvests by producing and exporting mountain products such as timber, bamboo, tea, tea oil, peanuts and medicinal roots.

Flatland areas well-suited for paddy cultivation formed the region's most productive, well-populated, and easily-accessible core areas. For example, the hillock-studded plain that lay at the center of Ninggang country produced enough grain from its single annual rice crop to feed the local population with a considerable surplus remaining for export. Similar conditions prevailed in the broad stretches of fertile, well-watered paddy that covered central and eastern portions of Yongxin, the southern part of Suichuan and the western sections of Chaling and Lingxian. Not surprisingly, the county seats of all of these counties, as well as some of their larger market towns and the closely-spaced villages that housed the densest concentrations of their inhabitants, were located in these flat fertile areas. Although no part of the isolated Jinggangshan region had particularly easy access to the outside world, the core areas were best situated in that regard; through them wound the most navigable waterways and the most passable of what passed for roads in the region, and they were

generally a day or two's travel closer than the hinterlands to the major cities and trade routes of the Gan and Xiang river valleys.

The region's mountainous peripheries, by contrast, were much poorer, more sparsely populated, and inaccessible. The several thousand people who lived on and around the Jinggangshan massif itself, for example, had to rely on the surrounding lowlands for part of their grain and had such a deficiency of draft animals that plows sometimes had to be drawn by human labor. Market towns and other sizable settlements were virtually nonexistent in such areas. Most people lived instead either in isolated individual homesteads or in scattered small hamlets ranging in size from three or four to a dozen or more dwellings, usually built straggling along the sides of small watercourses or around the verges of small, paddy-filled pockets. Even the most well-traveled thoroughfares through such rugged and isolated country were no more than yard-wide earthen and flagstone paths winding tortuously through the hills, and most were no more than muddy ruts trodden into the thin mountain soil by generations of village cowherds and woodgatherers.[11]

Peasant Society

As in previous generations, the vast majority of the region's twentieth-century inhabitants were rural dwellers who were exceptionally mobile, extremely diverse in the range of their economic activities, and highly fragmented into numerous solidary organizations based on real or fictive kinship, ethnic origin, and other factors. In the Jinggangshan region, as elsewhere in China, such people were and still are referred to as *nongmin*, a word whose normal English translation is "peasant." Although for the sake of familiarity and convenience I will frequently employ this translation in the present study, it is important to emphasize that in the Chinese context generally, and especially in peripheral mountain areas such as Jinggangshan, the word *nongmin* represents a broad and ill-defined social category whose members include not only crop-tilling individuals whose landholdings in this area might vary from nil to several dozen *mu*, but also people (among them timber-cutters, porters, bandits, and a variety of village-based handicraft specialists, to name a few) who might spend little or no time engaged in tilling fields.

Some more concrete idea of the multi-faceted and shifting nature of "peasant" livelihoods in this region may be gained by a brief examination of the family of Wang Zuo, whose exploits as a well-known regional bandit chieftain and Red Army leader will figure prominently in subsequent chapters. Wang's family was from Xiazhuang, a tiny hamlet whose scattered clusters of earthen houses straggled along the sides of a small basin a few miles south of the town of Ciping on the Jinggangshan massif. Wang's great-grandfather

had owned several dozen *mu* of paddy and some parcels of mountain land, but gradually all of the land had been lost, and Wang's father worked as a laborer on the land of the hamlet's main landlord family. Wang's mother was the sister of Fan Shanyang, a well-known and comfortably wealthy sworn brotherhood leader from a village some distance away. The couple had five sons and one daughter.

When Wang was a small child, his father died. Two of Wang's brothers remained in Xiazhuang working as long-term laborers. His sister went to live with Fan Shanyang and later married a man in a nearby village; the couple tilled several *mu* of paddy and some mountain land, gathered useful plants, and made wood and bamboo products for sale, and turned their home into an informal inn to put up occasional travelers. Wang's mother and the other children went to a larger village, where for a time she was a beancurd shop employee and foodstall proprietor before they returned to work for the Xiazhuang landlord.

At age fifteen, Wang began an apprenticeship to a tailor in another village, following which he drifted from place to place as an itinerant tailor. Among his clients were members of one of the more successful of the region's many bandit gangs, who also used Wang to scout for lucrative targets for them to attack. With his profits, Wang gathered other tailors and several sewing machines and set up a tailoring enterprise to supply several nearby bandit gangs. Eventually, Wang drifted into the bandit life himself, rising to become a well-known regional chieftain and a reasonably large landlord.[12]

Rice-tilling, agricultural labor, food vending, herb-gathering, woodworking, inn-keeping, tailoring, bandit scouting, banditry: the list of full- and part-time work engaged in by members of this one, indubitably "peasant," family clearly indicates the diversity of economic activity carried out by the region's rural inhabitants. People living in the demanding environment of the region's mountainous hinterlands were probably more likely to engage in the wide range of activities described here than were those living in the more favored lowland core areas. Even in mountainous areas such as the Jinggangshan massif, moreover, the diversity and itinerancy of the Wangs' activities were almost certainly more pronounced among the poorest inhabitants, who had to scrabble frantically to eke out even a bare existence, than among the fortunate few who possessed enough resources to provide secure livelihoods. Although their importance may have varied from household to household, however, it is likely that activities related only tangentially or not at all to the work of crop-raising contributed significantly to the income of a majority of the region's peasant families.

Analysts of peasant society have typically tried to accommodate the reality of peasant diversity by sub-dividing them into multiple categories. By far the most widely used such categorization is that which divides peasants into three or four main groups (sometimes with various transitional sub-categories)

based primarily on amount of land tilled and conditions of labor. In its basic form, this categorization scheme is as follows: rich peasants are those who have more land than they can till with their own family resources and who typically rent some land out or hire laborers to help them till it; middle peasants are those who own enough land to support their families; and poor peasants are those who may or may not own some land, but who must rent at least some land in order fully to meet their needs. Often a fourth category, that of agricultural laborers, is added to encompass those who neither own nor rent land but work for those who do.

This type of categorization was widely used by Communists in Jiangxi and elsewhere in China when they implemented land reform programs. As they soon discovered when they tried to apply the system to real rural households, these categories, with their primary focus on land relations, had obvious shortcomings when used to differentiate among households whose livelihood frequently depended heavily upon non-land-related resources and activities.

Moreover, as the shifting Wang family fortune indicates, while this type of categorization may produce snapshots (however blurred) of rural households at specific points in time, it is too static and one-dimensional to produce motion pictures showing evolution in these households and their habitual practices over time. As social scientists in a variety of disciplines have noted, individual and collective family histories of this sort affect in important ways the attitudes and actions of current generations.

These deficiencies notwithstanding, terms such as "rich peasant" or "poor peasant" remain useful in some circumstances as loose categories that help to indicate the types and (to a rough order of magnitude) the extent of resources certain individuals and households are likely to possess, and to situate them within the broad spectrum of rural society. It is as such rough social triangulation devices, rather than as precise, well-defined analytical categories, that these terms are generally employed in the present study.[13]

Detailed discussion of land relations in the Jinggangshan region is impossible due to lack of reliable data, but it is possible to provide at least an overview of conditions in the area at the time the revolutionary movement emerged. As might be expected in a mountainous area where extensive tracts of arable land were rare and small isolated plots were the norm, land ownership throughout the region was widely dispersed, in the limited sense that at any one time a large number of peasant households owned at least small pieces of land.[14] However, because (as in the case of Wang Zuo's sister's household) many of these plots were too small to fully support those who tilled them, family members had to make up the difference by some combination of renting additional land, working as part-time laborers, and securing side business income. Moreover, as the history of the Wang family further illustrates, the exigencies of this lifestyle and the pressures of partible inheritance meant that landowning on any scale was sometimes only a temporary condition.

Despite the fact that many peasants owned a little land, the small average size of their holdings also meant that in this region, as in many parts of China, a large percentage of the total existing land was still concentrated in only a small number of hands. Although some of these hands were those of large individual landlords (one of whom reputedly owned nearly one-third of the arable land in the heart of the Jinggangshan massif), such individuals were by all accounts very few. Much more common were small landlords and rich peasants who each rented out a few *mu* of land at rents that were normally defined as half of the main harvest. Regardless of the size of their holdings, most landlords and rich peasants lived in villages or market towns near their fields; real absentee landlordism was rare in Jinggangshan.[15]

Very common throughout the area, however, were various forms of collective landholding organization—most notably lineages, schools, and religious organizations—that rented out substantial amounts of communally owned land. The exact amount of such "public land" (*gongtian*) varied from place to place; the scattered figures available range from approximately 10 percent of all cultivated land in Maoping township (*xiang*) in Ninggang to 50 percent in Sanwan village in Yongxin, but figures ranging between 10 and 23 percent reported at the time of land reform in 1950 for Ninggang, Yongxin, and Chaling counties are probably not far from the regional average. Rich peasants and landlords together comprised about 10 percent of the population; together with the collective organizations which they often managed, they controlled somewhere between 60 and 80 percent of all the agricultural land in the region. These percentages also varied considerably from place to place.[16]

Regardless of who owned the land, agricultural and mountain products from the region went to local market towns for distribution or export. These towns also served as the main source of salt, cloth, and the few manufactured products consumed in these backward, largely self-sufficient counties. By and large, the market towns were small, widely scattered, and poor. Ninggang, one of the smallest and poorest counties in the region, had no market towns of more than local significance; Longshi, the largest, had only 500–1000 inhabitants and 20-odd stores.[17] Yongxin and Suichuan, particularly their lowland sections, were somewhat better off, and it was to markets in these counties that most peasants in the region looked for their higher-order marketing needs. For example, the town of Caolin in Suichuan, with six main streets, well over one hundred stores, and a population of 600-odd households, served as a major regional market serving both the northern and western parts of Suichuan (including the Jinggangshan massif) and parts of several surrounding counties. Even considering such towns as Caolin, however, Jinggangshan in the 1920s remained distant from major markets and only fitfully affected by foreign economic influences.[18]

Social organization as well remained dominated by long-established forms. Most significant of these were the corporate kinship groups—lineages—that were omnipresent in the Jinggangshan region. While apparently in general not as large, well-organized, and incessantly quarrelsome as their counterparts in southern Jiangxi and elsewhere in southeastern China, Jinggangshan lineages were still active in promoting the rights and interests of their members, and inter-lineage feuding was a common source of social conflict.

Each county in the region also had several surnames whose size and distinguished ancestry enabled them to establish special dominance. In Suichuan, for example, the Guo, Luo and Xiao lineages each carved out a notable sphere of interest, while in Yongxin the He and Xiao achieved positions of comparable importance. By far the most extreme situation prevailed in Ninggang, where a commonly heard saying alleged (doubtless with some exaggeration) that fully half of the county's entire population of 130,000 were surnamed Xie, while a further quarter were named Liu. Present in the area from Song times on, both of these surnames had grown into vast clans with county-wide organization, absorbing in the process considerable numbers of later arrivals (including some guest people) who, though also surnamed Xie and Liu, had in fact no kinship ties with the original families. As might be expected from groups with such massive size, both the Xie and Liu were major forces in the power structure of Ninggang in the early twentieth century. The eight branches (*fang*) of the Xie kinship group, for example, had a single comprehensive ancestral hall in the county seat, known as the Tonghui tang ("Hall of the United Associations"), which among other things served as a corporate management office handling rent collections. The Liu clan had a similar organization.[19]

Local Elite Society

Lineages and most other organizations in the Jinggangshan region were generally controlled by local elites. Unfortunately, discussion of rural elites is fraught with many of the same difficulties of definition and specification that have already been noted with regard to peasants. Both because the Chinese countryside contained a diversity of individuals who engaged in a wide range of activities that could conceivably be construed as "elite" and because of the inherent relational and situational quality of such terms as "elite" and "local," scholars have used the term local elites in a number of different ways.

In the following discussion, I will use the formulation of Joseph Esherick and Mary Rankin and define local elites as individuals or families who exert dominance within social arenas at the county level and below. Although vague and general, this description has the virtue of being flexible enough to accommodate an appropriately diverse range of people and

activities, and to allow room for discussion of the complex and changing relationships among elites and between them and non-elites. As Esherick and Rankin point out, emphasis on patterns of dominance "calls attention to an underlying coerciveness upholding the social position of elites, but also allows us to focus on the dynamic and processual aspects of elite power and on the inevitably dialectical relationship of elites to other subordinate actors in local society."[20]

In much the same way that dividing the large category "peasants" into subgroups such as rich, middle, and poor peasants can help roughly situate non-elites on the complex social terrain of rural China, so also can similar subdivision help better to map the variegated contours of the elites whose great importance in local society in general, and pivotal role in the development of the revolutionary movement in particular, contrasted so sharply with their small numerical size.

In this study, I will depict Jinggangshan region elites as members of one or another of three loosely defined, roughly hierarchical groups—termed upper, middle, and lower elites—each with somewhat different perceptions, expectations, and resources. Although the relative amount of land owned by members of these groups certainly helped distinguish among them, and although a tripartite division into upper, middle, and lower elites seems to echo the CCP's common economically derived classification of elites into large, middle and small landlords, the following discussion should make it abundantly clear that in fact for Jinggangshan region elites social, cultural, and political resources were at least as important as landholding in building and maintaining their elite status and power.[21]

At the upper level of elite society stood a small group (probably no more than several tens of families in each county) of the most powerful and important "great households," whose influence rested on control of large and varied economic and political resources, and upon the maintenance of complex networks of interpersonal contacts. Two examples from Suichuan will illustrate the variety of fields in which the power of this upper stratum of the local elite was exercised, and through which its position was buttressed.

The first example comes from the important regional market town of Caolin, which in the 1920s was controlled by a small group of local elites, mostly named Huang and Guo. The power of these local elites had probably been founded on commerce, since they controlled the town's major rice, salt, oil, and cloth firms. Over the years they had used their superior competitive position to good advantage, and had taken over or forced out of business nearly one hundred smaller firms that had fallen into debt to them. They also used their commercial dominance to levy various licensing, management, market rental, and "doing business" fees on both local people and outsiders wishing to use the market. Outside of town they used militia forces to man transit tax stations controlling traffic on the roads to market. Traders

coming to Caolin from the small market of Huang'ao near the Jinggangshan massif had to pass five of these tax stations on their seventy *li* trip to town. At least some of these stations charged tax even on peasants carrying a chicken or a few eggs to market.[22]

Huang Lirui was the most powerful of the Caolin elite. In addition to owning several major local stores, he also stood at the center of a much more elaborate net of economic and political influence. He owned paddy land that brought in over 9,000 piculs (*dan*) of grain annually in rent, and mountain land that produced over 5,000 *jin* of tea oil. Twenty armed retainers protected the family's walled and towered home; in addition, one of his sons was a local militia leader and a grandson was the government official who headed Caolin township. Outside of the Caolin area, Huang owned several stores in the county capital, controlled a company which traded with Nanchang, and had another son who was a member of the Jiangxi provincial assembly.[23]

Huang's family was also connected by marriage to powerful elites elsewhere in Suichuan. One of these was Xiao Jiabi, later condemned by the CCP as one of the county's "four great local bullies" who dominated the area around Dakeng in western Suichuan.

Xiao had been born in 1880 into a guest people landlord family in Dakeng. Although he received considerable education, first in a local Confucian academy and then in an agricultural school in Nanchang, Xiao relied on armed strength rather than cultural attainments as the core of his local power and prestige. A pugnacious individual by temperament, he was frequently involved in violent incidents as a youth, many of them involving disputes between guest people and early settlers. Gradually he built up an armed following, probably beginning from a base of support in the strong Xiao lineage, but soon recruiting deserting warlord soldiers and local ne'er-do-wells to form a more heterogeneous force of over one hundred men. Xiao used this force to become an independent bandit-hegemon dominating the entire northwestern part of the county, strong enough to intimidate county officials and take what he wanted from the populace.

On the basis of his armed following, Xiao built a substantial official and political career and a vast financial empire before he was finally executed by the Communists in 1949. To try to gain some control over him, county officials in the 1920s eventually regularized his force into a government-sponsored militia and gave Xiao himself the first of what became a long series of militia and police official appointments. In addition, he served at one time or another as township (*xiang*) and district (*qu*) head in the Dakeng area, head of the county government's civil affairs section (*minzheng ke*), acting county magistrate, and head of the county assembly (*canyi hui*). Along the way, he came to own a vast amount of property, including paddy fields producing several hundred piculs of grain; several thousand *mu*

of tea- and timber-producing mountain land; several native banks (*qianzhuang*) whose notes were widely used in the county; commercial enterprises of various sorts both in Suichuan and as far away as Nanchang, Nanjing, and Shanghai; and a transit tax station on the lower Youxi River that intercepted timber rafts heading toward the Gan River valley.[24]

In the multiplicity of their interests and the range of their contacts, both Xiao and Huang were characteristic of the upper layer of the local elite. Their initial power was centered on institutions in strategically located market towns where they developed extensive networks of influence. Eventually they were able to move beyond purely local bases to develop ties with local elites in other parts of the county, and even developed political and economic interests at the provincial level. While both operated across several levels of Jiangxi's central place hierarchy, they did so primarily in order to safeguard and extend their interests in Suichuan. Both men remained tenaciously committed to their local roots throughout their careers.[25]

Much more numerous than people such as Xiao and Huang were the members of the middle stratum of the local elite. Like the upper layer of the elite, this group sought control of a variety of resources and relationships that could preserve and enhance their status, but they generally operated on a more localized level and with greater exposure to changing conditions than did higher elites such as Xiao and Huang. Often these individuals were linked to higher-level elites through clientelistic ties that entailed obligations of service to the patron and expectations of support from him in case of need.

Once again, an example may help delineate the contours of this group. In Maoping township in Ninggang, just below Huangyangjie at the northern foot of the Jinggangshan massif, lived a sub-lineage of the county's powerful Xie clan. Several of their thirty-odd families each owned 100 *mu* or so of land, and the lineage also owned several tens of *mu* of public land. These holdings and their prestigious name combined to make the Xies the dominant lineage in the area, a position which they assiduously safeguarded and shamelessly exploited. Patriarch of the group was Xie Guannan, who in addition to his landholding was a local government agent collecting miscellaneous taxes and levies. During a 1923 Jiangxi provincial assembly election Xie and his sons likewise played a major role in local vote-buying on behalf of Long Qinhai, a prominent Ninggang landlord who was also an important provincial politician.[26]

Below people such as Xie Guannan, and situated only slightly above the imprecise boundary separating elite from mass, lay the lowest, largest and most localistic stratum of elite households. Some members of this rather amorphous and largely anonymous group were small landlords, petty merchants, or village schoolteachers, while others were much closer to what the CCP termed rich peasants; some were people who had recently managed by

one means or another to push their way up out of the mass of the hill country peasantry, while others were descendants of once-prosperous elite families now on a downward trajectory. Whatever their background, virtually all members of this stratum were forced by the precariousness of their position to act aggressively to utilize all available resources—legal or illegal—that could help maintain their elite status. This aspect of their behavior often disturbed government officials and higher-level elites, and led to some of these marginal elites being labeled "local bullies and evil gentry" (*tuhao lieshen*).

One example of a person whose background illustrates the marginality and the aggressively entrepreneurial nature of lower elite life is Wang Dongwen, who was from a prosperous peasant family in Tushan village on the east side of the Jinggangshan massif. A good student in his village school, Wang then attended the Hechuan Middle School in neighboring Yongxin county. After graduation he returned home and put his education to work by becoming a pettifogger, one who helped people to draft legal complaints and file lawsuits. Even in more prosperous and peaceful areas, let alone a region as rough as Jinggangshan, pettifoggery sometimes involved its practitioners in threatening situations. To make matters worse, Wang is said to have been particularly diligent in pursuing the interests of his mostly poor hill country clients in clashes with the region's proud and forceful elites.[27] As his need for protection grew, Wang used lineage funds to recruit a martial arts teacher from Ninggang to instruct him and other lineage members. After several years, Wang gained enough proficiency and reputation to recruit students of his own (one of whom was the regional bandit leader Wang Zuo) among local peasants and the young male members of other elite families.[28]

As limited as Wang's reach and resources may seem by comparison with upper-stratum elites such as Huang Lirui and Xiao Jiabi, he and the many other lower elites like him loomed large in the lives of ordinary peasants. In poor and isolated regions such as Jinggangshan, where really wealthy or well-educated individuals were few and far between, and where the presence of government officials was regarded as an unwelcome intrusion, the relatively numerous members of this stratum constituted the bulk of the rural social and political leaders with whom peasants commonly came in contact. The strategic position of the lower elite at the intersection between the worlds of elite and peasant made it a key group with which communist-led attempts to change hill country society had to deal.

EARLY SETTLER–GUEST PEOPLE CONFLICT

Another attribute of early-twentieth-century Jinggangshan society that cut across distinctions among elites and peasants, and which was sorely to test Communist leaders and threaten the success of the regional revolutionary

movement, was an endemic ethnic antagonism between early settlers and guest people that had its beginnings in the tensions and conflicts of the original guest people migration into the region.

The same passage from a Longquan gazetteer quoted earlier to evoke the energy and skill with which early guest people migrants opened for cultivation mountain areas subsequently draws a sharp contrast between guest people industry and the behavior of the early settlers, noting that

> The mountain lords were careless and squandered their share of the proceeds, while the tenant families industriously husbanded theirs. Therefore the tenants prospered and the mountain lords declined, the tenants were able to become property owners (*yezhu*) and the landlords declined.[29]

Contemporary observers in Jinggangshan and elsewhere frequently contrasted the industriousness and energy of guest people tenants with the idle extravagance of early settler mountain lords, and outlined the reversal of economic status to which such divergent behaviors could lead when pursued over a generation or more. Although the passage of time has erased most of the necessary evidence, occasionally it is still possible to find present-day traces of this process. One good illustration is the situation on the heights of the Jinggangshan massif itself, where in a number of villages near the present-day administrative center of Ciping isolated remnants of once-dominant early settler families still exist among a population that is now overwhelmingly of guest people origin.

In Wang Zuo's home village of Xiazhuang, for example, local tradition has it that the area had originally been opened up to agriculture during the Tang dynasty by his family's remote patrilineal ancestors. After guest people immigrants arrived in the area during the Ming-Qing transition, the Wangs' numerical majority gradually eroded, as did their control over the village's 200-odd *mu* of paddy land (perhaps aided by spendthrift attitudes such as those described in the gazetteer passage quoted above), until by the late nineteenth century many of the tiny remnant of the Wangs who remained amid the sea of migrant descendants were, like Wang Zuo's own family, tenants and laborers working for the Fans, a new dominant family of guest people origin.[30]

The Wangs of Xiazhuang and several other small nearby early settler kinship groups (notably the Luo, Li, and Guo) who managed to cling to tenuous footholds on the massif following the influx of guest people migrants did so in part by using regular intermarriage and shared ritual celebrations (such as the major spring and autumn ancestral sacrifices) to strengthen a sense of community and mutual cooperation that helped them remain distinct despite the guest people's growing numerical and economic superiority.[31]

As consequential as such cases of guest people migrants infiltrating and gradually expropriating established early settler communities might have been

for those directly involved, however, the concentration of guest people settlement in the region's most mountainous and sparsely-populated areas makes it very likely that the displacement or absorption of early settlers by the new arrivals was a relatively minor phenomenon. By the early twentieth century, perhaps a third or so of the population of mountainous regions such as the northern half of Suichuan, the borders of Ninggang, and the western and southern portions of Yongxin were of guest people origin. Within such zones of concentration there were smaller areas—such as the Jinggangshan massif itself—whose inhabitants were 80–100 percent guest people. But these areas were often still located cheek by jowl with areas dominated by early settlers, and throughout the region large swaths of the most fertile, densely-populated, and accessible land remained almost completely early settler territory.[32]

In light of these facts, the quoted passages should not be interpreted too broadly to imply a widespread region-wide decline in the relative economic and social position of the established early settler population during or after the guest people migration. As will soon become apparent, despite displacements or absorptions of sparse established populations in areas such as the Jinggangshan massif, the mottled, highly-differentiated settlement pattern characteristic of the region as a whole helped perpetuate both the sharp distinctions between the two groups of people and the overall economic and political dominance of the early settler majority.

Nevertheless, the quoted passages do indicate the existence of and provide some insight into the frictions between the two communities that first developed during the original guest people migration and festered chronically thereafter amid the continuing inequalities of hill country life. Many of the sources of conflict in the Jinggangshan region were similar to those that developed elsewhere in the hill country of Jiangxi and neighboring provinces in the course of the large-scale guest people migrations that also occurred in these regions.

Some of the friction stemmed from the substantial cultural and attitudinal differences that existed between the earlier settlers and the new migrants from Fujian and Guangdong. The overwhelming bulk of the latter were Hakkas, an ethnic group that appears to have coalesced from the commingling of Chinese with non-Chinese aboriginal peoples such as the She in the rugged border zone where Fujian, Guangdong, and Jiangxi provinces met. Although the Hakkas spoke a dialect of Chinese and were culturally more "Chinese" than aboriginal, the distinctiveness of their speech and customs made them seem suspiciously "foreign" to many of the populations among whom they settled.[33]

In addition, the manner of the guest people's arrival and some aspects of their subsequent behavior and activities also frequently aroused fear, jealousy, and anger among the established populations of the sub-Yangzi highlands. The itinerant bands of young male seasonal laborers who made up a

substantial portion of the migrants' early waves were blamed by officials and settled inhabitants for the increased violence and illegality that accompanied their arrival, and for the vagabond ways that often made it difficult to find and punish the perpetrators of such acts. Moreover, as implied in the quoted passages, the sheer energy and industriousness with which the migrants took full advantage of any local opportunities that presented themselves and defended whatever gains they were able to make quickly turned them into formidable competitors with local inhabitants for access to and control over land, water, and (as time passed and some of the "guests" became more well-established and wealthy) civil service examination degrees.[34]

As competition increased, so did the variety and intensity of disputes between individuals and groups of individuals belonging to the two communities. Elsewhere in Jiangxi, and doubtless in the Jinggangshan region as well, many of these disputes involved the terms of tenancy and land-clearing agreements entered into by early settler landholders and guest people migrants; others were occasioned by conflicting geomantic considerations involved in the siting of dwellings or burial plots; and still others stemmed from erosion-related problems such as the flooding or silting-up of lowland fields caused by run-off from mountain slopes recently denuded of their forest cover.

In many places, the multiplication of specific disputes eventually sparked attempts by people in both camps to achieve more sweeping solutions to the spreading pattern of conflict. In the case of the early settlers, the most common strategies were to attempt in various ways to restrict new migration and to encourage the repatriation to their former homes of migrants who had already arrived. Evidence of the employment of such strategies in the Jinggangshan region is available for Ninggang county, an area of particularly heavy migration, where during the Qianlong period local authorities attempted to restrict settlement of immigrants from Fujian, and later tried to keep guest people from building permanent wooden houses to replace their temporary thatch shacks.[35]

In general (and certainly in the specific case of Ninggang) these attempts did little to restrict or reverse the settlement process, but they were much more effective in deepening the animosity between early settlers and guest people. For their part, guest people in many different parts of the Yangzi highlands frequently resorted to collective action in attempts to achieve more equal treatment and less interference with their efforts to make a living for themselves in their new homes. Although the available source materials do not provide specific evidence of the extent to which such collective action might have occurred in the Jinggangshan region, its widespread prevalence elsewhere in Jiangxi and surrounding provinces makes it virtually certain that it occurred in one way or another in this region as well.

Guest people collective action took various forms. Sometimes these involved organized collusion and extortion schemes to avoid paying rent or to

seize control over disputed lands, or the mustering of large groups of armed guest people to resist attempts to seize accused guest people troublemakers. On occasion, particularly during the chaotic Ming-Qing transition period, the scale and violence involved in guest people collective action escalated still further, to the level of major armed uprisings and large-scale rent-resistance movements that affected multi-county areas. At least some of the uprisings involved counties in the Jinggangshan region.[36]

Given the unsettled circumstances, the general existence and violent expression of intense mutual animosity between guest people and early settlers during the initial migration period is not particularly surprising. In those parts of Jiangxi (primarily in the southern part of the province) where guest people migrants eventually became an overwhelming majority of the population, inter-ethnic antagonism as a factor in social conflict also gradually disappeared from the historical record.[37]

However, in parts of the Jinggangshan region and a number of other areas along the Jiangxi-Hunan border where guest people became a significant percentage but still a minority of the entire populace, disputes continued to be strongly influenced by ethnic considerations, and regional populations remained chronically polarized into distinctive and mutually antagonistic camps down into the twentieth century. For example, in Ninggang and Lingxian counties, portions of the Jinggangshan region where endemic guest people–early settler conflict appears to have been very intense, at the turn of the century each group had separate and often-opposing religious/sectarian organizations, schools, and other institutions.[38]

While different dialects, customs, and other concrete signs of cultural difference certainly contributed to the persistence of sharp ethnic tensions for many generations after the cessation of significant migration, the economic inferiority of the guest people and their attempts to overcome it was the main cause for the endemic conflict. One factor contributing to economic inequality between the two groups was the fact that the mountain land that guest people occupied was often less productive over the long term than the lowland fields tilled by early settlers, so that guest people families and lineages tended to be poorer than their early settler neighbors. Profitable as the initial clearing and tilling of the region's steep hills might have been for guest people migrants and local inhabitants who claimed ownership of the land, the difficulty of building and maintaining terraced paddy fields in the rugged terrain, together with the cumulative impact of soil leaching, erosion, and reduced cropping/employment opportunities caused by over-cutting of timber and over-planting of other mountain products, made it difficult for even the most industrious of hill-dwelling guest people to match the economic returns available from fertile lowland paddy land.

Exacerbating the problem was the fact that early settler–guest people relations were frequently still landlord-tenant relations, a legacy of the time when

guest people migrants had been called in by early settler landlords to till their unopened lands. Over the years some guest people also became landlords, and some lands once claimed by early settlers came by habit and long use to be considered open public property, but by the early twentieth century much land even in regions dominated by guest people settlements was still owned or claimed by early settlers, and rented out to nearby guest people.

Moreover, market towns were located predominantly in valley areas inhabited by early settlers. Guest people wishing to buy or sell goods, to attend fairs and local dramatic productions, or to participate in any other of the social and cultural functions that were centered in the markets, had to do so within a restrictive framework of customs, regulations, and fees set by the early settler community in general and their elites in particular. In sum, as Mao Zedong noted later, "these settlers [i.e., guest people] occupy the mountainous areas, are oppressed by the native inhabitants [i.e., early settlers] who live in the plains, and have never had any political rights."[39]

CONCLUSION

The main features of the Jinggangshan region's diverse and divided society had begun to take shape during the massive guest people migrations of the sixteenth–eighteenth centuries, and in the course of subsequent centuries of interaction between land and population had gradually evolved and hardened into the highly polarized and conflicted state in which they appeared in the early twentieth century. The end of the local guest people migration at a point when the migrants had thickly settled the area's highlands, but still constituted only a sizable minority presence in the region as a whole, helped insure that the economic and topographical distinctions between the region's wealthier lowland core areas and its poorer highland peripheries would also largely overlap and reinforce the contentious guest people–early settler ethnic dividing line.

In addition to such ecologically and ethnically based distinctions, members of the region's largely rural population also varied widely among themselves in the range of resources and opportunities they had available, and in the degree of power and prestige they could command. Most of the region's rural inhabitants were peasants, people who in this isolated and relatively poor area frequently survived by engaging not only (and sometimes not at all) in land-tilling, but also in mountain product processing, handicraft production, and a wide variety of other extractive and/or productive entrepreneurial activities. A small minority of the region's populace were local elites, people who resembled—and to some extent overlapped with—peasants in the diversity and variability of their resources and influence, but who generally commanded more of both than did non-elites, and also enjoyed greater

access to and control over the important social, economic and political institutions through which they exercised and maintained local dominance.

Both the similarities and differences between peasants and local elites are important to note. On the one hand, the disparities in wealth, lifestyle and power existing between hardscrabble peasants such as Wang Zuo near one end of the local social spectrum and well-endowed elites such as the Suichuan "great family" leader Xiao Jiabi near the other were so great that in many respects such individuals clearly functioned in and thought of themselves as belonging to largely separate social universes. On the other hand, the presence of an ambiguous and shifting mid-range of the social spectrum where elite and peasant met and mingled, and where the similarity in resources and social reach of the individuals and households involved made it nearly impossible to separate one category from another, also meant that enough behavioral and conceptual linkages still existed between the two groups to insure at least some shared interests and osmotic interchange of ideas between them.

It is also important to point out the coexistence in Jinggangshan society of various forms of enduring collective dominance and considerable fluidity of individual position both between and within the broad social categories of peasant and elite. That is to say, although groups such as early settlers, prominent lineages and certain of their subsegments and local elites in general retained their collectively superior wealth, power and status for generations, the circumstances of individuals and households within these and other groups changed considerably over time. The variable effects of partible inheritance, personal energy and management skill, or simple luck could plunge once-comfortable households into decline, or dramatically improve the fortunes of those formerly destitute. Local inhabitants followed certain well-established, though often widely divergent, strategies for trying to improve and maintain their fortunes, among the most prominent of which were educational achievement and the raising of armed forces such as militia or bandit gangs.

As will become more apparent in subsequent chapters, all of these aspects of Jinggangshan society are relevant to the history of the revolutionary movement in the region. For example, the cross-cutting network of social fissures engendered by various kinds of enduring, socioeconomically and geographically structured, inequality and discrimination helped instill in some of the region's inhabitants a desire for change that initially blossomed into action under the proper circumstances, later provided them with numerous attractive issues and points of attack as they sought to build a political organization, and ultimately affected that organization's growth and cohesion.

Other aspects of the region's elite and peasant societies, and of the connections between them, also affected the revolutionary movement. The presence of a particularly large number of mobile rural inhabitants of diverse occupations and ages who were not tightly bound to the land made it easier

than it might have been in a more prosperous agricultural area for the revolutionary movement to move beyond the adventurous and unencumbered young people who have always formed the backbone of military forces and radical movements the world over, and to enlist a broader range of the population in their cause. The deeply ingrained social perception of the importance of educational achievement as a strategy for individual advancement and status maintenance, acted upon far more often and more effectively by elites than by peasants, engendered support for schooling and sojourning students that provided key avenues for the introduction of radical ideas into the Jinggangshan region. And the contact and interchange that occurred among elites and peasants, particularly among those inhabiting the crucial liminal zone where the two groups overlapped, facilitated the reworking and transmission of versions of these radical ideas from the elite-dominated educational circles where they made their first local appearance to the broader peasant society into which the revolutionary movement eventually expanded.

At least as important to the revolutionary movement as any of these aspects of Jinggangshan society, however, was the habitual widespread use of armed force throughout the region. In this isolated and notoriously-lawless area, where collective violence or its threat was frequently the most effective means for achieving or defending one's aims and interests, people at all levels of society were familiar and interacted in one way or another with a variety of organized armed forces, including bands of lineage braves, bandit gangs and local militias. For a revolutionary movement whose ideology called for the violent transformation of the existing state and society, and whose members were engaged in constructing the institutional apparatus to achieve this goal, the regional profusion of armed forces of diverse provenance substantially eased the task of building an armed organization and mobilizing the local population to participate in it.

Because of the revolutionaries' emphasis on social and political transformation, they were naturally drawn particularly to armed groups that challenged existing state and elite power. The most notable forces of this type were the numerous bandit and sworn brotherhood gangs that roamed through the region. In view of the important roles that some gangs and their leaders eventually played in the revolutionary movement, and of the revealing insights into the dynamics of social conflict that study of the gangs' complex interaction with local society can provide, it is appropriate now to turn to a detailed examination of their place in Jinggangshan life.

NOTES

1. Yongxin county, for example, was established during the Han Dynasty, but the oldest surviving villages in the county were not founded until the latter part of the

Tang Dynasty. Recent local records show that of those inhabitants considered to be early settlers (*tuji*), 17 villages (of a county-wide total of 2,218 natural villages) trace their ancestors' arrival to the late Tang, 59 to the Song, 36 to the Yuan, 174 to the Ming, and 135 to the Qing. See *Yongxin xianzhi* [Gazetteer of Yongxin county] (Beijing: Xinhua chubanshe, 1992), 53. These figures are consistent with estimates derived from an extensive scanning (though not an exhaustive enumeration) of a recent listing of the entire county's villages. See Yongxin xian diming weiyuanhui bangongshi, *Jiangxi sheng Yongxin xian diming zhi* [Gazetteer of place names in Jiangxi province's Yongxin county] (N.p.: n.p., 1983). In this internally circulated publication, most entries for individual villages note the period when the earliest known inhabitants arrived in the village; in most cases, this must mark the founding of the village itself.

More cursory scanning of the corresponding place-name gazetteer for Ninggang county, and of gazetteer information for various counties in the region, leads to the same general conclusions. See Ninggang xian renmin zhengfu diming bangongshi, *Jiangxi sheng Ninggang xian diming zhi* [Gazetteer of place names in Jiangxi province's Ninggang county] (Nanchang: n.p., 1987); *Ninggang xianzhi* [Gazetteer of Ninggang county] (Beijing: Zhonggong zhongyang dangxiao chubanshe, 1995), 139–43; *Jinggangshan zhi* [Gazetteer of Jinggangshan] (Beijing: Xinhua chubanshe, 1997), 45–46; *Suichuan xianzhi* [Gazetteer of Suichuan county] (Nanchang: Jiangxi renmin chubanshe, 1996), 143; *Lianhua xianzhi* [Gazetteer of Lianhua county] (Nanchang: Jiangxi renmin chubanshe, 1989), 73; *Lingxian zhi* [Gazetteer of Lingxian] (Lingxian: Lingxian zhi bian zuan weiyuanhui, 1985), 534; *Chaling xianzhi* [Gazetteer of Chaling county] (Beijing: Zhongguo wenshi chubanshe, 1994), 667–68.

2. Yongxin xian diming weiyuanhui bangongshi, *Jiangxi sheng Yongxin xian diming zhi*. Another account by a knowledgeable Jinggangshan local historian cites gazetteer information to show that a few relatively small groups of guest people came directly from Luoyang in northern China to settle areas in or near Jinggangshan between the Five Dynasties Period and the end of the Song. Luoyang origins are commonly asserted by many modern-day Hakka-speakers, but it is not known what linguistic identity these early migrants originally had; as in cases known from elsewhere, they may well have assimilated over time to help form the majority early settler population. See Li Chunxiang, "Jinggangshan keji ren de laili" [The origins of Jinggangshan's guest people], in *Chong shang Jinggangshan* [Re-climbing Jinggangshan], ed. Jin Yang (Beijing: Guangming ribao chubanshe, 1996), vol. 4, 1267.

3. The following account of migration into Jiangxi draws upon material first presented in English in Stephen Averill, "The Shed People [peng-min] and the Opening of the Yangtze Highlands," *Modern China* 9, no. 1 (January 1983): 84–126. For a more expansive study that makes some of the same points and draws upon some of the same information, see Sow-Theng Leong, *Migration and Ethnicity in Chinese History: Hakkas, Pengmin, and Their Neighbors* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1997).

4. This generalization is supported by information in the population and dialect sections of local gazetteers, e.g.: *Ninggang xianzhi*, 139, 142; *Suichuan xianzhi*, 143–44; *Yongxin xianzhi*, 54; *Lingxian zhi*, 79, 227; *Jinggangshan zhi*, 45–47, 691; see also Li Chunxiang, "Jinggangshan keji ren de laili," 1267–68.

5. Some of these types of activity can be linked to the Jinggangshan region, though generally without much detail. For example, some people of She, Yao, and Li ethnic

origins living in the Jinggangshan massif region trace their ancestry back to refugees from the Ming-era She rebellions in southern Jiangxi and northern Guangdong, or to recruitment as militia forces called into the region to suppress bandits. Other immigrants came privately or were called in by officials to help open "waste land" emptied during various late Ming–early Qing uprisings—including the Rebellion of the Three Feudatories and various uprisings of the "shack people" (*pengmin*). See *Lingxian zhi*, 79; *Ninggang xianzhi*, 31; *Suichuan xianzhi*, 13, 143–44; Li Chunxiang, "Jinggangshan keji ren de laili," 1266–69; Fan Shoukai and Luo Dunfu, "Sanju zai Chaling bianyuan shanqu de 'kejia'" [The guest families that live scattered in the mountainous areas of Chaling's periphery], *Chaling wenshi ziliao*, no. 4 (1989): 266–70; "Lingxian Yaozu de lishi yuanyuan" [The historical origin of Lingxian's Yao people], *Lingxian wenshi ziliao*, no. 1 (1987): 5–7.

6. For details, see Averill, "The Shed People."

7. This practice continues down to the present day in the Jinggangshan region. On visits in 1984 and 1991, I observed many groups of seasonal woodcutters from Guangdong working in the Jinggangshan massif area, and living in thatch shacks that are probably nearly identical with those used by their predecessors during the seventeenth century.

8. *Suichuan (Longquan) xianzhi* [Gazetteer of Suichuan (Longquan) county] (Tongzhi ed.), *juan* 15, 69a.

9. Some Guangdong/Fujian migrants were entering the region as late as the early nineteenth century, as evidenced by a county magistrate's proclamation in 1810 warning against the wanton destruction of forests during land-opening operations conducted by such people. See *Youxian zhi* [Gazetteer of Youxian] (Beijing: Zhongguo wenshi chubanshe, 1990), 17.

10. On riverine transportation problems, see *Ninggang xianzhi* [Gazetteer of Ninggang county] (1937 ed.), *juan* 4, 106–7, which notes that the main river running out of the county is passable only part of the year, and then only by small boats. Comments on the twentieth-century appearance of the Jinggangshan region are based on personal observation during several visits since 1983. For more general discussions of the problem of flooding and erosion caused by the opening of the mountains by immigrants during this period, see Ho, Ping-ti, *Studies on the Population of China, 1368–1953* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1959), 150–51, 229–30; and (for Hunan) Peter Perdue, *Exhausting the Earth: State and Peasant in Hunan, 1500–1850* (Cambridge, Mass.: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1987), 88, 222, 232–33.

11. Descriptions based on personal observation and gazetteer information; for other general information on the early twentieth-century economy of the region, see "Yang Kemin guanyu Xiang-Gan bian suqu qingkuang de zonghe baogao" [A comprehensive report by Yang Kemin regarding conditions in the Hunan-Jiangxi border soviet area], in *Jinggangshan geming genjudi* [The Jinggangshan revolutionary base area], ed. Jinggangshan geming genjudi dangshi ziliao zhengji bianyan xiezuo xiaozu and Jinggangshan geming bowuguan (Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi ziliao chubanshe, 2 vols., 1987) (hereafter cited as *JGG*), vol. 1, 248–50; "Jinggangshan geming genjudi de jingji douzheng" bianxiezu, *Jinggangshan geming genjudi de jingji douzheng* [The economic struggle in the Jinggangshan revolutionary base area] (Nanchang: Jiangxi renmin chubanshe, 1977), 3–5; interview with party historians, Jinggangshan

Revolutionary Museum, 19 May 1984 [hereafter cited as Jinggangshan interview]; interview with party historians, Ninggang Memorial Hall, Ninggang county, 20 May 1984 [hereafter cited as Ninggang interview].

12. Information about Wang and his family is drawn from Huang Zhongfang and Li Chunxiang, *Wang Zuo jiangjun zhuan* [A biography of general Wang Zuo] (Beijing: Jiefangjun chubanshe, 1990) (hereafter cited as *WZ*), 1–66. For a more detailed account of these and other aspects of Wang's early life, see chapter 3.

13. A partial exception to this practice occurs when discussing CCP land redistribution efforts in the Jinggangshan area, in which context terms such as "rich peasant" and the like are used as contemporary party cadres typically used them.

14. Paddy fields cover only 5.1 percent of the total land area in the present-day administrative area known as Jinggangshan City, which comprises the Jinggangshan massif and surrounding mountains, together with a few adjacent areas of lower terrain. A significant portion of the mountainous land in the administrative area, however, was also productively used (and owned). The lack of agricultural land in the Jinggangshan massif area was extreme by regional standards; in the other counties a somewhat higher percentage of land was arable—10 percent of Ninggang's area is currently paddy land, for example. *Jinggangshan zhi*, 2; Ninggang interview.

Figures for Yongxin county in 1937 classified 34.2 percent of the population as "semi-self-cultivators." In Lianhua in 1936 over 75 percent of the county's peasant households were categorized as self-cultivators or semi-self-cultivators. In 1928 in Ninggang's Maoping village (situated at the foot of the Jinggangshan massif), about 63 percent of the peasant population were "poor peasants," and in 1936, 46.1 percent of the peasants in the county were classified as "semi-self-cultivators." The categories of "semi-self-cultivator" and "poor peasant" used in these examples both refer to individuals/households who own some land, but not enough to support themselves completely. Though sketchy, all of these figures suggest that many peasants owned at least a little land—either paddy field or "mountain" land. *Yongxin xianzhi*, 95; *Lianhua xianzhi*, 271; *Ninggang xianzhi*, 363–64.

15. In Lianhua county at the time of land reform in 1950, figures showed that landlords had an average of 23.6 *mu* per household; in Suichuan, landlords were found to have an average of 12 *mu* per person, which would give a five-person household an average of 60 *mu*; in Chaling, the figure was 7.1 *mu* per person, yielding a figure of 35.5 *mu* per household; in Yongxin, the average per landlord household was 29.61 *mu*. *Lianhua xianzhi*, 273; *Suichuan xianzhi*, 361; *Chaling xianzhi*, 97; *Yongxin xianzhi*, 95. Jinggangshan and Ninggang interviews provided similar sorts of figures, all of which suggest that most landlord households had quite limited amounts of land.

16. *Yongxin xianzhi*, 95; *Chaling xianzhi*, 98; Ninggang interview; Interview with Yuan Yaolie and others at Maoping, in Ninggang county, 19 May 1984 [hereafter cited as Maoping interview]. Figures for Sanwan village are from information on display at Sanwan village, Yongxin county.

17. Ninggang interview.

18. *Jinggangshan jingji douzheng*, 56–57.

19. *Chaling xianzhi*, 671; Jinggangshan interview; Ninggang interview; Interview with Mr. Liu Xiaonong, Ninggang county, 20 May 1984 [hereafter citied as Liu Xiaonong interview]. Mr. Liu stated that ancestors of the Xie lineage moved to the area from Henan during the Song period. He explained further that the lineage's huge size relative to the rest of the population was due both to the length of their residence in the area and the fact that they initially arrived as a large group rather than as a single family, thus enabling them to increase more rapidly. All interviewees repeated a saying current in the county to the effect that the Xies comprised half the population and the Lius one-quarter, and said that the situation had been the same before 1949. *Ninggang xianzhi* (1937 ed.), *juan* 4, 43, states that the county's population in early republican times was about 131,000; half of this figure would be over 60,000, which seems extraordinarily large for a single lineage, even one with fictive kin membership. Still, the contemporary gazetteer for the neighboring county of Chaling notes that there are three surnames in the county held by over 50,000 people each: Tan (97,478 people), Chen (71,068 people), and Liu (60,007 people). *Chaling xianzhi*, 664. Chaling is considerably larger than Ninggang, and simply possessing the same surname does not mean that all individuals consider themselves as part of the same corporate lineage structure. Still, the Chaling figures suggest the possibility that the Ninggang figures are at least roughly accurate.

20. Joseph W. Esherick and Mary Backus Rankin, eds., *Chinese Local Elites and Patterns of Dominance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 8–13.

21. For another exposition of this tripartite schematic of local elite structure based largely on materials dealing with Xunwu county in southern Jiangxi, see Stephen Averill, "Local Elites and Communist Revolution in the Jiangxi Hill Country," in *Chinese Local Elites*, ed. Esherick and Rankin, 282–304.

22. *Jinggangshan jingji douzheng*, 56–57.

23. *Jinggangshan jingji douzheng*, 59; Xu Yi, ed., *Zhongyang geming genjudi caizheng jingjishi changbian* [The financial and economic history of the Central Revolutionary Base Area] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2 vols., 1982), vol. 2, 212–14; Yan Guanglin and Sheng Zusheng, *Jinggang fenghuo* [Beacon fire on Jinggang] (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1980) [hereafter cited as *JF*], 90–91.

24. Zhong Haidong, "Jinggangshan xia feishou da eba Xiao Jiabi" [Xiao Jiabi: The bandit leader and great tyrant at the foot of Jinggangshan], *Suichuan wenshi ziliao*, no. 1 (1989): 57–77 (especially 57–58); Jinggangshan interview; "Suichuan 'sharen tufu' Xiao Jiabi" [The Suichuan "butcher" Xiao Jiabi], document dated December 1971 on file at Jinggangshan Revolutionary Museum; Xiong Bangyan, "Xiao Jiabi, Guo Mingda 'fangong' de shimo" [The complete story of the "anti-Communism" of Xiao Jiabi and Guo Mingda], *Jiangxi wenxian*, no. 4 (July 1966): 18–24; Li Chunxiang, "Jinggang lulin" [The bandits of Jinggangshan], *Jinggangshan wenshi ziliao*, no. 1 (1985): 63.

25. For discussion of the central-place hierarchy, see G. William Skinner, "Cities and the Hierarchy of Local Systems," in *The City in Late Imperial China*, ed. G. William Skinner (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1977), 275–351.

26. Liu Xiaonong, "Yuan Wencai, Wang Zuo ji qi budui shimo" [Yuan Wencai, Wang Zuo, and the complete story of their detachment], *Jiangxi wenshi ziliao*, no. 3 (1980): 101–2; Maoping interview.

27. For official and popular ideas about pettifoggers during the Qing period, see Melissa Macauley, *Social Power and Legal Culture: Litigation Masters in Late Imperial*

China (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998). In the likely event that many of the mostly negative views held during the Qing continued to influence people during the early Republic, one can see why Wang Dongwen might have found martial arts training useful and appropriate.

28. Yuan Jinghong, "Wang Zuo de quanshi Wang Dongwen" [Wang Zuo's martial arts teacher Wang Dongwen], *Jinggangshan wenshi ziliao*, no. 3–4 (1989): 112–15.

29. *Suichuan (Longquan) xianzhi* (Tongzhi ed.), *juan* 15, 69a.

30. *WZ*, 2, 5.

31. *WZ*, 89. For further discussion of these ancestral sacrifice gatherings, see chapter 3.

32. *Ninggang xianzhi*, 139, 142; Jinggangshan interview; Ninggang interview.

33. For more discussion on the formation of Hakka ethnicity, see Leong, *Migration and Ethnicity in Chinese History*. Along with the Hakka or proto-Hakka immigrants into the Jinggangshan region were some people who retained their She, Yao, and Li ethnic identities—several thousand of their descendants continued to live in the region in the 1920s. Li Chunxiang, "Jinggangshan keji ren de laili," 1267–69; *Suichuan xianzhi*, 146.

34. Conflict over access to civil service examinations occurred frequently in other areas where immigrants settled—see Leong, *Migration and Ethnicity in Chinese History*. See also Liu Min, "Lun Qingdai pengmin de huji wenti" [On the problem of household registration for the Qing Dynasty shack people], *Zhongguo shehui jingji shi yanjiu*, no. 1 (1983): 26–28.

35. *Ninggang xianzhi* (1937 ed.), *juan* 4, 28–32. Local historian Liu Xiaonong, drawing in this case on local oral traditions, provides a fuller account of the housing issue in his historical novel *Jinggang yanyi* [Romance of Jinggang] (Beijing: Nongcun dushu chubanshe, 1989), 2. In his account (which he dates to the Yongzheng rather than the Qianlong period), two guest people households in Maoping who had become prosperous set up a kiln to produce bricks for home construction. While the kiln was under construction, several early settler members of the prominent Xie lineage sought to block its completion on the grounds that guest people habitually lived deep in the mountains and built with thatch and wood, and so could not be allowed to change to more permanent materials. After a long legal battle, the guest people prevailed and were allowed to build in brick. From that time on, the place around the kiln site has been known as Wawuli ("Brick House Neighborhood"). Much of Liu's novel is based on oral sources and other materials he has collected as a local historian in Ninggang county. When I have used material from this novel, however, I have either used it in support of other material, or questioned Mr. Liu personally to ensure the factual basis of the material cited.

36. For examples of gazetteer records of guest people uprisings affecting the Jinggangshan region, see *Ninggang xianzhi*, 31; *Suichuan xianzhi*, 13; *Yongxin xianzhi*, 501.

37. A good example of this is the case of Ningdu county in southern Jiangxi, in which social unrest involving immigrant tenants and local landlords was prominently recorded in late Ming–early Qing accounts, but then fades away. According to local historians interviewed in 1984, Ningdu is now a primarily Hakka-speaking county.

38. Liu Xiaonong interview; Chen Zhengren, "Mao Zedong tongzhi chuangjian Jinggangshan geming genjudi de weida shijian" [The great practice of comrade Mao Zedong in founding the Jinggangshan revolutionary base area], *Jiangxi wenshi ziliao*, no. 1(1987): 49; Liu Xiaonong, "Guanyu Yuan Wencai, Wang Zuo beisha de zeren wenti" [The problem of the blame for the killing of Yuan Wencai and Wang Zuo], in *Yu hong san juntuan youguan de lishi wenti ji wenxian* [Historical problems and materials concerning the Red Third Army Group], ed. Jiangxi xiandai shi xuehui (Nanchang: Jiangxi renmin chubanshe, 1980), 42–43; *Lingxian zhi*, 6, 420.

39. Averill, "The Shed People"; "Report of the Jinggangshan Front Committee to the Central Committee" (25 November 1928), in *Mao's Road to Power: Revolutionary Writings, 1912–1949*, ed. Stuart Schram (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1995), vol. 3, 110.

2

Bandits and Brotherhoods

Like many rugged, administratively and militarily inaccessible areas in China, the Jinggangshan region in the early twentieth century had a well established reputation as an habitual bandit "lair." In addition to the obstacles that terrain and distance posed to government efforts to impose "order" on such regions, local constellations of social structures and practices, filtered and interpreted through collective memory, generally also distilled over time into what might be termed cultural moods, or atmospheres, or ambiences, that significantly affected both the behavior of the inhabitants and their characterization by outsiders.

As pointed out in chapter 1, even the notoriously "pugnacious" and "unruly" populations of areas such as Jinggangshan, including inhabitants stretching all across the social spectrum, had a range of potential occupational choices and extensive repertoires of collective action upon which to draw when they sought to deal with problems. In absolute terms, only a relatively small percentage of the total population chose to seek their fortunes or redress their grievances by joining bandit gangs or sworn brotherhoods, or were related in some way to those who did. Nor did the Jinggangshan region appear extraordinarily bandit-ridden during the first several decades of the twentieth century—admittedly a period of particularly intense and widespread banditry in many parts of the country—at least by anecdotal comparison with other topographically and administratively similar areas.[1]

Even acknowledging all of these points, however, the fact remains that bandits and brotherhoods were extremely visible and consequential parts of the social, economic and political landscape of early twentieth century Jinggangshan. Such organizations provided some of the region's most desperate and deprived people with a means of livelihood; comaraderie, kinship and

mutual protection; opportunities to take revenge on the powerful; and possibilities, however remote, for becoming gang leaders and potentially ascending into the ranks of the local elite. In addition, given the specific economic and ethnic contours of the Jinggangshan region, banditry/brotherhood in this area also tended to possess a particular topographical and ethnic stratification that disproportionately exacerbated existing social tensions.

This chapter and the next explore the characteristics and interrelated activities of the region's bandits and brotherhoods, some of whose members would eventually come to play significant roles in the history of the region's revolutionary movement. This chapter begins with a general description of the nature and character of banditry and brotherhood activity in the region, focusing upon the social and ethnic dimensions of these forms of collective behavior. This is followed by a discussion of a significant upsurge in the amount and scale of bandit activity and other related forms of social unrest that started around the turn of the twentieth century and that by the time the local revolutionary movement began in the mid-1920s had brought the region to a state of much higher militarization and much more intense ethnic polarization. Finally, the following chapter adopts a more personal, micro-societal perspective on many of these same issues by examining in some detail the early lives and careers of two specific individuals—Wang Zuo and Yuan Wencai—who gained both fame and notoriety as regional bandit leaders, and who later became central participants in the revolutionary struggle.

JINGGANGSHAN BANDITRY—AN OVERVIEW

Although there were probably always at least a few large gangs of full-time professional brigands in the region, the bulk of Jinggangshan's endemic banditry consisted of the predatory activities of individual highwaymen, or of small, often short-lived bands with a fluid membership ranging in size from two or three to a couple of dozen persons.[2] Most of this small-scale banditry was carried out by disgruntled youths restlessly searching for a rewarding livelihood in the harsh hill country environment. Much of their activity was seasonal or episodic in nature. For cultivators whose land was inadequate to sustain their families, for example, part-time banditry provided supplemental income during the agricultural slack season, while for timber-cutters, porters, inn-keepers and itinerant craftsmen whose work normally kept them in the high hill country or on the roads and trails that wound through it, banditry might manifest itself as an episodic and opportunistic banding-together to prey upon travelers or wealthy households with whom they dealt.

Such seasonal or opportunistic bandits remained fully a part of mainstream local society, raising families and spending most their time involved

in productive employment. Even many of those who adopted banditry as a primary occupation still retained considerably more connection with the surrounding population than is conveyed by stereotyped images of "outlaw" gangs holed up in remote hideouts.

For one thing, in line with the frequent Chinese practice of seeking family security through occupational diversity, it was not unheard of for one son to become a bandit while others in the family concentrated upon tilling the land or engaging in handicraft production. In such cases the bandit son might well retain close personal ties with the family, providing them with gifts of goods and money obtained from his banditry and relying upon them in turn to provide a place of rest and refuge, assistance with marriage and other such life-events, and sometimes even temporary assistance in bandit activities themselves.

Bandit gangs as well as their individual members likewise had collective need for the community around them, upon which they relied for outlets for the sale of their booty, supply points for the purchase of food, clothing, and various luxury goods, and sources of information about potential targets and upcoming government suppression efforts. In some of the smallest gangs it was doubtless possible to meet many of these collective needs largely informally, through the combined efforts of the individual bandits. In larger bands, however, interactions with the surrounding community tended to become more structured and formalized, including the employment of hired scouts and the establishment of large and well-organized fencing, investment, and resupply operations.[3]

Both as individuals and as gangs, therefore, Jinggangshan bandits were linked and interacted with regional society in multiple ways. The number and range of these interconnections meant that large numbers of local people had kinship ties, business connections or other vested interests in the continued existence of banditry. At the same time, they structured an environment in which individuals and groups slid fluidly and frequently back and forth along a continuum of activities in which the licit shaded so naturally, imperceptibly, and commonly into the illicit that the distinction between the two categories lost most of its relevance and moral force.

Coexisting with and often closely connected to banditry in the region were a number of sworn brotherhoods. Lack of sources makes it difficult to describe them in detail, but most were apparently either variants or hybrid mixtures of such ubiquitous South China and Yangzi Valley groups as the Triads and the Elder Brother Society.[4] Although many brotherhoods were known to imperial-period government officials primarily because of their avowed anti-government aims and occasional armed uprisings, they played other roles as well. As the term implies, sworn brotherhoods were modeled on kinship relations and aimed by linking their members (who generally included many unrelated people) through notional kinship bonds to provide them with

much the same solidarity and mutual assistance benefits that in other circumstances were typically obtained through family ties. The brotherhoods were therefore particularly favored forms of organization for poor and rootless young men—such as porters, boatmen, peddlers, soldiers and the like—for whom they could provide protection and assistance in strange surroundings and dangerous circumstances.

At the same time, the brotherhoods also served as very effective collective vehicles for a variety of illicit and predatory activities, including salt and opium smuggling, extortion and protection rackets, organized gambling and banditry. In many parts of China, including Jiangxi, it was common for most or even all members of many bandit gangs to belong simultaneously to a sworn brotherhood, which adds to the difficulty of distinguishing between the two forms of predation.

In some cases brotherhood gangs engaged in a sort of "rob from the rich and give to the poor" social banditry that echoed the deeds of the 108 sworn brother protagonists of the novel *Shuihu zhuan* (sometimes titled in English *All Men Are Brothers*), whose fictional actions in this and many other respects did much to shape the cultural ideal of heroic egalitarianism accepted by later generations of Chinese swashbucklers. More often than not, however, the actions of brigands and brotherhoods alike fell far short of these noble ideals, and amounted to little more than ordinary armed robbery whose impact fell upon rich and poor alike.

Most brotherhoods, including the Triads and the Elder Brother Society, propagated membership through the creation of many discrete lodges loosely connected by thin skeins of common ritual and tradition. Both the separateness of individual lodges and the shared connections among them were important factors that help explain the attractiveness of brotherhood organizations in the Jinggangshan region.

Brotherhood lodges were typically formed and led by individual local leaders, each of whom recruited and presided over a membership divided into a complex hierarchy of subordinate ranks. As scholars have long realized, this discrete, cell-like structure had both advantages and disadvantages for brotherhoods that sought to oppose the existing political order. On the one hand, independent recruitment practices, individual lodge solidarities and personal rivalries among leaders of different lodges contributed to an organizational diffuseness that generally kept the brotherhoods from combining into a body with enough unity and cohesion to mount a sustained challenge to the established state. On the other hand, the responsiveness of the lodges to local mutual assistance needs, their rootedness in widespread conceptions of kinship obligation, their chameleon-like mutability into and mutual interpenetration of other local organizations, and their sheer multiplicity of numbers all combined to give them a hydra-headed, social-contour-hugging character that made them nearly impossible for the government to suppress.[5]

The characteristics possessed by brotherhoods made them especially well suited for the special features of hill country regions such as Jinggangshan, with their scattered mountain villages, small lineages and mobile, hustling peasant populations. In such geographically and socially atomized settings, individual brotherhood lodges provided cohesive institutional structures based on kinship ideals that could help unify villagers of different surnames from neighboring hamlets, while the brotherhoods' uniform rituals and organizational forms provided inter-lodge connections that could help link people across much larger areas.

Under these circumstances, brotherhoods could easily expand to encompass large numbers of relatively settled highland villagers of all ages as well as the restless, rootless youths who formed the bulk of the membership of bandit gangs and the trade route/market town itinerants and soldiers who comprised the other main constituencies for the brotherhoods. The vast majority of bandits and sworn brotherhood members were peasants, craftsmen, transport workers and other poor non-elites for whom joining the "brothers of the greenwood" offered one of the few means for possibly improving their lives and gaining a measure of revenge upon those who had taken advantage of them. But many elites as well were involved in, and some were themselves the product of, the multiple interactions among the gangs and other facets of local society.

Existing elites interacted with the gangs for both profit and protection. Merchants who helped bandits dispose of booty or invest their money, for example, not only received a share of the profits generated, but also gained immunity from bandit depredations on their own businesses. Some landlords and other elites similarly sought to establish sworn-brother ties with gang leaders to avoid becoming targets of attack themselves or to gain the support of armed followings in factional disputes with other elites.[6]

Bandits and brotherhoods could make new elites as well as aid existing ones. In the hill country, armed strength and the physical possession of land, water and other economic resources were easily the equal of classical education and bureaucratic titles in defining power and prestige, and the line between bandit gangs and official militias, between brigand chiefs and officially tolerated local power holders, was often so indistinct as to be nonexistent. The lives of the vast majority of bandits, sworn brothers and their leaders were more notable for brevity and violence than for prestige and prosperity. But for a strong and lucky few, success in a greenwoods career provided sufficient resources and reputation to enable them to pull themselves out of poverty and obscurity and into the ranks of the elite.[7]

Although bandits and brotherhoods affected the entire region to some degree, their centers of activity were disproportionately concentrated in the high hill country that constituted the socioeconomic peripheries of the region, including most notably the Jinggangshan massif itself. In part this was

due to the rugged inaccessibility of these areas, which made it easy for bandits to escape destruction by government troops. In even greater measure, however, it was due to the widespread impact in these areas of the sorts of economic disadvantages and social discrimination that we have described in chapter 1. The disparities in wealth and opportunities that existed between the lowland and highland portions of the region made it almost inevitable that the less favored highland areas would generate more bandits and sworn brothers, and that in their search for profitable targets they would be led to prey disproportionately upon the wealthier lowland areas.

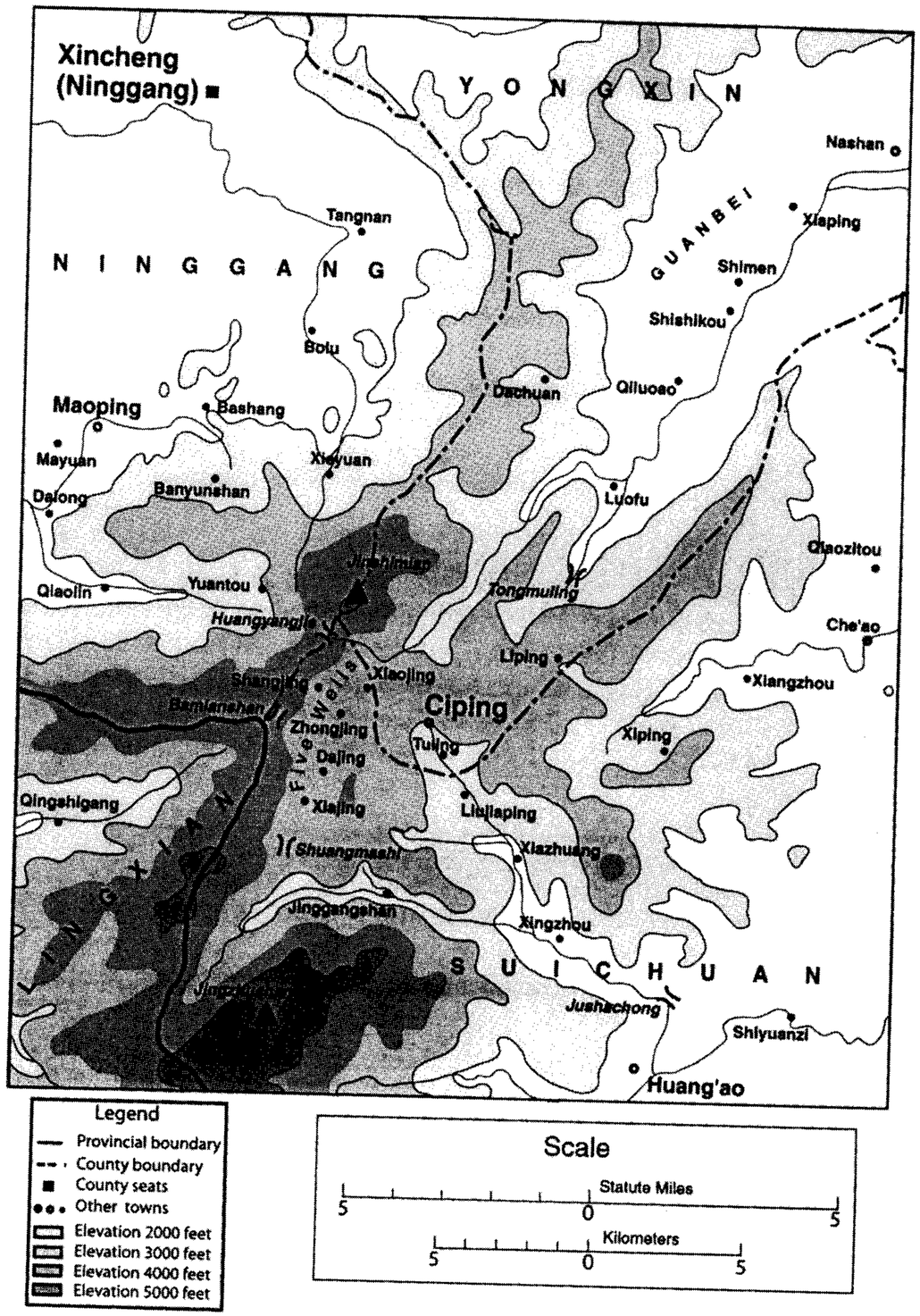
The high coincidence between these geographical and economic distinctions and ethnic dwelling patterns encouraged this tendency, since attacks by hill-dwelling guest people bandits on lowland early settler communities became both profit-making endeavors and significant, satisfying forms of revenge and protest against generations of discrimination. Similarly, feelings of injustice and a shared sense of ethnic persecution stimulated the reliance on sworn brotherhoods as a way to link numerous small guest people villages and their weak lineages together in a kind of large-scale, multi-surnamed surrogate kinship organization that had a chance to stand up against oppressive early settler communities and their dominant lineages.[8]

THE LATE QING–EARLY REPUBLICAN PERIOD COLLECTIVE ACTION UPSURGE

During the last years of the Qing, and especially in the decade or so after 1911, the level of government control declined sharply all over Jiangxi. Political instability, the growth and depredations of warlord armies, and other factors weakened the ability of local officials to impose order on recalcitrant populations and at the same time contributed to growing unrest among the people. One result was a province-wide upturn in bandit and sworn brotherhood activity.

In the Jinggangshan area, the upturn in the rate of this important social Geiger counter was particularly noticeable. Not only did the normal background-level activity of local bandits (*tufei*) and brotherhoods increase sharply, but these forces also expanded to include much more sizable and well-organized groups (*gufei*) capable of staging armed uprisings and massive predatory raids. Local governments, wealthy elites and threatened villagers responded by calling in outside troops, forming militias and mobilizing lineages to defend and retaliate against the bandit and brotherhood assaults. The result was a repetitive cycle of intensifying militarization and conflict that by the 1920s had engulfed the entire region in violence and devastation.

Fueling this growing conflagration were two factors directly or indirectly related to the instability attending the collapse of the imperial order. One of



Map 2.1 The Jinggangshan Massif Area

these factors was a dramatic flare-up of long-smoldering antagonisms between the region's guest people and native settlers. The other was the introduction into the area of a great many itinerant ex-soldiers spawned by the numerous passing warlord armies.

Growing Ethnic Tension

The flare-up in the chronic guest people–early settler tension seems to have begun in the late nineteenth century, when early settler elites in Ninggang county abruptly began to increase their economic demands on the local guest people. No specific reasons are known to account for this, but it may well have involved the pressures of intensifying taxation and local exaction that commonly occurred elsewhere in China during this period and that often led to riots and minor rebellions.[9]

At any rate, Ninggang early settler landlords and lineage managers began reviving claims on land that had long been used by guest people. Their agents fanned out through the hills, setting up wooden ownership stakes, demanding that guest people families or their community representatives personally deliver land rents to early settler landlords in town, and requesting that the guest people provide meals and other favors to the landlords at the time of payment. At the same time, the early settler elites who dominated certain local markets began to impose new exactions and restrictions upon guest people who sought to use them. These new demands were most obvious in Ninggang, but involvement of guest people communities in neighboring counties in the subsequent events suggests that the issues involved were regional in scope.[10]

The new exactions further polarized local society at a time when the authority of local government in the area was also rapidly declining. One sign of growing social unrest was a marked growth of bandit kidnapping raids on early settler communities. The kidnapping of prominent and wealthy elites to hold for ransom, a practice known locally as "lamb-hanging" (*diaoyang*), had probably long been a part of the repertoire of local bandits, for whom it was a useful income source in an area without major trade routes upon which they could prey. But the widespread proliferation of the practice during the 1910s and 1920s clearly reflected not only the impact of the swarms of ex-soldiers swelling the Jinggangshan bandit gangs, but also the rising anger of the region's guest people population, for whom lamb-hanging constituted a satisfying form of revenge and social protest against early settler discrimination.[11]

Sworn Brotherhoods and Their Opponents

At the same time the regional guest people community began to mobilize more broadly in different ways to resist the pressure of the lowland- and urban-centered early settlers. In the late nineteenth century thousands of guest people peasants launched what Qing government officials called uprisings of "sect bandits" (*huifei*), which in local context almost certainly involved one of the region's largely secular sworn brotherhoods rather than a religious-based sect such as the White Lotus.

The events involved a guest people martial arts instructor and brotherhood leader named Huang Sanxiang, who lived in the heart of the Jinggangshan massif. Huang, who drew support from a network of present and former students that was reputed to number over 2000 and to stretch across much of the Jiangxi-Hunan-Guangdong border area, first mobilized over a thousand Jinggangshan hill people in 1888 and led them to invade the Ninggang county seat and burn its *yamen*. Several years later, in 1893–1894 (or 1894–1895—sources differ), pressure by early settler agents on the guest people hamlets on the flanks of the Jinggangshan massif prompted another violent outbreak. In this case, Huang allied with several other brotherhood leaders from neighboring Lingxian, Suichuan, and Anren counties, each of whom is said to have gathered "several hundred" followers for a joint uprising at Xiaojing ("Small Well"), one of a group of Jinggangshan massif villages known collectively as the "Large and Small Five Wells" (*Daxiao wujing*). After killing several *yamen* underlings sent to disperse them, the rebels staged a vain attack on the Ninggang county capital before being driven away by the local garrison and hastily mobilized early settler militia. Huang's two attacks were the first in a series of similar brotherhood and bandit raids on the early settler-dominated economic and political centers in Ninggang and surrounding counties that continued into the 1920s.[12]

Prominent among the brotherhoods involved in these actions was one known as the Hong River Society, whose lodges were widespread in Jiangxi and parts of Hunan in the early twentieth century.[13] Some accounts state that this brotherhood was founded in the early twentieth century at the initiative of well-educated anti-Manchu revolutionaries living in a region along the Hunan-Jiangxi border slightly north of Jinggangshan. Supporting this statement is the deep involvement of the society in the abortive anti-Manchu Ping-Liu-Li Uprising in the same region,[14] as well as suggestions (noted below) that certain leaders of the brotherhood in the Jinggangshan region were also Revolutionary Alliance (Tongmenghui) members.

The case of the Hong River Society coalition headed by a man named Fan Shanyang clearly illustrates how brotherhood lodges and their leaders helped the region's guest people organize themselves to resist early settler pressures, and how such resistance contributed to an escalating spiral of militarization, violence and social polarization in the early twentieth century.[15] Fan was from Luofu, a collection of several tiny guest people villages rimming one of several small, interconnected basins strung out along a watercourse descending from the eastern edge of the Jinggangshan massif. Other

guest people villages lined adjacent stretches of the valley's upper reaches, while further downstream the large and fertile basin region known as Nashan was dotted by seventeen villages of various sizes inhabited predominantly by early settlers.

Little is known about Fan's life except that at some point early in the twentieth century he had joined the Hong River Society in neighboring Ninggang county and then returned to form his own lodge in Luofu. Gradually his own influence grew, perhaps aided by the numerous martial arts adepts he recruited, and his lodge in Luofu became known as the center of the brotherhood's activities in the entire broad swath of hill country that later comprised the core of the CCP's Jinggangshan base area.

A recent biography of the guest people bandit-cum-revolutionary Wang Zuo (who was related to Fan) states that Fan's brotherhood connections began and his influence grew as a result of his decision to align himself and his followers with Sun Yatsen's Revolutionary Alliance (Tongmenghui). No evidence is advanced to support this claim, however, and the general weakness of the anti-Manchu revolutionary movement in Jiangxi also makes it seem unlikely that Alliance branches reached into this remote corner of the province, or that they would have had much influence if they did. If Fan did in fact join the Revolutionary Alliance, it is more likely that its agents approached him after he had already built a name and a following on his own, rather than before.[16]

Other information also suggests a different and much more plausible basis for Fan's influence than the impact of outside agents. Wang Zuo's biographers state that representatives of the "Thirty-six Surnames" (*Sanshiliu xing*) of guest people living in the Jinggangshan region frequently gathered in Fan's village "to discuss important matters and exchange views," and that many members of these surnames belonged to the Hong River Society. This fact, together with the ability Fan later demonstrated to mobilize other lodge leaders and their followers, strongly suggests that (like Huang Sanxiang) Fan stood at the center of an at least quasi-formal regional collective action organization structured by reinforcing ties of common ethnic identity and brotherhood membership.

A major function of the loose coalition of guest people sworn brotherhoods (and probably the main reason behind its initial formation) was to enhance the ability of scattered guest people communities to confront their numerous and powerful adversaries in the lowland early settler villages. As the intensity and scale of clashes between the two groups began to increase during the late nineteenth century, a growing cycle of raid and counter-raid in this particular area came to pit the upstream guest people settlements and the sworn brotherhoods of Fan and his fellows against the downstream early settler villages and the powerful, lineage-based organizations that they produced.

Dominant among the latter were the strong lineages of the "Thirteen Halls" (*Shisan tang*) that dominated the Nashan area. Leaders of these lineages and other local elites may have cooperated formally or informally for some time in dealing with the guest people threat, but in 1912 their cooperation became considerably more institutionalized following a major cycle of confrontation between the two opposing groups.[17]

The conflict began when Fan Shanyang's agents managed to recruit seven new Hong River Society members from villages around Shimen, in the early settler–dominated territory at the foot of the mountains. News of this reached several of the area's powerful early settler elites who, determined to stop this activity before it began to threaten them on their own home ground, quickly mobilized their followers and killed all seven of the newly-recruited sworn brothers. Guest people reaction was swift and predictable: Fan contacted several other local brotherhood leaders, and together they gathered several hundred people to launch a ferocious retaliatory attack on the seventeen early settler communities that dotted the Nashan basin. In all the attackers are said to have burned precisely 108 sections (*jian*) of homes, a number whose symbolic importance in Chinese brotherhood rituals suggests careful and deliberate planning in the destruction inflicted.

The scale of this attack demanded and soon prompted a proportionate response. Aggrieved elites from the area complained to the Yongxin county magistrate, who sent troops to capture the Hong River Society leaders and disperse their followers. Guiding and accompanying the troops were the leaders and mobilized braves of the Thirteen Halls, who took revenge by despoiling the guest people villages through which they passed. Most of the brotherhood leaders had already left the area in anticipation of the attack, but almost all were quickly tracked down elsewhere in the region and executed. Fan Shanyang and his family escaped capture, but only by fleeing deep into the heart of the mountains, where they managed secretively to eke out a precarious existence until Fan died of illness a short time later.

The property of Fan and the other brotherhood leaders (as well, most probably, as some belonging to other local guest people) was confiscated by the victorious early settlers to help compensate for the losses they had suffered. The movable property was easily divided among the people of the seventeen villages on the basis of how many sections of housing they had lost during the guest people attack, but disposing of the paddy and mountain land that was also among the confiscated property posed a more difficult problem. The plots were initially put up for sale, but no one dared purchase them, potential buyers doubtless fearing the difficulties of owning land in the heart of guest people country.

To deal with this situation, the early settler elites obtained the magistrate's permission to form a body known as the Rescue Society (Kuangjiu hui) in Shimin to administer the properties and manage the income they generated.[18]

The finances of the organization were supervised by a board of representatives selected from the seventeen involved villages, and overall leadership of the society was put in the hands of Chen Meiqing, a prominent local educator and Qing lower degree holder (*xiucai*) who had been one of the chief leaders of the attacks on the Hong River Society.

The Rescue Society became an important, multi-faceted institution that dominated many aspects of early settler elite life in the region for more than a generation. According to its bylaws, the society was supposed to provide a specified income every year to the families whose homes had been burnt during the guest people attack on the seventeen villages. In addition, however, society income was used for other purposes. Primary among these was to support a militia detachment (also initially headed by Chen Meiqing, with the assistance of another local elite leader named Yin Daoyi) whose formation had been authorized by the magistrate at the same time the Rescue Society itself was formed. Another was to pay for an elementary school that Chen Meiqing had established sometime earlier, but which was moved and expanded using Rescue Society funds. Under the existing geographical and political circumstances, there can be little doubt that the student body of this school was overwhelmingly of early settler origin.[19]

The clash between Fan Shanyang's Hong River Society guest people followers and the Nashan early settler supporters of the Rescue Society indicates how conflicts between the two ethnic groups could have consequences far outlasting the precipitating incidents themselves, and how the ramifications of such incidents could help replicate and institutionalize still more resistance and community polarization. As the example of the Rescue Society's attached elementary school also indicates, this process of deepening community polarization extended beyond the violent world of sworn brotherhoods and lineage braves to encompass the more sedate (if no less important) sphere of educational and cultural life. In addition to mobilizing the hill country population through brotherhoods, the more prosperous and educated members of the guest people community also moved to reaffirm and strengthen their commitment to accessible and up-to-date schooling for themselves and their families.

As noted in chapter 1, early settler domination of most imperial-era local Confucian academies had led guest people elites to establish the Longjiang Academy in southern Ninggang to serve their own regional community.[20] Now in the early twentieth century, the end of the civil service examinations and the growth of new Western-style schools focused local attention once more on the practical and pedagogical problems of education, just as guest people–early settler tensions were also on the rise.

The conjunction of these two processes prompted a group of prosperous guest people elites from Ninggang, Chaling, and Lingxian counties to meet in 1908 to reorganize the Longjiang Academy into a Western-style institution

called the Longjiang Upper Primary School. During the years that followed, the school remained a focus of attention and source of pride for the guest people community, even as management of the school and its substantial endowment brought together members of the regional guest people elite and fostered that building of relationships and contacts which is so important to power-holding in any Chinese community. As we shall see, in the late 1920s this school and its management would play an important part in the growth of the early Jinggangshan Communist movement.[21]

The Upsurge in Banditry

The eventual significance of guest people schools and elite ties notwithstanding, the main trend of guest people activity in the early twentieth century was toward violent confrontation with their early settler antagonists. In addition to the occasional outbursts of large brotherhood coalitions already mentioned, the main manifestation of this violence was an upsurge in bandit raids on lowland communities during the 1910s and especially the 1920s.

The bulk of the increased bandit activity took the form of an increase in "lamb-hanging" raids by guest people gangs on wealthy lowland households, the vast majority of whom in this geographically- and ethnically-stratified environment were undoubtedly early settler elites. In addition, large groups of what official sources called "bandits" launched at least two (and perhaps more) major attacks on lowland centers of government and early settler power during the mid-1920s.

Before examining these attacks, however, it is important to note that not all of the bandit raids that rocked the region in the 1920s were manifestations of guest people anger and desire for economic or social revenge. Exacerbating the conflicts caused by friction along indigenous socioeconomic fault lines were the effects of the infiltration into the region of a growing number of armed deserters and refugees spawned by warlord army activities in neighboring areas of Jiangxi and Hunan.

In the early 1920s both provinces were controlled by independent warlords or subordinates of major central China warlords such as Sun Chuanfang and Wu Peifu. South of Jiangxi and Hunan, across the rugged, east-west–trending Nanling mountains, lay Guangdong, home to a number of rival warlords and to the Guomindang's National Revolutionary Army (NRA). The ill-defined and hotly-contested spheres of interest of rival southern and central Chinese militarists met and overlapped along the northern slopes of the Nanling ranges in southern Jiangxi and Hunan, and frequent battles raged across this politico-military shatter zone throughout the 1920s. Army units also moved ceaselessly along the Gan and Xiang river valleys, which formed natural axes of north-south communications through Jiangxi and Hunan, respectively, for troops heading into or out of the conflict zone. Lying between

and running parallel to the Gan and Xiang valleys were the Jiangxi-Hunan border mountain ranges, of which the Jinggangshan massif was a part.

The frequent military clashes and troop movements that occurred in the adjacent zones of military activity led to a massive influx of armed men into the Jinggangshan region. Even when idling in urban garrisons or dispersed on routine rural foraging expeditions, warlord armies of the era regularly sloughed off a certain percentage of their manpower, as soldiers upset by poor treatment took their weapons and slipped away from their units as individuals or small groups. Personality clashes and factional intrigues within warlord armies likewise often caused disgruntled junior officers to lead entire platoons or companies away from the main army to seek their fortune as independent detachments. Other forces of similar or even greater size emerged from the surviving wreckage of army units destroyed in battle.

Whether as isolated individuals, small groups or well-organized units, the flotsam and jetsam of warlord military activity steadily washed up from the surrounding lowlands to be deposited on the rugged ridges and hidden hollows of the Jinggangshan region. Once in the region, the former soldiers drew upon their own armed strength, the protection afforded by the difficult terrain, and the support provided by the region's well-developed predatory traditions and associated socioeconomic infrastructure to establish themselves as bandit gangs.

Apparently the first, and certainly the most influential, of the outside gangs was that of Zhu Kongyang, who was originally from Qiyang county in Hunan. In early 1920 Zhu, then a minor warlord army officer in a unit garrisoning Guidong county on the southern border of the Jinggangshan region, led a dozen or more men and their weapons away from his unit and set himself and his followers up running an "inspection station," levying exactions on traders. Soon they branched out from this to serve as escorts and levy collectors for merchants from Qiyang who were bringing opium into the Guidong-Suichuan border area. After several months and some misfortunes in this business, Zhu's force found similar employment collecting levies for several local militia, and thence drifted into "eating the big households" (*chi dahu,* the common rural practice of extorting contributions of food and money from wealthy families) and lamb-hanging. Eventually they based themselves in two adjacent hamlets on the massif that together were known as Jinggangshan village. Of Guangdong guest people origin himself, Zhu soon settled comfortably into the rough border country lifestyle of the area, establishing a reputation as a laconic, somewhat hard-of-hearing man with chronic habits of womanizing and conspicuous consumption, but also a crack shot and an effective leader. He styled himself "Commander Zhu" (Zhu *siling*), but was more often known as "Zhu the Deaf" (Zhu *longzi*) because of his hearing problem.

Zhu and his band were very successful in kidnappings for ransom—so successful, in fact, that their example is said to have contributed greatly to the increased incidence of the practice throughout the region. In order to identify appropriate targets, they also hired several scouts from the Jinggangshan village area, who came and went freely among the villages and markets of the region in the guise of peasants selling their goods. As the gang's activities and reputation increased, other local peasants and drifting soldiers joined up, and within a short time the entire village was little more than an armed bandit camp and its associated service industries.[22]

Other bands of outsiders soon followed in Zhu's wake. These forces were of diverse provenance, and included some deserters of North China origin from some northern warlord units. The bulk of them, however, appear to have been southerners, many of them small groups led by former subordinate officers of the Guangxi warlord Shen Hongying, whose forces had been defeated in fighting with northern warlord troops. The largest of these splinter groups was that of Tang Guangyao, who had been one of Shen's battalion commanders and who led over one hundred of his men to form a bandit gang based in the Five Wells area of the Jinggangshan massif.

Other, smaller Guangxi forces established themselves nearby. One such group of thirty-odd men led by Yang Zuoshan, for example, infiltrated into the mountains on the northern edge of the Jinggangshan massif bordering Ninggang county, while another group of three men led by Liu Guoquan lodged itself not far to the east and managed by intrigues and alliances with local bravos to build up its own gang of twenty or thirty men. Yet another small gang of former soldiers was ambushed in the same general area by local peasants whose women they had abused; the peasants used the weapons captured from the outsiders to form their own bandit gang, which then allied itself with Yang Zuoshan's forces.[23]

The influx of these and many other bands of outsiders significantly affected the scale and quality of the region's bandit activity. Although they were natives of different places and had become bandits in the Jinggangshan region through somewhat different mixtures of motivations and circumstances, outsiders and local bandits combined with and complemented one another in many ways.

At least in part, this stemmed from common ethnicity among some outside and local bandits. Zhu Kongyang's ancestral home may have been Xingning county in northern Guangdong, a county whose population was almost completely Hakka-speaking, while the warlord units of Shen Hongying, which spawned so many outsider bandit gangs, were from Guangxi, a province whose population also contained a great many Hakka-speakers.[24] It is therefore almost certain that among the outside bandits were some people whose culture, ethnic awareness, and (in at least some

cases) experienced history of inter-ethnic conflict were similar to those of the Jinggangshan guest people who constituted a majority of the region's local bandits. This fact helps explain how bandits of outside and local origin could combine successfully, and it suggests how the influx of outside bandits might have reacted synergistically with the ongoing upsurge of indigenous banditry whose roots were so closely connected with the region's endemic early settler–guest people conflicts.

In addition, the influx of outsiders led both to a numerical increase in the total number of bandits present in the region and to an increase in the size of many gangs and an improvement in their overall effectiveness and organizational cohesion. This resulted from a number of factors, including the fact that most of the new arrivals had prior military training, that they possessed modern rifles that were far superior to the swords, spears and fowling pieces used by most local highwaymen and that a substantial number of the new gangs they formed were built around nuclei of intact or nearly intact former military units.

The evident power and predatory capacity of the outside forces soon made them both magnets and models for local inhabitants. Their ability to deter or resist suppression by militias and army units, coupled with the greater resources they could deploy in and the larger profits they could reap from lamb-hanging, quickly attracted local recruits who supplemented the gangs' original core of outsiders. These expanded mixed gangs then benefited from the advantages of even greater fighting capacity coupled with a much deeper knowledge of local conditions.

The success of these gangs also inspired local imitators. Time spent in outsider gangs provided local people with experience, capital and access to modern weapons that they could use to strike out independently by hiving groups off from preexisting gangs. Other local people preferred to found new locally recruited bands from scratch, generally relying upon ties of kinship and friendship to link the core of gang members together. Some such gangs were formed by ambitious local entrepreneurs eager for a piece of the action they saw going on around them, while others developed as outgrowths of defensive reactions by peasants to the depredations of other gangs.

Local people labeled many of the gangs formed through interaction among ex-warlord troops and local peasants "shuttle soldiers" (*suozi bing*), a term suggested by their ceaseless to-and-fro movements. Brief accounts of them from several counties in the region agree that they were small, dispersed bands whose members were "mountain people by day, shuttle soldiers by night," and who robbed, kidnapped, and extorted from well-scouted wealthy targets. Because the rugged boundary zone separating Yongxin, Lianhua, Ninggang, Youxian, and Chaling counties that was their main reported area of activity was also a region of heavy guest people set-

tlement and because one account refers to mountain-dwelling "immigrants" among their members, it is likely that shuttle soldier gangs were made up predominantly of guest people, but they obtained arms and probably at least a portion of their personnel from drifting ex-soldiers as well.[25]

Local Resistance to the Gangs

Through the interaction of the osmotic in-seepage of aggressive outside adventurers and the steady, bubbling percolation of pugnacious local peasants, several dozen bandit gangs formed in the Jinggangshan region between 1920 and 1924. No region-wide enumeration of bandit activity is available, but one list of groups known to be active in the 1920s in the immediate massif area alone lists fifteen of the better known gangs. They were of varying size; many were smallish groups with two dozen or so members, but at least three are reported to have had 100 to 150 members each.[26] Doubtless many other people in the massif area also engaged in bandit activity as part of smaller, more ephemeral gangs, including those that operated only at certain times of the year, or came together only when opportunities presented themselves. Although the Jinggangshan massif was a particularly well known center of bandit activity, it was of course only part of the larger area under discussion here, and bandits were certainly active elsewhere in the region as well. All in all, it is probably a conservative estimate to say that at any specific time during the mid-1920s several thousand individuals were personally participating in organized bandit gangs throughout the region.

If this rapid proliferation deeply affected the bandits themselves, the impact on the remainder of the region's population, and particularly upon its wealthier segments, was if anything even more dramatic. On the individual and family level, the upsurge of lamb-hanging raids contributed to a growing generalized fear and to an increasingly tense game of cat-and-mouse between bandit gangs and the prosperous households that were their targets. As lamb-hanging raids increased, wealthy households embarked on a variety of individual countermeasures, including fortifying their residences, hiring armed retainers, concealing the movements and whereabouts of the family patriarchs who were the main targets for kidnappings, and in some cases even sending potential targets to live in urban centers outside of the region.[27]

Gangs responded by developing ever more elaborate and pervasive networks of scouts. Many of the scouts were local peddlers or itinerant handicraft specialists whose occupations gave them opportunities for traveling back and forth between the high hill country and lowland towns and villages and who also had legitimate excuses to visit wealthy households to ply their trades. They kept special watch around New Year's and the times of the spring and fall ancestral sacrifices performed by most lineages, when tradition dictated that the leading male members of wealthy families and kinship

groups should be in their family residences and undertaking public ritual activities that left them particularly visible and vulnerable.[28]

As the pervasiveness of bandit intelligence networks grew along with the overall size and firepower of their gangs, elite families and the larger communities over which they wielded power and influence also began to increase the scale of their own collective militarization. Some elite-led militia units had formed in the early twentieth century when the upsurge in bandit/brotherhood activity was just starting, as had multi-faceted elite management organs with some local security responsibilities such as the Nashan area's Rescue Society. In the early 1920s, such bodies proliferated in response to the growing bandit threat.[29]

To organize and maintain the militias, elites generally relied upon a mixture of local and state resources. In addition to their own often considerable personal resources, elites in the region who sought to form militias could frequently draw upon the manpower and money of individual or, as in the case of the Rescue Society, coalitions of cooperating lineages over which they exerted strong control. They also commonly sought state sanction and titles for their militias, for both the legitimacy and right to appeal for state-controlled outside military aid that official status conferred, and for the access to county government funding and rights to levy their own local taxes that normally accrued to such state-approved organizations. Thus, the Rescue Society leaders were careful to obtain state sanction for the militia they founded, and other militias that eventually emerged in the Nashan area as supplements to or descendents of this original force obtained both titles and tax collection rights from the Yongxin county government.[30]

Obtaining the proper personnel and arms was sometimes difficult for would-be militia leaders, however, and for this reason they occasionally sought to coopt some of the very bandits whose depredations had provided the rationale for them to form militias in the first place. Reconstituting some bandit leaders and their followings as state-sanctioned militias had the further advantage of reducing their depredations and regularizing their exactions from the lowland populace, while hopefully making their aggressive energies available for use in suppressing remaining rival highland bandit gangs.[31]

To illustrate this process of cooptation and its complex consequences, we might for the moment simply recall the description of the Suichuan bandit/militia leader/local hegemon Xiao Jiabi presented in chapter 1. As noted, Xiao was a pugnacious man of guest people origins who built a mixed gang of lineage braves and ex-warlord soldiers whose ravages eventually prompted the county government nominally to reconstitute him and his force as a militia unit. As Xiao's subsequent career indicates, this cooptation attempt succeeded in more closely aligning Xiao's long-term interests with those of other local elites and the state. "Reorganization" as a militia also prompted Xiao to lead his force in a long series of suppression campaigns

against Jinggangshan bandit gangs—often in retaliation for bandit raids on Suichuan territories—that destroyed a number of the region's small gangs and severely discomfited many others.[32]

Many, if not most, of the members of the gangs Xiao's forces attacked were guest people such as himself, but his campaigns against them are better seen as attempts to destroy potential military rivals and threats to his own growing wealth and property than as evidence of a repudiation of his own ethnic heritage. Indeed, in his early years Xiao had gained a measure of local notoriety for championing guest people interests and inciting inter-ethnic disputes, and he engaged in a long-standing rivalry with a well-known Suichuan early settler elite named Luo Puquan that appears to have continued well after Xiao's own appointment to militia office.[33]

Similarly combustible mixtures of individual ambitions and rivalries, inter-gang competitions and regional ethnic animosities were almost certainly at work in the genesis and conduct of several separate attacks launched by guest people bandit gangs in the mid-1920s against the Ninggang county seat of Xincheng and its predominantly early settler environs and against Longshi, the county's major commercial center. These attacks caused extensive destruction and loss of life. Although sources make no mention of sworn brotherhood involvement in the attacks, they were otherwise similar to earlier raids such as those of Huang Sanxiang and Fan Shanyang on Xincheng and the Nashan region. As in the earlier incidents, the large scale and overt institutional targets of the 1920s bandit assaults revealed a far more widespread anti-establishment ethnic and political animus than was evident in lamb-hanging raids on wealthy households.

Military Resistance

The threat that these large-scale attacks presented to the state and preyed-upon early settler communities demanded a response that was beyond the capacity of Ninggang's scattered elite and state-sponsored militias. Moreover, both in Ninggang and elsewhere in the region there were certain occasions—such as after an unusually brazen and lucrative kidnapping—when particularly visible and energetic retaliation against the bandits seemed imperative.

Under such circumstances, elites and/or local government officials sought to call in warlord army troops for "bandit-suppression" campaigns. One small, more-or-less-permanent army garrison is known to have been stationed in the Yongxin county seat, and it is possible that there may also have been garrisons in other reasonably accessible locations such as the Suichuan county seat. In addition, depending on other military exigencies, troops were occasionally deployed temporarily to more isolated locations such as the Ninggang county seat. The superior officers of these local garrisons probably

emphasized tax collection and foraging for self-maintenance more heavily than aggressive bandit suppression, but the units were in any case too small, sedentary and distant to make effective anti-bandit forces.[34]

Major suppression campaigns, therefore, were normally launched by larger bodies of troops specially called in from outside. Unfortunately for officials and elites who had summoned them, the efforts of these outside troops were not very effective, and in some respects actually counterproductive. Unlike the bandits, the soldiers were unfamiliar with the territory in which they were fighting, and often found the Hakka dialect of the guest people peasants completely incomprehensible. In addition, the large and clumsy army units were incapable of the rapid reactions and aggressive maneuvering necessary if they were to have a realistic chance of finding and destroying small and mobile bandit gangs. Zhu Kongyang's boast that to confound the army one didn't have to fight, but only to "travel in circles" (*da quanzi*) through the mountains expressed the bandits' well-founded contempt for their adversaries.[35]

If the soldiers were generally unable to destroy the gangs, however, they were distressingly capable of inflicting damage on the region's already poverty-stricken populace. After fruitlessly floundering around the mountains for a time, the army forces typically took out their frustration on the only easily accessible targets available: the houses, property and inhabitants of the mountain villages through which they passed. Information provided by local elites sometimes enabled soldiers specifically to target the property and families of important local bandit leaders, but their destructiveness was often indiscriminately extended to entire communities. The inevitable consequence was the creation of still more disgruntled and dispossessed recruits for the bandit bands, and still greater bitterness against the loose lowland coalitions of officials, elites and early settler communities who had visited this further calamity on their lives.

Nor was the military's impact confined to the mountains and their guest people communities. The locust-like progression of foraging army units through market towns and along the approach routes to the Jinggangshan massif likewise left many lowland communities ravaged and outraged. For their inhabitants, peasants and elites alike, the arrival of new army garrisons or bandit-suppression expeditionary forces led not to a diminution of the chronic threat to property and personal security, but simply to a temporary change in its source and manner of manifestation. Caught thus between the rock of marauding bandits and the hard place of pillaging soldiers, many once-favored lowland households were gradually ground into a state of misery that differed little from that of their traditionally disadvantaged highland neighbors.

Notwithstanding the overall clumsy destructiveness of the warlord forces, however, their mere presence in the region for weeks at a time did succeed

in forcing many bandit gangs—particularly the larger ones that were often specifically targeted—out of their regular bases in places such as Jinggangshan village and into much more spartan living conditions deep in the mountains. Similarly, the frequent appearance of army units, coupled with the steady growth of militias, disrupted the normal pattern of lamb-hanging raids upon which bandit gangs depended to maintain their income. For these reasons, the military efforts did have a noticeable constraining influence upon bandit operations.

Internecine Conflict among Bandits

In addition to the impact of the growing military resistance to their activities, the region's bandit gangs also suffered from problems caused by their own rapid proliferation. With no major trade routes in the immediate vicinity and with a regional population too small and self-sufficient to attract more than a few itinerant merchants and peddlers, most gangs sought to support themselves primarily by lamb-hanging raids on or extortion from the region's wealthier elite households. The amount that could be raised in this fashion, however, had a finite limit, and was subject to growing difficulties as those households that had not already been struck by bandits either began to develop more effective defenses or abandoned their rural homes entirely for the greater safety of the cities. The result was increasing competition among gangs for exclusive control of specific "turfs," and a growing tendency for the gangs to seek to enhance their resources by preying upon one another as well as upon wealthy families.

The result of these competitive struggles and increased suppression efforts was a gradual winnowing out and consolidation of the gangs. As mentioned earlier, sometimes two or more small gangs loosely allied against larger rivals. On other occasions, external and internal pressures built up to the point where large gangs exploded, with each shard then seeking to establish its own smaller territory and resources. The gang of Li Guicheng provides a prime example of this process. Originally a group of over seventy former soldiers who had wandered in from Hunan to form a gang operating on the eastern slopes of the Jinggangshan massif, Li's band was pressed hard by local militia and army suppression efforts, and wracked by internal disputes over the division of spoils. Eventually the gang broke up into at least five smaller bands, most of which were soon destroyed by militias or combined with larger gangs.[36]

In this atmosphere, even many of the largest and most well-armed gangs were forced to confront both each other and non-bandit (at least in their current incarnations) rivals among the militias and army units in the region. The major gangs of Tang Guangyao and Zhu Kongyang, for example, faced off in a struggle for regional dominance that ultimately led to the departure of both

men and most of their forces from the area. In the initial confrontation between the two, Zhu's forces lost, and Zhu himself was forced to take part of his remaining wealth and flee the region. Tang occupied Zhu's former base in Jinggangshan village, but the need to support his expanding gang forced him to engage in such aggressive predatory behavior that he became a prime object of attention from and intrigue by other gangs, militias and warlord armies. In the end, Tang decided that the stress of banditry was too great and its long-term prospects too meager, so he accepted an offer of an official position and marched down from Jinggangshan and off into Hunan with most of his force. Those who remained were soon absorbed by other gangs.[37]

CONCLUSION

Despite the casualties and the elimination of some gangs that occurred as a result of internecine conflicts and the other pressures of their difficult life, by the mid-1920s both local and outsider bandits, as well as the "shuttle soldiers" and sworn brotherhoods that overlapped significantly with them, remained numerous and exceptionally aggressive parts of the Jinggangshan region population. Their collective prominence reinforced the long-standing image of the region as a lawless "bandit world" in which might made right, actions counted more than ideas, and possession of armed force was easily the equal of wealth or education as a source of power and prestige. At the same time, predatory behavior in the region was neither amorphous nor confined simply to the relatively small group of very poor and desperate people who directly participated in the gangs and brotherhoods. Instead, it was structured and distributed in differing ways by the co-variation of topography, economic patterns and ethnic composition, and it involved exactions by large lineages, officially sanctioned militias and visiting army troops as well as "eating big households" and "lamb-hanging" by the gangs. In fact, violence in some form, whether predatory, protective or retributive in aim, was widespread enough to have had at least indirect impact on most of the region's population.

Jinggangshan society in the 1920s was thus highly mobilized, militarized and polarized. It was mobilized in the sense that a sizable percentage of the adult population belonged to organized groups (lineages, coalitions of surname groups, gangs, brotherhoods, militias) that engaged in some form of collective action. It was militarized in the sense that a significant proportion of the collective action in which these groups engaged involved the use or threat of armed force. And it was polarized in the sense that the shape and object of collective action in many parts of the region was strongly affected by relative position on one side or the other of the region's prominent ethnic fault line.

These circumstances had complex consequences for the development of the regional revolutionary movement. Naturally, the fact that the area's population was already partially mobilized and militarized helped revolutionaries, in that many people were already sensitized and potentially responsive to calls for collective action, participated in organizations that could be used to undertake such action, and were accustomed to the overt use of armed force as a method for expressing social dominance and settling political disputes. Potentially helpful as well were the persistent socioeconomic differentials that contributed significantly to the long-term ethnic tension that afflicted much of the region and the contemporary flare-up of violent animosity in the early twentieth century. Both provided potential "hooks"—grievances, issues of intense concern to particular groups—that might serve revolutionaries as exploitable lodging points for establishing themselves and their radical socioeconomic program in rural China.

But the environment of the Jinggangshan region simultaneously constrained, channeled, and forced compromises on the revolutionary movement. Most obviously, close association—whether actual or perceived—with the causes, people and even the geographical territory on one side of the region's ethnic divide could alienate those occupying the other side. Likewise, organizations and forms of collective action (such as feuding or banditry) that had taken shape in the sociopolitical context of hill country life incorporated certain assumptions, attitudes, and conceptions about the cultural order and the conduct of politics that made them at best imperfect instruments for—and at worst outright obstacles to—the implementation of programs aimed at transforming the existing system. Put another way, the political anthropology of the world of Jinggangshan's bandit gangs and rural strongmen differed significantly from the social and political milieu of the urban areas in which China's revolutionary movement began. For young Communists who had absorbed radical thought and practiced revolutionary politics in the quasi-intellectual atmosphere of May Fourth–era urban China, the transition from urban to rural environments posed a wide range of challenges.

For a better understanding of the world of rural power holders into which Communist cadres would eventually seek to move, however, we must move beyond this generalized societal overview to explore in addition the lives and experiences of specific individuals inhabiting that world. It is this individualization of the overall sociopolitical experience of Jinggangshan life that is the task of the following chapter.

NOTES

1. See, for example, the descriptions of banditry in parts of Henan presented in Phil Billingsley, *Bandits in Republican China* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University

Press, 1988); or those of banditry in western Fujian found in Communist documents from the 1920s. For a good example of the latter, see "Zhao Yisong guanyu Fujian gongzuo qingkuang de zonghe baogao" [Comprehensive report by Zhao Yisong on the state of work in Fujian] (29 July 1928), in *Fujian geming lishi wenjian huiji* [Compilation of historical materials on the revolution in Fujian], Zhongyang dang'an guan and Fujian sheng dang'an guan (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 1987), vol. 3 (Provincial Committee Materials, 1927–28, Part 2), 91.

2. The overview of bandit life that follows is based on synthesis and generalization of factual material presented in *WZ*; Li Chunxiang, "Jinggang lulin" [The bandits of Jinggangshan], *Jinggangshan wenshi ziliao*, no. 1 (1985): 60–71; and Li Shaoheng, "Yuan Wencai nongmin siweijun shimo" [The complete story of Yuan Wencai's Peasant Self-Defense Army], in *Jinggangshan geming genjudi* [The Jinggangshan revolutionary base area], ed. Jinggangshan geming genjudi dangshi ziliao zhengji bianyan xiezuo xiaozu and Jinggangshan geming bowoguan (Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi ziliao chubanshe, 1987) [hereafter cited as *JGG*], vol. 2, 266–72. Many of the points made here are also consistent with those presented in Billingsley, *Bandits in Republican China*.

3. Anecdotes from the massif area bandit leader Wang Zuo provide examples to illustrate the ramifications of bandit activity. Before joining a gang, Wang worked as an itinerant tailor, a job that gave him easy access to just the sort of information about the whereabouts and circumstances of elite families that was needed by bandit gangs. In due course, one of these gangs enlisted him as a scout, and from this beginning he worked his way gradually into the "bandit world." Along the way, he took time out to establish a short-lived tailoring enterprise, with several sewing machines and seven to eight employees, that specialized in making clothes for the bandit gangs in the massif area. Later, after his band was well established, Wang established an elaborate economic relationship with and extended his gang's protection over a commercial firm centered in the Guanbei area of Yongxin county, just beyond the foot of the Jinggangshan massif. *WZ*, 36–38, 48; Xiao Zuoming and Zhang Jiyu, "Wanfulong de xingshuai" [The rise and fall of the Wanfulong], *Jinggangshan wenshi ziliao*, no. 3–4 (1989): 89–94.

4. Among other sources, the following discussion of sworn brotherhoods has been influenced by Jean Chesneaux, "Secret Societies in China's Historical Evolution," in *Popular Movements and Secret Societies in China 1840–1950*, ed. Jean Chesneaux (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1972), 11–13 and passim; Fei-ling Davis, *Primitive Revolutionaries of China* (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1977), esp. chap. 4; James M. Polachek, "The Moral Economy of the Kiangsi Soviet (1928–1934)," *Journal of Asian Studies* 42, no. 4 (August 1983): 813–14; Cai Shaoqing, *Zhongguo jindai huidang shi yanjiu* [Research on the history of secret societies in modern China] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987), 21–34.

5. Philip Kuhn, *Rebellion and Its Enemies in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980), 167–88.

6. Xiao Zuoming and Zhang Jiyu, "Wanfulong de xingshuai," 90–93; Zou Fuguang, "Wang Zuo yu Yin Daoyi you jiaowang dao polie" [Wang Zuo and Yin Daoyi from contact to rupture], *Jiangxi wenshi ziliao*, no. 15 (1984): 93–94.

7. The careers of Wang Zuo and Yuan Wencai, described in the next chapter, are cases in point.

8. Polachek, "The Moral Economy," 814–15 and passim, makes a similar general point.

9. Joseph W. Esherick, *Reform and Revolution in China: The 1911 Revolution in Hunan and Hubei* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), chap. 4; Roxann Prazniak, *Of Camel Kings and Other Things: Rural Rebels Against Modernity in Late Imperial China* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999); Elizabeth Perry, "Social Banditry Revisited: The Case of Bai Lang, A Chinese Brigand," *Modern China* 9, no. 3 (July 1983): 362. However, many of the cases described by the sources cited here (especially those studied by Prazniak) were directly connected to the "New Policy" (Xinzheng) reforms of the last decade of Qing rule. I have not been able to document any such direct connection for any part of the Jinggangshan region.

10. Ninggang interview: Liu Xiaonong interview; *Ninggang xianzhi* [Gazetteer of Ninggang county] (1937 ed.), *juan* 1, 68; *juan* 5, 42–43: *Ninggang xianzhi* [Gazetteer of Ninggang county] (Beijing: Zhonggong zhongyang dangxiao chubanshe, 1995), 945; Long Fatai, "Jinxi tukeji zhi jian" [The present and past of early settler–guest people relations], *Yongxin wenshi ziliao*, no. 2 (1991): 131–34. In a novel based very heavily on oral and written historical materials collected in the area, the Ninggang local historian Liu Xiaonong provides considerable additional information about the recent origins and implementation of the practices described here. According to his account (which he has informed me is based in this case upon stories handed down through the generations and heard from elderly people in the area, the practice of collecting surface rent (known as *dipanzu*) from guest people for land whose subsoil rights were claimed by early settlers apparently began in the early Tongzhi period when an individual named Chen stated that land used by guest people near the village of Maoping was in fact his family's ancestral land. Although Chen had no land contract, he quickly generated some other sort of officially sealed document that he said supported his claim. In the face of this implied government support, and because the amount of rent for which he asked was small and easily paid, the occupants of the land acquiesced to his demands. Seeing both precedent and opportunity as news of this transaction began to circulate, many other early settler elites similarly began to lay claim to other tracts of land on behalf of their individual or collective ancestors, often using the institutional mechanisms of lineage trusts to manage the process, and mobilizing large gangs of lineage members as needed to enforce their demands. Poor guest people were the main targets of the rent collection activity; guest people elites were allegedly left alone, and some of them also began to engage in the same practice. Liu Xiaonong, *Jinggang yanyi* [The romance of Jinggang] (Beijing: Nongcun dushu chubanshe, 1989), 4–5.

11. Liu Xiaonong, "Guanyu Yuan Wencai, Wang Zuo beisha de zeren wenti" [The problem of the blame for the killing of Yuan Wencai and Wang Zuo], in *Yu hong san juntuan youguan de lishi wenti ji wenxian* [Historical problems and materials concerning the Red Third Army Group], ed. Jiangxi xiandai shi xuehui (Nanchang: Jiangxi renmin chubanshe, 1980), 42; Chen Peijun and Wu Zhixiong, "Yuan Wencai," in *Zhonggong dangshi renwu zhuan* [Biographies of personages in the history of the CCP], ed. Zhonggong dangshi renwu yanjiu hui (Xi'an: Shaanxi renmin chubanshe, 1981), vol. 2, 286.

12. Jinggangshan interview; *Ninggang xianzhi* (1937 ed.), *juan* 5, 42–43; *Ninggang xianzhi* (1995), 945–46. Liu Xiaonong opens his historically based novel *Jing-*

gang yanyi with a detailed account—based again on memories passed down orally by local inhabitants—of events involving Huang Sanxiang that is probably either a selective recollection of this particular uprising (though Liu dates the events around 1909 instead of the mid-1890s), or a conflation of this and other related episodes. Though it may contain some distortions, conflations, or elisions, nothing in this account is fundamentally inconsistent with the brief "official" accounts of the events presented in gazetteers, and much in it accords well with what is otherwise known about the social dynamics of the area. In any event, according to this account, the immediate causes of the outbreak were frictions between early settlers and guest people over geomantic siting (*fengshui*) of a building and over rent and tax levies. The building in question was a joint ancestral shrine and social gathering point under construction by the "Eighteen Surnames" (*shiba xing*), which appears to have been some sort of collective agency linking the various small guest people kinship groups inhabiting the northern flanks of the massif in and around the hamlet of Qiaolin. When the *fengshui* issue could not be resolved, an elite member of the powerful Yin early settler lineage led several hundred lineage members to destroy the shrine. Although no immediate retaliation was taken by the affected guest people (who included Huang Sanxiang), the affair was not forgotten. Later that year Huang himself became embroiled in a quarrel (also unresolved) with an early settler representative of one of the corporate management agencies that handled the collection of rent from the guest people for lands claimed by a branch of the county's most dominant (and predominantly early settler) lineage, the Xies. The last straw came when several guest people women from Qiaolin who had gone to the county seat were harassed by collectors of a market sales tax imposed on guest people and by agents of the Xie lineage management agency. One of those hassled was the wife of a sworn brother of Huang, and this man (named Liu) and Huang then proceeded to mobilize the Eighteen Surnames and launched the assault on the county seat that became the key event in the subsequent uprising. Liu Xiaonong, *Jinggang yanyi*, 1–22.

13. The sound "Hong" in the name Hongjiang Hui was written at various times with either the Chinese character meaning "great" or "vast," or with a homophonous character meaning "red." This type of substitution was a common device used by brotherhoods and religious sects to try to avoid government persecution. In the Jinggangshan region this brotherhood was also sometimes known as the Hong Mountain Society (Honggang Hui). As the Red River Society, it was also very visible and active in efforts (many at least temporarily successful) to seize county seats and establish quasi-governments at various places in Jiangxi during the immediate aftermath of the 1911 Revolution. The Yongxin county seat was one of the society's successful targets. See Samuel Kupper, "Revolution in China: Kiangsi [Jiangxi] Province, 1905–1913" (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1973), 222–23 and passim. At least one Chinese source claims that the society was an off shoot of the Gelaohui. *Yongxin xianzhi* [Gazetteer of Yongxin county] (Beijing: Xinhua chubanshe, 1992), 430.

14. Esherick, *Reform and Revolution*, 58–65.

15. The following discussion of Fan Shanyang and the Luofu area Hong River Society is based on Wang Mingmin, "Luofu Hongjiang Hui" [The Luofu Hong River Society], *Jinggangshan wenshi ziliao*, no. 3–4 (August 1989): 57–61; and *WZ*, 13–22.

16. *WZ*, 20.

17. The following account of guest people–early settler conflict and the formation of the Rescue Society is drawn from Wang Mingmin, "Luofu Hongjiang Hui," 60–61; *WZ*, 21–22; and Xiao Zuoming, "Kuangjiu Hui" [The Rescue Society], *Jinggangshan wenshi ziliao*, no. 3–4 (August 1989): 62–63.

18. *WZ*, 20–22, states that the Rescue Society had already been in operation for some time before the 1912 confrontation with the Hong River Society, while Xiao Zuoming, "Kuangjiu Hui," states that the Rescue Society was formed after the suppression of the brotherhood and the seizure of its leaders' property. Both the name of the organization and the specific details about its formation provided in Xiao Zuoming's account persuade me that his version of events is more accurate. It may very well be, however, that the early settler elite in the area did have some other sort of earlier institutional apparatus—perhaps the Thirteen Halls or other lineage-based organization—through which they coordinated their conflicts with nearby guest people before the formation of the Rescue Society.

19. Zhang Zijue, "Yongxin xian dong erqu baoweituan de yixie qingkuang" [A few things about conditions in the Yongxin County Second Eastern District Militia], *Jinggangshan wenshi ziliao*, no. 2 (1987): 57–58.

20. A similar phenomenon occurred in neighboring Lingxian in Hunan, where during the late Kangxi period of the Qing an official established what became known after a name change as the Miquan Academy (Miquan shuyuan), specifically intended to serve the exam training and other scholarly needs of the county's early settler (*bendi*) community. In the Jiaqing reign, another local offical established the Meigang Academy (Meigang shuyuan) to serve the corresponding needs of the Hakka speakers. Thereafter, the county's two major dialect groups were called the "Mi group" (Mibu) and the "Mei group" (Meibu). *Lingxian zhi* [Gazetteer of Lingxian] (Lingxian: Lingxian zhi bian zuan weiyuanhui, 1985), 6–7.

21. *Ninggang xianzhi* (1937 ed.), *juan* 4, 95–96; *Ninggang xianzhi* (1995), 691.

22. This discussion of Zhu Kongyang's gang is a synthesis of material found in Li Benjie and Gong Jixian, "Zhu Kongyang xiaoju shanlin" [Zhu Kongyang goes to the greenwood], *Guidong wenshi ziliao*, no. 6 (1987): 1–5; *WZ*, 33–44; and Li Chunxiang, "Jinggang lulin," 60–61.

23. Li Chunxiang, "Jinggang lulin," 61–62; *WZ*, 79–83.

24. Li Chunxiang, "Jinggang lulin," asserts that Zhu Kongyang's home was Xingning county in Guangdong; this is compatible with more detailed (and presumbly authoritative) information given by Li Benjie and Gong Jixian in "Zhu Kongyang xiaoju shanlin" only if Xingning was Zhu's pre-migration ancestral home.

25. Zhonggong Yongxin xianwei dangshi bangongshi, *Yongxin renmin geming shi* [The revolutionary history of the people of Yongxin] (Jinggangshan: n.p., 1989), 10–11; Lianhua renmin geming douzheng shi bianweihui, *Lianhua renmin geming douzheng shi* [History of the revolutionary struggle of the people of Lianhua] (N.p.: n.p., 1960), 21–22; Chaling xian nongmin yundong diaocha bangongshi, *Chaling xian nongmin yundong shilüe (chugao)* [Brief history of the Chaling county peasant movement (first draft)] (N.p.: n.p., 1981), 7–8; *Pingxiang shizhi* [Gazetteer of Pingxiang city] (Beijing: Fangzhi chubanshe, 1996), 699.

26. Li Chunxiang, an experienced local historian and expert on the history of Jinggangshan banditry, states that there were "several tens of bandit gangs" in the Jinggangshan area in the 1920s. "Jinggang lulin," 60–61. The list of fifteen gangs is found

in Jinggangshan shi renmin wuzhuang bu, *Jinggangshan junshi zhi* [A military gazetteer of Jinggangshan city] (Beijing: Guofang daxue chubanshe, 1992), 73–74.

27. *WZ*, 69, 94.

28. *WZ*, 33,

29. *WZ*, 72–73, 77, 92, 98, 103–7, 122–26, 135; *Chaling xianzhi* [Gazetteer of Chaling county] (Beijing: Zhongguo wenshi chubanshe, 1994), 508, which notes that by the mid-1920s the county had forty militia bureaus.

30. Xiao Zuoming, "Kuangjiu Hui," 62–64; Zhang Zijue, "Yongxin xian dong erqu baoweituan," 58.

31. Zhang Zijue, "Yongxin xian dong erqu baoweituan," 58; *WZ*, 72–73, 92, 103–7, 122–26, 135.

32. Li Chunxiang, "Jinggang lulin," 63–65; *WZ*, 72–74, 78.

33. Li Chunxiang, "Jinggang lulin," 63; *WZ*, 72–73; *Suichuan xianzhi* [Gazetteer of Suichuan county] (Nanchang: Jiangxi renmin chubanshe, 1996), 933–34. Another account indicates that Xiao and Luo Puquan also eventually came to cooperate in opposition to the Communists. See Zhong Haidong, "Jinggangshan xia feishou da eba Xiao Jiabi" [Xiao Jiabi: The bandit leader and great tyrant at the foot of Jinggangshan], *Suichuan wenshi ziliao*, no. 1 (1989): 58, 60.

34. On soldiers in Yongxin, see Wang Xingjuan, *He Zizhen de lu* [He Zizhen's road] (Beijing: Zuojia chubanshe, 1985), 11–12.

35. *WZ*, 101–2.

36. Li Chunxiang, "Jinggang lulin," 63–64, 67; *WZ*, 51, 83–84.

37. Li Chunxiang, "Jinggang lulin," 61–63; *WZ*, 82, 92.

3

Wang Zuo and Yuan Wencai

In the fiercely competitive world of Jinggangshan bandits and brotherhoods just outlined, only a few dozen individuals endowed with unusual courage, determination, charisma, and luck ever managed to become gang leaders. Fewer still managed to survive in this brutal environment long or successfully enough to acquire region-wide reputations. In this chapter, I will focus on the early lives and careers of two of the most notable of these successful regional bandit chieftains: Wang Zuo and Yuan Wencai.

Both Wang and Yuan were born into peasant families that were wholly or partially descended from guest people ancestors, and both eventually gravitated to the world of banditry after failures in other careers, exacerbated by the effects of early settler discrimination. Their early lives are worth investigating in detail because of the information that such examination can provide on the tone and texture of hill country life, on the relative range of possibilities open to the poor and disadvantaged in this isolated region, and on the complex interactive dynamic that existed between the broader regional society and its bandit subset. Through such examination, it is possible to begin to relate social structure and individual behavior, and to give a more intimate, human perspective to what has so far been a rather generalized depiction of Jinggangshan society.

In addition, study of the early experiences of Wang and Yuan is important because of their later involvement in the revolution. As early members of the local CCP organization, peasant militia leaders controlling the massif when Mao Zedong arrived in 1927, high-level Red Army officers and party cadres active in the Jinggangshan revolutionary base area, and central figures in a bitter and tragic factional struggle that ultimately tore the region's party leadership asunder, the lives of Wang and Yuan were inextricably intertwined

with the history of the Jinggangshan revolutionary movement, and their names will appear repeatedly in the chapters to follow. An examination of the early careers of these two important figures, therefore, provides an appropriate and useful transition between the general description of Jinggangshan society provided thus far and the more narrowly focused discussion of the regional revolutionary movement to follow.

WANG ZUO AND HIS BAND

Wang's Early Life

Wang Zuo was born in 1898 into a poor peasant family in Xiazhuang, a small village on the Jinggangshan massif in northern Suichuan county.[1] In Wang's great-grandfather's time the family had been comfortably well off, but by his father's generation property divisions and migration had reduced the family's land to a small fraction of what it had once been. Wang's father completed the decline in family fortunes by gradually selling off the remaining land to support his opium habit, and he and his two eldest sons were eventually forced to try to support the family of eight by working as long-term agricultural laborers for a large local landlord named Fan Ayi.[2]

Though most sources state that Wang Zuo was of guest people origin, and he himself often acted as such, he was really of mixed origins. Xiazhuang was founded during the Tang Dynasty by early settler ancestors of Wang's family, and their descendants retained control of the village until guest people began to enter the area during the Ming-Qing transition period. Gradually the Wangs declined and so much village property passed into the hands of guest people surnamed Li and Fan that by Wang Zuo's time guest people, and especially the Fans, dominated the area.[3]

Wang's mother, Fan Chenmei, was from a guest people Fan lineage, but one located some distance away, in the Luofu area on the eastern approaches to the massif. Her elder brother was the Hong River Society leader Fan Shanyang, whose conflicts with early settlers from Nashan were described in the previous chapter. These conflicts, in fact, apparently led to Fan Chenmei's marriage into the Wang family: it is said that Fan Shanyang deliberately sought to marry his sister into the early settler Wang family in order to avoid trouble in his rear.[4]

When Wang Zuo was a small child, his father died and the family's life worsened. Though Wang started school, a brother's injury made it necessary for him to quit this—the only formal education he was to have in his life—after only three months. Soon he and his younger brother were sent to join their sister at the Luofu-area home of their relatively prosperous uncle Fan Shanyang.[5]

By virtue of a three-year stay in the household of this prominent Hong River Society leader, Wang perforce felt the effects of the guest people–early settler disputes then rocking the area. On one occasion, in fact, he himself very nearly occasioned a conflict when cattle that he and another youth were tending strayed into a nearby early settler village and bedded down in its lineage hall. The outraged villagers seized the boys when they attempted to retrieve the animals, and held them hostage until Fan paid several hundred dollars (*yuan*) in compensation for the shrine's defilement. This publicly humiliating event contributed to the materially worsening relations between guest people and early settlers in the area.[6]

Following the defeat of Fan and his Hong River Society followers in 1912, Wang and his brothers went to the home of their sister, who had recently married into the Shi family in the guest people village of Dachuan, deep in the mountains near the Ninggang-Suichuan-Yongxin border. Wang himself, however, was now fifteen, and the family decided that he should be apprenticed to a tailor in the tiny village of Banling who had kin in Dachuan and who, probably not coincidentally, was also surnamed Wang. Apprenticeship was a common way to remove extra mouths—especially younger sons—from poor families while simultaneously diversifying the families' incomes by having their children learn non-agricultural trades. But apprenticeship was generally demanding, and many youths learned more about chopping wood and sweeping floors than about the skills they were sent to acquire.

Nonetheless, Wang learned enough so that after three years he could set out on his own as an itinerant tailor drifting throughout the Jinggangshan region. Though he was able to eke out a marginal living, in this poor area where few had extensive wardrobes or disposable incomes, tailoring was obviously not a route to riches. It is therefore unsurprising that a young man who had already knocked around a bit, and who faced long years of drudging poverty ahead, should be attracted by a potentially more exciting and lucrative career in the hill country's "bandit world."[7]

Wang Becomes a Bandit. Opportunity knocked when he became involved with Zhu "The Deaf" Kongyang, whose role in the region's bandit world was noted in chapter 2. Wang came to Zhu's base in Jinggangshan village during his travels, and began tailoring for the band using cloth they had obtained in raids. Soon he was hobnobbing freely with band members as he worked, and Zhu asked him to join his corps of scouts. Bored, restless and poor, Wang readily agreed.[8]

In addition to the familiarity with the region's settlements and their inhabitants that he had gained as an itinerant tailor, Wang also possessed another useful qualification for a gang member: martial arts expertise. Such training was popular among local youths, who used it for protecting against bandit attacks and for participating in lineage feuding, guest people–early settler

conflicts and other inter-village struggles. To meet the demand for fighting skills, numerous martial arts teachers set up practice in the area, competing for local prestige and students through an informal, word-of-mouth reputational grapevine whose opinions were subject to concrete validation at periodic matches and demonstrations. Wang's teacher was Wang Dongwen, the pettifogger and martial arts expert profiled in chapter 1.[9]

Wang Zuo's martial arts skills eventually proved useful, but at first it was his detailed knowledge of commercial and social conditions and his ability to blend unobtrusively into the region's markets that Zhu's gang found most attractive. During his forays he purchased special foods and other items unavailable in the gang's mountain nest and checked up on the movements of potential lamb-hanging targets and the condition of their households. His reports led the gang to a number of prosperous and vulnerable targets, most notably the wealthy Li household in nearby Guidong county in Hunan, which paid the astronomical sum of 50,000 dollars for the return of its kidnapped patriarch. News of the wealth accumulating in Jinggangshan village and the wide publicity given to the sensational haul from the Li lamb-hanging enhanced Zhu's reputation and led to the arrival of a stream of local youths and roving soldiers eager to join the band.[10]

Zhu's success also encouraged imitators in the increasingly crowded and contentious "bandit world." Among those who began to have thoughts along this line was Wang Zuo, whose efforts had played a part in Zhu's rising fortunes. An examination of the process through which Wang changed from a peripheral (if valued) participant in Zhu's band into an independent and regionally noted bandit leader in his own right reveals with increasing clarity the ambiguity of local attitudes toward banditry and the ease with which the everyday practices of this mobile, hustling society could contribute to its occurrence.

Wang had received a sizable reward for his scouting for the Li kidnapping. At the time of the Mid-Autumn Festival in 1921 he returned home and used some of the money to buy sewing machines and hire several tailors from the surrounding area to staff a small business that specialized in making clothes for nearby bandit gangs. He also sought to marry, but family poverty and Wang's own still tenuous career prospects complicated matters, and although a match of sorts was eventually made, the couple soon split up under circumstances embarrassing to Wang.[11]

These frustrations may have encouraged Wang to think about turning to active banditry. This, at any rate, is what he did, beginning around the time of the Spring Festival in 1922, when he and a brother visited his sister's family in Dachuan. His sister and her husband occasionally rented rooms to passing travelers, and when Wang arrived there were three Guangdong opium peddlers staying there, men whom Wang recognized as habitual traders with Zhu Kongyang's and other bandit gangs. After Wang informed

his relatives, they waited until the men slept, and then bound, robbed, and murdered them.

Wang bought a rifle with some of the money they had taken, but when he tried the weapon out it proved to be broken, and he took it for repairs to a metalworker named Diao Huilin. Diao easily fixed the rifle, and as he did Wang also persuaded him to join him in becoming a full-time bandit. While Diao temporarily remained behind to make swords and other weapons for the planned gang, Wang returned to Xiazhuang to bring it into existence. He first approached his brothers, who were generally amenable. Then he also obtained the agreement of Li Kaichang and another young man of his acquaintance from the early settler Li lineage of Ciping village, to the north of Xiazhuang. With these individuals lined up, and with the cooperation that their recent joint involvement in the killing of the Guangdong peddlers showed he could also expect from his sister and her family in Dachuan, Wang now had a potential gang nucleus.[12]

The catalyst for the group's transition from potential to actual "greenwoods bravos" emerged when word reached Xiazhuang of the imminent arrival of four tax police to collect some of Suichuan county's numerous levies and surtaxes. Wang, his brothers, and the Lis enticed the police into the Wang house, then killed them and seized their weapons. When the government sent troops to burn the village, the population fled into the nearby mountains. Instead of blaming the Wangs for bringing this disaster down around their heads, many of the village's young men were roused to join their fledgling gang. By now Diao and his newly-made weapons had arrived, and Wang and a group of about twenty others gathered up all the available arms and went via isolated mountain paths to Wang's sister's village of Dachuan.

The arrival of armed men was noticed by people in neighboring villages, and numbers of their young men came to see what was going on. Some also joined Wang's force, which then numbered over thirty men. Not long thereafter the entire group went to a temple some distance away and held a formal blood oath ceremony to become sworn brothers. As this new band spread and attracted more recruits, it became increasingly difficult to support them all in any of the area's poor mountain villages. Wang therefore sent most of them back home to carry on their former lives, with the expectation that they would return quickly to reform the band when needed. A small core group of ten or so, including the Wangs, Diao, and Li Kaichang, remained in Dachuan, and several scouts were sent out to search for potential targets.[13]

One was soon found in the wealthy person of Ma Jiangbao, who lived near Huang'ao on the southern side of the massif. Ma was an attractive target to Wang because of a dispute the two had once had over some clothing when Wang was an itinerant tailor. Ma was also a martial arts practitioner, and like many other wealthy rural elites he had fortified his home and hired

armed retainers for protection. Nevertheless, Wang and his gang smoked Ma out, captured him, and exchanged him for a 500 dollar ransom. Modest though this success was compared to the spectacular kidnappings Zhu Kongyang had staged, it was sufficient to attract more recruits. As the band grew, Wang bought more weapons, moved Diao Huilin's metal-working equipment to Xiazhuang, and hired other metalworkers to make weapons under Diao's direction.[14]

The Struggle for Survival

All of this banditry provoked the already sorely beset northern Suichuan elites to call for county government suppression efforts. By this time Xiao Jiabi, the regional satrap of guest people origin whose background has already been examined, headed the county's official militia office. Although Xiao had earlier launched several campaigns against Jinggangshan area bandit gangs, he was now more interested in enjoying the perquisites of his new position than in prosecuting the struggle against the elusive and dangerous gangs. Most of his militia detachments therefore remained inactive garrison forces.

Under these circumstances, Wang's desire for both more weapons and more kidnap victims led him to risk an attack on the small but well-armed militia force of Li Shilian that protected the Li lineage and other people living in the village of Shiweizi near Huang'ao. Wang's band caught the militia by surprise and captured several weapons, kidnapped three wealthy local inhabitants and burned the Li lineage hall. However, this attack on one of his subordinate units finally provoked Xiao Jiabi to retaliate. The attack was more devastating because it was long in developing: Wang had expected prompt reaction, but when nothing had developed by spring planting time, he sent home most band members who lived nearby. Hearing this, Xiao Jiabi quickly mounted a night attack on Xiazhuang. Wang and most of his family fled, but their newly rebuilt home was again burned and one of Wang's nephews was killed.[15]

Fearful of further attacks if they kept operating in Suichuan, Wang decided to move his band north closer to the Suichuan-Yongxin-Ninggang border, and to direct their lamb-hanging efforts into Ninggang county. However, due to the rapid proliferation of bandits and the competition that this had engendered in the region, the attempt to move the band met vigorous opposition from other small gangs already operating in the border area. Though Wang's band was able to overwhelm or displace some of these gangs, others combined to resist the intruding force and launched a destructive attack on Wang's relatives in nearby Dachuan village as a sign of their implacable determination. In the face of this stout resistance, Wang and his men happily seized upon news that Xiao Jiabi's force had finally returned to the Suichuan

county seat as an opportunity to abandon the northern massif for the friendlier ground of Xiazhuang.

But at about this same time battles broke out between other major regional bandit gangs, most notably those pitting Tang Guangyao against Wang's former employer Zhu Kongyang, and Ma Wenlin against Yang Zuoshan. Realizing that it would be difficult to remain aloof from these struggles if they stayed in Xiazhuang, Wang led his force deep into the mountains to rest and recruit. During this period he also sent representatives to Tang Guangyao (the closest of the victorious bandit chieftains) and worked out a tacit mutual coexistence agreement with him.[16]

Even as some gangs were dying, others were still being born, and Wang soon became entangled in the affairs of one led by a man named Luo Dongsheng, from Aobei in the Jinggangshan massif's Tuling area. Luo had been part of Li Guicheng's gang in the eastern massif.[17] When this gang split up, Luo gathered friends and lineage members to form his own gang, which gradually grew to nearly one hundred men and 50–60 rifles. However, internal dissension and external predation by the large gang of Tang Guangyao eventually led to a crisis in Luo's band that culminated in Tang's capture and attempted ransom of Luo's mother and one of his sisters. Luo, who was notoriously stingy and self-centered, simply refused to pay the ransom.

At this point, Wang Zuo became involved. The Luos of Tuling were one of four small early settler lineages in the massif area (the others being the Lis of Ciping, the Guos of Liujiaping, and Wang's own kin from Xiazhuang) who habitually intermarried in an attempt to maintain their identity despite the area's guest people majority. Several years earlier Wang's brother Yunlong had married another of Luo Dongsheng's sisters, and this tie now led him to feel that Tang's actions had challenged his own reputation.

After gathering his gang for a possible confrontation, Wang negotiated with Tang. Possessing both the larger military force and the Luo family women, Tang correctly felt that he had the upper hand and freed the women only after Wang paid a 200-dollar ransom. Though he had lost some money, Wang ended up with an unexpected benefit, in that Luo Dongsheng's mother was so thankful for Wang's efforts that she urged him to marry her just-freed sixteen-year-old daughter. Wang accepted with alacrity, the ceremony was performed, and the relations between the two families further deepened.[18]

It may be that this matrimonial tie suggested to Wang a broader strategy to undermine Tang Guangyao, whose force still posed a significant challenge. In order to make it more difficult for Tang to sustain himself in the area, Wang sought to deepen and institutionalize existing ties among the four Jinggangshan area early settler lineages. This he planned to do by setting up a formal association (*hui*) of members of the four lineages, with provisions calling for a yearly joint gathering at the time of the spring cere-

mony honoring the ancestors (the Qingming Festival), and for mutual assistance in times of trouble.

Before implementing this plan, however, Wang sought to head off complications by consulting Luo Dongsheng, who was both his kinsman, a member of one of the four lineages involved, and the leader of the other major armed force in the area. Luo could hardly object to the goal of expanding opposition to their mutual adversary Tang Guangyao, but he was still concerned about the leadership of the new association. He realized that although both he and Wang were about the same age, differences in the overall size, existing generational distribution and leadership mechanisms between the Wang and Luo lineages meant that Wang would be an "elder" representing the Wangs in meetings held to select leaders of the new association, while he himself would not normally be among the Luo lineage leaders. Wang eased his worry by remarking that since the Luos and Lis were quite numerous, they should have more representatives at the meeting, and that these should include both Luo Dongsheng and Li Kaichang, founding members of Wang's bandit gang.

With this issue resolved, a formal meeting of the men of all the lineages was held during the festival to establish what became known as the Spring Festival Association (Qingming hui). At the meeting (in the Li lineage hall in Ciping), Wang, Luo, Li Kaichang, and several older men were elected to the association's management board. In recognition of Wang's force of character and his reputation as a rising young man of action, he was chosen as association head (*huizhang*), with Luo and Li as the two subordinate managers (*zhishi*). Li was in fact of a higher generational ranking than Wang, but they were still about the same age, and Li had long been subordinate to Wang in the bandit band, so he readily accepted Wang's leadership. Luo was less contented, but he also bowed to the weight of popular opinion.

Following the selection of leaders, the promulgation of bylaws (*huigui*), and a feast, members of the various lineages broke up to conduct ceremonies honoring their individual ancestors. Under the influence of this joint organizational activity and evidence of greater inter-lineage cohesion, still more young men from the various lineages joined either Wang's or Luo's band.[19]

Tang Guangyao, meanwhile, had taken over Zhu Kongyang's old bandit "nest" in Jinggangshan village, where, as noted in chapter 2, his activities led to militia counterattacks and eventually to a government offer of an official position if he and his force abandoned banditry. Though Tang still had a strong independent force, the constant efforts required to support such a large force, the limited potential of lamb-hanging as a long-term survival strategy, and the growing pressure in his rear from Wang's and Luo's gangs of local people with their lineage-based popular support all persuaded him to leave. In the spring or summer of 1924, he and most of his band left the mountains and entered the employ of the Hunan government.[20]

King of the Mountain

Although some small groups of highwaymen such as had always posed a threat to travelers remained active in the area, after Tang's departure Wang's and Luo's bands were the most important large gangs operating in the Jinggangshan massif area. Of the two leaders, Wang had the larger following and the broader reputation.

Wang's reputation probably did stem in part, as most accounts stress, from his "rob from the rich, give to the poor" attitude, but the intrinsic nature of the lamb-hanging operations that supplied much of the large gangs' revenue meant that the same could be said of virtually all regional band leaders. However, it is clear that his reputation owed much to the unusual ability that his mixed parentage gave him to command support from both of Jinggangshan's ethnic communities. On the one hand, his membership in the Wang lineage, his marriage ties with the Luos, and his leadership of the Spring Festival Association gave him the solid support of the area's small early settler lineages. On the other hand, his maternal kinship ties to and former residence in the home of a well-known and powerful guest people brotherhood leader, his sister's marriage into a guest people family, and his own reputation for not discriminating among people on the basis of their group identity, all helped him gain acceptance among the pugnacious and persecution-conscious guest people community.[21]

Both Wang's and Luo's bands continued lamb-hanging in the territory around the massif's base, particularly in the northern and eastern sectors of Ninggang and Yongxin counties. Once again Wang scored the more impressive triumph by seizing one of the most prominent and wealthy elites in Ninggang, one Long Yaozhai. Though troops were soon sent to rescue him, their efforts were unsuccessful, and eventually Long's family paid a ransom of 50,000 dollars—probably not coincidentally the same size as Zhu Kongyang's earlier lamb-hanging windfall that had helped Wang get his own start as a bandit. In this case, however, the ransom was not the end of the matter. Although Wang ordered Long's release, people among his escort out of the mountains who had grudges against him killed him instead.[22]

This brutal murder, along with repeated lamb-hanging raids by Luo Dongsheng's band into the border areas of Yongxin and Taihe counties east of Jinggangshan, greatly agitated local elites, many of whom—their faith in the regular army dwindling—appealed to another of the region's most prominent elites for help against the bandit menace.[23] The notable in question was Yin Daoyi, who had been born in the mid-1880s into a peasant household in a prominent early settler lineage from the Nashan area east of Jinggangshan. In this region and its early settler lineages, it may be recalled, had earlier been located the main opposition to Wang's uncle, the Hong River Society guest people leader Fan Shanyang. One of that struggle's leaders, the local

educator Chen Meiqing, had been Yin Daoyi's elementary school teacher and patron, and Yin himself is said to have participated in the attack on Fan's forces and the subsequent formation of the Rescue Society that provided an ongoing institutional focus for early settler opposition to the massif-dwelling guest people.

After graduation from the Huanan School in Yongxin, Yin and several friends had heard of Sun Yatsen's revolutionary movement and had been motivated to travel to Canton to seek opportunities for advancement. Some time later he returned to Nashan, armed with several rifles and a now-considerably-enhanced local reputation, to consider how best to profit from the changing political situation.

About this time Wang Zuo (then still a tailor) passed through Nashan and heard of Yin's return. Wang, who seemed to have a talent for forming social relationships with a wide range of people, knew a former schoolmate and friend of Yin named Xiao Bowang. Through Xiao, Wang met Yin, and the two men found it useful to cultivate their relationship even after Yin went to Nanchang and Jiujiang in 1924 to try to exploit connections made in Canton. Wang attended a farewell dinner in Yin's honor, and Yin gave him a rifle; later when Wang's band began "lamb-hanging" raids they were careful to avoid Nashan, and Wang used a portion of the gang's earnings to buy gifts for Yin.

After two years, Yin returned to Nashan. He had apparently had little success in advancing himself in Jiangxi's big cities, and therefore felt free to accept Xiao's request to help in a feud then going on between the Xiao and the Hu lineages. He and Xiao used some of the money that Wang had provided to them to buy several rifles, obtained others from a military man of Yin's acquaintance, and recruited an armed force to employ in feuds and other local factional struggles.

In this way, Yin and Xiao gradually emerged as two of the area's most powerful elites, with Yin as the paramount partner in their alliance. Soon the local warlord officer Niu Wentian regularized their armed band as a Yongxin militia force, and when governments in the area later decided to establish an umbrella militia institution known as the Five County Joint Defense Headquarters (Wuxian lianfang zongzhihui) to ameliorate local factionalism and suppress bandits, Yin was a logical choice to be its head.[24]

Local elites strongly urged Yin to move against the bandit gangs of Wang and Luo, a difficult and dangerous task that risked both Yin's prestige and his valuable armed forces. Moreover, he and the bandit leaders had personal connections: in addition to the ties with Wang Zuo mentioned above, Yin and Luo were sworn brothers. Although his relations with Wang had faded over the years as their careers had taken them on potentially competitive trajectories, Yin still preferred to remain as passive as possible in the effort to suppress the Jinggangshan bandits.

With his passive blessings and the ongoing clamor of other local elites, therefore, in spring 1925 officials called for another army suppression effort using a regiment headed by Niu Wentian. Wang's band and the massif population met this campaign as they had before: by hiding deep in the hills and avoiding contact. Moreover, as troops scoured the mountains for Wang's band, Luo Dongsheng's gang raided their communication lines. Eventually, Niu's men withdrew, after demonstrating their ferocity by burning homes and killing a few old peasants. Unlike past campaigns, however, this time Niu's force settled down watchfully in Nashan, within easy striking distance of the massif villages. Their continued presence and uncertain intentions not only inhibited lamb-hanging raids, but also kept bandits and many other inhabitants from returning to their villages for fear of the sort of surprise attack that Xiao Jiabi's militia had formerly launched upon Wang in Xiazhuang.

In the end, what the army could not impose by direct force it effected indirectly by the persistence of its presence. Even for young bandits acclimated by long experience, prolonged living in the deep mountains, unprotected from the cold, drizzly springtime weather, was an enervating and ultimately unendurable experience. For the inhabitants of the Nashan area as well, the steady drain on local provisions and patience resulting from the presence of a large body of outside troops became more and more exasperating.

Local inhabitants of all social strata and geographical location therefore wished to resolve the bandit problem so that the troops would leave. As a powerful local leader to whom many people looked for direction, Yin Daoyi was under particular pressure to find a solution; at the same time, as one both sufficiently removed from direct involvement in the struggle so that his prestige did not ride on a particular outcome and sufficiently connected with both bandits and local officials, Yin was well positioned to mediate between the competing forces.

The solution that Yin eventually proposed relied upon the time-tested cooptive strategy of "reorganizing" bandits into officially sanctioned militia forces. With Niu Wentian's consent, Yin and Wang met to discuss this possibility. The main issues to be resolved were the conditions for the withdrawal of Niu's force and those governing the security and responsibilities of the proposed new militias. They finally agreed that Niu would not leave until his "face" had been preserved by Wang's force presenting him with a few broken rifles as a symbolic gesture of disarmament and "pacification." Both Wang and Luo Dongsheng would receive militia commissions, their forces could remain in the Jinggangshan area, and they would not have to hand over any more arms, collect grain levies or raise conscripts for other military units. Finally, the Nashan notable (and Yin's former teacher) Chen Meiqing would remain with Wang's band for some time, ostensibly to help with the reorganization but in fact as a hostage to the agreement's good-faith implementation.[25]

In the following weeks, Wang's and Luo's forces waited quietly in separate sites for the arrival of local officials to carry out their formal transformation into government militia units. Unfortunately for the peace of the area, this interval allowed vague feelings of unease and jealousy that Luo had gradually been developing toward Wang to blossom into full-scale animosity. Fearing that unless he took drastic measures he would soon be hopelessly outclassed by Wang's growing power and prestige, Luo attacked the village where Wang's band lived. After some confusion they succeeded in wounding and capturing Wang himself, but before they could kill him, Luo's mother and sisters rushed to the scene. In a long, tense and tearful confrontation, they persuaded Luo to release Wang in exchange for the promised transfer to Luo of a large quantity of money and half of the rifles possessed by Wang's band.

In addition to wounding Wang, however, Luo's attack had killed one of Wang's brothers, and once freed, the angry Wang made only a token transfer of money and weapons to satisfy the pledge that Luo's mother had made. But if kinship appeals had earlier helped persuade Luo to release Wang, they now constrained Wang from taking direct and immediate revenge. As Wang pondered what to do, Luo made a hostage of Wang's nephew (the only son yet born to any of the male family members of Wang's generation) when the child's mother (Luo's sister) brought him home for a visit.

Under the circumstances, Wang agreed to deliver the remaining money and weapons. At the same time, however, he sought to deal with Luo indirectly by asking the Nashan notable Chen Meiqing (still a hostage in Wang's camp) to see if Yin Daoyi would kill Luo for him for a fee of 1000 dollars. Yin gladly agreed, seeing this as a profitable chance to remove an obstacle to his own expansion. Yin arranged to meet with Luo to discuss details of the militia reorganization, and as they sat drinking together, Yin's men burst in and seized Luo and his bodyguards. Yin forced Luo to order his band to hand in all of their weapons within a day, but the confused and divided band members found it impossible to comply. Yin used this as an excuse to execute Luo in the Yongxin county seat. Luo's gang then split up, with many entering Wang's band and the rest drifting off to become bandits on their own. Wang assumed responsibility for Luo's family.[26]

By now Wang's band had over 180 rifles and was much too strong for Yin's militia to defeat in battle. Yin and his associate Xiao Bowang therefore decided to proceed to reorganize Wang's band into a militia, so they met Wang at militia headquarters in Shimen to work out the details. Several times before, Wang had refused Xiao's offers to become his sworn brother. Now Xiao extended the offer again, and this time Wang agreed. Soon thereafter, Wang's appointment letter arrived and was read to the illiterate bandit.

After some discussion, it was decided to base the unit on the massif in the village of Xiaojing. For Wang this village had several advantages: it was conveniently located on the main north-south communication route; it was close

to the town of Ciping, whose Li lineage was among the four early settler lineages participating in the Spring Festival Association under Wang's leadership; and it was also near a rugged area of the massif country known as Gold Lion Face (Jinshimian) that Wang and his band frequently used as a hideout and safe haven.

In Xiaojing, the new militia built substantial headquarters and dwellings, distributed subordinate officer appointments to several of Wang's long-time followers, and settled down to enjoy peace after several dangerous years. But they soon discovered that while they still had to maintain themselves, their new status precluded them from lamb-hanging. Instead, militias normally supported themselves by collecting local taxes and skimming part of the revenues. In the case of Wang's detachment, however, the situation was more complicated, due in part to its own actions. Lawlessness in the region—including the killing of Suichuan tax police by Wang and his men—had caused several years' *de facto* suspension of tax collection from the mountain villages. Moreover, the abandonment of productive activities by young men going off to become bandits, lamb-hanging raids on elite families, internecine gang warfare and military suppression campaigns had made life harder than ever for poor mountain communities. Finally, during the negotiations that had led to their reorganization, Wang had insisted that his militia not be responsible for tax collection or other extractive activities.

In the end, the need for money led Wang to agree that the militia would collect the combined household tax known as the "monthly levy," but would only collect it from wealthy households who could still afford to pay. To implement this practice (which amounted to a legalized version of "rob from the rich, give to the poor"), Wang enlisted several literate acquaintances such as his former martial arts teacher Wang Dongwen to set up population registers and handle tax records for the militia bureau. Other militia officers managed the actual collection itself.[27]

The tax collection indirectly led to a mutiny that nearly ended Wang's career. One officer sent to collect taxes was Li Yunfei, a long-time band member with a grudge against Wang. While on his rounds, Li was feted by a landowner who suggested that Li himself would make a fine militia leader. Encouraged by this idea and by his festering resentment of Wang, Li conspired with several others to seize the Xiaojing militia headquarters while most of the detachment's other leaders were away. Though Wang himself escaped through a secret passage that past scrapes with rivals had given him the foresight to build in the rear wall of his house, he nonetheless lost control of the detachment and remained uncertain of the opposition's strength. Under the circumstances, Wang made his way to his sister's home in Dachuan to consider his options. There Wang's brother-in-law suggested that he might be able to obtain aid from another bandit gang called the Saber Detachment, part of which had also just undergone nominal

reorganization into a militia detachment. Wang therefore contacted this detachment's leaders.[28]

One of these leaders was Yuan Wencai, the second of the two bandit chiefs who would figure prominently in the history of the Jinggangshan revolutionary movement. Because of his importance in the events to follow and because of the interesting counterpoint and variations on the process of becoming a bandit leader that his biography makes to that of Wang Zuo, it is useful to pause for a time to examine Yuan's early life before exploring the interaction between him and Wang that helped pave the way for their mutual involvement in the revolution.

YUAN WENCAI AND THE SABER DETACHMENT

Yuan's Early Life

Yuan Wencai was born in 1898 in a small hamlet near Maoping, in southern Ninggang at the foot of the Jinggangshan massif. In Yuan's youth his parents were comparatively well-off peasants, and they were determined that Yuan would have access to the education that might allow him to get ahead. He did well in the village school, despite the field work and animal-tending responsibilities which earned him the derisive sobriquet "the cowherd scholar" from better-off classmates. But the Yuans were only a "small surname" (*xiao xing*) in the area, which was dominated by the Xie sub-lineage headed by Xie Guannan. At least in part as the result of economic oppression from the Xies, the Yuan family circumstances began to decline. In 1917 Yuan stopped his schooling, married and began to help on the family farm.

Some time thereafter, the second son of Xie Guannan took a fancy to Yuan's wife, and with the unprincipled arrogance common to back-country powerholders, took her to live in his own household. The helpless Yuan had no choice but to marry another and continue farming. After several years, however, the family was able to borrow money to continue Yuan's schooling at the Hechuan Middle School in neighboring Yongxin county.

At this point Yuan's career stood at a critical juncture. In early twentieth century China, particularly in an area as peripheral and culturally backward as the Jiangxi mountains, middle school graduation was a mark of distinction usually obtained by a person of some present means and considerable future prospects. Most such graduates found jobs in the expanding modern school system, in the bureaucracy or in commerce. As he journeyed over the mountains to study at the Hechuan Middle School, Yuan was entering a world of considerably wider possibilities.

It must thus have been particularly crushing to Yuan when his father died of illness after his second semester in Yongxin, plunging the family further

into debt, depriving them of important labor power, and effectively ending Yuan's chances for completing school. Yuan returned home once again, with feelings we may well imagine, mourning both his deceased parent and his blighted career. Back in the village, whispers of "cowherd scholar" again loud in his ears, he settled down once more to help on the family farm. Before long, however, Yuan began anew to distinguish himself from the bulk of the peasantry and to carve out a niche for himself—this time not in the basically upper-elite world of the modern middle school graduate but in the more circumscribed but familiar world of the lower elite local power holder. Yuan began—probably stimulated first more by frustration at past abuses than by conscious ambition—by trying to curb the power of the Xie family. When Xie's son led a group of followers to Yuan's village to press for payment of road and bridge repair "contributions," Yuan organized his neighbors in a successful resistance movement.

In the spring of 1923, Yuan became more deeply and dangerously involved in Ninggang elite politics during the election to the provincial assembly. Local power holders around the county were engaged in lobbying and influence-peddling on behalf of various aspiring politicians, and Xie Guannan was no exception. When Yuan heard that Xie had received a "gift" for his services from the Nanchang politician and Ninggang native Long Qinhai, he was moved to expose the matter openly and embarrassingly, in the streets of Maoping on election day, provoking in the process an angry, insult-slinging exchange between himself and Xie.

It is not known what effect this had on the electoral fortunes of the candidate backed by Long and Xie, but the incident clearly caused discomfiture and loss of face to Xie. While this obviously helped repay Yuan in some measure for the loss of his first wife and the slights on his scholarly endeavors at the hands of the Xies, it also marked him clearly in the eyes of this powerful local family as a gadfly and troublemaker. Without the support of a powerful family of his own, under normal circumstances Yuan might well have paid dearly for his moment of satisfaction.[29]

Yuan and the Saber Detachment

Fortunately for Yuan, however, the 1920s were not normal times, and Yuan's actions had brought him to the attention not only of the powerful Xies but also of Hu Yachun, who led one of the bandit gangs thronging the hills. Hu, whose original name was Lai Guoliang, was raised in a small guest people hamlet near the village of Dachuan into which Wang Zuo's sister married. The village and family had suffered greatly when the Ninggang early settler power holder Long Yaozhai (who was later kidnapped and killed by Wang Zuo's band) used the local warlord garrison to support him in financial extortion and other sorts of self-aggrandizement. Eventually Lai's parents

had hanged themselves, and several of his brothers were either seized as army conscripts or fled the area.

Around the same time another Guangxi army unit had broken up in the area, and several groups of its officers and men had come to the Jinggangshan area and become bandits. One of these groups, known as the Saber Detachment, settled around Ban'gangshan, near both Yuan Wencai's home in Maoping and Lai's home in Nanmuping. After their arrival, Lai changed his name to Hu Yachun (presumably to reduce the risk of retaliation against his remaining family) and became a scout for this force. Soon, however, attacks by government troops and internal feuds over the division of booty caused the gang to break up into three smaller bands, each with its own turf.

At this point, Hu might have returned to farming or tried some form of commerce, as some bandits and scouts did when their gangs broke up. But such possibilities were denied to Hu when he and another man were denounced by local notables (including Xie Guannan), put on a wanted list, and forced to hide in the mountains. To make a living, they recruited other local peasants, bought several rifles from drifting soldiers, and set up another small bandit band, which they also called the Saber Detachment.[30]

Now Hu, always in search of new talent and no doubt seeing in Yuan Wencai certain attractive features—a guest family background, obvious ambition and dissatisfaction with his current situation, and a relatively high level of education—attempted to recruit him into the detachment. After a period of indecision, Yuan finally agreed and became a sworn brother of Hu and a secret group member. He remained for a time still very much on the fringes of gang life, living at home and taking no active part in the lamb-hanging raids that provided most of the group's revenues. Gradually, however, his ties deepened; he was often sent a share of ransom proceeds (probably in exchange for providing intelligence about potential targets or the activities of militias and army units), and eventually he did personally participate in several kidnappings.

Despite his continued efforts at secrecy, Yuan's deepening involvement with the Saber Detachment soon came to the attention of Xie Guannan, for whom thorough knowledge of changing personal relationships and village gossip was always an important aspect of local power holding and whose sensitivity toward such matters was heightened by the real danger facing all of the privileged and powerful in the current upsurge of kidnapping and violence. Xie must also have been keeping particularly close watch on people such as Yuan, who had already openly opposed and obstructed his efforts in the past.

In any case, Xie informed the magistrate of Yuan's bandit activity, and troops were sent to arrest him. Unfortunately for both Xie and the magistrate, this simply drove Yuan more deeply into the bosom of the bandits and confirmed him in his opposition to the local order. Although Yuan and most of

his family escaped, his mother was killed and the family home was burned. Enraged by this cruel and senseless action, Yuan abandoned all pretext of remaining just an ordinary peasant and went off to become an open, full-time member of the Saber Detachment.[31]

Yuan's presence soon substantially affected the Detachment. Most members of the group were illiterate, and for them even an erstwhile "cowherd scholar" was an important addition, able to write ransom notes and read the replies, keep accounts, and read newspapers. Not content with such work alone, however, Yuan also rapidly curbed the detachment's riotous feasting and ensured that they confined their depredations to the local elite and avoided the surrounding peasantry. Hu Yachun seems to have been as impressed as anyone with Yuan's personality, ambition and ability, which was just as well, for he soon found himself relegated to largely figurehead status in the group while Yuan (now elevated to the rank of "chief of staff") took over most of the actual power.

It was therefore under Yuan's direction that in the summer of 1924 the Saber Detachment led two other bandit gangs and some of the guest people populace in a major incursion into the early settler–dominated area around the Ninggang county seat of Xincheng. This raid was launched after several months of warlord army "bandit suppression" in the county, and formed part of the escalating pattern of early settler–guest people violence discussed in the preceding chapter. In this instance the invading forces destroyed several nearby early settler villages, then sacked the county seat itself, burning the *yamen* and its archives, the Confucian temple, and the main hall housing the Xie surname's county-wide clan organization the Tonghui Tang—all symbols of early settler/government power and therefore natural targets for attack.[32]

From Saber Detachment to Militia Unit

This destructive raid, soon followed by further disturbances as northern and southern armies clashed in the area, plunged the county into near anarchy for a time, but also gave impetus to a new and partly successful effort to ease the growing guest people–early settler tension with negotiation rather than violence. The initial prime mover in this effort appears to have been a new magistrate named Shen Qingyuan, who arrived in April 1925. Shen sought to grapple with the threat that local bandit power posed to public order (and to his own position), and he determined as part of this process to talk with Yuan Wencai, now regarded as among the most important local guest people/bandit leaders.

In choosing negotiations, Shen was influenced by the advice of Long Chaoqing, a young Ninggang intellectual and CCP cadre.[33] Long, about whom more will be said in chapter 4, was seeking a suitable armed ally, so he and two other party cadres persuaded the magistrate to allow them to act

as intermediaries between the government and Yuan's band. Magistrate Shen hoped Long could persuade the detachment to cease its depredations. Long and his associates hoped instead to establish a special relationship with Yuan, so that later he would cooperate in CCP-led efforts to overthrow the local government. The hopes of both parties nearly died when at the first meeting neither Yuan nor Hu Yachun displayed any interest in negotiations. Contact continued, however, and after he and Long became sworn brothers, Yuan agreed to talk with a group of students and gentry at the Saber Detachment's base near Jinggangshan.

Although Hu Yachun continued to oppose any cooperation, Yuan was eventually convinced, and in October 1925 he went to Long's village near the county seat to meet with magistrate Shen. The meeting was tense and argumentative, but Shen was in a poor position to bargain. Recently bandits had launched another major raid, this time against the county's major commercial center at Longshi, and securing some sort of agreement with Yuan's force assumed even greater urgency as the situation deteriorated. In the end, they agreed that the Saber Detachment would be maintained and would continue to be based near Jinggangshan, but now would receive provisions (and presumably orders) from the government, and would be renamed the Ninggang General Militia. Subsequently Yuan and a group of 30–50 followers moved to "garrison" Maoping, leaving Hu Yachun and a smaller group behind in the Saber Detachment's old base at Ban'gangshan.[34]

The Yuan–Shen agreement immediately affected the leadership of the old Saber Detachment. When Yuan persisted in negotiations despite Hu Yachun's opposition, Hu soon led part of the band off to continue banditry as before. Accommodation between Yuan and Shen thus divided and weakened bandit forces, as the government had hoped. Moreover, Yuan apparently assisted the government even further by embarking in November on an effort to "cleanse the countryside" (*qingxiang*) by subduing some of the many remaining bandit gangs in the area. This campaign is not mentioned in Communist accounts of the period and the gazetteer description, which is our sole record of it, is brief. But it is clear that for Yuan, ambitions perhaps fueled by the attention lavished upon him by local power holders, any weakening of other armed competitors would have increased his own relative power and importance. Perhaps this explains his efforts to suppress the guest people hill country bandits from whom he had himself just emerged.

However the suppression was conducted or whatever Yuan's motivations were for participating in it, the result was in fact to increase Yuan's power and probably also his involvement in local politics. These points are symbolized by the changing location of Yuan's base. In late 1925 his forces moved from Maoping to the major market town of Longshi, and sometime in 1926 he moved to the county seat. As Yuan's forces seemed to move more clearly into the government's orbit, magistrate Shen disbanded the militia

office (*qingxiang ju*) formerly responsible for bandit defense. The combination of Yuan's own suppression efforts and the magistrate's administrative moves meant that by mid-1926, on the eve of the Northern Expedition, Yuan's ex-bandit guest people militia forces had managed to become the county's major military power, dominating both the early settler centers in the lowlands and the guest people bandit gangs in the hills.

Yet Yuan had not severed his roots in guest people society; on the contrary, he remained keenly aware of what was going on in the hills above Maoping and in the larger regional guest people community. At some point during this period, for example, he became involved with the group of guest people elites who managed the Longjiang school, including the powerful Luo family from neighboring Chaling county, with whom he retained close contacts even during the revolution. At the same time he was on occasion very much involved in the interplay of personality and power among the various bandit gangs that still remained in the area following his "cleansing of the countryside."[35]

FURTHER ALARMS AND EXCURSIONS

Wang Regains Power

It was just such interest in keeping in touch with other gangs and their leaders that led Yuan to welcome the rather bedraggled figure of Wang Zuo when the latter appeared in Yuan's Maoping camp following Li Yunfei's mutiny. Wang had an introduction from his brother-in-law, who knew the Saber Detachment leader Hu Yachun, but his reputation was almost certainly wide enough so that Yuan already knew his name. At any rate, Yuan extended a warm reception, and as they ate and drank, the two developed a mutual affinity that began with the fact that they shared the same birth year and was strengthened by similarities in their lives and experiences. Soon they became sworn brothers, and Yuan pledged to help Wang regain his band.

In the end, however, neither Yuan nor Wang had to take action. During the mutiny, Li Yunfei had captured Wang's mother and several family members, and this protected him for a time. But though long-time gang members loyal to Wang such as Diao Huilin and Li Kaichang had not prevented Li's power-grab, neither had they accepted it. During the New Year's holiday period, they acted. Several officers went to militia headquarters, ostensibly to pay respects to Li, but instead they killed him, seized control of the detachment, and released Wang's family. Wang quickly returned, accompanied by an escort from Yuan Wencai.[36]

Wang was primed for vengeance after this, the second attempt to overthrow and kill him within the space of a few months. With Li Yunfei and Luo

Dongsheng already dead, his attention turned to two of Luo's lineage and gang members who had killed Wang's brother during Luo's attack on Wang and his band. Wang first sent people to seize the two assailants from their refuge in neighboring Lingxian, and then arranged for an elaborate memorial service to be held for his brother during the upcoming Spring Festival.

The service was held at Tushan, where Wang had close ties. In addition to being inhabited by people surnamed Wang, the village was also the home of Wang Zuo's former martial arts teacher Wang Dongwen. Wang Zuo knew many village youths from when he had studied martial arts in the local lineage hall, and some of them had joined his band or supported it in various ways. Tushan was also connected to the death of Wang's brother, in that it and the adjacent village of Jiangnan had together been the bivouac site for Wang's gang when Luo had attacked it.

The ceremony displayed elements of pride, subjugation and revenge in about equal measure. The Wang lineage hall was elaborately outfitted as a mourning hall, and large amounts of food, incense and other funerary objects were consumed. Three of Luo Dongsheng's brothers were on hand to acknowledge their family's culpability in the entire affair, and to make gestures of financial and symbolic compensation by first contributing money to pay for the ceremony and then carrying Wang's brother's ancestral tablet to the grave and sweeping the site clean. Finally, one of the two captured killers was brought out and tied to a tree, and in a brutal but dramatic demonstration of his power and vengeance, Wang Zuo stepped up and hacked off his head.[37]

The Plots Continue

Despite this display of the fate of those who attacked him and his kin (to deepen the impression, Wang shot his brother's other killer several days later in Xiaojing), challenges to Wang's domination of the massif continued. The next plot came not from rival bandits or ambitious underlings but from elites irritated by Wang's attempts to tax the rich. A group led by a well-educated landlord named Hong Futian received secret encouragement from the Nashan-area powerholder Yin Daoyi, who was alarmed by the growth in Wang's strength resulting from his absorption of members of Luo Dongsheng's gang and weapons purchases funded by government stipends to his militia force.

The elites struck when the spring agricultural busy season had arrived and Wang had sent most of his men home, leaving only a few bachelors and long-time associates around. Taking advantage of market day crowds in Xiaojing, Hong and forty or so others infiltrated the village in disguise, but the large number of strangers aroused the suspicion of the ever-wary Wang. He alerted nearby militiamen, and their prompt action forced the intruders to flee before the attack could be properly launched.

Although Yin Daoyi's involvement in Hong's plot was hidden, Yin worried that word would soon get out and prompt Wang's retaliation. Yin and his colleague Xiao Bowang therefore quickly plotted to lure Wang to their militia headquarters in Shimen, where it was hoped he could be easily seized and killed. Once again, however, Wang discovered the trap and avoided disaster. Hong Futian was also captured, and under harsh interrogation he shocked Wang by revealing that Yin had previously persuaded one of the original sworn brothers at the core of Wang's band to spy for him. Several months later, Wang caught and killed this spy, after which Yin retaliated by trying unsuccessfully to capture Wang's sister and brother-in-law in Dachuan. To protect them, Wang found work for the couple in Xiaojing; their relocation meant that all of Wang's immediate family members were now in one way or another directly involved in his activities.[38]

In this manner developed a deep and open enmity between Wang and Yin that lasted until the latter's death in 1928. The details of this violent denouement must wait until a later chapter; for the moment it is sufficient to highlight the important counterpoint that the personal interaction between these two rivals makes with the larger structural dynamic of ethnically and geographically rooted socioeconomic conflict that so dramatically shaped the region's social and political life. Despite their origins in different and antagonistic communities, mutual ambitions and complementary resources initially led the two men to cooperate as they sought to build separate power bases on their own respective "turfs." Their later conflict reflected specific considerations of personal pride, reputation, and "face," and the abrasive effects of competition between two expanding spheres of individual power, as well as the more generic inter-community rivalry between early settlers and guest people.

As the discussion in this and the previous chapter indicates, this type of personal rivalry among elites and would-be elites was common in the Jinggangshan area. Throughout the region, bandit and brotherhood leaders, militia commanders and other powerholders competed as individuals or coalitions of individuals, and the patterns of alliance and competition could and did transcend the boundaries of ethnic community and topographic distinction. The politics of personality as well as those of ethnicity, status and class were all among the sometimes-opposing moments of force whose combined interaction helped determine the structural dynamics and relative motion of regional politics.

CONCLUSION

The early careers of Wang and Yuan illustrate many of the general observations made in chapter 2 about the social ecology of hill country banditry in

the Jinggangshan area and suggest a few further observations as well. Their examples emphasize the fact that banditry was both a common and accepted career pattern for ambitious hill people dissatisfied with or driven from other lines of work. Most of the bandit population and its leaders were no doubt drawn from the poorest and least well-educated hill people—people such as Wang Zuo—but the example of Yuan Wencai indicates that even some individuals with considerable education joined the bandit world.

Yuan and Wang were both able to use their success as bandit leaders to lift themselves out of the mass of the peasantry and into the ranks of the elite. In terms of many commonly used criteria for measuring local elite status, such as educational level, political awareness and sophistication, and sustained interaction with government officials, Yuan seems to have been the more "elite" of the two men, an assessment that is further confirmed by the nature of his later career within the revolutionary movement. He was in many respects an early twentieth-century version of the Qing *shengyuan*, educated and ambitious individuals who also often found themselves frustrated in their aspirations for reward and recognition commensurate with their efforts, and who sometimes in consequence were also led to become involved in smuggling, banditry, secret societies and rebellion.

Wang Zuo came from a considerably poorer and less stable family background than Yuan, and never approached even Yuan's relatively modest educational achievements. Nevertheless, his forceful personality, extensive network of personal contacts, and painfully won practical knowledge of hill country conditions enabled him to develop a level of regional power, wealth and reputation that certainly equaled and probably surpassed Yuan's. Although many of the region's better-born and better-educated elites—people such as Yin Daoyi and his associates—might have looked down on Wang for his lack of schooling, limited awareness of the outside world, and volatile temper, they were nevertheless forced to acknowledge his multi-faceted regional influence and to interact with him politically and militarily as essentially their equal.

Although both Wang and Yuan were born into bandit-riddled communities and owed their power and elite status either directly or indirectly to the armed gangs that they themselves came to lead, their involvement in the world of the hill country bandits proceeded gradually. Their careers provide ample illustration of the close symbiotic relationship that existed between bandits and the hill country communities among which they operated. In a situation where gangs relied on community members to provide them with information, recruits, and supplies, people could have a variety of different relationships with the gangs without ever becoming full-time members, could drift in and out of contact with them, or could move from complete non-involvement to full-time membership in a series of gradual stages. Yuan and Wang followed this last route; both were initially approached by the

gangs to provide services for them and then moved into deeper involvement over a period of time.[39]

The activities of Yuan and Wang once they became full-time gang members also shed valuable light on the structure and interconnections of bandit gangs. Rather than amorphous mobs ruled by a single leader, gangs seem often to have had relatively complex organization and internal specialization. Yuan was first employed as a "clerk" for the Saber Detachment and later became "chief of staff"; Wang employed a "teacher" to handle the band's secretarial work and a skilled metalworker to make its weapons; both Wang and Yuan were for a time members of the corps of scouts upon which many gangs relied to find profitable targets. These specialized occupations and military-style titles indicate not only the functionally differentiated nature of bandit gang organization but also the continuing influence on the gangs of the former warlord soldiers whose influx into the region was described in chapter 2.

Both within and among the gangs, especially among their leadership groups, individual relationships were commonly made and cemented through sworn brother, native place, kinship or marriage ties. The above account, for example, provides abundant evidence of the important role that Wang Zuo's immediate family, in-laws, other members of the Wang surname group, fellow villagers and various sworn brothers (including Yuan Wencai) played at many different stages in the formation, expansion and maintenance of his gang. Yuan also engaged in the same types of relationship-building: he became a sworn brother (and was also *tongnian* and possibly also *tongxue*) with Long Chaoqing, a sworn brother with Hu Yachun, and had several relatives as members of his gang. These sorts of relationships increased the internal cohesion of gangs, and could bring separate gangs into at least loose alliance.

Despite such attempts to improve cohesion and cooperation, however, bandit society remained violent and faction-ridden. Wang's many close brushes with death at the hands of jealous rivals, and ambitious subordinates in particular, clearly illustrate just how difficult it could be for successful bandit leaders to remain alive and in power. For their part, both Wang and Yuan showed little compunction in turning against some of their erstwhile confederates and allies when the occasion warranted, in Wang's case including at least one of his own sworn brothers.

For none of these gang leaders could any number of ties, sacred or secular, totally replace unceasing vigilance, strength of character and firmness of purpose as guarantees of safety or success. As radical political movements gradually developed in rural Jiangxi in the mid-1920s, and particularly as more serious and widespread social and political convulsions began to affect the province in the course of the Northern Expedition launched by the Guomindang in the summer of 1926, both the personal

qualities and private relationships of Jinggangshan bandit leaders such as Wang and Yuan continued to stand them in good stead.

As will become clear in following chapters, the gangs and brotherhoods of the Jinggangshan area, and especially the bands of Wang Zuo and Yuan Wencai, were to play important but sometimes controversial roles at various stages in the history of the local revolutionary movement. As we stand now on the verge of discussing the development of the movement itself, it is worth pausing for a moment to reflect upon some of the advantages and disadvantages that the social position and operating style of the gangs presented to those (whether Communists or not) who sought to build personal political followings or mass political movements in Jinggangshan and other similar rural regions.

Among the most obvious and prominent attractions of the gangs and brotherhoods for ambitious local power holders and enthusiastic young revolutionaries alike was the access they provided to already-organized bodies of armed men whose weaponry and fighting experience was considerably superior to that possessed by local peasants, and generally at least equal to that of the state- and elite-run militias who were their main opponents. At the same time, when compared with the army troops who might be called in from outside, the gangs possessed much better intelligence and communications networks as a result of their intensive scouting for lamb-hanging targets, as well as a much more intimate knowledge of both the strategic and tactical geography of the area gained through their long residence and constant movement across the difficult terrain.

Other advantages of special importance for political radicals stemmed from the close connections that existed between the gangs and local society. For one thing, in contrast to new-style political parties such as the GMD and CCP, bandits and brotherhoods were already familiar parts of the hill country's institutional landscape. By associating with and employing the gangs and by enlisting some gang leaders in their own ranks, radical political parties could absorb some of the color and character of the gangs in the eyes of local inhabitants, and thus ease their assimilation into the conceptual universe of the peasant.

Similarly, the gangs' functions as avenues to a possible better future attracting the poor but ambitious, and as social catchment tanks collecting the poor and hopeless among the hill country population meant that they had deep roots in the most disadvantaged and desperate segments of society, among groups whose members had the most to gain from dramatic social change, and the least to lose from the failure of risky efforts to achieve it. For radicals, therefore, contact with the gangs held out the hope of providing easy access both to large masses of the people likely to be particularly sympathetic to calls for reform and to the smaller gang-member subsets of these populations among whom much of the difficult work of mobilization and organization had already been accomplished.

On the other hand, as scholars and practical politicians alike have long realized, bandit gangs such as those existing in the Jinggangshan region have serious political shortcomings as well as advantages.[40] Their localism, their low levels of ideological and organizational sophistication, and their disunity and frequent internecine rivalries all reduce the capacity of such gangs to serve as vehicles for the large-scale implementation of radical political programs and increase the likelihood that at some point in the expansion process of political movements many aspects of gang behavior will actually become counterproductive.

Both the general account of Jinggangshan banditry given previously and the more focused discussion of the early careers of Wang Zuo and Yuan Wencai presented in this chapter have provided abundant evidence of the double-edged political potential of gangs and their leaders. Further illustration of the complexity and ambiguity of the gangs' contribution to the growth of the Jinggangshan revolutionary movement will appear from time to time in the pages that follow.

Nevertheless, as radical political thinking and party organizations began to spread from cities to the countryside in the mid-1920s, and as young intellectuals such as Long Chaoqing who transmitted these new impulses sought to put them to practical use in the county seats and market towns of Jiangxi's rural hinterland, the evident short-term advantages of allying with bandit gangs to obtain quick military muscle in these violence-prone regions far outweighed the dimly-perceived long-term problems to which such alliances might ultimately lead. Having sufficiently explored the bandit side of the bandit-intellectual dialectic through which the Jinggangshan revolutionary movement eventually developed, it is now time to examine the young radical elites who constituted the other element in this unusual equation, and to trace the manner in which their introduction of new political impulses into this unruly highland region helped set this dialectic into motion.

NOTES

1. Most information about Wang Zuo's life and activities in this chapter is based upon *WZ*. This lengthy volume is based upon numerous reminiscences and other historical materials, as well as the authors' intimate knowledge of the region (both are local historians living in the Jinggangshan municipal area). The account of Wang's early life and bandit activities is particularly detailed, and appears to have benefited from information provided by Wang's surviving relatives.

2. Wang Zuo was the fifth of the six children, who included three older brothers, an older sister, and a younger brother. *WZ*, 2–4.

3. *WZ*, 2–3.

4. *WZ*, 3.

5. *WZ*, 4–13.

6. *WZ*, 14–22.
7. *WZ*, 23–32.
8. *WZ*, 32–38.
9. Yuan Jinghong, "Wang Zuo de quanshi Wang Dongwen" [Wang Zuo's martial arts teacher Wang Dongwen], *Jinggangshan wenshi ziliao*, no. 3–4 (1989): 112–15; *WZ*, 29–31.
10. *WZ*, 38–44.
11. *WZ*, 45–48. The match Wang's family made for him was with a once-divorced woman with a reputation for wildness. Unfortunately for Wang, the reputation proved to be justified, for she persisted in continuing a sexual liaison she had earlier formed with a man in the village of Maoping and soon abandoned Wang to live with her lover.
12. *WZ*, 49–55.
13. *WZ*, 55–67.
14. *WZ*, 68–72.
15. *WZ*, 72–79.
16. *WZ*, 79–83.
17. Li Chunxiang, "Jinggang lulin" [The bandits of Jinggangshan], *Jinggangshan wenshi ziliao*, no. 1 (1985): 63–64, 67.
18. *WZ*, 83–88. This marriage made the daughter Wang's secondary wife, since he was still technically married to the woman who had earlier abandoned him.
19. *WZ*, 88–92.
20. *WZ*, 92–93. Among those who remained was one of Tang's subordinates named Yin Xiangya, a relatively well-educated man who led a small group to join Wang's band. Wang was pleased to have them because of the rifles that they brought along, but even more importantly because of Yin's literary skills. Wang gave Yin the title of "teacher" (*shiye*) and asked him to help teach him to read, and also to handle the clerical work of the growing band (now over one hundred men).
21. *WZ*, 93.
22. Long was from an early settler family that had produced many scholars and officials; Long himself possessed a low-level civil service degree, but his reputation was as a rural magnate rather than a scholar. Though he now mostly lived in the provincial capital to avoid kidnapping, late in lunar 1924 he returned home for New Year's celebrations. Wang's band attacked Long's home and quite literally carried him off to the mountains; the unathletic Long had such trouble walking that the gang unceremoniously stuffed him into a large basket and had him carried.
23. *WZ*, 94–98.
24. This account of Yin Daoyi and his interaction with Wang Zuo synthesizes information from the following sources: Zou Fuguang, "Wang Zuo yu Yin Daoyi you jiaowang dao polie" [Wang Zuo and Yin Daoyi from contact to rupture], *Jiangxi wenshi ziliao*, no. 15 (1984): 92–95; Xiao Zuoming, "Jiefang qian Yongxin Guanbei diqu de paixi douzheng" [Factional struggle in the Guanbei area of Yongxin before Liberation], *Jiangxi wenshi ziliao*, no. 15 (1984): 183–91, 196; Xiao Zuoming, "Yin Haomin qiren" [That fellow Yin Haomin], *Jinggangshan wenshi ziliao*, no. 3–4 (1989): 124–28; Xiao Zuoming, "Kuangjiu Hui" [The Rescue Society], *Jinggangshan wenshi ziliao*, no. 3–4 (August 1989): 62–63; *WZ*, 98.
25. *WZ*, 99–107.

26. *WZ*, 108–21.
27. *WZ*, 122–29.
28. *WZ*, 129–33.
29. Chen Peijun and Wu Zhixiong, "Yuan Wencai," in *Zhonggong dangshi renwu zhuan* [Biographies of personages in the history of the CCP], ed. Zhonggong dangshi renwu yanjiu hui (Xi'an: Shaanxi renmin chubanshe, 1981), vol. 2, 285–86; Liu Xiaonong, "Yuan Wencai, Wang Zuo ji qi budui shimo" [Yuan Wencai, Wang Zuo, and the complete story of their detachment], *Jiangxi wenshi ziliao*, no. 3 (1980): 101–3; Li Shaoheng, "Yuan Wencai nongmin siweijun shimo" [The complete story of Yuan Wencai's Peasant Self-Defense Army], in *JGG*, vol. 2, 267–68. The latter document is a published version of an unpublished reminiscence dated 25 April 1964 on file at the Jinggangshan Revolutionary Museum. Li was a member of the Saber Detachment, and his account seems to have served as a major source for other accounts of Yuan's life and of the "bandit troubles" in the area.
30. Accounts of the formation of the Saber Detachment are not entirely consistent. One near-contemporaneous account, for example, says Hu was a subordinate of the bandit Zhu Kongyang, while a post-1949 reminiscence speaks of former Guangxi warlord soldiers recruiting him. Xie Yi, "Jiangxi gongfei gaikuang" [Conditions of the Communist bandits in Jiangxi], *Changong banyuekan*, no. 24–25 (August 1932): 49; Li Shaoheng, "Yuan Wencai," 266–67. Because of Li's personal knowledge, I have in this case chosen to follow his reminiscence rather than the more contemporary account. See also *WZ*, 132–34.
31. Liu Xiaonong, "Yuan Wencai," 103–4; Li Shaoheng, "Yuan Wencai," 268.
32. Liu Xiaonong, "Yuan Wencai," 105; Li Shaoheng, "Yuan Wencai," 268–69; *Ninggang xianzhi* [Gazetteer of Ninggang county] (1937 ed.), *houji* section, 8.
33. For background information on Long Chaoqing, see the following chapter.
34. *Ninggang xianzhi* (1937 ed.), *houji* section, 8; Liu Xiaonong, "Yuan Wencai," 105–7; Li Shaoheng, "Yuan Wencai," 269–70.
35. *Ninggang xianzhi* (1937 ed.), *houji* section, 9; Chen Peijun and Wu Zhuxiong, "Yuan Wencai," 289; Liu Xiaonong, "Yuan Wencai," 107.
36. *WZ*, 136–39.
37. *WZ*, 140–43.
38. *WZ*, 143–59.
39. Edward Friedman, in *Backward Toward Revolution: The Chinese Revolutionary Party* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 125, has argued that "men with land to till do not make sustained rural revolutions. Ex-tillers, almost tillers, and embryonic tillers can. These permanent recruits tended to be soldiers or police or laborers or the very young whose situation left them without roots. They had no families to return to, no places where they would be welcome." Although Friedman's comments have some validity, they apply more to the large bands of *gufei* roaming China during the twentieth century than to smaller bands such as the Saber Detachment. Moreover, as the subsequent revolutionary involvement of Yuan's and Wang's bands indicate, people *can* sometimes be mobilized for long-term involvement in revolution and still retain close ties with their home communities and families.
40. See, for example, the discussion of bandit shortcomings in Eric Hobsbawm, *Bandits* (New York: Pantheon, 1981).

4

The Early Jinggangshan Revolutionary Movement

The early revolutionary movement in the Jinggangshan region developed much as it did elsewhere in rural Jiangxi. That is to say, it emerged as the explosive chemical consequence of the corrosive seepage, under appropriate catalytic circumstances, of small numbers of iconoclastic young elite intellectuals into the bubbling broth of rural society we have portrayed in the preceding chapters.

In Jinggangshan, as elsewhere, these young people were largely rural in origin but urban in orientation. Born and raised amid the villages and small towns of this isolated and backward region, many of them then left for further urban schooling. All had been affected deeply by the culturally reformist and politically activist attitudes prevalent in and propagated by the hierarchies of new schools that had sprung up since the end of the imperial examination system. It was through these networks of schools and the people and groups connected with them—clusters of individuals, institutions, and their mutual interactions that are usually referred to in literature of the period as local "educational circles" (*jiaoyu jie*)—that young intellectuals returning to their hill country homes after years in the heady atmosphere of post–May Fourth Movement cities sought to funnel the broad stream of new ideas from urban China into the narrow minds of hill country inhabitants.

At first these efforts were mainly confined to the local elite community, the segment of society from which almost all of the young intellectuals came and the traditional locus of debate on political and cultural issues and of the power struggles of individual local notables. In time, however, as national events and new political groups began to affect provincial and local affairs, some of the most radical young intellectuals began to expand their activities by forming new types of political organization, drawing disadvantaged groups such as

peasants, handicraft workers, and women into the political arena and beginning to articulate widespread and fundamental social reforms.

Although initially and superficially influential, efforts in all of these areas were top-down impositions that were highly dependent upon outside political and military support and shallowly rooted in local society. When the outside political support for mass movements and radical social reform was no longer evident, conservative local elites who had hitherto sullenly acquiesced in mass movement activities or had sought to turn them to their own advantage were prepared to launch largely successful counterattacks against radical cadres and their non-elite allies.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE EARLY JIANGXI REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT

The Jinggangshan region's revolutionary movement developed well outside of the region itself, among the teachers, students, and other well-educated people who together formed what we might loosely term the "intellectual community" of Nanchang, Ji'an, and other Jiangxi cities. Within this important urban subgroup, and particularly within the schools that lay at its very core, were many sojourners drawn from the hinterland by urban opportunities yet still closely connected to their rural origins. Among these ambitious young people were several from the Jinggangshan region, and it was from their ranks that the region's first revolutionaries emerged.[1]

Although sleepy backwaters in comparison with Shanghai or Beijing, by the late 1910s and early 1920s, Jiangxi cities had also begun to display much the same sociocultural changes and political activism that characterized more famous metropolitan centers. In addition to the influence of a growing nationwide print media and the galvanizing impact of the May Fourth and May Thirtieth incidents, urban inhabitants were also deeply affected by local affairs such as the abrasive relations between successive provincial warlord governments and powerful Jiangxi political and economic elites.

But perhaps the most important influence was provided by the heavy concentration of Western-style secondary and specialized professional schools found in the cities. In addition to whatever stimulation and information about the outside world the curricula of these schools may have offered, they were focal points for the acquisition and distribution of informal knowledge about new social and cultural developments, political ideologies, and political organizations. These intellectual and personal interactions helped form a shared subculture and sense of common experience that also fostered collective political activity. Some of this activity was directed toward remedying deficiencies of the schools themselves, some toward expressing dissatisfaction with warlords and foreign nations, and some toward spreading

new ideologies and developing new organizations that could help make the nation strong once more.

Much of this political activity began in informal societies and associations, small vortices of intellectual and political energy that formed in and around schools during this period. Although often called "study societies" (*xuehui*), many of these groups went beyond discussing philosophical and political ideas to serve as incubators and bases for social reform and political action.[2]

Together this welter of urban schools and societies provided institutional foci and frameworks through which the generalized ferment of the time was given specific shape and content. Notable among the ideologies and organizations nurtured in this milieu were those of the Chinese Communist Party. The origin of the Jiangxi Communist movement can be traced to the formation of a small informal student organization in Nanchang known as the Poyang Lake Society, many of whose members became leading party cadres in the province. Most early Jiangxi party members were teachers, students, or recent graduates, while schools, study societies, and bookstores catering to the intellectual community were the main venues for expanding party membership. Several founders of the Jiangxi CCP even went so far as to join with liberal non-Communists to establish the Liming Middle School, an institution whose main purpose appears to have been to serve as a radical recruiting and training center.[3]

A majority of early party members were educational sojourners from Jiangxi's rural hinterland. Most kept in touch with home via mail, conversation with other sojourners, and vacation trips, and over time, many of these radicalized youths also returned home to work. At first the returnees were prompted largely by the difficult job prospects in competitive urban markets, but later they often returned at the request of party leaders who were seeking to broaden party influence.

Through these returnees, radical ideas and organizations reached even remote areas such as Jinggangshan. At first revolutionaries appealed primarily to other young elites such as teachers and students. As in the cities, schools in rural county seats and market towns propagated the new influences and often provided the main constituencies for small-town study societies and student political organizations. These societies and other local elite-centered organs became political factions that struggled with other elites for political power and for the reform of local institutions and practices, and intermediary bodies that identified potential recruits for membership in the Communist Youth League (CYL) and the CCP. Often the factional struggles in which the young revolutionary activists engaged involved educational issues, such as access to local schools, selection of principals, and control and management of school finances.[4]

As rural radicals began to establish themselves in local elite circles, they simultaneously built up formal party organizations. As the revolutionary

movement became more highly organized, particularly after 1925, its cadres also began to reach beyond elite society for recruits. One widely used method for doing so was to use rural schools as sites for adult evening schools established to attract and proselytize among handicraft workers and peasants who worked during the day. In some places rural party cadres also began to form peasant associations and establish contact with organized non-elite groups such as sworn brotherhoods and bandit gangs.

EARLY JINGGANGSHAN REVOLUTIONARIES—THREE PORTRAITS

The early Jinggangshan revolutionary movement followed closely the general province-wide pattern of development just outlined, as is apparent from the background and early political activity of Long Chaoqing, Chen Zhengren, and He Zizhen, three of the Jinggangshan region's first Communist cadres. The lives of these three—each from a different county in the subsequent Jinggangshan base area—illustrate quite clearly the range of similarities and differences in background and experience among the region's early revolutionaries, and examination of their interaction with friends and colleagues as they became politically active reveals much about the early revolutionary movement's formative processes.

Long Chaoqing and the Ninggang Revolutionary Movement

Long Chaoqing, who was mentioned briefly in the previous chapter in connection with the reorganization of Yuan Wencai's Saber Detachment, was born in 1905 into an early settler family living near Ninggang's county seat. Although people surnamed Long were far less numerous in Ninggang than dominant surnames such as Xie and Liu, the Longs were still a respected and influential early settler family.

In large measure this was due to Long's father Qinhai, a returned student from Japan who held several high offices during this period, including head of the provincial assembly and head of the provincial education department. Long Qinhai was clearly sympathetic to Nanchang's early revolutionary leaders: he supported efforts to establish and maintain the radical Liming School, helped free party members arrested by warlord police, and allowed revolutionaries to consort quite freely with his family.

Long Chaoqing attended primary school in Ninggang, then joined his father in Nanchang and entered the prestigious provincial Second Middle School (where the elder Long held the title of "honorary principal"). There, Long Chaoqing became involved in radical politics, encouraged by frequent contact with other radicalized Ninggang natives and family in-laws.[5] Several other Ninggang youths were then studying in Nanchang, and they and members of the Long family often socialized. Several of these Ninggang natives also joined the CYL at about this time, mostly via introductions from the early Jiangxi CCP leader Zhao Xingnong, who was one of the organizers of the Liming School that Long Qinhai had helped sponsor. Three of those who joined the CYL were members of Ninggang's large Liu surname group, and two of them, named Liu Huixiao and Liu Keyou, married Long Chaoqing's sisters.[6] Long's elder brother (a returned student from Japan who was also a radical sympathizer) also married the sister of a Communist women's movement activist named Xiao Guohua.[7]

Long Chaoqing's own initial involvement in the movement seems to have been somewhat opportunistic. One story has it that Long, a snappy dresser who quite likely took full advantage of his family's power and privilege, expressed little interest in politics until one Sunday when he was unable to find any of his friends because they were all at a CYL meeting, whereupon he began to press his in-law Xiao Guohua to help him join the organization. Party leaders clearly suspected Long's motives, as they subjected him to extensive investigation and a probationary period before finally accepting him fully into the CYL and eventually (in autumn of 1925) into the CCP.[8] No matter why he first joined the movement, Long soon became one of the most thoroughly revolutionary members of a family generally known for its radical sympathies and a central figure in an expanding circle of politically committed friends and relatives.

Long's case illustrates how the dense matrix of personalistic relationships, institutional connections, and strategies of sojourning and marriage alliance typical of Chinese elite families could be infused with and facilitate political activity. Although the activity thus enhanced was most often the micro-politics of family advancement or local clique competition, the example of the Long family also indicates that the same web of interactions and behaviors could help nurture the early stages of what came to be a large-scale party-based movement.

The marriage relationship between the Long family and the two Lius also shows some of the special social complexities of Ninggang and other parts of the Jinggangshan area. The Longs were from a prestigious but relatively small early settler surname group, while the Ninggang Lius were a much larger and more powerful, but also a more complex, fictive kinship group that contained both early settler and guest people elements. Thus, Liu Huixiao was from a wealthy early settler family living in a town near the Long family's home, while Liu Keyou was from a guest people landlord family living elsewhere in the county.[9] By marriage relationships with the Long family, both Liu families gained the benefits of the Longs' greater access to the world outside of the county, while the Longs established relationships with both guest people and early settler segments of the ramified Liu surname group in their native place.

After Liu Huixiao finished his schooling in 1924, he returned to Ninggang, where he founded and managed the Western-style Culture Primary School (Wenming xiaoxue). Although Long Chaoqing remained in Nanchang with his family, he and several other Ninggang-born CYL members (including Liu Keyou) returned to Ninggang at one or more points in 1924–1925, probably during school vacations. During this time, they and Liu Huixiao laid the foundations for the county's revolutionary movement.

One of their methods was to establish a network of contacts and organization among the county's educated youth. Most of the returnees (both guest people and early settlers) were from prosperous and influential local families, and they were already accustomed to socializing among themselves in Nanchang. Back in Ninggang they continued this pattern by frequent visits to each other's homes. The centrally located home of Xie Xi'an in the county seat of Xincheng was a particularly popular destination for overnight visitors.[10] The returnees also reached out to incorporate local youths into their network. Several of the Youth League members followed Liu Huixiao's example and found work in various local schools, which they used both to spread new ideas and to look for potential new recruits.

As a focus for all of these informal activities, Liu Huixiao, Long Chaoqing, and perhaps others combined at some point in 1924–1925 to establish the Culture Society (Wenming she), a group composed mostly of local students or recent graduates whose name suggests its initial close connection with Liu's Culture Primary School. Among the group's ostensible purposes—common to many similar societies formed throughout China—were the promotion of student activities and discussion of current issues of interest to the small local community of young intellectuals.[11] Beyond this, however, the Culture Society served less openly articulated purposes. One of these was to spread revolutionary ideology and identify, recruit, and organize political activists, both members of the CYL and also of the local GMD organization (which Long established in 1926).[12] Another was to serve as the organizational vehicle through which young local elites struggled for power with older and more established power holders. Such factional struggles, quite often involving generational conflict and closely connected with educational issues, were very common throughout Jiangxi in the 1920s.[13] In Ninggang this conflict pitted the educated youth of the Culture Society, many of whom were fresh from study in urban Jiangxi, against the established local elites who controlled another organization known as the New People's Society (Xinmin she).

The New People's Society had been established somewhat earlier by a group of early settler elites trying to cope with guest people lamb-hanging raids and attacks on early settler communities. The group's aggressive agitation for government retaliation and promotion of its own military counter-

measures made it a prominent expression both of a locally specific early settler intransigence in clinging to their dominant local position and of a broader society-wide elite establishment resistance to change.

In all likelihood it was predominantly the latter aspect of the New People's Society's symbolic image that aroused the antagonism of radical Culture Society members, although in a society as highly polarized as Ninggang's it is always necessary to question the group identities involved in the background whenever rival organizations confront one another. In this case as well, one author writing about guest people–early settler rivalries in Jinggangshan, beginning from the known association of the New People's Society with the early settler establishment, has claimed that it and the Culture Society were simply rival early settler and guest people student organizations that engaged in violent affrays when early settler students attempted to restrict guest people participation in student athletic meets.[14]

Though plausible, this hypothesis appears to be largely unfounded. Long Chaoqing and Liu Huixiao, the main organizers of the Culture Society, were from wealthy and prestigious early settler families, as were several other members of the society. Indeed, of the eleven society members whose origins can be determined, six were early settlers and five (including Long's relative by marriage Liu Keyou) guest people.[15] The mixed nature of the group's membership provides an important indication that under the right circumstances common political ideas, educational experiences and generational circumstances were capable of bringing both guest people and early settlers together in at least conditional cooperation.

Despite the enthusiasm of the Culture Society adherents, however, the New People's Society remained a powerful and influential body whose armed forces could serve as well against factional opponents as against lamb-hanging guest people raiders. Therefore, members of the nascent revolutionary movement soon decided that they must reach beyond the limited ranks of "progressive" elite youth in native settler–dominated urban centers if the movement was to continue growing.

The way they decided to do this was to establish contact with the local guest people bandit leader Yuan Wencai. As previously noted, this contact was established in the context of an escalating spiral of guest people–early settler violence that so frustrated and exasperated county magistrate Shen Qingyuan that he was willing to consider Long Chaoqing's and Liu Huixiao's proposal to reorganize Yuan's Saber Detachment into a government-sponsored militia force.

The idea of making this proposal to the magistrate originated in a social gathering CYL leaders attended in the county seat at the home of Xie Xi'an, during which several local powerholders complained bitterly about the depredations of the Saber Detachment. Afterward, Liu and Long talked about

the advantages of establishing friendly relations with Yuan and his force and formulated their plan for brokering a reorganization agreement between the Saber Detachment and the magistrate.

Magistrate Shen was unwilling to take sole responsibility for such a potentially dangerous process and called a meeting of a dozen or so prominent local elites (most of them early settlers and members of the New People's Society) to seek more advice. Although majority sentiment at this meeting was solidly against rapprochement with the Saber Detachment, Long, Liu, and Xie Xi'an held a later secret meeting with the magistrate at which they finally persuaded him to embark on negotiations.

After gaining Shen's cooperation, Liu and Long still had to get Yuan and his group to go along. In addition to recent local bandit suppression efforts that had left the survivors tense and wary, there was also the problem that both Liu and Long were from early settler families and were thus regarded as potential enemies. Fortunately for the CYL leaders, Liu was fluent in the Hakka dialect as a result of his frequent contact with the guest people who inhabited the mountain land where Liu's family owned large amounts of woodland. Liu (and perhaps Long as well) had also become acquainted with Yuan Wencai through his guest people in-law Liu Keyou. With this background, in July 1925 they met the Saber Detachment leaders and worked out the reorganization plan described in the previous chapter.[16]

How could a group of young intellectuals, many of them early settlers, find common ground with the violence-prone, peasant-based guest people bandit gangs and their leaders? There proved no simple answer to this question, involving as it did complex and cross-cutting ties of class, clan, common interest and group identity. As will become clear, early settler–guest people tension continued to bedevil the Jinggangshan Communist movement down into the 1930s. Nevertheless, this rough and variegated social and economic environment was easily complex enough to afford the young Communist movement temporary purchase while it sought other ways to develop more secure and permanent lodgment.

One aid to contact lay in the fact that the split between early settlers and guest people, while real enough, was blurred around the edges more than the analysis thus far has suggested. As already noted, there were guest people elites as well as guest people peasants, and among them were landlords and men of culture willing and able to support such institutions as the Longjiang Academy. Some of these people, or their children, also left the county for urban education. These guest people elites—people such as Liu Keyou—inevitably came into close contact with their opposite numbers in the early settler community, overcoming in the process at least some of the ingrained antipathy between them. Thus young guest people intellectuals could be found along with early settlers within the Culture Society, while the elite leader Xie Guannan of Mao-ping, though of guest people stock, still had clientelistic relations with the early settler politician Long Qinhai, and he and his family

members belonged to the county-wide Xie clan, which was dominated by its early settler members.

Xie Guannan's example also reminds us that, if relations between guest people and early settler elites could be friendly, so also could relations between guest people elites and their poorer brethren be sharply antagonistic. Wealthy guest people were also sometimes targets of "lamb-hanging," and they strongly resisted guest people bandit leaders. Class lines, then, as well as age, modern education, clientelistic ties, and kinship claims, could all cut across the distinction between guest people and early settler. Which distinction would dominate was often difficult to predict, even for those on the spot, and their patterns of interaction are even harder for historians to unravel in retrospect.

In the case of Yuan's relations with Long, Liu, and the Culture Society, almost all of these distinctions were probably involved, as well as considerations of individual ambition and personal safety. Yuan may well have been influenced by some of the same post–May Fourth currents of change that had affected Long and his fellow revolutionaries. Despite his disadvantaged background, Yuan after all was still a young man in an environment and time in which the intellectual and political initiative in local society increasingly lay in the hands of youth. Furthermore, he possessed at least the minimum education necessary to be accepted into the company of the intellectuals who dominated the political movements of the 1920s, and he may also have become acquainted with some of the local Communist activists while at school in Yongxin.

Party leaders also espoused a doctrine that promised relief from much of the economic and social oppression that Yuan had suffered at the hands of local elites, both guest people and early settler. If this doctrine was as yet imperfectly understood and barely acted upon by its adherents, it remained alive as a promise, and the Culture Society's struggle with the establishment figures within the New People's Society gave evidence that its fulfillment was a possibility.

Finally, cooperation with the Culture Society helped secure Yuan's position as militia leader. In the months after the reorganization of the Saber Detachment, as Yuan moved both physically and psychologically further away from the hill country and into the world of the county-level elite, his proximity and the closeness of his relations with young radicals began to worry magistrate Shen. Eventually he responded by reforming the recently disbanded early settler-dominated Qingxiangju militia. The reestablishment of this office, redolent as it was with overtones of past guest people–early settler conflicts and signaling local government's mistrust, pushed Yuan even closer to Communist leaders.[17]

CHEN ZHENGREN AND THE SUICHUAN REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT

If Long Chaoqing came from an upper-elite background of considerable wealth and privilege, Chen Zhengren exemplifies the less exalted lower-

elite family background that appears to have been much more common among the region's early revolutionaries. Chen was born in 1907 into the "bankrupt small landlord family" of a former Qing lower-degree-holder (*xiucai*) of guest people origin who had opened a small elementary school in a mountainous region of Suichuan county. Although early settler–guest people relations in this area were not as antagonistic as in Ninggang, guest people in Suichuan felt enough persecution so that Chen's father made a special effort to encourage their education to enable them to overcome their disadvantageous origin.

Unfortunately for Chen's family, their fortunes declined after his father died when Chen was still a child, and with the harshness all too common in rural Chinese society at the time the fatherless family was preyed upon by its wealthier or stronger neighbors, including some members of its own lineage. These difficulties led Chen's mother to consider apprenticing him to a merchant firm, but Chen resisted so fiercely that eventually she borrowed money to send him to upper primary school. There his awareness of politics deepened, and he gathered a group of like-minded classmates who became sworn brothers and vowed to work to reform Asian society.

After Chen graduated, he borrowed money to enroll in middle school in the nearby city of Ji'an, and eventually won a scholarship that allowed him to continue his studies. Ji'an was an important regional metropolis that had long been the economic, administrative, and cultural center for a dozen or so counties in central and western Jiangxi, including most of those in the Jinggangshan region. For some regional elites, a brief interval spent at one of the cluster of schools in Ji'an was a stepping-stone to further education or employment in Nanchang or other larger cities. For many more, especially those with few connections and slender financial resources such as Chen, schooling in Ji'an marked the zenith of an academic career, to be followed in all probability by a quick return to their counties of origin.

In light of the close general connections between schools and the revolutionary movement, it is not surprising to discover that Ji'an likewise served much the same functions as a regional center for radical politics as it did for regional education. With easy access to Nanchang and Jiujiang by boat along the Gan River, Ji'an absorbed new social and political impulses almost as soon as they reached the northern cities, concentrated and intensified them in its own schools, and rapidly radiated them out into the surrounding countryside with each graduating class.

Over time, as formal CCP and GMD party organizations developed a certain critical density, virtually all middle schools in the city became radical hotbeds, and the "natural" processes of cultural and political diffusion over educational networks were artificially enhanced by the active recruitment of students and their deliberate dispatch back to their rural homes to found additional schools, establish new study societies and spread more revolution. By the time the CCP-GMD alliance broke down in mid-1927, virtually every county in central Jiangxi had Ji'an-educated party members in residence and hard at work.[18]

One of these was Chen Zhengren. After enrolling in the Provincial Sixth Middle School—one of Ji'an's most well-known radical centers—Chen soon began to read Marxist literature, joined first the GMD and then in 1925 the CCP, and prominently participated in the wave of agitation that swept Ji'an during the May Thirtieth Incident in 1925. At about the same time, financial difficulties forced him to transfer to the cheaper Seventh Normal School (an even more well-known radical hotbed), but he soon had to quit after the warlord government listed him as a known subversive.

Chen then turned to full-time undergound party work. After spending several months building party organizations under cover of being a teacher in Wan'an and other rural counties near Ji'an, he moved to Nanchang and worked on the staff of the Jiangxi party committee, then headed by the Ji'an native Luo Shibing. After the arrival of the National Revolutionary Army (NRA) in October 1926, he was sent back to Suichuan with the title of GMD "special representative" to expand the revolutionary organization there.[19]

He Zizhen and the Yongxin Revolutionary Movement

Although from much more disadvantaged social and financial circumstances than a cadre such as Long Chaoqing, Chen Zhengren was at least able to leave home for education and move freely around the province in his revolutionary work. Others were still more circumscribed in their opportunities and range of action. He Zizhen, one of the earliest cadres in Yongxin and one of the few women among the first wave of revolutionaries anywhere in the Jinggangshan region, provides a good example.[20]

He Zizhen was born in 1909 or 1910 into a once-prosperous but now declining Yongxin family. Much of the family property had been appropriated by warlords and local power holders, and most of the rest was used up when her father, a Qing *juren* and former county magistrate who had been reduced to making a living by writing documents for people involved in lawsuits, was jailed for a time as a result of complications involving one of the suits. During He Zizhen's childhood the family lived in back of a small teahouse and inn that her father had opened just outside the city gates.

Her father was anxious for all his children to study, including Zizhen and her younger sister Yi, so they attended a local primary school run by Finnish missionaries. Her older brother Minxue briefly attended middle school in Yongxin (where he was a classmate of Yuan Wencai), and then a series of schools in Ji'an, the shifts resulting from expulsions from one school after another for radical activities.

By 1925, He Zizhen had also become politically active, much to the chagrin of her missionary schoolteachers. In that year she, her sister Yi, and a number of other students defied school authorities to stage a large meeting and procession in honor of the recently-deceased Sun Yatsen. It is unclear whether she was expelled from the school because of her actions, quit because of dissatisfaction with its conservatism, or simply graduated, but at any rate she soon left and entered first the local county-run women's middle school and then the private Xiushui School.

While at these schools, He Zizhen met the early Yongxin revolutionaries Ouyang Luo, Liu Zhen and Wang Huai. Ouyang Luo (1900–1930), the son of a poor former Qing *xiucai* who worked as a local schoolteacher in northern Yongxin, had overcome financial difficulties to attend the tuition-free First Provincial Normal School in Nanchang, where he joined the CCP in 1924. In 1925 he went to Ji'an to help organize the city's large and volatile student community. Among those he recruited into the CCP there were fellow Yongxin natives Wang Huai and Liu Zhen. By 1926, all of them had returned to the county to establish a revolutionary organization there.[21]

At the urging of these young men, He Zizhen soon joined the CYL and began to help spread revolutionary ideas. The following year she joined the CCP. He Mingxue and He Yi also joined the revolution during this period.

Through the efforts of these early activists, Yongxin developed the most extensive revolutionary movement in the region by the time the NRA arrived in August 1926.[22] By mid-1926 the county's twenty-odd CCP members were organized into a network that reached into all of the county's main subdivisions; at that point, also, Yongxin was the only one of the three core counties in which peasant associations had already begun to form. There was also an active student movement in the county seat, as well as one of the few county-level women's movements known to have existed in rural Jiangxi before the arrival of the NRA.

These developments owed much to the energy and enthusiasm of the sixteen-year-old He Zizhen. After joining the revolution, she threw herself wholeheartedly into organizing and consciousness-raising activities among students and women in the county seat. Her actions mixed symbolic breaks from the established sociopolitical order with practical efforts to organize alternatives. She was the first young woman in the county, for example, to cut her hair short in the fashion that then signified revolutionary commitment, and she persuaded several other local women to follow her example. She also mobilized fellow students to join her in toppling and burning the wooden images displayed in the local city god temple. At the same time, she met with city women in the evening to encourage them to attend the night school that Ouyang Luo and Wang Huai had established at a local primary school and helped several male students organize a suburban peasant association.

He Zizhen was unusual among rural women of her era both in the educational opportunities she had and in the freedom she was given to participate in activities outside of her home. She also appears to have been somewhat unusual among the relatively few women involved in the revolutionary movement anywhere in Jiangxi in the variety of her political participation. For most women the primary sphere of work in which their participation was welcomed by their male counterparts was in mobilizing other women; beyond this their main contributions usually extended no further than providing clerical and housekeeping help—and sometimes romantic companionship—for male revolutionaries. He Zizhen was far from being able to avoid this sort of "ghettoization" completely, and her role became progressively marginalized as time went on and the revolutionary movement entered into a long civil war. But in this early period it is interesting to note her participation in such non-female-centered activities as destroying idols and forming peasant associations.

If He Zizhen was an atypical female revolutionary, however, her case is otherwise broadly illustrative of many others, male and female alike, who made up the secondary and tertiary layers of recruits into the revolutionary movement. Unlike people who had joined the revolution while sojourning in large cities outside of the region, He Zizhen and many like her had experiences that were confined to their own home counties. Their recruitment owed much to the influence of returned sojourners such as Long Chaoqing, and appearance of these new secondary recruits among the ranks of the revolutionaries marked the beginning of the effective transplantation of the movement into the Jiangxi countryside.

Taken together, these portraits clearly reveal the differences that existed among early Jinggangshan region revolutionaries in gender, wealth, social standing, and life experience. At one extreme was Long Chaoqing, the widely-traveled male scion of a wealthy and well-placed early settler family, familiar with big-city living and learning, and accustomed to associating with officials and other social notables. At the other extreme were (in different ways) both Chen Zhengren and He Zizhen: the former a male member of a poor, marginally elite rural guest people household, who had to overcome serious financial and familial obstacles to make his way even part-way up the urban and educational hierarchies to Ji'an; the latter a female member of a declining but still rather urbane and urbanized early settler elite household, blessed with a more supportive family than most young women of the time had, yet still confined by gender-based attitudes to the limited opportunities available in a small county seat while her brother was allowed to bounce restlessly from school to school in Ji'an.

Despite these distinctions and modulations, however, certain general patterns emerge. For one thing, the early revolutionary movement was clearly not a mass activity. In the context both of Jinggangshan and of rural Jiangxi

as a whole, with its masses of poor rural inhabitants barely eking out a living, even the most disadvantaged of the early revolutionaries were still elites by family background and/or their own educational and occupational achievements. Similarly, in their early efforts to expand into the region's rural counties, the main recruitment targets were other educated elites, and the primary foci of attack were more established (and often older) elite powerholders and their organizations. In using these tactics, the early revolutionaries in many respects replicated methods used by generations of young elites trying to make places for themselves in the rough-and-tumble world of Jiangxi hill country elite politics.

Although the early revolutionaries covered a wide range on the spectrum of elite wealth and status, as a group they appear to have been clustered quite heavily toward the lower end of the elite continuum. This was certainly the case with early CCP members in Jiangxi generally, as a province-wide survey of the backgrounds of several dozen such individuals reveals, and although background information on Jinggangshan region revolutionaries is incomplete, the large number of village schoolteachers, pettifoggers, and other such relatively low-paid occupations that appear among the fathers of those whose family backgrounds we do know suggests that the same pattern prevailed in Jinggangshan as well.

Regardless of family background, virtually all of the region's early revolutionaries were very well educated by the standards of the time, and almost all were initially drawn into the revolutionary movement through involvement in educational circles. Most had attended middle school at a time when this level of education had been reached by only a tiny fraction of the Chinese population, and even those (such as He Zizhen) who had not advanced this far had nonetheless received considerably more education than most of their age or gender.

In a sense it is also fair to say that it was their education that had made them revolutionaries. It was through new ideologies and cultural practices introduced and spread through the educational system that they became interested in radical politics; through student unions, study societies, and other such informal subsets of educational circles that their generalized enthusiasms began to be harnessed to organizational structures and expressed in concrete actions; and through the various venues and outlets provided by local schools back in the Jinggangshan region that a radical movement initially developed in major urban centers could be transmitted to new rural constituencies.

Finally, it is worth emphasizing that this was emphatically a youth movement. Ouyang Luo, along with Liu Huixiao the oldest of the early radicals mentioned in the accounts above and the first to participate in the revolutionary movement, was twenty-three years old when he joined the CYL in 1923, and Liu was probably just a few months older. Among the others mentioned above, He Minxue joined the revolution at age twenty-one; Long Chaoqing at twenty; Chen Zhengren at eighteen; He Zizhen at about sixteen; and He Yi at about fifteen.[23] The youthfulness of its participants was responsible for much of the energy and emotion that characterized the movement, and imparted to the movement's struggle with mostly older established powerholders an element of intergenerational conflict that added yet another line of cleavage to an already fractured and polarized society.

THE EXPANSION OF THE REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT

Following the conquest of Jiangxi by the National Revolutionary Army (NRA) in the fall of 1926, the revolutionary movement explosively expanded. With the support of NRA units scattered around the province and of a new government installed by the GMD-CCP United Front, peasant associations and other mass movement organizations that had already been established in small numbers under the old regime now grew dramatically in numbers, size and aggressiveness. So also did membership in the GMD and the CCP, both of which had already begun to grow rapidly following the May Thirtieth Incident but which now became several times larger in the six months or so after the NRA's arrival.

This frenetic expansion was accompanied by growing uncertainty, tension, and animosity. In part this was the predictable consequence of the transition between two rather different systems of government organization; in part it was caused by attempts by the growing party apparatus and mass movement organs to bring about rapid changes in political power and socioeconomic practices at the local level around the province; and in part it was due to conflicts within the United Front over control of the new government and party institutions and what their policies should be.

Ultimately the conflicts generated by the attempt to install a new political and social system caused the collapse of the United Front and a violent reaction by threatened local power holders that led to civil war in the Jiangxi countryside. It took some time for these phenomena to manifest themselves, however, and little hint of them was visible to cadres in the Jinggangshan region in fall 1926 as they gazed in the initial flush of enthusiasm on the opportunities that lay before them.

The Initial Wave of Expansion

Throughout the region, the small groups of radical intellectuals that had begun to coalesce and compete with established elite power structures drew upon the success of the NRA and the momentum of the political changes its arrival produced to adopt a high public profile, establish new, radical-controlled county governments, and promote the growth of mass movements.

The immediate results were dramatic upsurges in visible party activity, sharp increases in the level and intensity of political rhetoric, and rapid proliferation in the numbers of peasant associations, unions, and other mass organs. Everywhere, the explosive release of energy and the prevailing currents of change propelled youthful radicals into unaccustomed positions of power.

The speed and extent of the radical assumption of power varied somewhat from place to place within the region. It was particularly dramatic in Ninggang. In the spring or summer of 1926, Long Chaoqing and other local youths had established a GMD branch and a small CCP cell and reestablished relations with Yuan Wencai's force.[24] In September or October, as warlords were being expelled from Jiangxi, Yuan and the Communists staged a coup that disarmed the Qingxiang ju and expelled the county magistrate. In place of the old government they established a County People's Government Committee consisting of both early settler and guest people, with Long as chair and Yuan, Liu Huixiao, Liu Keyou, and Xie Jiaoming as members. In rapid succession Yuan's militia was renamed the Ninggang County Peasant Self-Defense Army; unions, peasant associations, and other mass organs began; and after an aggressive campaign, enough people (including, in November, Yuan himself) were added to the CCP to allow formation of a formal party branch near the end of the year.[25]

For several more months, radical power continued to grow. By February 1927, the CCP party branch had expanded into a county committee, with a number of subordinate branches established in various mass movement organizations. The county's general labor union, peasant association, and most if not all other mass organizations were also headed by Communists. This interlocking directorate made it impossible for several successive provincially appointed county magistrates to gain a foothold, and their quick departures contributed to a growing sense of security and confidence in the new regime.

Backed by Yuan's force and the mass movements, local revolutionaries also moved against a number of prominent local elites, the majority of whom were members of the New People's Society. Many of these targets fled, but one was captured and executed in spring 1927, a preliminary symbol of what confident local party leaders felt would be a growing assault on the established political and social power structure.[26]

Ninggang was not only the smallest and most isolated of the region's counties but also the one in which (due to the precocious connection established with Yuan Wencai's force) the radicals had the most extensive military capability. Elsewhere in the region, where counties were somewhat wealthier and more open to the outside world and where military power was more diffused, the process of radical government takeover was less complete: in most of these places, magistrates and their bureaucratic support structures continued to operate to some degree. The end result in all

cases, however, was still county governments in which openly-operating party organizations dominated by Communists and their left-wing Guomindang allies had taken the initiative, set the political agenda, and greatly expanded their power.

In Yongxin, most local CCP members went to the countryside in the summer of 1926 to organize peasant associations and "peasant self-defense armies" and to recruit new party members. He Zizhen, who as a young, unmarried woman could not easily travel unsupervised away from home, was left in the county seat to carry out "propaganda work." As it turned out, however, events involved He in considerably more. Fearing the arrival of the NRA, the warlord garrison commander fled after extorting a large sum of money from local elites. To make up the loss, the county chamber of commerce, backed up by its militia, tried to impose a special levy (*tanpai*) upon the populace. He Zizhen and other cadres roused people in and around the county seat and with the aid of cadres and peasants mobilized from the countryside eventually disarmed the merchant militia and forced abandonment of the levy.[27]

In September, an NRA unit paused briefly in the county before pushing on toward Ji'an and held a rally in the county seat to proclaim the formation of a county GMD party branch and provisional executive committee. Thereafter radical activity expanded rapidly. By spring 1927, Yongxin had over 500 CCP members, all of whom were simultaneously members of the GMD. The county also had a large and very active non-Communist GMD membership, which was encouraged and supported by several Yongxin natives who held important positions in the provincial party hierarchy. Together Communist and non-Communist GMD members supervised the expansion of mass movement organs, especially peasant associations. As elsewhere, many of the peasant associations embarked on rent reduction campaigns, extracted voluntary or involuntary contributions of grain or money from elites to help support the revolution, and attacked particularly recalcitrant elite opponents.

Further south in Suichuan county, party branches and mass movement organs also proliferated. When Chen Zhengren returned to Suichuan in the fall of 1926 to establish a local GMD branch, one or two dozen CCP members were already at work in the county. After he pulled them together to form a CCP branch with himself as secretary, both CCP and GMD organizations began to promote mass movements. Within six months, over a thousand handicraft workers in more than twenty unions agitated successfully for wage increases and improvements in working conditions. By early 1927 over 20,000 peasants had also joined peasant associations, which launched attacks on officials and local power holders, including the public humiliation of an uncooperative county magistrate; incidents of contract-burning and rent- and interest-reduction; limitation of grain exports; and "settling accounts" with elites who had mismanaged lineage or other collective property.[28]

Developments in counties such as Lianhua, Chaling, and Lingxian on the periphery of the territory that eventually became the Jinggangshan revolutionary base area unfolded in much the same general manner as did events in the "core" counties described above. In these counties as well, coalitions of young Communist and left-Guomindang cadres drew upon the prestige and pronouncements of the new United Front government in Nanchang, along with influence derived from their leadership of the mushrooming local mass movements, to establish themselves as powerful political presences whose members occupied strategic bureaucratic offices and whose opinions and initiatives shaped the political discourse and policies of their respective county governments.[29]

Throughout the region, one of the primary uses to which the radicals' newfound influence was put was to continue their challenge to the incumbent elite power structure, much of which had always operated at least semi-independently of the formal government bureaucracy. Instigated by groups of young elites and conducted by groups of peasants and rural handicraft workers they had mobilized, the individual attacks on established elite power holders resonated on a variety of levels with enduring patterns of intra-elite factional struggle and rural collective action. For generations, the individuals and groups within the region's elite had competed for control over geographical "turfs," access to and influence on local officials, and local clienteles and reputations; for generations as well, non-elites had sought through various forms of punitive and redistributive collective action—such as tax- and rent-resistance, granary-looting, and lamb-hanging—to restrict and resist the inequities imposed upon them by elites and government. The actions taken by the United Front radicals and the mass movements they promoted were in some respects little more than reincarnations of such familiar practices.

However, rather than bubbling up spontaneously and sporadically from within local society, the conflicts that erupted following the arrival of the NRA were deliberately stirred up as part of a large-scale attempt from above to promote dramatic social and economic change. Moreover, despite the variation and inconsistency that characterized the activities of United Front radicals in different places, both the breadth of party organization and the extent of coordination differentiated this campaign against established power holders from traditional intra-elite factionalism or peasant protests.

The attacks on the elite power structure involved a multi-faceted mixture of economic and political measures. In the economic sphere, emphasis was placed on actions that relied upon the familiar repertoire of rural collective action to chip away at the economic dominance of landlords, lineage property managers, shop owners, and handicraft enterprise owners. The most notable of these actions were those involving rent- and debt-reduction, but other activities were also undertaken. Thus, in Chaling the traditional practice of "eating off the big families" (*chi dahu*), in which mobs invaded the

homes of wealthy families and intimidated them into providing feasts and giving gifts to the interlopers (a practice that, as we have seen, was part of the repertoire of certain bandit gangs as well), was encouraged and systematized, transforming it from an occasional, spontaneous reaction to unusual dearth or oppression into a repeated, routinized program of coercive redistribution. Similarly, campaigns in various counties for the "settling of accounts" specially targeted the management of collective property and endowments, a traditional elite responsibility which was ostensibly a public service but in actuality often a lucrative private skimming operation for the individuals involved.[30]

Synergistically intertwined with these efforts to erode the economic underpinnings of elite power and mobilize the non-elite population on grounds of economic interest were a variety of political tactics aimed at diminishing the prestige and reputations of certain locally or regionally significant elites. In early manifestations of methods that eventually became routine elements of the repertoire of Communist-led political campaigns, radicals put up denunciatory placards and posters on market-town walls, encouraged mass movement organizations to seize individual power holders and parade them through village and market-town streets (frequently wearing dunce caps), and held mass denunciation rallies-cum-trials. Most often the elite targets of such tactics suffered public abuse (and consequent loss of "face") and fines, but on occasion they were also subject to imprisonment and even execution.[31]

Many economic and political attacks on established local elites were to some degree stimulated, directed, and given a legal veneer by party cadres acting through and with the authority of official government positions. Nevertheless, the key institutions through which assaults on representatives of the local power structure were actually carried out were the mass movement organs, particularly the peasant associations.

Despite their importance in this regard, and their centrality in the idealized revolutionary historiography constructed by the CCP, information about the formation and operation of mass organs in the Jinggangshan region is remarkably sparse. Party sources uniformly comment on the rapid expansion and large membership peasant associations had attained by early 1927—more than 20,000 in Suichuan, and more than 30,000 in Lianhua and Yongxin, for example—but say little about the manner of their formation or their behavior. Both the speed of their expansion and the equal rapidity of their subsequent collapse suggest what information from other areas also indicates that the bulk of the mass organs were artificially imposed, jury-rigged constructs whose formation was sparked more by the demands of outside political forces than by the dynamics of local society.

Within the larger mass of peasant associations and unions, radical organizers also developed smaller "self-defense armies" and "picket detachments"

of armed able-bodied men whose purpose was not only (as their names implied) to protect the mass movements, but also to enforce their will in attacks against local elites. Such armed organizations eventually became common components of mass movements elsewhere, but in the violent and highly militarized Jinggangshan region they appear to have been given higher priority and to have been formed earlier than in many other places.

Precisely because the region was already highly militarized, however, party cadres also felt the need to obtain support from armed forces with more experience and capability than was found in the peasant armies and picket detachments. Although a minimum of several hundred rifles were then present in the region, they were so highly valued and in such demand that they were virtually all in the hands of full-time militia units and bandit gangs, so that the mass movement forces had to make do with agricultural implements, swords, and fowling pieces—"arms" which left them severely disadvantaged in any confrontation with the region's more professional combatants.

For this reason, radical cadres sought to ally with or incorporate such forces, including those of Yuan Wencai and Wang Zuo. As noted, Yuan's militia unit worked with the Ninggang CCP leaders from the start, and Yuan himself soon joined the party. Wang's unit, however, had initially remained high in its mountaintop base, deliberately aloof from the surrounding tumult. It was not until January 1927, after considerable effort, that radical cadres managed to enlist Wang's detachment on their side. The main protagonist in this activity was a Suichuan native, Whampoa graduate, and peasant movement specialist named Hu Kaijia, who had been sent to the area in late 1926 as a special representative of the provincial peasants' department.

Although Wang's force was now formally a Yongxin county militia organization, Hu was aware of the jurisdictional ambiguities of the border area, the extensive economic and social connections between Jinggangshan area peasants and Suichuan communities to their south, and the long-standing animosities between Jinggangshan bandit leaders and Suichuan militia leaders such as Xiao Jiabi. Encouraged by these factors as well as Wang's well-advertised "rob from the rich, give to the poor" attitudes, Hu determined to try to convert him to the revolutionary cause. To this end he went to Wang's headquarters and engaged him in a protracted series of discussions.

Although sympathetic to the aims of the revolution as Hu interpreted them, Wang at first hesitated to become involved in affairs outside of the mountains for fear of being outmaneuvered and made vulnerable to his enemies on unfamiliar terrain. Just when Hu was about to leave for a conference in Nanchang, however, Wang finally agreed that he would at least set up a peasant association on Jinggangshan if he could get advice on how to do so. Hu readily agreed, and two weeks later the county peasant association sent one of the Wang family peasant organizers from Xiazhuang to assist him. Together they established an organization with the awkward-

sounding but descriptive title of Suichuan County Yongxin-Suichuan Border Area Peasant Association to serve as the supervisory agency for a number of embryonic peasant associations (many with only 3–5 members) that Wang directed the population of various villages in the area to organize. At the same time, Wang's militia was also renamed the Yongxin-Suichuan Border Area Peasant Self-defense Army to reflect its perceived new role. Indeed, given the highly directed and well-planned manner in which the local peasant associations were formed and the fact that most of Wang's followers were still at least part-time peasants, it seems likely that peasant association and Self-defense Army memberships were heavily overlapping.[32]

The Initial Elite Response

Radicals did not try to win over armed forces such as Wang's simply as part of a general drive to expand the revolution. They had very specific reasons to increase their organizational and military strength. For one thing, they were very much aware that the local elites against whom they had been leading the mass movements were seeking to resist the attacks on them and that for this purpose they were seeking support from existing bandit and militia forces and attempting to form their own versions of the new mass movement organs. In addition, radicals recognized that the balance of forces within the whole United Front regime in Jiangxi was unstable and that both the formal content and the practical implementation of policies were subject to challenge by a group of conservative GMD members—some of them natives of the Jinggangshan region—whose power was growing alarmingly fast.

Because of bandit kidnapping and the general insecurity of the region, many of the wealthier elites had hired armed personal retainers. Many also sought to use kinship or ethnic ties to insulate themselves from attack by outsiders. But the scale and intensity of the radical-led mass movement actions, the heterogeneous class makeup of lineages, and the variable geographic distribution of ethnic communities quite often undermined the effectiveness of these tactics. Moreover, factional rivalries dividing the established elite "community" and the fact that radical attacks tended to focus on specific individuals rather than on elites as a whole often allowed radicals to concentrate overwhelming pressure on isolated targets.

For these reasons, non-radical local elites found it necessary to enhance their resistance to the radical threat by locating additional armed strength, expanding their own organizational strength, and appealing for outside aid. These methods—which more or less paralleled tactics also being employed by the radicals—did not all bear fruit immediately, but eventually they significantly altered the dynamics of political struggle throughout the region.

As the radicals sought the support of forces such as those of Yuan and Wang, so also did threatened local elites seek to enlist their own allies among

the area's numerous bandit gangs. Though they were composed predominantly of disadvantaged people, often preyed upon local elites, and sometimes engaged in redistributive "social bandit" behavior, the gangs were by no means uniformly pro-radical when it came to offering their support. Instead, many of them were eminently willing to sell their services to the highest bidder or to the party judged to be most likely to offer opportunities for reward. Especially as the permanence of radical power came increasingly into question, gangs in Lianhua, Yongxin, and probably elsewhere as well came to constitute an important component of the resurgent power of conservative local elites.[33]

While they sought allies among established and fully militarized bandit gangs, local elites also strove with some success to coopt the new mass movement organs such as the peasant association. Although radicals generally controlled the United Front government's higher-level mass movement bureaucracy and the bulk of the basic-level mass organs throughout Jiangxi, radical domination was contested and sometimes subverted at a number of levels. In Chaling, for example, a non-Communist GMD member managed to get control of the county peasant association, and under his benevolent gaze ,a number of conservative elites in different parts of the county also drew upon lineage connections and patronage ties to form peasant associations that were completely under their personal control.[34]

Similar forms of cooptation also occurred in Yongxin, where a strong non-Communist GMD contingent ensured that in some rural areas neither the peasant associations nor the local GMD branches were dominated by radicals, and established power holders could find opportunities to use the new bodies for their own purposes. A good example of how mass movement organs with quite divergent bases could develop in the same area is provided by the situation in the southeastern part of Yongxin adjacent to Jinggangshan, known formally as the Eastern Second District (Dong er qu) and informally as the Guanbei region. As previously noted, this was the fertile basin around the town of Nashan that was controlled by early settler lineages and where Wang Zuo's rival Yin Daoyi was now ensconced as a militia leader.

As elsewhere in the region, local revolutionary politics and mass movement organizing activity were largely instigated by former students who had returned to the area after the start of the Northern Expedition. One of the most visible of them was Hu Lifeng, a scion of the prominent Hu lineage of Hu Family Village. He and several classmates established a peasant association in this area and soon began leading peasants to attack landlord granaries.

As the attacks spread, landlords sought aid from Yin Daoyi. For the moment, however, Yin chose to keep a low profile. As a reasonably well-educated man with sojourning experience outside of the county that had

apparently included some contact with the GMD, Yin must have had a general sense of national political trends, and he may well have had some personal sympathy for reform. He also clearly realized that the provincial government and party agencies installed after the NRA's arrival were, for the moment at least, accepting if not encouraging mass movements and their demands for change.

Therefore, instead of actively opposing the formation and activities of bodies such as Hu's peasant association, Yin chose to swim with the tide and try to turn developments to his own advantage. This he did by gathering a group of elite allies to support the formation of another peasant association, this one led by his son Yin Haomin, an indifferently educated former martial arts classmate of Wang Zuo who had basically been making his way in the world by trading on his father's resources and reputation. Thereafter, two rival peasant associations, each headed by an elite leader from a prominent local lineage, competed for followers and local power.[35]

In addition to employing local resources to set military and organizational backfires against the mass movement wildfires threatening them, conservative elites also sought external aid. Appeal to outside authorities (whether jurisdictional superiors in the governmental hierarchy or other well-placed and powerful patrons) was a long-established tactic used by elites to counteract impasse or incipient defeat in disputes in local arenas.

This approach had mixed results in the first few months after the NRA's arrival, due largely to the upheaval in officeholders and policies that accompanied the installation of the United Front regime. With almost all warlord-era incumbents replaced by party officials, many established relationships and channels of appeal were disrupted, while the fluid, contested currents of Nanchang politics provided treacherous ground for those seeking redress for grievances at the hands of mass movements and local radicals. When the well-known Suichuan magnate Xiao Jiabi went to public security officials in Nanchang to complain about the mass movements, for example, he had the bad luck to seek help from none other than the Communist leader Zhu De, whose party membership was unknown to Xiao. Zhu informed Suichuan cadres of Xiao's complaints, and they immediately launched a disruptive attack on his home in Dakeng.[36]

Such instances to the contrary notwithstanding, the rising chorus of complaints and appeals by local elites around the province did encourage the more conservative, non-Communist members of the United Front government in Nanchang to press their struggle to rein in the mass campaigns and replace the radical cadres who were promoting them. Though the battle remained hotly contested for several months, gradually the balance of power shifted to the right, and as it did, the supportive political atmosphere that had sustained the mass movements and local-level radical cadres eroded as well.

COLLAPSE OF THE GREAT REVOLUTION

Despite the influence Communist leaders had developed in the region, by the spring of 1927 their power was insecure in many ways. Party leaders had changed from intellectual agitators operating primarily in the arena of local educational circles and upper elite politics to political reformers dedicated to drastic change in the whole pattern of local elite dominance. Yet their power was still not rooted firmly in any of the established institutions of local society except for the educational system; it depended instead primarily upon continued support from the new Nanchang government. Locally, party organization was an unwieldy and unstable amalgam of idealistic young intellectuals, opportunistic local power holders, and poverty-stricken peasants. Even working together, these groups could not monopolize power in every corner of the region, and in some places the radicals did not even fully control the local GMD branches.[37]

Given these weaknesses, the upsurge of right-wing activity that began in Jiangxi in early 1927 and continued with increasing vigor into the summer brought great distress to the Jinggangshan revolutionary movement. The upsurge originated in a successful campaign by a group of right-wing Jiangxi GMD members to take over many previously Communist-dominated provincial GMD organs. From this power base they then sent "special representatives" (*tepai yuan*) to Ji'an, Ganzhou, and elsewhere to compete with Communists.

Prominent within this right-wing group (known as the AB Corps) were a number of young and middle-aged Yongxin natives, led by a well-known former May Fourth activist named Duan Xipeng. Duan and other Yongxin AB Corps members retained connections in the county and in nearby Ji'an, and these connections and the visibility of their activities around the province helped stimulate conservative elites in the region to step up resistance to left-GMD and Communist-dominated mass movements.

As the AB Corps and their sympathizers became aggressive, they sparked reactions from CCP leaders, and frictions between the two sides quickly escalated into violent confrontations. Particularly noteworthy instances of this violence included the assassination in Ganzhou in March of the southern Jiangxi Communist mass movement organizer Chen Zanxian—an incident that attracted nationwide media coverage and in which several AB Corps members from Yongxin were conspicuously implicated—and a sudden Communist coup in Nanchang on 2 April that succeeded in regaining control of the provincial GMD and mass movement apparatus.[38]

Despite this latter success, the general trend was toward the erosion of CCP power, especially after the 12 April Incident in which forces under Jiang Jieshi violently crushed Shanghai mass movements. From this point on, right-wing party leaders and local elites who took their cues from them had the initiative fully on their side, and the result was a wave of violent right-wing attacks on local party branches, peasant associations, and other mass movement organs.

Events in the Jinggangshan region reflected these trends. Throughout the area, bitter factionalism emerged within the political coalitions controlling county governments and party branches, dramatic and disconcerting oscillations occurred in local balances of power as the separate components of the rapidly splintering United Front engaged in spiraling cycles of violence to assert their dominance, and the hastily erected pyramids of mass movement organizations wobbled and ultimately collapsed amid the strife. Though conditions varied somewhat from place to place, description of events in Yongxin and Suichuan will suffice to outline the general course of events around the region.

In Yongxin, as arguments over power sharing and attacks on prominent elites escalated during the winter/spring of 1927, local radicals gradually split into two factions. At first the split was expressed largely in verbal terms. After the 12 April Incident, however, divisions became more open. Several GMD leaders who had formerly acquiesced in the formation of mass movement organs and who in some cases had organized their own personally dominated peasant associations, now openly opposed the "excesses" of other mass organs and called for curbing the peasant self-defense army and workers' picket detachments.[39]

When the non-Communist county GMD secretary finally ordered these bodies disarmed, it set in motion escalating violent confrontations that eventually led to local civil war. Communists carried out a late-spring coup during which several rightists were killed or jailed.[40] In response, rightist elites and militia leaders (some of whom were apparently former bandits) attacked mass movement and party organs in the county seat. During this "10 June Incident" the peasant self-defense army and workers' picket corps were disarmed, and jailed rightist leaders were released and replaced in prison by over one hundred captured radicals. Power holders elsewhere in the county, among them Yin Daoyi in Guanbei, seized this opportunity to break up local mass movements and kill or jail their leaders.[41]

Ouyang Luo, He Yi, and a few other Yongxin party cadres escaped to Ji'an, where radical organs were still active, and where He Zizhen was already working. They established a Yongxin party and mass movement branch office in Ji'an, which appealed to nearby counties and to Nanchang for aid. By this time, radicals elsewhere were also preoccupied, so the Yongxin leaders in Ji'an decided instead on an armed attack to recover the county seat.[42]

These plans involved a coordinated assault by several surviving regional peasant self-defense armies. One of these was from Anfu county, where a Communist military officer named Wang Xinya had taken charge of a garrison left behind when the NRA had passed through the previous year and had

subsequently built up a well-armed self-defense army of about three hundred men. The others included a peasant force from Lianhua county and the Jinggangshan-area forces of Yuan Wencai and Wang Zuo.[43]

Plans for the attack were coordinated from Ji'an by a Yongxin CCP leader named Liu Zuoshu. When Liu's letter requesting aid reached Yuan Wencai, he and Wang Zuo were living quietly in their massif strongholds, avoiding direct involvement in the emerging civil war. Upon receipt of the letter, however, both men responded. On 26 July they crossed Ninggang and reached a bivouac site some distance from the Yongxin county seat. Late that night, in conjunction with the Anfu peasant self-defense army, they routed the garrison and seized the city and the surrounding area.

After freeing the imprisoned radicals, the Communists established new political and military organs as a foundation for what they hoped would be a long-term occupation of Yongxin. Their hopes were dashed, however, when news arrived in early August that the Communist-led Nanchang Uprising had failed and that conservatives had seized power in Ji'an. Wang Xinya's Anfu self-defense army and the Lianhua peasant force then departed, leaving local peasants and the Yuan-Wang forces to resist enemy counterattacks.

The Communists drove off the first enemy troops to arrive in a battle in which the seventeen-year-old He Zizhen earned the nickname of "The Two-gunned Girl General" for her active and enthusiastic participation. But when a much larger force appeared, the Yuan-Wang forces had no choice but to retreat to the Jinggangshan massif, accompanied by He Zizhen, He Minxue, and several dozen other Yongxin and Ninggang CCP cadres. Wang went back to the top of the massif to guard the area where his family and property were located, while Yuan, accompanied by the Yongxin refugees, similarly retreated to his old base around Maoping at the mountains' foot.

Much the same sort of cycle of attack and counterattack also took place to the south in Suichuan. On 4 April, local radicals staged a rally and procession of several thousand people to honor the memory of the assassinated Ganzhou labor leader Chen Zanxian.[44] After the 12 April Incident in Shanghai, however, local conservatives and their followers attacked peasant associations, insulted women who had participated in the revolutionary movement, and expelled radical students from local schools. Even more ominously, Xiao Jiabi and other powerful elites formed a conservative group known as the "Military Mutual Assistance Society" (Junjie xiexing she) and a new militia, and seized the funds of the radical-dominated GMD party branch.

The confrontation escalated throughout May. Radical May Day celebrations were matched on 12 May when the magistrate arrested and tried members of a radical peasant association; a radical march on the yamen the same day was followed on the 13th by a conservative retaliatory raid on the GMD branch; on the 14th the magistrate and rightist politicians proclaimed another

GMD branch reorganization, disbanded mass organs, and began to hunt down Communist cadres; on the 15th Chen Zhengren and other radicals relocated to rural market towns, formed a peasant self-defense army, and began preparing for a major uprising. Finally on 2 and 3 June, events reached a violent climax when hundreds of rightists attacked party and mass movement centers in Bizhou and several other market towns, killed a number of revolutionaries, and drove the rest into hiding.

For several weeks after this "Bizhou Incident," militias led by Xiao Jiabi and other rightists swept through the county in a "White Terror." Included among those who were executed was Hu Kaijia, the organizer who had persuaded Wang Zuo to join the revolution. By this time the wisdom of Hu's desire to obtain military protection for the revolutionary movement was readily apparent. It was, however, Hu's ironic and fatal misfortune that at the time of his death the force he had so presciently recruited was many miles away on the northern side of the Jinggangshan massif, preoccupied with preserving itself in the face of continuing attacks from Yin Daoyi's Guanbei militia.

In late July, Chen Zhengren and other Communists led remnants of the Suichuan mass movements to Luotangwan in neighboring Wan'an county. A river flowing through southern Suichuan joined the Gan River in Wan'an, and extensive trade and travel over this riverine route had developed economic and social links between the two counties similar to those existing between Yongxin and Ji'an. These links had made it natural for political activists from both places to interact. Wan'an's revolutionary movement had been among the most prominent of any county in Jiangxi before the CCP-GMD split, and in the summer of 1927, revolutionaries still controlled most of the county's rural areas. Radical influence from Wan'an had spilled over into neighboring counties, including Suichuan; among other ties, Chen Zhengren himself had worked in the Wan'an party before returning to work in Suichuan. Now, drawing on these relationships, peasant forces of the two counties joined to form the Wan'an Peasant Self-Defense Army.

Wan'an leaders were particularly eager to cooperate, because they had already experienced the violence of the Suichuan Military Mutual Assistance Society. Acting in conjunction with right-wing forces in Ganzhou and other nearby counties, the Mutual Assistance Society had followed up its early June assault on Suichuan mass movements with several attacks on the Wan'an revolutionaries, all of which were beaten back by mobilized Wan'an peasants. The Wan'an revolutionaries had retaliated by confiscating the considerable property that right-wing Suichuan elites held in Wan'an and blockading goods moving upriver to Suichuan.[45]

After Chen received word that Suichuan rightists planned to kill many jailed revolutionaries in early August, the Wan'an and Suichuan cadres launched a surprise strike by the Wan'an Peasant Self-defense Army that managed to rescue the prisoners. The lift to revolutionary spirits that this

bold action provided was, however, extremely short-lived. Powerful conservatives responded by forming new GMD "party cleansing" (*qingdang*) organs and launching a redoubled White Terror. Eventually the remaining Communists had to go under cover; Chen Zhengren himself left in a vain attempt to seek aid in Nanchang, arrived just in time to witness the collapse of the Nanchang Uprising, and returned to work in Wan'an. Aside from a few underground cadres and skeletal organizations in former peasant movement hotbeds, revolutionary activity largely ceased in Suichuan south of the Jinggangshan massif.

Notably absent from these events were Wang Zuo and his Suichuan-Yongxin Border Area Peasant Self-defense Army. One basic reason for this was the fact that despite wide-ranging raids throughout the region during earlier bandit days, Wang and his followers preferred to limit their activities to the Jinggangshan massif. Experience had taught them that outside of the mountains all was potential enemy territory whose people and politics alike were unfamiliar at best and dangerous at worst. Distrust of the uncertainties of political and military struggles in southern Suichuan, it will be remembered, lay behind Wang's reluctance to join the revolutionary movement when Hu Kaijia first approached him.

In addition, Wang and his force had become increasingly preoccupied with people and events to the north and east of Jinggangshan, and it was on these fronts rather than in the south that they commonly operated when they did leave the mountains. As important as the close ties with Yuan Wencai that had persuaded Wang to join in the raid to free the Yongxin revolutionaries, Wang's fierce rivalry with Yin Daoyi and his Guanbei militia also required constant attention and much of his energy.

Yin's efforts to destroy Wang had intensified after the collapse of the United Front during the spring and early summer of 1927. In addition to attacking peasant associations and their followers in Guanbei itself, Yin used his powers as head of a newly established Seven County Joint Anti-Communist Militia to launch a series of attacks on Wang and his forces, first using only his own Guanbei militia and then launching joint assaults in conjunction with militias from Taihe, Suichuan (where the forces were commanded by the redoubtable Xiao Jiabi), and other counties.

As had happened in the past, these attacks simply caused Wang's force to melt into the deep mountains where they were virtually untouchable. Nevertheless, the assaults brought further ruin to the poor and oft-ravaged massif villages, and for a crucial period they kept Wang's force bottled up where it could not interfere with events in the surrounding lowlands. It was after the militia's departure, and doubtless with revenge partly in mind, that Wang joined in the raid on the Yongxin county seat. When the Yuan-Wang forces retreated to Jinggangshan, yet another rightist upsurge began in the Guanbei

area. Yin Daoyi's militia continued to attack survivors of radical mass movements, focusing especially on the Hu lineage from Hu Family Village, where Hu Lifeng had been instrumental in building peasant associations.

Hu had been among the prisoners freed in the attack on Yongxin, and he had accompanied Wang Zuo back to Jinggangshan. Now he beseeched Wang to retaliate against Yin's attacks on his kinfolk. Wang agreed, and launched yet another raid on Yin's militia headquarters at Shimen, but this time disaster ensued when Yin ambushed and inflicted extremely heavy casualties on them. When the survivors rallied in Dajing, only eighty men with sixty rifles remained. With this chastened and much diminished force, all thought of further offensive action was impossible, and even defense of the Ciping–Five Wells area against militia raids was problematic. Under the circumstances, Wang and his followers had little choice but to dig themselves deep into their familiar mountains and await developments.[46]

CONCLUSION

By September 1927, throughout the entire region, Communists and the populations they had mobilized were in states of disarray that rivaled or surpassed the condition of Wang's band. Everywhere, bandit gangs and militias controlled by conservative elites and right-wing party members had broken up mass organs, defeated and disarmed self-defense armies and picket detachments, and executed Communists or forced them into flight or hiding. As vigilant militias patrolled the streets of county seats and market towns, magistrates and "party-cleansing" committees of the new, post–United Front regime had begun to reorient administrative policies, revamp local Guomindang branches, and purge schools and other public bodies of potential radicals. Meanwhile, prominent elites who had been targets of radical attack, such as members of the New People's Society in Ninggang, the "Five Tigers" in Lingxian, and the "Four Celestial Warriors" in Suichuan, returned to their customary pursuits and perquisites.

With this turn of events, which generally paralleled developments elsewhere in China, the initial elite-oriented phase of the Jinggangshan revolutionary movement had come to a traumatic conclusion. The activities of Long Chaoqing and his young, urban-educated elite associates had facilitated the transmission of the revolutionary impulse from the schools and study societies of major urban centers to their counterparts in the "educational circles" of the region's county seats and market towns. Through their subsequent interaction with local armed forces of people such as Yuan Wencai and Wang Zuo and their promotion and mobilization of peasant associations and other mass organizations, the young party cadres had subsequently also taken the

first tentative steps along the difficult, winding path leading from the disputatious realm of small-town elite politicians deep into the even more violent world of hill country gangs, brotherhoods, and their local strongmen leaders.

In the course of their process from urban to rural, the young elite founders of the regional revolutionary movement had built up a common body of experience and interaction that had given them a certain level of cohesion and that would significantly shape how they approached and met the challenges they would face in the next stage of the revolutionary struggle. Given the rapid growth in party membership that occurred after the arrival of the NRA in the fall of 1926, the region's revolutionaries were certainly not all personally acquainted with one another, and they were drawn from a range of family circumstances. A clear majority of those whose ethnicity can be determined were of early settler backgrounds, and this fact was to have a noticeable impact on the subsequent dynamics and evolution of the movement, but a number of guest people were represented in their ranks as well. When all was said and done, however, at this point their shared pedagogical, cultural and political experiences as young radicals emerging from New Culture–infused educational circles bound them together in common purpose more than their differences pulled them apart.

Most important, perhaps, was the Janus-faced quality of the young revolutionaries who, with both rural backgrounds and urban experience, made excellent cultural and political brokers mediating the introduction of revolution into the countryside. With status as probationary local elites by virtue of their education and sometimes through family background as well, and with some familiarity with both the personalistic strongman politics of this kind of backcountry border region and the newer cultural politics of May Fourth–era urban China, the revolutionaries were well positioned to carve out space for themselves within the political power structure in their home counties. Once established, they were able to move—in conjunction with larger-scale political and military processes of the Great Revolution—beyond competing with strongmen in traditional local elite political arenas to mounting a more general challenge to the existing political and social power structure.

Once this initial challenge was disastrously defeated during the spring and summer of 1927, however, young revolutionaries in the Jinggangshan region and other rural areas found it necessary to venture deeper and more unambiguously into the world of rural strongmen and bandits just to survive. To both survive and prosper in such a harsh environment, without at the same time abandoning their larger revolutionary program, would require dogged persistence and remarkable conceptual and programmatic flexibility. The next part of this study focuses on one of the earliest and most celebrated efforts to complete this final stage of the revolution's transition into rural China as it examines the creation of the Jinggangshan revolutionary base area.

NOTES

1. This overview is a summary of research I have done over many years on the history of the early revolutionary movement in Jiangxi. More detailed accounts, including citations, may be found in Stephen C. Averill, "Revolution in the Highlands: The Rise of the Communist Movement in Jiangxi Province" (Ph.D. dissertation, Cornell University, 1982), chap. 4; and Stephen C. Averill, "Party, Society and Local Elite in the Jiangxi Communist Movement," *Journal of Asian Studies* 46, no. 2 (May 1987): 279–303.

2. For information on the early *xuehui* (also called *xueshe*) from the mid-1890s, see Min Jie "Wuxu xuehui kao" [A study of study societies during the 1898 Reforms], *Jindai shi yanjiu*, no. 3 (1995): 39–76. For May Fourth–era study societies and the early CCP, see Hans van de Ven, *From Friend to Comrade: The Founding of the Chinese Communist Party, 1920–1927* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 38–50; and Arif Dirlik, *The Origins of Chinese Communism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

3. Huang Yeluo and Xu Xianzhao, "Yuan Yubing he Gaizaoshe" [Yuan Yubing and the Reform Society], in *Nanchang qingnian yundong huiyilu* [Reminiscences of the Nanchang youth movement], ed. Gongqingtuan Nanchang shi weiyuanhui (Nanchang: Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi, 1981), 19–32.

4. For samples of these sorts of conflicts, see Zhonggong Jiangxi shengwei dangshi yanjiu shi, ed., *Jiangxi yinglie* [Martyrs of Jiangxi] (Nanchang: n.p., 5 vols., 1984), vol. 1, 83–84; Fang Zhichun, *Huainian ji* [A collection of cherished memories] (Beijing: Zhongguo qingnian chubanshe, 1983), 96, 101–3, 145–46; Wan Fafu, "Huang Dao tongzhi er, san shi" (Two or three things about comrade Huang Dao), in *Gan dongbei hongqu de douzheng, dierji* [The struggle of the red areas in northeastern Jiangxi, vol. 2], ed. Zhonggong Hengfeng xianwei (Nanchang: Jiangxi renmin chubanshe, 1978), 10–12.

5. Unless otherwise noted, biographical information on Long Qinhai and Long Chaoqing is drawn from Long Chaoqing's biography in *Jiangxi yinglie*, ed. Zhonggong Jiangxi shengwei dangshi yanjiu shi, vol. 1(1984), 159–61, and Long Qinhai's biography in *Ninggang xianzhi* [Gazetteer of Ninggang county] (Beijing: Zhonggong zhongyang dangxiao chubanshe, 1995), 947–48.

6. Liu Xiaonong interview; "Fangwen Su Lanchun tongzhi jilu" [Record of interviews with Comrade Su Lanchun], 1971–78. Document on file at Jinggangshan Huishi Museum; Su Lanchun, "Huigu Ninggang de geming douzheng" [Thinking back on the Ninggang revolutionary struggle], in *JGG*, vol. 2, 87; Liu Huixiao biography in *Jiangxi yinglie*, ed. Zhonggong Jiangxi shengwei dangshi yanjiu shi, vol. 2 (1985), 83.

7. Su Lanchun, "Huigu Ninggang," 87; biography of Xiao Guohua in *Jiangxi yinglie*, ed. Zhonggong Jiangxi shengwei dangshi yanjiu shi, vol. 2 (1985), 76.

8. Su Lanchun, "Huigu Ninggang," 87; Long Chaoqing biography in *Jiangxi yinglie*, ed. Zhonggong Jiangxi shengwei dangshi yanjiu shi, vol. 2 (1985), 161. Su's reminiscence relates the story of Long's Sunday conversion to political activism; Long's biography, on the other hand, makes him appear to have been more conventionally eager to join the movement from the beginning. Su was of guest-people origins, his writings sometimes express a guest people–oriented view of local politics, and he had reason to be biased against Long Chaoqing for Long's later partisan involvement in guest people–early settler disputes. Nevertheless, in this case his

reminiscence seems to accord with other information about Long's character and with the fact that Long was subjected to a lengthy investigation before being accepted by other revolutionaries.

9. Liu Xiaonong interview.

10. Su Lanchun, "Huigu Ninggang," 87.

11. *Jiangxi yinglie*, ed. Zhonggong Jiangxi shengwei dangshi yanjiu shi, vol. 2 (1985), 83.

12. "Fangwen Su Lanchun tongzhi jilu." See also Liu Xiaonong, "Yuan Wencai, Wang Zuo ji qi budui shimo" [Yuan Wencai, Wang Zuo, and the complete story of their detachment], *Jiangxi wenshi ziliao*, no. 3 (1980): 105; Ninggang interview.

13. For some examples, see Miao, Min, *Fang Chih-min—Revolutionary Fighter* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1962), 4–13; Zheng Biyi, "Yi Gu Bo tongzhi" [Remembering comrade Gu Bo], *Hongqi piao piao*, no. 19 (1980): 88–105; Jiangxi sheng minsheng ting, *Buxiu de geming zhanshi* [Immortal revolutionary warriors] (Nanchang: Jiangxi renmin chubanshe, 1960), passim.

14. Qiu Zhizhuo, "Lun Jinggangshan geming genjudi de tukeji maodun wenti" [On the problem of the contradiction between early settlers and guest people in the Jinggangshan revolutionary base area], in *Tudi geming zhanzheng shiqi genjudi yanjiu* [Research on base areas during the period of the land revolution war], ed. Quanguo Zhonggong dangshi yanjiu hui (Ji'nan: Shandong renmin chubanshe, 1987), 91.

15. Information on ethnic background comes partly from published biographical sources cited herein and partly from Liu Xiaonong interview.

16. *Jiangxi yinglie*, ed. Zhonggong Jiangxi shengwei dangshi yanjiu shi, vol. 2 (1985), 85; vol. 1 (1984), 163–64 (biography of Long Chaoqing); Su Lanchun, "Huigu Ninggang," 88.

17. Liu Xiaonong, "Yuan Wencai, Wang Zuo shimo," 107.

18. For overviews from various angles of early revolutionary activities in Ji'an, see the reminiscences and documents collected in Zhonggong Ji'an diwei dangshiban, ed., *Zhonggong Ji'an dangshi ziliao* [Materials on the history of the CCP in Ji'an] (N.p., n.d.), vol. 1.

19. Gongzhong, Yousheng, and Shengyang [pseud.], "Chen Zhengren," in *Zhonggong dangshi renwu zhuan* [Biographies of personages in the history of the CCP], ed. Zhonggong dangshi renwu yanjiu hui (Xi'an: Shaanxi renmin chubanshe, 1985), vol. 25, 211–14.

20. Although He and the rest of her family all participated in the revolutionary movement, little information about any of them has been available until relatively recently. This is due primarily to the fact that He Zizhen later married Mao Zedong and was his wife until displaced from that position by Jiang Qing during the Yan'an period. The messy circumstances of her abandonment by Mao and her later post-1949 history of mental illness long made it too embarrassing for PRC historians to discuss her or her close family members. Recently, however, several accounts of He Zizhen and her family have been published, and while they are not as revealing as one would like about the more sensitive periods of Zizhen's life with Mao, they do provide considerable information about the family's early involvement in the Jinggangshan revolutionary movement.

The best biography of He Zizhen available, and the source of most of the information in this account, is Wang Xingjuan, *He Zizhen de lu* [He Zizhen's road] (Beijing: Zuojia chubanshe, 1985). Wang's account is based on many long and detailed discussions with Zizhen.

The entire He family was involved in the revolutionary struggle. Zizhen's sister He Yi (1911–1949) followed in her older sister's footsteps both as a revolutionary and as a member of the Mao family (she married Mao's brother Zetan). She survived the revolutionary struggles, only to die in an automobile crash at the moment of Communist victory. Zizhen's older brother He Minxue (1904–1988) was also an important early Yongxin CCP cadre and Jinggangshan region military leader. He also survived to become a high post-1949 provincial official in Fujian. In addition, both of Zizhen's parents participated in the revolution until dying of illness in the late 1930s. Another male sibling, He Minren, was killed in combat in the soviet areas in 1931.

For information on other family members, see Tan Jiaqing, "He shi xiongmei" [The brothers and sisters named He], and Wei Bing, "He Yi yu Mao Zetan" [He Yi and Mao Zetan], both in *Yongxin wenshi ziliao*, no. 1 (September 1989): 22–28 and 35–39, respectively.

21. Zuo Zhaoxiang and Song Junsheng, "Ouyang Luo (Mao Chunfang)," in *Zhonggong dangshi renwu zhuan* [Biographies of personages in the history of the CCP], ed. Zhonggong dangshi renwu yanjiu hui (Xi'an: Shaanxi renmin chubanshe, 1985), vol. 23, 133–34; "He Minxue tongzhi guanyu Jinggangshan douzheng jige wenti de tanhua" [Conversation with comrade He Minxue regarding several problems of the Jinggangshan struggle], document dated 2 January 1971 on file at the Jiangxi Provincial Exhibition Hall, Nanchang.

22. The following account of the growth of the Yongxin revolutionary movement is based primarily upon Wang Xingjuan, *He Zizhen de lu*, 12–42; and Zuo Zhaoxiang and Song Junsheng, "Ouyang Luo," 134–38.

23. These ages are calculated from years of birth and years of entry into a formal Communist-dominated political organization (Socialist Youth League [SYL], Communist Youth League [CYL], or CCP) as given in various biographical materials cited in the accounts above.

24. Liu Keyou, "Huiyi Ninggang xian de dang zuzhi" [Reminiscences on the Ninggang county party organization], in *JGG*, vol. 2, 286–87; *Jiangxi yinglie*, ed. Zhonggong Jiangxi shengwei dangshi yanjiu shi, vol. 1 (1984), 161–62, and vol. 2 (1985), 86. Long's biography in vol. 1 of *Jiangxi yinglie* assumes that Long only returned to the county once, in 1926, and that the reorganization of Yuan Wencai's bandits into a militia also took place at that time. In light of the statement in *Ninggang xianzhi* [Gazetteer of Ninggang county] (1937 ed.) that the reorganization took place in the latter half of 1925 and statements in Liu Huixiao's biography in *Jiangxi yinglie*, ed. Zhonggong Jiangxi shengwei dangshi yanjiu shi, vol. 2 (1985) that Long and others returned both in 1925 and 1926, I assume that Long returned to Ninggang at least twice, once during the summer vacation of 1925 and then again at least once in 1926.

The CCP cell consisted initially of three of the county's earliest and most closely-connected party members: Long himself and his in-laws Liu Huixiao and Liu Keyou, the latter of whom was then teaching at the guest people's Longjiang Academy.

25. *Jiangxi yinglie*, ed. Zhonggong Jiangxi shengwei dangshi yanjiu shi, vol. 1 (1984), 164–65, and vol. 2 (1985), 86; Liu Xiaonong, "Yuan Wencai, Wang Zuo shimo," 107–8; *Ninggang xianzhi* (1937 ed.), *houji* section, 9.

26. Liu Keyou, "Huiyi Ninggang," 288; Su Lanchun, "Huigu Ninggang," 89.

27. Wang Xingjuan, *He Zizhen de lu*, 21–27.

28. Gongzhong, et al., "Chen Zhengren," 214–17; Suichuan xian geming douzheng shi bianji weiyuanhui, *Suichuan xian geming douzheng shi* [History of the revolutionary struggle in Suichuan county] (N.p.: n.p., 1959) (manuscript copy available at Jinggangshan Revolutionary Museum), 6–8.

29. For information on these other counties, see, among others, Zhou Li, "Huiyi wo zai Lingxian de geming douzheng jingli" [Recollecting my experience in the Lingxian revolutionary struggle], *Hunan wenshi ziliao*, no. 30 (1988): 54–76; "1926–1927 nian de Chaling nongmin yundong" [The peasant movement in Chaling in 1926–1927], *Chaling wenshi*, no. 3 (1988): 54–68.

30. "1926–1927 nian de Chaling," 55.

31. "1926–1927 nian de Chaling," 56–57. The origins of the various elements in this repertoire of rural political action remain unclear. Were they developed by radical party cadres as rural analogues of the tactics used in their own May Fourth–era urban student protest experiences? Or were they drawn from long-established traditions of rural behavior—either directly (from the ad hoc treatment given to various village offenders, for example) or indirectly (by adaptation from processional ceremonies involved in funerals and "god's birthday" festivals, for example)? I know of no evidence that would help answer these questions.

32. *WZ*, 161–66. The structure and dynamics of rural militarization and peasant collective action in the Jinggangshan area was little changed by the formal establishment of these new bodies, and the process of their establishment may have resembled past efforts by officials and local elites to coopt highland bandit gangs, including Wang's itself. In this case, however, as in the similar case of Yuan Wencai's force in Ninggang, the formal renaming and nominal acceptance of a new source of authority marked not the end but only the beginning of the process of incorporation of Wang and his followers into the revolutionary movement.

33. Zhonggong Yongxin xianwei dangshi bangongshi, *Yongxin renmin geming shi* [The revolutionary history of the people of Yongxin] (Jinggangshan: n.p., 1989), 25; Lianhua renmin geming douzheng shi bianweihui, *Lianhua renmin geming douzheng shi* [History of the revolutionary struggle of the people of Lianhua] (N.p.: n.p., 1960), 51.

34. "1926–1927 nian de Chaling," 65–66.

35. *WZ*, 166–67.

36. Gongzhong, et al., "Chen Zhengren," 215–17; Chen Zhengren, "Mao Zedong tongzhi chuangjian Jinggangshan geming genjudi de weida shijian" [The great practice of Comrade Mao Zedong in founding the Jinggangshan revolutionary base area], *Jiangxi wenshi ziliao*, no. 1 (1987): 46; Liu Xiaonong, "Yuan Wencai, Wang Zuo shimo," 114.

37. *Ninggang xianzhi* (1937 ed.), *houji* section, 9; He Bolie, "Zhou Zuoyao lieshi fangong xunnan shilüe" [A brief sketch of the martyr Zhou Zuoyao's death while opposing Communism], *Jiangxi wenxian*, no. 5 (August 1966): 17; Tan Wenxiang and Tan Jingru, "Xianyan xingshu" [A brief biographical sketch of our late father], *Jiangxi wenxian*, no. 95 (January 1979): 55.

38. Qin Xianci, "Duan Xipeng (1898–1948) xiaozhuan" [A brief biography of Duan Xipeng (1898–1948)], *Zhuanji wenxue*, no. 178 (March 1977): 15, 67; Xiao Cen, "AB tuan zai Jiangxi" [The AB Corps in Jiangxi], *Shehui xinwen* 3, no. 8 (24 April 1933): 116; Hong Gui, "Minguo shiliu nian Jiangxi sier shibian huiyi" [Reminiscences of the 2 April 1927 incident in Jiangxi], *Jiangxi wenxian*, no. 13 (April 1967): 9–10.

39. Wang Xingjuan, *He Zizhen de lu*, 30; He Bolie, "Zhou Zuoyao lieshi," 17; Tan Wenxiang and Tan Jingru, "Xianyan xingshu," 55.

40. Wang Xingjuan, *He Zizhen de lu*, 30–31.

41. Wang Xingjuan, *He Zizhen de lu*, 30–31; Zuo Zhaoxiang and Song Junsheng, "Ouyang Luo," 136–37; He Minxue, "Yongxin baodong" [The Yongxin uprising], in *Xinghuo liaoyuan congshu zhiyi (Jinggangshan douzheng zhuanji)* [A single spark starts a prairie fire collecteana, vol. 1 (A special collection on the Jinggangshan struggle)] (Beijing: Jiefangjun chubanshe, 1986), 54; *WZ*, 168.

42. Zuo Zhaoxiang and Song Junsheng, "Ouyang Luo," 137–38; Wang Xingjuan, *He Zizhen de lu*, 33–34; He Minxue, "Yongxin baodong," 54.

43. This account of the attack on Yongxin and its aftermath is drawn from the following sources: He Minxue, "Yongxin baodong," 54–56; *WZ*, 171–78; Wang Xingjuan, *He Zizhen de lu*, 34–43.

44. This account of events in Suichuan is based largely on information in Chen Zhengren, "Wode zizhuan" [My autobiography], *Jiangxi dangshi ziliao*, no. 1 (1987): 176–77; Gongzhong, et al., "Chen Zhengren," 217–20; Suichuan xian geming douzheng shi bianji weiyuanhui, *Suichuan xian geming douzheng shi* [History of the revolutionary struggle in Suichuan county]. N.p.: n.p., 1959; "Jiangxi Suichuan xianzhang tusha minzhong" [County magistrate in Suichuan, Jiangxi, kills the masses], in *Beifa shiji bendang yu gongfei bodou xiaoxi jian baozhan canbu* [A clipping file of news of our party's struggle with the Communist bandits during the Northern Expeditionary Period], vol. 2 (1927), document on file at the GMD Archives, Taibei, Taiwan.

45. Zhang Shixi, "Wan'an gongnong douzheng ji 1927 nian 10 yue dao 1928 nian 3 yue dabaodong jingguo qingxing" [The Wan'an workers' and peasants' struggle and the circumstances of the major uprising between October 1927 and March 1928], *Jiangxi dangshi ziliao*, no. 5 (1988): 64. Zhang Shixi was one of the founders and leaders of the Wan'an revolutionary movement; this document (dated 12 July 1928) is the text of a report he gave to the Comintern's Sixth World Congress in Moscow.

46. *WZ*, 168–71, 178–84.

II

THE JINGGANGSHAN REVOLUTIONARY BASE AREA

In early October 1927, after a long and difficult trek south along the rugged Luoxiao mountain range following the failure of the Autumn Harvest Uprising, Mao Zedong and 700-odd other weary soldiers of the nascent Red Army reached the Jinggangshan region. Little over a year later, in January 1929, Mao and a considerably larger, more experienced, and even more weary Red Army force left the region under heavy enemy pressure to embark on another long hegira deeper into southern Jiangxi.

During the roughly fifteen months between these two retreats, Mao's forces engaged in near-constant effort on several fronts to carve out a secure base area centered on the Jinggangshan massif. In the face of numerous and increasingly severe enemy attacks and economic blockades, they and later-arriving forces under Zhu De and Peng Dehuai joined with the remnants of the indigenous revolutionary movement to build new local military and political organizations, establish a variety of mass movement organs, and begin to implement land redistribution and a number of other socioeconomic reforms. In the process, Mao and his fellow party cadres engaged in a drawn-out, often acrimonious dialogue with higher-level party leaders and among themselves over the proper use of Red Army forces and the proper policies to follow in building an effective rural military and political movement to revive the revolution's flagging fortunes.

In the party's own retrospective judgment, the period spent building a Jinggangshan base has always been considered a notable chapter in revolutionary history. This is so both because the effort was undertaken under trying circumstances by Mao and other CCP cadres who eventually became the party's most prominent leaders and because the activities of these individuals in the Jinggangshan region are felt to have helped lay the foundation for

the strategy of rural guerrilla war and peasant mobilization that eventually brought the revolution to a successful conclusion.

The intimate linkage at this time and place of a sizable group of future national leaders and the birth of a successful revolutionary strategy has led party historians to consider the months between October 1927 and January 1929 as the most significant period in the region's revolutionary history. Indeed, so strong is the emphasis on the importance of the actions of these leaders in this period that most party histories make little or no mention of events in the region before Mao's arrival. This is true not only for textbooks and other general historical surveys but also for books written specifically about the region's revolutionary history.[1]

These and other party histories about Jinggangshan typically begin with accounts of the failure of the Autumn Harvest Uprising, of the southward march of Mao and his forces, and of the important army reorganization which occurred along the way at Sanwan. This is also characteristic of many works written after Mao's death. Of the three post-Mao books listed in note 1, for example, only the one by Gui Yulin makes any mention whatsoever of pre-1927 conditions in Jinggangshan, and even in that case the remarks are confined to the first seven of the book's nearly 300 pages, which are immediately followed by a 24-page account of the action's of Mao's forces during the Autumn Harvest Uprising and its aftermath. Virtually all of these books implicitly view Jinggangshan's revolutionary struggle as chronologically coincident with the presence of Mao and his forces.

As noted in part I, one of the aims of the present study is to expand this circumscribed approach by exploring the society and politics of the Jinggangshan region before and after as well as during Mao's brief stay in the area. To this end, the following chapters strive wherever possible to integrate the knowledge of the region's socioeconomic dynamics and early revolutionary history presented in part I with a survey of events which, while synthetic and rather unorthodox from a "party history" point of view, nonetheless owes a good deal to standard party- and Mao-centered accounts of this period.

Because Western scholars are generally unfamiliar with the history of the Jinggangshan base between 1927 and 1929, and because military and political activities and policies were prominent in that history, much space in the chapters comprising part II is devoted to providing a narrative survey of such topics. Chapter 5 begins with an examination of the establishment of the base area in late 1927 and early 1928, focusing on such subjects as the decision to base the Red Army in the Jinggangshan region, early interactions between the newly arrived outside party leaders and local revolutionaries, and preliminary efforts at popular mobilization and party organization.

Chapter 6 continues the account by relating the events of spring 1928, when a variety of outside influences, among them anti-Communist armies,

the armed band of revolutionaries led by Zhu De and Chen Yi, and higher-level Communist authorities all began to impinge upon the formerly isolated base. The primary focus of this chapter is on political and military affairs, including the strategy and tactics of the Red Army's combat with invading armies, the expansion of political and military infrastructure, and the nature of and rationale for the strategic disagreements that emerged between Mao and higher party leaders.

As chapter 7 shows, while military and political leaders were trying to preserve and consolidate the base in the face of these major challenges, they and their programs were also continuing to interact with the complicated human ecology of the Jinggangshan region. As successive military victories and the cumulative expansion of party and mass movement organizations increased security and popular confidence, the revolutionary movement sought increasingly to implement a variety of socioeconomic reforms. Both these specific reforms and the ongoing ordinary political activities of the revolutionary movement affected and energized the region's complex, already conflict-ridden society in ways that sometimes added as much to the revolutionary movement's problems as they enhanced its prospects.

After a brief springtime "high tide" of successful military action and deepening socioeconomic reforms, during the summer and fall of 1928 the base was plunged into a period of desperate struggle and crisis which in the short run nearly destroyed the base and in the long run contributed significantly to the ultimate decision by the Fourth Red Army to abandon the Jinggangshan region in search of potentially more favorable base-building sites elsewhere in Jiangxi. Chapters 8 and 9 cover this period of defeat and departure: Chapter 8 examines the events and context of the "August Defeat" itself, while chapter 9 focuses on the varied efforts the surviving revolutionaries made to analyze and assimilate the reasons for the defeat, to rebuild their shattered organizations, and to counteract increasing enemy economic and military pressure.

The picture of the "Mao period" in Jinggangshan's revolutionary history that emerges from these chapters is one that differs significantly from established tradition by setting Mao and the Red Army more fully into regional context. It is a view that emphasizes that the tasks facing the outside revolutionaries were not only to defeat high-ranking party opponents and invading enemy armies, but also to assimilate their strategies and actions to the structures, practices, and recent historical experience of local inhabitants.

However, although thus broadening the horizons of established interpretation leads to a significant shift of perspective on and substantial reevaluation of the history of the Jinggangshan revolutionary movement, it does not require anything like complete rejection of the traditional party- and Mao-centered narratives of this specific period. Indeed, as the following chapters also clearly demonstrate, setting the party's "struggle in the

Jinggang Mountains" between late 1927 and early 1929 into a more fully-articulated and nuanced historical context in some ways only highlights more clearly the importance and heroic quality of the activities Mao and his fellow cadres undertook there.

In addition to thinking of the events and processes that unfold in the following chapters in light of what they reveal about CCP history, it is also useful to consider them in the context of the overall political and societal dynamics of the Chinese Revolution. As noted in part I, by the time Mao and the Autumn Harvest Uprising survivors reached the Jinggangshan region, some aspects of the Chinese Revolution's transition from urban to rural had already been underway in this and surrounding areas of Jiangxi and Hunan for well over a year and in some localities for considerably longer. Beginning with the transmission of radical ideas and organizational forms over educational and other networks from big cities to elite communities in rural county seats and market towns, followed by the development in these locales of organized groups of politicized young challengers to the entrenched elite power structure, the process eventually extended to organization and mobilization of the broader rural population through the formation of peasant associations and other similar "mass" organs. Even after peasant associations began, the attention of most United Front revolutionaries remained focused more on urban- and elite-centered affairs than on the immediate problems and potential of peasant mobilization—a fact that was reflected in the hasty and sometimes superficial manner in which the peasant associations were formed. Nevertheless, the diffusion of personnel and concepts that occurred into rural areas such as Jinggangshan, together with the success achieved by revolutionaries from such regions in clearing space and establishing a presence for themselves within local political and social arenas, did open access routes into rural society over which Mao and the Autumn Harvest veterans could later march.

The collapse of the United Front and subsequent suppression of most urban radical mass movement and many party organs dramatically changed the dynamics of the revolutionary situation and plunged the majority of the surviving CCP cadres willy-nilly into much more intimate interaction with rural society. As the GMD-led "White Terror" spread through the major cities and conservative elite-led paramilitary forces roamed unfettered through many rural county seats and market towns, undefended radical organizations could no longer operate openly even in most small towns. Under these altered conditions, the role and emphases of surviving rural CCP members perforce also changed. Formerly, party cadres in rural counties had acted

primarily as politicized intellectuals operating in elite venues. In this context, they were generally concerned with non-elite rural inhabitants either as abstract members of a class of exploited people ("peasants"), the improvement of whose condition was one of the revolution's long-term goals, or as active objects of recruitment as allies or clients in support of cadres' struggles against individual elite power holders. Now, however, as the surviving cadres were faced with the prospect of waging a violent civil war, they needed to develop armed forces and to rely more immediately and thoroughly than previously anticipated on the resources and assistance of the non-elite "masses."

This second and final stage of the revolution's transition from urban to rural—the move from market-town to village level politics—entailed changes in the repertoires of collective action, the manner of framing and articulating the meaning and purposes of the movement, and the organizational structures through which it was mobilized and maintained. Formerly a largely elite revolutionary movement dominated by students and young intellectuals had articulated a vision that fused nationalistic anti-imperialism with the anti-Confucian cultural politics of the New Culture movement. They had grouped themselves not only into formal political parties but also into a variety of urban-oriented organizational forms such as student associations, study societies, and periodical publishing groups. And they had utilized a repertoire of disruptive activities—school "strikes," public rallies, marches, and demonstrations, etc.—that was similarly urban-oriented in its venues and at least in part of foreign origin.

Faced now with the task of attracting the support of bandit gangs and sworn brotherhoods and of diverse local non-elite populations, many of the same individuals tried to maintain the core of their change-oriented, anti-establishment program while at the same time articulating it through words and actions that resonated more effectively with traditional forms of peasant collective action and the traditions of swashbuckling rural strongmen. Downplaying the side of their identity and behavior that defined them as cultural iconoclasts, politicized intellectuals, or ideologues, local party cadres instead began to give salience to the aspects of their character and background that labeled them as scions of elite families enmeshed in local social networks. In this capacity, they emphasized adaptation, compromise, and conceptual mediation as they sought to rebuild and then expand local revolutionary organizations, often as loose coalitions or amalgamations of gangs/brotherhoods, remnants of broken-up peasant associations, and groups of ordinary villagers.

Processes of sociopolitical adaptation such as these took place among revolutionaries in many parts of China during the year or two following the collapse of the United Front in mid-1927, and their explication in the specific context of the Jinggangshan region forms a significant part of many of the

chapters in this section. When thinking about these matters, it is important to stress that what was occurring in the course of the revolutionary movement's transition into rural China was a multi-sided mutual interaction rather than the unilateral construction or imposition of political programs. Party cadres did, of course, to varying extents have ideological vision, policy goals, and mobilizational experience stemming from their exposure to Marxism and to urban organizing work, and they sought assiduously to explain what they were doing. But as accounts not only from Jinggangshan but also from elsewhere in China and throughout the chronological span of the Chinese Revolution clearly indicate, many cadres remained remarkably unsophisticated in their grasp of Marxist ideology and deeply influenced by their local backgrounds. Their interpretations—in both words and actions—of the movement's goals and policies were the filtered products of these intellectual and experiential constraints. For their part, rural inhabitants to whom these explanations were addressed likewise understood and responded to them in light of their own not-completely-congruent local experiences, traditions, and frames of cognition. In both the way they were read and the way they were heard, therefore, the texts of the revolution—both oral and written, symbolic and concrete—were given different, sometimes multiply different, emphases and interpretations. This was, moreover, an ongoing, interactive feedback process, of reading–reception–response–new reading, through which the interpretations of rural inhabitants affected (at least within limits) the manner in which local cadres and movement leaders alike conceptualized various aspects of the movement—the operational definition of "class" in the Chinese countryside, for example, or the most appropriate functions for guerrilla detachments and soviet governments, or the conceptualization and purpose of "base area."

The Jinggangshan region between 1927 and 1929 was one of the sites where this sort of interactive discourse and the practical experimentation generally associated with it were most productive and wide ranging. This was primarily because of the presence in the region of the Red Army forces headed by Mao (later joined by Zhu De). The Zhu-Mao forces were among the largest—if not *the* largest—Communist-led military forces in the entire country during this period, and their impact on the dynamics of the revolutionary movement in the region was significant in a variety of ways that will be explored in the chapters that follow. Moreover, this scarce and valuable military resource attracted considerable attention from higher level party authorities and precipitated a certain amount of rivalry and debate over how and where it should be used. The debate helped bring to the fore a range of strategic and organizational issues with which movement leaders had not previously had to grapple and thereby accelerated the process of rethinking the movement's assumptions and methods that was necessary following the collapse of the United Front.

It is important to keep the dynamics of the essentially localized struggles between revolutionaries and local elites firmly in mind in any consideration of the embryonic evolution of rural base areas. As party cadres moved to consolidate and expand revolutionary movements in their localities, their notions of how to establish local power bases still owed more to preexisting models of strongman turf-building than to party pronouncements on how to construct rural bases. In fact, though high-level party documents issued during this period contained numerous general exhortations on the need to establish rural bases and soviet governments and on the usefulness of "guerrilla warfare," they were remarkably vague on such vital matters as just what types of activity constituted guerrilla warfare, precisely how it might be used to establish and defend bases, and what strategic role rural bases were expected to play in the overall process of revolution in China.

In the absence of well articulated alternative visions, many party cadres apparently continued to conceptualize efforts to build local revolutionary power bases by reference to models and terms drawn from existing political and military usages. One prominent set of relevant conceptions was that associated with local strongmen and their "turfs," but there were others as well.

Though Communist writers avoided the pejorative term "nest" or "lair" (*jiao*) when referring to areas under their control, the frequency with which documents from the late 1920s warned against undesirable cadre mindsets such as a "roving bandit" mentality or "mountaintop-ism" clearly indicates the continuing influence of what might be called a bandit model of base-building. In this model, bases were primarily hideouts, inaccessible places of refuge and preparation from which predatory raids could be launched. In those areas—and they were numerous—where cadres had made bandit/brotherhood gangs the core of their armed forces or in which survivors of defeated uprisings had retreated to regroup and recruit in bandit-dominated areas, bandits likely played a direct role in diffusing this conception among local revolutionaries. Beyond this, the overall dynamic of the situation contributed to this style of thinking: both in Jinggangshan and elsewhere the revolutionaries, like generations of local bandits before them, used armed gangs of poor people to appropriate resources from wealthy families or to stage hit-and-run raids on urban centers, then avoided retaliation by hiding in inaccessible rural hinterlands. Similar behavior may well have encouraged similar identifications. In any event, it was not just high level party critics who saw resonances between the thought and behavior of bandits and those of "mountaintop-ist" Party cadres. As the chapters in part II make clear, these connections were evident to the general populace as well, and they often allowed anti-Communist elites to make a plausible pejorative equation that "Communist equals bandit."

Local cadres also had available another conceptualization with a somewhat different emphasis: that of the warlord base. This model focused on bases as territorial centers for resource extraction and for the support of military operations. The terms commonly used to describe such bases (*dipan*, *geju*) connoted areas acquired by forceful seizure; the word *geju* had the added connotation of a separatist regime splintered off from another political entity.[2] The sense of warlord bases as springboards and support structures for ambitious political and military challengers may well explain why party leaders during the late 1920s frequently use the term *geju* to refer to the emerging areas of rural Communist influence.[3]

In line with these existing understandings of the meaning and function of bases, Party cadres continued through 1928 and 1929 to develop many separate small geographical nodes of revolutionary power scattered across the rural hinterlands of southern and central China. Gradually, under a combination of pressure from suppression campaigns, growing attempts by high-level party leaders to guide, coordinate, and integrate the activities of cadres in individual localities, the assistance of growing Red Armies, and local cadres' own efforts to expand and consolidate the territories under their control, some of the scattered nodes began to link up and form a few larger contiguous areas that were each administered through a unified, party-dominated, political and military apparatus.

Achieving agreement on the appropriate modes and degrees of centralization and uniformity under these circumstances, however, was a difficult task on a variety of different levels. This was true not only in such well-known cases as Mao's persistent controversies (described in several chapters of part II) with higher party authorities but also in a range of cases involving leaders of regional-level army and party organizations interacting with local cadres in the emerging base areas to work out the terms of their ongoing association. As is also evident from the following chapters, the evolving and sometimes strained relationship between Mao and his Red Army colleagues and their local Jinggangshan allies provides an excellent example of the dynamics of the kinds of regional-local interaction that occurred in many places across central and southern China during the initial stages of the base-building process. In the Jinggangshan region, relations between local people and a Red Army and its leadership that were predominantly of outside origin were further complicated by continuing tensions within the local revolutionary movement between the region's rival guest people and early settler ethnic communities. Adding a final complication was the rudimentary and unsettled state of the Red Army, which in the Jinggangshan region as elsewhere during this period was faced with the unenviable task of trying to preside over and mediate among competing local interests while simultaneously inventing itself and its mission.

Much space in part II is devoted to the ramifications of such issues, and many of them carry over into part III as well. Taken together, they remind us how numerous and difficult were the winding and perplexing paths down which revolutionaries wandered through the Chinese countryside en route to finding what in retrospect has been enshrined as the "only correct" path to success. Existing repertoires of rural collective action, the political cultures of local strongmen and notions of bandit lairs and warlord bases might provide valuable methods, tactics, and conceptual signposts that facilitated the revolution's entry into the countryside, but it required dogged, trial-and-error experimentation to develop beyond this. Solutions to many of the complex issues involved in base-building required years of effort to construct. Indeed, it is at least arguable that some of the problems with the strategy of rural bases were never fully resolved. Jinggangshan was one of the earliest and most significant of the sites where this time-consuming experimentation was undertaken, but it was a task that extended far beyond the departure of Mao and the Fourth Red Army in early 1929.

NOTES

1. See, for example, *JF*; Gui Yulin, *Jinggangshan geming douzheng shi* [A history of the Jinggangshan revolutionary struggle] (Beijing: Jiefangjun chubanshe, 1986) [hereafter cited as *JGDS*]; *Jinggangshan de wuzhuang gezhu* [The Jinggangshan military base] (Nanchang: Jiangxi renmin chubanshe, 1980).

2. Strongman turfs and bandit nests might of course also provide resources to help sustain their occupiers and likewise often furthered implicit or explicit political activities, but such functions were not as central to their rationale as they were for warlord bases. Moreover, although warlord bases varied widely in size, they were generally both larger and more deeply bound up with large-scale politico-military rivalries than the bases of local strongmen and bandits.

3. The term "base area" (*genjudi*), now commonly used by party historians, appears rarely in documents until 1929, at which time it seems to have been used primarily in documents written by the party's national leaders. The term was clearly available in the Chinese lexicon much earlier, as a nearly identical phrase (*genju zhi di*) was used by late-Qing reformers and radicals who wrote for the newspaper *Shibao*. Joan Judge, *Print and Politics: "Shibao" and the Culture of Reform in Late Qing China* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1996), 181.

5

Establishing the Jinggangshan Base

THE ARRIVAL OF MAO AND THE RED ARMY

Following the collapse of the CCP-GMD United Front in mid-summer 1927, the national leadership of the CCP met in emergency session on 7 August to make organizational changes and plans for the future. In addition to installing Qu Qiubai as party leader in place of Chen Duxiu, who was now in disgrace because of the failure of the United Front, the 7 August Emergency Conference called for the launching of a coordinated series of rurally based attacks on major central China cities, which came to be known collectively as the Autumn Harvest Uprising.[1]

Mao Zedong, who had participated in the 7 August conference, also played an important role in leading the Autumn Harvest Uprising in his native Hunan province. Under his overall leadership, several poorly armed forces composed of peasant association remnants, Anyuan miners, former bandits, and warlord army troops in September 1927 launched a number of unsuccessful attempts to seize control of the provincial capital of Changsha. After these attacks were defeated, the Communist-led forces retreated eastward in disarray to the mountains along the Hunan-Jiangxi border, losing a substantial portion of their strength in the process through mutinies and desertion.

The March South

Once in the mountains, the Communist leaders paused to reorganize their remaining forces and to consider their options. After considerable discussion,

and despite requests from the CCP's national leadership that they resume attacks on Changsha, Mao and his fellow cadres decided to march south along the Hunan-Jiangxi border. Unable to gain lodging in the well-defended mining area of Anyuan, they continued south toward southern Hunan, a region that party leaders had earlier identified as another prime staging area for organizing peasant uprisings.

At least as important a factor in the decision to move toward southern Hunan, however, was that region's convenient location nearly equidistant from and on the main travel route between Changsha and the central Yangzi valley on the one hand and Canton on the other. Both of these were strategic areas that had had well-developed CCP and mass movement organizations during the United Front period and in which party leaders still hoped they could retain a viable presence even under the current less-favorable conditions. The Communist-led military force that had staged the Nanchang Uprising on 1 August had also retreated toward Canton after the uprising's failure, and a move to southern Hunan would bring Mao's force much closer to possible support from this quarter.[2]

Clearly, therefore, in the fall of 1927 Jinggangshan was not the self-evident and pre-ordained promised land of the revolution that it is now frequently made out to be in party histories. Instead, it appeared to be just another waystation and decision point on a long and rather uncertain journey whose goals were oriented as much toward simple survival and linking up with other bodies of roving Communist military leaders as toward establishing a secure and lasting revolutionary base. Only gradually, as information about the circumstances of other Communist military forces and conditions in Jinggangshan was received and digested at various meetings and as operations in the region revealed more clearly the limitations of the nascent Red Army, did the possibility of establishing a longer-term base in the Jinggangshan area suggest itself.[3]

This gradual transition began with the military and political reorganization that the several hundred men of what was now known rather optimistically as the First Worker–Peasant Revolutionary Army underwent during a several-day rest halt in the village of Sanwan, in Yongxin county in the northern part of the Jinggangshan region. Disturbed by evident deficiencies in the ragtag force's organization, cohesion, and functioning, army leaders used the rest to consolidate and redesignate the army's units, establish a more extensive network of party branches and political officers, and set up a system of soldiers' committees to improve interaction and cooperation between officers and ordinary soldiers. Taken together, these measures constituted important early moves in the process of creating a political and organizational superstructure for a Red Army that—after further reforms and considerable leavening of experience—was eventually to become a much more highly unified, motivated, and ideologically aware force than its typical opponents.[4]

Contacting the Local Revolutionaries

During the Sanwan reorganization, the Red Army also met with representatives of Jinggangshan-region party organs. Mao had apparently begun to hear about conditions in the region—particularly the existence of the armed bands of Yuan Wencai and Wang Zuo—while he was in northern Hunan, and he learned more as the army traversed neighboring Lianhua county en route to Sanwan. While in Sanwan he wrote to Yuan Wencai urging contact and cooperation between their respective forces.[5]

Yuan had also heard of the Red Army's arrival. Exhibiting a caution bred of long experience with warlord army bandit-suppression campaigns, he had initially reacted by ordering his force (still accompanied by many Ninggang and Yongxin county party cadres who had been made refugees by the summer's right-wing crackdown) to retreat from his Maoping base up to the lower slopes of the Jinggangshan massif where they could more easily avoid the invaders and be supported by Wang Zuo's band atop the massif.

After receiving Mao's letter, Yuan, his staff and local cadres discussed their options at length before deciding to meet with the Red Army. Helping to overcome their suspicion was Yuan's secretary Chen Muping, who had met Mao while at the Wuhan Peasant Movement Training Institute. Because of this connection, Chen was sent to Sanwan along with Long Chaoqing and another Ninggang cadre for extensive talks with Red Army leaders. These conversations, together with Mao's gift of three rifles to the unarmed Ninggang cadres, helped persuade them of the advantages of further contact and cooperation, an opinion which Chen conveyed to Yuan along with Mao's request for a meeting.[6]

After leaving Sanwan, the reorganized Red Army moved into northwestern Ninggang county, to the small market town of Gucheng ("Old City"). There the First Army's leading party organ, known as the Front Committee, convened an important two-day meeting, known as the Gucheng Conference, which was attended by several dozen people, including Front Committee members, other high-level army cadres, some unspecified party activists, and several Ninggang party leaders, including Long Chaoqing.[7]

Although party historians disagree among themselves on the question, it seems likely that the Gucheng Conference was the point at which Mao and his fellow Red Army leaders made the initial, if still tentative, decision to build a revolutionary base in the Jinggangshan region. At the very least, the conference marked a major step in the extended process of narrowing options that ultimately led to the establishment of this base and its inclusion in the broader national revolutionary struggle.[8]

One very practical factor in the decision—and a subject for discussion at the conference—was the urgent need for a place to leave the growing number of sick and wounded soldiers whose presence was beginning to pose an

intolerable drag on the morale and fighting efficiency of the small force. Sanwan and the other small villages through which they had passed could not provide the needed surplus food and service support, while the capture of a county seat would invite dangerous government military retaliation. Yuan Wencai's Maoping base, however, was isolated enough to be unobtrusive, was headquarters for one of the region's few remaining functional revolutionary organizations, and had developed enough popular mobilization and logistical infrastructure to support the needs of Yuan's force.

It was, however, clear that the area around Maoping and the nearby Jinggangshan massif could only be developed as a base with the active cooperation of Yuan Wencai and Wang Zuo. The Gucheng Conference therefore spent considerable time discussing how to deal with these two former bandits, especially Yuan, who was the better educated, more politically active, and geographically more accessible of the two.

Precisely how the question of Yuan and Wang was raised and considered at the conference cannot clearly be ascertained. Various accounts mention that the conferees disagreed about how to deal with the two men. Some felt that they were still bandits at heart and should be suppressed, a view which doubtless resonated well with cadres who had already experienced mutiny within their ranks during the Autumn Harvest Uprising and who had just completed an extensive army reorganization designed to avoid more such problems. Others, most notably Mao, are said to have disagreed with this view and argued for the potential contribution that Yuan and Wang could make to the revolutionary movement. Mao is also said to have stressed the important role that the Yuan-Wang forces could play in what he hoped would be a united guest people–early settler movement, indicating that the conferees were also well aware of the delicate problem of ethnic rivalries and the role that Yuan and Wang had previously played in them. In the end, all agree, the conference accepted Mao's view and pursued efforts to cooperate with Yuan.[9]

At the same time, however, accounts of the Gucheng Conference also note the presence of cadres from the Ninggang county party organization and of a representative sent by Yuan Wencai. Yuan's representative is further said to have been cool toward the outsiders and to have offered to provide the Red Army with needed supplies while urging them not to try to "ascend the mountain" toward Yuan's base at Maoping. As it seems extremely unlikely that frank comments on Yuan and Wang's "bandit nature" or on the complications of guest people–early settler rivalries would have taken place in the presence of representatives of the very individuals and groups under discussion, it is probable that much of the conversation on these matters took place outside of the formal conference sessions. However such matters may have been managed, eventually conference participants persuaded Yuan's representative that they wished to cooperate with rather than to destroy or absorb the existing local armed forces and obtained his acceptance, subject to Yuan's approval, of the Red Army's desire to establish a hospital and staging area in Maoping.[10]

Though standard accounts of the decision to establish the Jinggangshan base focus mainly on the views of Mao and the other newly-arrived cadres about the human resources and relative suitability of the area, the participation in the Gucheng Conference of Ninggang cadres and Yuan's representative indicates that deliberation by the outside cadres was only part of a broader multi-sided process of mutual evaluation and risk-benefit calculation that also involved local party leaders and the loosely allied Yuan-Wang forces.

For Long Chaoqing and the other intellectuals who dominated the local party organs, Mao's force offered both a link with revolutionaries outside of the area and an alliance with a military force independent of the limited, localist, guest people-dominated bandit forces of the Jinggangshan massif. For Yuan Wencai and Wang Zuo, Mao's arrival similarly held out the prospect of affiliation with a strong armed group—on the surface very little different from the large bands of bandits and ex-soldiers that had long drifted through the region—that could aid them against their enemies among the early settler elite establishment. As for Mao and his followers, cooperation with all of these local bodies offered a valuable accretion of armed strength, experienced local contacts, and ties, however tenuous, with previous revolutionary mass movements.

Despite their obvious common interests, the various groups also had reason to approach one another cautiously. As just noted, the newly arrived cadres worried that Yuan's and Wang's men would prove to be opportunistic and unreliable. For their part, both the local party leaders and Yuan and Wang, experienced in the Machiavellian intrigues and fickle alliances common in back-country politics, feared that their local power might be eclipsed and their forces "eaten" by the better-armed and better-connected new arrivals.

Moreover, it is likely that the Jinggangshan natives were also painfully aware of the possible impact of the predominantly Hunanese outsiders on the region's delicate balance of political and ethnic power. Not only were the newcomers foreign to both this isolated locality and the notoriously insular province in which it was located, but an appreciable number of their soldiers were also almost certainly of guest people origin. The Hunan-Jiangxi border areas from which most of Mao's Autumn Harvest forces were recruited were heavily populated by guest people, and this fact was almost certainly reflected in the ethnic composition of the Red Army units that arrived in the Jinggangshan region. To local party leaders of early settler origin already

worried by the growing power of the forces of Yuan and Wang, the arrival of a new cohort of armed guest people and of leaders such as Mao who seemed inclined to cooperate with local guest people undoubtedly deepened concern about the distribution of power.

In the end, the suspicions of all parties involved were to be confirmed, but in the fall of 1927 their mutual needs seemed more compelling than their mutual antipathies, and a *modus vivendi* was eventually worked out. After the conference, the army prepared to proceed to the Jinggangshan massif, engaging in propaganda and proselytizing work among the rural populace along the way. The Front Committee also began to consider how to solve the practical problems involved in making this trip, especially the question of how to make closer contact with Yuan and Wang, who were still behaving very cautiously.[11]

After Chen Muping returned from Sanwan with favorable impressions, Yuan had been disposed to cooperate with Mao, but other advisors urged him to be wary. Yuan vacillated, but after getting a report on the Gucheng Conference, he finally agreed to meet with Mao at Dacang village near Gucheng. Obliged to be hospitable but still worried about the possibility of treachery, Yuan went to the site in advance to prepare both a feast and the means for his own defense; as the food was being made, he carefully stationed several dozen followers out of sight in a nearby lineage hall.

On the morning of 6 October, Mao and several soldiers came to meet Yuan, who had stationed himself on a high stone bridge from which he could observe them from far enough away so that he could call out to his guards if conditions seemed threatening. Finding no cause for alarm, Yuan welcomed Mao and the two settled down for a long private meal and conversation. By the time Mao returned to Gucheng several hours later, the two men had established a firm foundation for cooperation. Among the most notable of the measures upon which they agreed was the exchange of more than one hundred Red Army rifles for a large amount of Yuan's cash; although presented as a friendly exchange of "gifts," this activity was suspiciously akin to a straight commercial transaction. In addition, Yuan ratified his representative's agreement at the Gucheng Conference: Mao's force could advance to Maoping, where Yuan promised to feed them and care for their sick and wounded; Yuan also agreed to urge Wang Zuo to accept the presence of Mao's forces.

With the way thus smoothed, on 7 October the Red Army entered Maoping. In an early instance of what would soon become an habitual and characteristic part of Red Army behavior, the soldiers spent much of the next several days proselytizing among the area's inhabitants, first dispersing into the countryside to meet peasants in their individual hamlets and then (perhaps on market day) holding a mass rally of townspeople and surrounding villagers in Maoping.[12]

The Raid into Hunan

Despite the Red Army's efforts to make itself welcome in the heart of the Jinggangshan region, its long-term presence there was at this point still only ambiguously accepted by either local satraps and party cadres or the Red Army's own leaders. Whatever alternatives any of the parties involved may still have been considering, however, were soon abandoned after a brief Red Army raid into neighboring sections of southern Hunan.

As noted, southern Hunan had been the apparent original objective of the Red Army's southward journey. According to comments Yuan Wencai later made to another cadre who asked what he and Mao had discussed at their first meeting, Mao had then stated that he still desired to move on toward Shaoguan (in northern Guangdong near the Hunan border) to meet the Communist-led forces who had earlier staged the Nanchang Uprising but that he would leave some officers and men behind on Jinggangshan. If accurate, this statement indicates that at this point Mao still hoped to wage the revolutionary struggle across a broader territory that might include but would not be limited to Jinggangshan.

Yuan did little to discourage Mao in this ambition. To the contrary, he is said to have replied to Mao that because of a shortage of resources in the Jinggangshan area, the Red Army would be well advised to raid into Hunan to seize money and materiel from local elites there. Yuan, of course, spoke with firsthand knowledge about the difficulty of supplying large bands of armed men in this poor region whose elite families and other sources of surplus money and food had already been strained by years of disruption by bandit gangs such as his own, but his comments also clearly reflected his ambivalence about the implications for his own power and position of having such a large "guest army" remain in the area.[13]

Other factors encouraging movement into southern Hunan were the temporary withdrawal of most government garrison forces from the cross-border region and the likelihood that an advance closer to the major north-south communications route running through Hunan's Xiang River valley would provide opportunities to capture newspapers and otherwise obtain up-to-date information about political and military developments. Obtaining such information was a high priority not only because the Red Army had been out of touch with events during its southward march but for the less obvious reason that Mao Zedong was a remarkable news addict whose personal determination to obtain current newspapers led to special raids and other extreme measures on more than one occasion during his time in the Jinggangshan region.[14]

Moved by this variety of motives, Red Army leaders decided to strike quickly into neighboring counties of southern Hunan as soon as they had set up a base and hospital in Maoping. In mid-October the Red Army

moved into Lingxian in Hunan, proselytizing, recruiting new party members, attacking local militias, and opening jails in towns along the way. After capturing the county seat, the army learned the discouraging news that the Nanchang Uprising army had failed to seize the Guangdong port city of Shantou.

From the county seat, the army moved south to the town of Shuikou, where they paused to rest and inducted several ordinary soldiers into the CCP, these recruits marking the first concrete results of a new policy of encouraging greater party enrollment in the Red Army introduced during the Sanwan reorganization. As the Red Army paused in Shuikou, they heard that one of the region's few remaining enemy military units was approaching. The army split, with a diversionary force headed by Wan Xixian going on to attack Chaling county in Hunan, while the remainder of the Red Army under Mao continued south into Jiangxi's Suichuan county, proselytizing among the rural populace as they proceeded.[15]

On 22 October, Mao's force arrived at the large town of Dafen in western Suichuan. Almost immediately Wang's Zuo's longtime nemesis, the influential regional power holder Xiao Jiabi, whose center of power was not far away in Dakeng, sent warning that the region was under his control and that if they didn't leave immediately there would be trouble. The Red Army troops very unwisely ignored the challenge. The next day several hundred members of Xiao's powerful militia attacked Mao's rump force and, taking advantage of the Red Army's unfamiliarity with the region, inflicted considerable losses on the Communist forces, dispersed them, and drove them from the area in confusion.

One battalion was forced further south into Shangyou county, where it conducted guerrilla activity on its own for some time before making contact with Communist forces led by Zhu De and eventually accompanying them back to Jinggangshan. The remainder of the defeated force—300 or so men in all—retreated northward in small scattered groups, regrouping at Huang'ao just south of the massif, and then continuing on via mountain paths to the small village of Jingzhushan, where they were met on 23 October by Zhu Chiliu, the chief of Wang Zuo's scout detachment.[16]

Up to this point, Wang had hardly been involved in the interaction between local revolutionaries and the Red Army. His physical remoteness, his illiteracy and crude behavior, and his tendency to subordinate himself to the better-educated Yuan when it came to politics, all had contributed to the scant attention that Wang had received during the delicate negotiations leading to the Red Army's arrival in Maoping at the massif's northern entrance. After meeting with Mao, Yuan informed and reassured Wang about what had transpired, but otherwise he was left alone until he received a message from Mao, dispatched while the Red Army was still at Shuikou during its Hunan raid, suggesting a joint meeting of Mao, Yuan, and Wang.

While Wang was still mulling over this proposal, word came that Mao's force had reached Huang'ao, and Wang immediately sent Zhu off to discover their intentions. As had happened in his earlier meetings with Yuan's representatives and with Yuan himself, Mao won Zhu over in the course of a long intimate conversation. The next morning Zhu provided Wang with a reassuring report that led the latter to begin preparations for a feast and welcoming ceremony, while Mao and his force gathered to march to Wang's location in the village of Dajing.[17]

Before setting off, Mao delivered an important lecture on military discipline to the assembled troops. In these remarks, Mao was reacting in part to overall discipline and training deficiencies that had plagued the army since its origins and had already led to reform efforts such as the Sanwan reorganization. But his remarks were also prompted by specific recent incidents during the disorderly withdrawal following the Dafen defeat when hungry Red Army soldiers had stolen chickens, sweet potatoes, and other food items from peasant families and fields along the route.

To avoid repetition of such alienating behavior as the bedraggled force marched into particularly sensitive circumstances on Wang Zuo's home turf, Mao now articulated for the first time what became known as the "Three Disciplines" (*san jilü*): 1) actions must be in response to orders, 2) funds raised must be used for public purposes, and 3) not even a single sweet potato may be taken from the populace. Over time, these principles of behavior were to become an enduring part of the Red Army's military ethos and to help distinguish it from other Chinese armies in the eyes of the populace.[18]

By noon on 24 October, Mao's force arrived at Dajing to find that Wang had deployed his eighty-odd men on both sides of the road to await them. As Mao and Wang met and exchanged pleasantries, people began to slaughter pigs for the welcoming feast, and the piercing sound of their squealing echoing through the village served as a prearranged signal for Wang's men to hoist their variegated weaponry and present arms to honor the new arrivals.[19]

For Mao, the garish, grandiose openness of Wang's welcoming ceremony must have stood in marked contrast to the more reserved and private reception that Yuan Wencai had given him three weeks earlier, while for the Red Army troops the raucous squeals of stuck pigs and the subsequent lip-smacking indulgence in roast pork must have formed an equally dramatic contrast with the solemn exhortation to abstemious revolutionary self-discipline which Mao had delivered to them just a few hours earlier. The contrasts among all of these ceremonial events revealed not only the differences between Yuan and Wang in style and personality but also the deep gulf that separated the limited horizons, personalistic politics, and self-indulgent behavior of both local powerholders from the more organized, ambitious, and ideological program of outside leaders such as Mao.

Ultimately, tensions engendered by these differences would significantly affect the Jinggangshan base, but for the moment cooperation rather than conflict was the dominant mode of thought and action. Although the style of Wang's welcome differed from Yuan's, the course of his subsequent interaction with Mao was otherwise similar to Mao's meeting with Yuan at Dacang. As in the earlier meeting, Mao and Wang first exchanged "gifts": Mao provided Wang with seventy Red Army rifles, and in return Wang gave the Red Army 500 piculs (*dan*) of grain from his own stores. In another sort of reciprocal interchange, Dajing villagers moved out of some dwellings and doubled up in those remaining so that Red Army soldiers would have comfortable billets, while the soldiers spread out through the village doing odd jobs for the local people.

At the same time, Wang and Mao engaged in the same sort of extended personal conversation that Mao had had with Yuan. In this discussion, Wang happened to mention the bitter antagonism that had long existed between himself and his regional rivals Xiao Jiabi and Yin Daoyi. The Red Army having itself just emerged much the worse for wear from a tangle with Xiao's formidable force, Mao was doubtless in no hurry to send his troops on further adventures in that quarter, but an attack on Yin's smaller militia was a considerably more manageable operation whose successful prosecution would give Wang another important tangible sign of the value of cooperation with Mao's force.

The next day, therefore, the now-well-fed Red Army troops and Wang Zuo's band jointly attacked Yin Daoyi's militia headquarters in the village of Shimen, in the Nashan area east of Jinggangshan. As luck would have it, when the attack started, the people of Shimen were in the midst of ceremonies honoring the ancestors, and so both they and the militia were caught totally unaware. Although Yin and some of his relatives and fellow militia leaders escaped, several dozen militiamen were killed and many others captured. Taking advantage of another welcome opportunity to fill their stomachs, the Red Army then sat down to eat the food laid out for the ancestral sacrifices, after which they burned the militia headquarters and proselytized among the villagers before returning to Dajing on receipt of news that the detachment which had split off from Mao's force at Shuikou had finally returned following its diversionary raid through Hunan's Chaling and Anren counties.

Once the two groups had reunited at Dajing, Wang suggested that all of them move from the tiny village—by then bursting at the seams trying to hold nearly one thousand soldiers—to nearby Ciping, which as Wang's headquarters and the massif's largest settlement was better equipped to accommodate such a large force. On 27 October, the combined forces made the short march to this new location, underwent another round of feasting and celebration, and settled down for a period of well-deserved rest.[20]

The bivouac at Ciping meant that the Red Army had now established a presence at both ends of the axis of local politico-military power that Wang and Yuan had constructed running from Ciping at the summit of the Jinggangshan massif to Maoping at its northern foot. Although much work remained to be done before this tenuous foothold could be fully secured, it was the Red Army's insertion into and partial appropriation of this strategic terrain that marked the unambiguous final evidence that Mao and his associates had decided to remain in the area, and the emphatic first step in the demarcation of what would become the military and political core of the Jinggangshan revolutionary base.

With this move onto the heights of Jinggangshan, the Red Army and its leaders reached the end of the extended period of uncertainty and indecision that had followed the failed Autumn Harvest Uprising. Beginning with a generalized determination to continue armed struggle from some area that was both isolated from immediate threat of military suppression and yet strategically positioned to receive support from other leftist forces and eventually to resume assaults on centers of enemy power, Communist leaders were first inclined to relocate to southern Hunan. However, during their journey south they received new information that led them steadily to revise their plans. In the process, southern Hunan became an increasingly unlikely option as a long-term base, and Jinggangshan emerged as an increasingly possible alternative. Once direct contact was made between Red Army leaders and local revolutionaries, an extended process of exploration and negotiation, including the short raid into Hunan, led to the final decision to settle on Jinggangshan.

For the existing local revolutionaries, the sudden appearance of outside Communist forces brought further uncertainty to a leadership already reeling from the setbacks of the spring and summer. The Red Army's arrival forced local leaders rapidly to evaluate both the possible dangers and potential advantages presented by the new arrivals themselves and the effect that their presence might have on tensions between early settlers and guest people, intellectuals, and bandits, and elites and peasants that had been temporarily submerged but still bubbled steadily beneath the surface of the Jinggangshan revolutionary movements.

Although much inferior to the Red Army in military strength and in macropolitical sophistication, the Jinggangshan revolutionaries possessed incomparable familiarity with local terrain and extensive micropolitical experience with local society that made their cooperation indispensable to the outside forces. Thanks in large part to Mao's shrewd handling of crucial meetings with the oft-victimized and wary Yuan Wencai and Wang Zuo, what could have been protracted and inconclusive negotiations over the terms of coexistence between the Red Army and local revolutionaries went relatively smoothly and produced enough points of mutual advantage and common

purpose to permit the cooperation between outside and local forces that ultimately allowed the Jinggangshan base to emerge.

DEFINING AND SECURING THE BASE AREA

If the decision to establish a base in the Jinggangshan region involved extended interaction among both Red Army leaders and local revolutionaries, so too did the subsequent development of the base itself. The construction of a viable base required obtaining effective military and political control of a much larger and socioeconomically more variegated area than simply the Jinggangshan massif, for only in a substantial and diverse territory could a critical mass of human and economic resources be found to supply an expanding Red Army and implement the CCP's desired reforms.

At least initially, securing such a broad swath of territory was primarily a military task and thus centrally involved the Red Army. However, the Red Army's strength and support structure was inadequate to accomplish this task without close cooperation with local forces such as those of Yuan and Wang. Moreover, once territory was seized, politics came into play as the CCP sought to build party organs and mass movements that could mobilize and bind the populations of the new areas to the revolutionary movement. In this consolidation stage, regional party cadres, with their history of local organization and mobilization, were obviously of great importance. As with the initial decision to establish a base in the region, however, the subsequent growth of the base involved tensions and compromises between the indigenous and foreign components of a still-rather-fragile coalition.

In seeking to expand beyond the massif, the Communists were helped by the constant blustering confrontations and intermittent fighting that preoccupied most non-Communist politicians and troops in central China after the breakup of the United Front. At both provincial and local levels in Hunan and Jiangxi, politicians from various parties and factions competed fiercely for preeminence in what was left of the broad political alliance that had launched the Northern Expedition. In addition, shifting military coalitions faced off on a broader regional stage to see who would inherit the territories of recently evicted warlord armies and position themselves best for the likelihood of continuing national military competition.

Under these circumstances, military dispositions and political priorities alike were influenced more by threats from external armies and internal factions than by concern for what seemed to be inconsequential remnants of the thoroughly defeated CCP. Army units in particular were often concentrated to defend strategic cities and transportation routes rather than being dispersed to engage in "bandit-suppression" campaigns in the hinterlands,

and even when they were dispatched to the countryside, they were often recalled abruptly to meet new external threats.[21]

This initial preoccupation of many of its most formidable enemies was vital to the growth of the Jinggangshan base. Nevertheless, at the local level in the fall of 1927 opposition to the Communists varied considerably from one part of the region to another. In Ninggang county immediately to the north, political and military conditions were still somewhat fluid as a newly-arrived magistrate and local elites remained undecided about the extent of the Communist threat and ambivalent about how to deal with it. In Chaling county to the west, the Red Army's recent raid had also revealed weak local resistance and apparent opportunities for expansion. Elsewhere, however, the situation was less favorable: in Yongxin and Suichuan counties in particular, rightist political organizations were strong, elites and local government officials cooperated effectively, and there were numerous elite-led militias available to defend the established political order.

Expansion into Chaling

The weak resistance and relative power vacuum apparent in Chaling probably explain why Red Army leaders made this county their first venue for expansion. As it turned out, the fate of this first effort provided Communist leaders with a sobering example of how much work remained to be done before the Red Army would be disciplined and ideologically committed enough to implement the distinctive blend of military action and political mobilization that base-building required.

The move into Chaling began propitiously enough. On 16 November 1927, a reinforced Red Army battalion led by a Whampoa graduate named Chen Hao left the massif, defeated local militia, and seized the Chaling county seat. Quickly they established mass organizations reminiscent of the Great Revolution period and installed a new magistrate and a county government organ called the People's Committee.

The new government, however, was set up in the old county *yamen*, which kept most of its old staff, and appointees to the new organs were largely beholden to Chen and his fellow Red Army officers. These officers, according to retrospective accounts, contented themselves with ordering the Chamber of Commerce to levy money from its members to support their own extensive wining and dining. Landlords continued to collect rents without interference, and the *yamen* remained so threatening that peasants and even ordinary Red Army soldiers feared to enter.

Cadres unhappy with this situation, most notably the army political commissar and concurrent county party committee secretary Wan Xixian, complained to Jinggangshan leaders, who sternly ordered Chen Hao to reform.

These demands brought immediate, if temporary, results: Communist cadres paraded some local elites through the streets and confiscated their property, formed a guerrilla detachment, and by the end of November formally established the Chaling Worker-Peasant-Soldier Government—the first "soviet" (though this name itself was not used) in the Jinggangshan region and one of the first in China.

In late December, however, strong enemy forces attacked Chaling. A Red Army unit working nearby helped Chen Hao's unit defend the county, and Mao and a small additional force from Jinggangshan also hastened to their aid. When Mao's group reached the county seat, however, they learned that the Communists had been defeated and that Chen Hao had inexplicably led the defenders not east toward Jinggangshan but south, away from the base.

When Mao caught up with Chen's force in southern Chaling, its leaders were violently arguing. Wan Xixian reported that although at several points he and others had opposed the move south, Chen had simply insisted that they follow his orders. Further investigation led to the conclusion that Chen and several others had betrayed the revolution. It was asserted that while at Whampoa Chen had befriended a man who now led one of the armies opposing them and that Chen and his allies had plotted with this commander to lead their troops to destruction at the appropriate moment. Mao called army mass meetings, which decided to arrest the accused men and return to Jinggangshan. Soon after returning to the base area, the arrested officers were executed.[22]

Political Mobilization in Suichuan

Undeterred by the difficulties in Chaling, early in January 1928 the Red Army moved southward into Suichuan, making its first target the pesky militia of Xiao Jiabi, which had inflicted a stinging defeat upon the unwary Communists in October. By now the Red Army was ready and soundly trounced Xiao's force. This frightened the county's weak army garrison, other militias, and much of the county seat's population into flight, and on 6 January the Red Army entered a nearly deserted city.

As had by now become common practice when entering a new area, the Red Army dispersed to engage in mass mobilization work and (equally important) to seize funds and property from the wealthy. One group remained in the county seat, and others went to important market towns; each group formed an Action Committee (*xingdong weiyuanhui*) to coordinate the individual platoons and squads that dispersed into the villages. Initially the detachments found that many rural inhabitants fled or hid from them. Gradually, however, they were persuaded to emerge, and as some popular support was aroused, the army began to fine local elites and confiscate their property.[23]

The action committees reported to higher authorities every few days, and Mao asked them to survey rural conditions as part of their work. Mao himself went to Caolin, where a standoff had developed between cadres and powerful elites who had closed down most commerce in the town. As outlined at greater length in chapter 7, Mao used this opportunity to promote policies that recognized the need for a continued flow of goods and services and also the value of a less severe policy toward market town merchants than toward landlords. By allowing smaller merchants to trade freely and redistributing the wealth that was seized to the local population instead of keeping it, cadres under Mao's supervision gradually persuaded small merchants to reopen and then struck freely at the isolated wealthiest elites.[24]

In late January the army reassembled to celebrate the new year in the Suichuan county seat. On 24 January, in the midst of the new year's season, Mao and county party cadres also formally established the Suichuan Worker-Peasant-Soldiers' Government at a rally, accompanied, as a kind of ritual sacrifice, by the public execution of one of the county's well-known local power holders. Then the army returned to the countryside to extend the county's fledging government down to the district and township level and to establish various mass movement organs.[25]

The Victory at Xincheng

To deal with the local Communists, the Jiangxi government sent a battalion of troops to garrison the Ninggang county seat of Xincheng, making a total (counting local militias) of over 500 troops in the area. In reaction CCP cadres formed as many guerrilla and red guard units as they could and the Red Army's First Regiment returned from Suichuan to Maoping in mid-February 1928 to rejoin the newly-formed Second Regiment (as Yuan Wencai and Wang Zuo's combined bands were now called).

After leaving Wang Zuo's battalion behind to guard the massif and then setting an ambush along the retreat route to Yongxin, on 18 February the bulk of the army and some local guerrillas attacked Xincheng. After fierce fighting, the enemy fled the city, fell into the ambush, and lost over a hundred killed (including the county magistrate). On 21 February, 10,000 or more people from all over the county attended a mass meeting in Longshi. The meeting, presided over by Mao Zedong and local leaders, established the Ninggang County Worker-Peasant-Soldiers' Government. Along with celebrating the founding of another new government, the rally also in effect acknowledged the progress the Red Army had made in four months' time in carving out a circle of Communist-controlled territory around the Jinggangshan massif.[26]

Tactics

In their raids into Chaling, Suichuan, and Ninggang, the Communist forces used basically the same methods and sequence of actions, albeit with some overall evolution of technique and local variation:

1. initial lightning attacks on key enemy military forces and county seats, accompanied by the destruction of official buildings, opening of jails and other similar anti-government acts;
2. appropriation of cash, grain, and other useful property from *yamens* and local elites, some of which was kept by the Red Army and some redistributed to the local populace;
3. selection of a few local elites as exemplary targets for punishment (often execution) at public rallies;
4. dispersion of Red Army units and CCP cadres into towns and villages to proselytize, investigate, and otherwise interact with the local population;
5. re-concentration of forces, accompanied by further rallies announcing the formation of Communist-run local governments.

These tactics served several interrelated functions, but their perceptual and psychological effects were initially most important. The amount of killing, destruction, and confiscation that the raids caused was relatively small, and in physical terms had little effect on the elite/government power structure. Similarly, the immediate concrete benefits to the revolutionaries were also largely temporary: cash and food were soon consumed, and the small, thinly-stretched Red Army found it necessary to withdraw from most of the county seats, market towns, and resource-rich lowlands into which it had raided. Of the three counties raided, only in Ninggang did the Jinggangshan Communists manage to retain most of the territory seized.

Symbolically and psychologically, however, the raids were much more significant in that they mounted an explicit, public, and—for the moment at least—largely unanswered challenge to existing patterns of social and political dominance, and thereby began to alter the perceived balance of local power in ways that gave the revolutionary movement greater credibility and potential support. The simple fact of successful attacks on walled county seats and on powerful local militias such those of Xiao Jiabi, even though they were not long lasting or fatally destructive, drew widespread public attention to the subject of local power, and raised doubts about the permanence of its current distribution.

In rural China, where for both elites and government officials the image and reality of power were subject to frequent comparison and realignment on the basis of recent public demonstration and where coercive force was a particularly salient component of political legitimacy, physical attacks and

public humiliations such as those the Red Army inflicted upon individuals and institutions during its raids could easily spark widespread shifts of popular reputation and support as people hurried to align themselves with a newly-perceived "winner." By nature, this sort of public support was shallow, contingent, and expedient, but it was nonetheless consequential, and while it lasted it could sometimes generate rapid, self-reinforcing "bandwagon" effects, which energized power-full (as it were) political phenomena.[27]

In this case, the raids and the ineffective responses to them by government and local elites both introduced the Red Army to the population as a significant new actor on the regional stage and suggested that the balance of power could conceivably shift in its direction. Though not enough by themselves to arouse broad support for the revolution, the raids sensitized the population to the movement's potential and helped erode the solidity of elite and government control by highlighting a possible alternative.

Certainly in Ninggang, and probably to a lesser extent in Suichuan and Chaling as well, the raids' local impact was heightened by the degree to which they resonated with earlier assaults by mountain-based bandit gangs and mobilized guest people communities on lowland early settler elites and government institutions. The Red Army's seizures of money and property from elite households, their singling out of certain elites to pay fines of specified amounts on pain of severe punishment, and the public humiliation and sometimes death that they meted out to their elite captives, all were similar both in form and to some degree in immediate objectives to the well-established predatory practices of the region's bandit gangs. In addition, both the bandits' lamb-hanging raids and the large-scale attacks by mobilized guest people communities had often originated from the Jinggangshan massif region where the Red Army was now based. Moreover, like the Red Army's raids into surrounding counties, the guest people attacks on the Ninggang county seat of Xincheng had targeted locations where government and early settler power and wealth were deeply intertwined on both symbolic and concrete levels.

These resonances with established repertoires of local behavior doubtless helped local inhabitants situate the Red Army in their existing mental frames of reference, but they also complicated matters for Communist leaders who saw themselves and their movement in far more ambitious terms. To have the Red Army and the larger revolutionary movement so closely associated with guest people bandits made it difficult for people to conceive of the movement either as an agency for fundamental change or as an undertaking concerned with the problems of poor early settlers as well as those of poor guest people. These conceptions of the Red Army and the revolutionary movement as having a special connection with the region's guest people minority were to prove remarkably durable and troublesome for Communist leaders.

DEVELOPING INTEGRATED MILITARY AND POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS

As the Red Army was attacking centers of government and elite power, Communist leaders simultaneously sought to develop more comprehensive, flexible, and integrated military and political organizations in the emerging base. Developing such effective organizational networks was important for a number of interrelated reasons: to indicate that the revolutionary movement was different from other forms of collective action common to rural China, to construct a durable institutional framework that would enable the Communists to hold and administer territory rather than simply marching through it, and to help meld the indigenous regional revolutionaries and the newly arrived outsiders together into a single centrally directed hierarchy that could more efficiently handle the complicated process of base-building.

Reorganizing the Forces of Yuan Wencai and Wang Zuo

Among the highest priorities of both the outside and local Communist leaders was to integrate the forces of Yuan Wencai and Wang Zuo more closely into the revolutionary movement. As already noted, the power and prestige that came from raising and maintaining their own armed forces, coupled with the strong ethnic solidarity that infused their predominantly guest people forces, had enabled Yuan and Wang to preserve considerable *de facto* autonomy even after they joined the revolutionary movement. This autonomy had been enhanced by the reverses suffered by CCP organs and mass movements in 1927 and by the crucial role that the "peasant self-defense armies" of Yuan and Wang had played in rescuing CCP cadres imprisoned in the Yongxin county seat.

The fact that Yuan's and Wang's forces were loosely associated with but not totally submissive to the party must have rankled local cadres from the beginning, but the impossibility of changing the situation as well as the fact that Yuan and Wang did cooperate quite effectively with local cadres such as Long Chaoqing kept the relationship from becoming a major issue. With the Red Army's arrival, however, the situation changed. Having narrowly survived attempted power grabs by disaffected or opportunistic officers during the march to Jinggangshan and the raid on Chaling, and having begun to devote much attention to the slow process of improving the discipline and ideological sophistication of their soldiers, Red Army leaders certainly did not wish to allow the kind of semi-independent association with the revolution that Yuan and Wang had formerly enjoyed. Moreover, the Communist leaders needed to distinguish themselves from warlord armies and "roving bandits" and from a too one-sided association with the local traditions of mountain-based guest people predation on lowland early settler communities.

Although local party leaders may have been aware of the worrisome implications that the "integration" of the forces of Yuan and Wang into the Red Army might eventually have for their own independence of action, in their current weak and dependent state they also had more to gain than to lose from such a reorganization. Adding urgency to this task were contacts Yuan had had with local elites and officials in October. While the Red Army was raiding into Hunan, several meetings had occurred among Ninggang elites (including both early settlers and guest people) and the county magistrate to discuss summoning troops to suppress the Communists. One of several arguments used to oppose this was that the Red Army had already left the area, and that Yuan's forces could again be "soothed" and persuaded to cooperate with local officials and elites to keep local order, as had happened when he became county militia leader in 1925. A group of elites went to Maoping to meet with Yuan and assess the situation. Their report that the Red Army had gone and Yuan was hospitable persuaded the magistrate not to call for troops. This curious incident may have avoided the immediate dispatch of government troops, but it also raised the worrisome possibility that Yuan might indeed make a separate deal with the county's elite/official establishment at some point unless he could be bound more closely to the revolutionary cause.[28]

Efforts to this end were already being set in motion even as Yuan was meeting with the Ninggang elites: among the measures Red Army leaders took while on their initial raid into Hunan was to send several cadres to serve as company-level officers and instructors with Yuan Wencai's forces. Although experienced practitioners of the swaggering raid-and-ransom fighting style typical of hill country bandit gangs, Yuan's followers had had virtually no formal military training and frequently spent the time in between engagements tilling family fields or engaged in other productive activities. To give them at least a modicum of military discipline, the army cadres organized over a hundred of Yuan's men into a company and its subordinate squads and platoons, and put them through daily drills. In early November, Mao Zedong came to a nearby village for a social survey and while there also helped improve Yuan's forces by giving them lectures on politics.[29]

The military advice and political consciousness-raising extended to Yuan as well as his followers, though his relatively high educational level and experience interacting with local officials and elites had already given him some awareness of the outside world and larger political issues. Clearly, Communist leaders hoped that military and political training for both Yuan and his men would produce a force that could ultimately be merged with the rest of the army, and a leader who would be more firmly aligned with the revolutionary movement. In the process, Red Army training officers would also be in a position to keep an eye out for any suspicious activity in Yuan's camp.

Whatever other motives may have been behind it, the training regime did improve the quality of Yuan's troops and helped encourage new recruits to join the force. News of these improvements soon reached Wang Zuo, who recognized the value such training would have for his own force. In early November, he therefore asked Mao for help in improving the military efficiency of his men. Mao advised having a recruiting drive to increase the size of the force and also promised to send cadres to train the unit. Within days, Wang had sent trusted subordinates to nearby villages to locate new recruits and had managed to double the size of his band, to about 150 men. The army cadres Mao provided then divided the amorphous force into standard military units and subjected them to a training regimen similar to that already provided to Yuan's detachment.[30]

While Wang was eager to obtain this sort of training, he remained wary about allowing outsiders to develop too much control over his force. It was with the task of overcoming these reservations and winning Wang's confidence that in January 1928 Mao sent He Changgong to be an advisor to Wang. Although Wang welcomed He pleasantly enough on the surface, he was clearly suspicious of the party cadre's intentions and after private consultations with his advisors, decided to keep him isolated. They moved He to a house well away from the headquarters building in which he had been staying, stationed guards at the new dwelling to "help" him, and warned him not to carry on any private activities or fraternize with the band's soldiers. The band also went to some pains to keep him from observing evidence of their sworn brotherhood activities, since they knew that the CCP formally disapproved of such "feudal" ties.

He accepted these restrictions on his contact with ordinary soldiers, but he persisted in trying to gain the confidence of Wang and his closest relatives and advisors. By doing chores for Wang's mother and tutoring his son, He was able to get on good terms with them and used this to improve his relations with Wang himself. Through discussions on military training and organization with Wang's trusted subordinates He likewise gained their respect and friendship and was even able to enlist several of them into the CCP (tactfully sidestepping in the process at least one invitation to become a sworn brother).

In this manner, He eventually overcame Wang's fears that he was seeking to depose or otherwise undermine Wang's control. A final breakthrough came when He gave Wang valuable advice on how to dispose of his longtime rival Yin Daoyi. Yin and his Nashan militia had recovered from the Red Army's earlier raid on them and remained an implacable opponent threatening the eastern and northeastern flanks of the base. At He's request, Mao (then with the Red Army in Suichuan) sent a small body of troops to join Wang's force at Ciping. Using a plan He devised, the combined force then lured the militia leader and his men into the mountains, where they were ambushed and Yin himself was killed and decapitated.

Overjoyed at this success, Wang and his force brought Yin's head back to Ciping and proclaimed a major holiday. During the following days, groups of Wang's troops carried the severed head in turn to all of the surrounding villages, where elaborate processions and other ceremonies were held to welcome this tangible symbol of victory over a hated lowland early settler opponent. Unfortunately for the villagers, their celebration was somewhat premature: Yin Daoyi's son Haomin immediately swore revenge and took over his father's militia, and further battles would be required before they would finally cease to be a threat to the massif's population.

Such loose ends aside, the victory over Yin removed whatever doubts Wang might still have harbored about the advisability of close relations with the outside Communists. When the Red Army returned to Jinggangshan from Suichuan in February, Wang willingly sent several dozen men to the army for training and also accepted a substantial number of army advisors into his own camp. Shortly thereafter, when He Changgong suggested the advisability of combining Wang's and Yuan's forces to form a single unit which would be a formal part of the Red Army, Wang raised no objections.

As other party members, including a number of local cadres, had simultaneously been working toward the same end in Yuan's force, the details of the amalgamation of the two bands were soon settled. In mid-February 1928 the new unit, formally designated the Second Regiment (later changed to the Thirty-second Regiment) of the First Division of the First Red Army, was formed at Dalong in Ninggang. Yuan became commander, with Wang as second-in-command, and the outside Communist cadres Xu Yan'gang and He Changgong as chief-of-staff and political commissar, respectively. In an important concession to the realities of power within the new unit, however, Yuan and Wang each exercised concurrent command over one of the regiment's two battalions, which were basically redesignated versions of the men's original bands. Twenty-odd cadres from the main Red Army forces became commissars in the regiment's various sub-units to help hold the new force together and continue with further training efforts.[31]

Constructing Political Power in the Base Area

As measures were underway to improve the Yuan-Wang forces' training, organization, and integration into the Red Army, the newly arrived party cadres also encouraged and joined with surviving local revolutionaries in efforts to establish or reestablish party and revolutionary government organizations in the various counties of the region and to link these individual organs into comprehensive, coordinated, and hierarchical regional networks.

Not surprisingly, the task of rebuilding, expanding, and coordinating the activities of the regional party apparatus received highest priority. All local- and county-level party branches in the region had been severely disrupted

by the "White Terror" that accompanied the breakup of the United Front, and many of them had almost completely ceased functioning. A few of the surviving cadres had left the region entirely, many had scattered and gone to ground in their families' homes, and the remainder—including many of the most important leaders from Yongxin, Ninggang, and Lianhua—huddled at Maoping under the uncertain protection of Yuan Wencai. Few if any of the surviving local cadres had begun to revive their shattered party organs or resume political activity by the time the Red Army arrived in October.

The pace of party-building activity picked up rapidly thereafter, however, due largely to the systematic efforts of Mao Zedong and the other newly arrived cadres. These efforts began with the Red Army's peregrinations around the region, which gave strong initial impetus to renewed party activity as well as strengthening the military security of the base. Part of this impetus was engendered simply by the army's presence and combativeness, which demonstrated to demoralized present and potential cadres that the revolutionary movement still had substantial military assets which could protect them.

In addition, as the prior descriptions of the raids on Suichuan and other counties clearly indicate, the Red Army provided a package of political services that promoted both party work and mass mobilization in areas through which it passed. Part traveling political road show, attracting widespread popular attention by its numerous mass rallies, processions, and exemplary acts of public violence, and part mobile political clinic, examining local conditions, diagnosing difficulties, and suggesting courses of remedial action, the Red Army engaged local cadres in a rhetorical and practical dialogue that helped them both regain lost momentum and work out appropriate techniques to expand their local organization and influence.

To facilitate this dialogue and to sustain the initial party-building impetus, Red Army leaders took the initiative in convening numerous conferences of party leaders from around the region. During the Red Army's initial forays around the region, many of the conferences naturally aimed primarily to introduce the new arrivals and their ideas to party members in various places, to help reestablish local party organs, and where necessary (as before the meetings with Yuan Wencai and Wang Zuo) to prepare the way for negotiating relationships with powerful local people. While this familiarization process was still underway, however, the Red Army's leading party organ, the Front Committee, also began to hold combined conferences of cadres from party organs in different localities. In the short run, such conferences facilitated making decisions, disseminating information, and coordinating the actions of the region's party members and local organs. In the long run, they also helped lay the foundation for the gradual construction of a comprehensive region-wide civilian party organization that eventually came to coexist, interact closely, and at its higher levels partially overlap in leadership with the party organization within the Red Army.[32]

The most important of the early joint party meetings was a conference of cadres from Ninggang, Yongxin, and Lianhua convened by Mao in early November at Xiangshan'an, a former Buddhist nunnery not far from Maoping. Most local cadres who attended were refugees who had trekked into the mountains when the forces of Yuan and Wang retreated from the Yongxin county seat during the summer and who had remained relatively inactive in the mountain sanctuary ever since. At this conference, at which the main topic of discussion was the revival of local party activity, Mao (his words doubtless made more convincing by the visible presence of the Red Army) succeeded in rousing the cadres from their lethargy and persuading them to return to their home counties to begin building up political and military organizations in the countryside.[33]

To supplement the local party's scarce personnel, in late 1927 and early 1928, the Front Committee dispatched some of its own cadres to the countryside. Among those who went out were Mao Zedong and his brother Zetan, who had recently made his way to Jinggangshan from the Communist force of Zhu De, which was then passing through southern Jiangxi. In December, Zetan went to Qiaolin township at the foot of the Jinggangshan massif in Ninggang, a volatile guest people area known for its strong opposition to early settler activities.[34] Mao Zedong himself went to work in Yongxin's Qiuxi township in February 1928 as part of a larger program of party work and rural organizing undertaken in the area by a Red Army regiment.[35]

Through the combined efforts of local and Red Army cadres, by the end of February 1928, Ninggang, Yongxin, Chaling, and Suichuan all had reestablished county party committees, and less well-developed party organs had been set up in Ling and Lianhua counties as well. These developments had been paralleled at lower levels by the reemergence of numerous district and township organs.[36]

Red Army cadres also spearheaded efforts to set up hierarchies of local governments parallel to and corresponding with the revived party organs. Whereas new party organs were typically established in private party meetings, the local governments were set up as part of the large and varied public ceremonies held in conjunction with the capture of county seats such as those in Chaling, Suichuan, and Ninggang.[37] All of these ceremonies were elaborate exercises in symbolism and political ritual, and the same was certainly true of the promulgations of newly formed governments that were imbedded within them. The ceremonies generally occurred in county seats—by definition centers of government power—in the wake of acts which were part of the traditional repertoire of challengers to that power, such as the ransacking and burning of official *yamens* and the opening of jails; they took place at, and symbolically marked the takeover of, public sites closely associated with the dominance of the established social and cultural order, such as the open spaces in front of Confucian academies

and large lineage halls; and they attracted large crowds by providing noisy excitement through a mixture of bursting firecrackers, city-wide processions, and the ritualized humiliation and execution of selected local elites and local officials.

Although it soon became clear to everybody that the CCP and the Red Army were the core organizations through which the revolutionary movement exercised power, local government bodies were still important to party leaders. Among other things, they hoped that the new governments would serve as the public interface between the selective and secretive party and the broader population; as forums for the open articulation, discussion, and resolution of many issues; as agencies through which non-party members could be drawn into political participation and/or mobilized for action; and as evidence of the truth of the CCP's claim to be constructing a political system which was a viable alternative to the existing order.

Initially at least, the manner and circumstances of the new governments' foundings were not particularly conducive to the achievement of many of these goals. The new governments, like the party and mass movement organs of the preceding United Front period, tended to be artificial entities established from the top down. Not only did the impetus for their formation come from local and Red Army cadres instead of from the mass constituencies whose interests they were designed to express, but in addition they generally began in a given region with the celebratory formal promulgation of a county-level government and its office holders and only then gradually and unevenly spread into the countryside through the formation of district (*qu*), township (*xiang*), and village (*cun*) governments wherever cadre availability and territorial control allowed.

This style of implementation stemmed in part from the prevailing situation, which provided only a brief window of opportunity for a sizable military force of outside origin and several small, decentralized, and demoralized local party branches somehow to join to construct a usable, defensible base area. With insufficient time, personnel, and experience, the revolutionaries were encouraged to employ military and political strategies that stressed high visibility and rapid impact and initially called for only rough definition of the parameters of military and political action. The territory, policies, and institutions thus quickly established and broadly outlined could later be consolidated, refined, and ramified as conditions improved.

Whatever short-term justifications there may have been, however, the practices of top-down implementation also reflected an enduring and more general authoritarian command style prevalent in the base area leadership (and, for that matter, pervasive throughout the CCP as a whole). As will become more apparent in subsequent chapters, political and military institutions within the revolutionary movement were still fluid and evolving in this period, and there was ongoing negotiation among various leaders and

organs over the distribution and exercise of power. Nonetheless, the practice of authoritarian decision making by one individual or at most a small number of people was already the predominant pattern.

MAO AND HE ZIZHEN

As he did so often in his life, Mao Zedong stood out from the crowd (albeit in this case a small one) of mixed local and outside sojourner cadres who led the Jinggangshan revolutionary movement during the fall and winter of 1927–1928. With his commanding physical presence and forceful personality, his broad political experience and high party rank,[38] and (not least of all) his control over the region's most capable military force, he was a powerful figure whose opinions and actions could not be ignored.

But Mao was well aware that neither he personally nor the non-local forces he led could afford to remain completely distinct from either regional society or the local revolutionary movement that had emerged from it. Recognition of this fact, for example, helped energize his efforts to interact cooperatively not only with leading cadres from the local party apparatus but also with local power holders of more ambiguous political provenance such as Yuan Wencai and Wang Zuo. Both this sense of practical utility and the well-known anthropological fascination he displayed at this stage of his career with the detailed workings of local society likewise encouraged him to undertake two of his earliest "rural surveys" (*nongcun diaocha*) during this period.[39]

In addition, for both Mao and the regional revolutionaries, politics was profoundly personal, not only in the sense that it was closely tied to ego and self-image but also in that it was a lived community experience. Virtually all accounts of the early history of the CCP in general, as well as biographies of Mao in particular, note the intensely personalized and interactive nature of the early revolutionary milieu in which Mao's early career developed. Likewise, as noted in part I, many of the founders of the regional revolutionary movement had been linked together from the start by a variety of school and family connections, and their lives became even more intertwined as they continued to interact in the intense hothouse world of full-time revolutionary politics.

When to these circumstances is added the fact that almost without exception both local revolutionaries and outside sojourner cadres were young people (Mao, then in his early thirties, was older than most), with full complements of young adult drives and vitality, it should come as no surprise that as they were involved in the difficult struggle to build a base, they were also entwined in romantic relationships and trying to build new families.

Mao was among those for whom a sexual dimension added extra spice to the complex stew of other ideological motivations, practical considerations, and interpersonal connections that constituted politics in the revolutionary

movement. For Mao, personal and political relationship-building and base-building came together in his romance with the energetic and attractive "Two-gunned Girl General" from Yongxin, He Zizhen. Mao and He first met when they were introduced by Yuan Wencai at the time of the Red Army's arrival in Maoping in October 1927. In early November they met again, this time when He attended the regional cadres' conference that Mao convened at Xiangshan'an. As the only woman at the meeting (and at that point perhaps the only female party member in the entire region), the young and vivacious He must have stood out in any case, but she attracted still further attention by speaking out actively during and after the conference proceedings. Impressed, Mao arranged with Yongxin county party leaders for He to remain in Maoping for a time after the conference ended to work for the Front Committee.[40]

So far as can be determined, to this point romantic relations had not yet developed between Mao and He. Though such relations might eventually have blossomed on their own anyway, their development was apparently hastened by active intervention on the part of Yuan Wencai. In playing matchmaker, Yuan acted as a friendly intermediary, but he also had ulterior motives. Primary among these, according to the account of one well-informed local historian, was Yuan's desire to calm the jealousy of his own concubine, whose fears that He's charms and propinquity were making her a rival for Yuan's attentions had led to many angry tantrums and public scenes. In December 1927, after one particularly nasty such incident at a meal attended by He, Wang Zuo, and others, Yuan and Wang are said to have come up with the idea of getting He involved with Mao as a way to resolve Yuan's domestic troubles.[41]

A romance between Mao and He would also, they reasoned, have the further advantage of encouraging Mao to have friendly feelings toward Jinggangshan's inhabitants. As noted above, Yuan and Wang had feared that their small bands would be "eaten" by Mao's larger and better-armed unit. In this context, a formal or informal romantic alliance between Mao and He might serve—in ways analogous to the "marriage politics" commonly used to link lineages and prominent families—to bind Mao (and by extension the outside Red Army troops) more closely to a prominent local revolutionary (and by extension to the associated forces of Yuan and Wang).[42]

With these considerations in mind, Yuan and Wang each brought the idea up in separate conversations with Mao after the latter returned to the massif area following the January 1928 campaign in Suichuan. Though Mao is said initially to have dismissed the idea, these conversations clearly helped focus his attention on He. Shortly thereafter, Mao went to the area around Jiulongshan in western Yongxin to check on progress in local infrastructure-building work, and there met He, who had come to the area to work not long before after recuperating from an attack of malaria. Again Mao was impressed with her and asked her to return with him to do secretarial work in the Front Committee office in Maoping. During their time in the Maoping area, especially during a week or two spent working together at nearby Xiangshan'an as Mao wrote surveys of rural conditions in the Ninggang-Yongxin areas, romance blossomed between them.[43]

The budding romance had to be postponed for a time in March and April when (as will be discussed in the following chapter) Mao left Jinggangshan to help salvage an abortive uprising in southern Hunan, while He went to work for the Yongxin county committee. When Mao returned and sought to have He reassigned to her prior job with the Front Committee, however, Yongxin committee secretary Liu Zhen resisted. The Yongxin party, like all base area organs, was short of literate cadres capable of administrative work, and had even fewer female cadres who could help with "women's work." Liu Zhen, who had rankled at the cavalier way Mao had earlier commandeered He's services, now ignored two written requests from Mao in an effort to keep his valuable subordinate. Only when Mao had a third blistering rebuke hand-delivered to Liu by an assistant with orders to personally escort He back to Maoping was the situation finally resolved.

Two or three weeks after their reunion, in late May or early June, Mao and He were married in a small ceremony at Xiangshan' an. In attendance were Yuan Wencai and Wang Zuo (both of whom are said to have given the final nudges that persuaded the couple to marry), along with a dozen or so other local cadres, their family members, and nearby residents. Two days later, the couple left for Tangbian village in Yongxin, where they would join with elements of the Red Army in carrying out land redistribution work.[44]

In addition to its personal and emotional aspects, Mao's relationship with He Zizhen also had strategic and symbolic dimensions. If, as Yuan and Wang are said to have concluded, a Mao–He connection would aid them personally by taming Mao's potential aggressiveness toward them, it also provided local people more generally with welcome evidence of the outsiders' commitment to the area. This alliance between, on the one hand, the leader of a massif-based outside military force with ties to guest people "bandits" and on the other, a prominent founding member of a large, active, and early-settler-dominated party apparatus, could also stand as a symbol of the deepening regional involvement of the Red Army and its cadres, a comforting sign that the force was settling in, adapting to local circumstances, and beginning to link the movement's disparate elements—massif and lowland, army and party, outsider and local, guest people and early settler—into a single integrated entity.

CONCLUSION

By the end of the winter of 1928, the efforts of indigenous revolutionaries and sojourning Red Army forces had laid the territorial and military foundations for a base centered on the Jinggangshan massif and had taken the first

tentative steps to erect an institutional infrastructure upon those foundations. From its center in the Maoping-Ciping area of the massif, territory firmly under Communist control stretched out to include all of Ninggang, northern Suichuan, eastern Chaling, parts of western and southeastern Yongxin, and adjacent portions of Lianhua, Lingxian, and Guidong counties. Throughout this largely mountainous core area there remained no enemy army garrisons, functioning government offices or sizable elite-led militias; in their place was an increasingly well-armed and disciplined Red Army, an expanding network of party branches and local soviet government organs, and a growing number of red guard and guerrilla detachments.

Beyond this core, the rest of the territory of the several counties in the region was also contested by the revolutionaries. As the Red Army's numerous raids during the fall and winter of 1927–1928 had illustrated, lowland county seats, market towns, and wealthy elites living in these areas were all within easy striking distance of the main Communist forces based on the massif, and they were also coming under growing pressure from local peasant associations, red guards, and guerrilla units as the edges of the base area gradually inched outward. Faced with these threats, many of the wealthiest elites abandoned the region for the safety of Ji'an or Nanchang, and authorities had increased difficulty in finding officials willing to take up posts in the region.

For none of the various parties involved—Mao and his fellow outsiders, local party cadres, and the forces of Yuan and Wang—had the decision to cooperate in building a base in the region been sudden, simple, or inevitable. In this transitional period, the whole issue of whether rural base-building was the proper strategy for continuing the revolutionary struggle was still debated in national and international party circles, and it was in any case clear that mutual cooperation involved potential dangers as well as possible benefits for each constituent group active in the Jinggangshan region. The process of developing a base-building coalition thus involved a complex and extended process of mutual interaction and the weighing of alternatives.

Outside cadres, local party leaders, and the Yuan-Wang forces all necessarily contributed to the formation of the revolutionary coalition and the initial construction of the base. Certainly, in the absence of the local knowledge and prior organizational spadework of the indigenous party leaders, or of the well-situated bases and regional reputations of Yuan and Wang, the Red Army and its leaders would have found it difficult if not impossible to establish a viable base on their own. In return, outside CCP leaders provided a critical mass of well-armed soldiers, an initial freedom from local constraints and entanglements, and a degree of political sophistication and energy considerably greater than that possessed by Jinggangshan natives.

Having acknowledged that all members of the revolutionary coalition made significant contributions, one must nonetheless also recognize that the

outside cadres, with Mao Zedong chief among them, played particularly vital roles in the initial base-building process. Admittedly, it is easy to be seduced in this regard by the hagiographic nature of the vast bulk of the available reminiscences and narrative accounts of Jinggangshan, in which every correct opinion, innovative policy, and significant victory is simplistically attributed to the superior wisdom and foresight of Mao and, by extension, the people and institutions most closely associated with him.

Even after allowing for such adulatory over-enthusiasm, however, it seems indisputable both that the outside cadres' collective drive, determination, and critical perspective was crucial in revitalizing the moribund regional revolutionary movement, and that Mao's own personal energy, imagination, and political skills made him the dominant individual within the outsiders' ranks. Mao played a key role in the delicate negotiations with Yuan Wencai and Wang Zuo, the extended effort to improve the Red Army's discipline and political utility, and the promotion of integrated and centralized regional political networks; without his active involvement, it is doubtful that these activities would have been anywhere near as successful as they were.

Mao's personal contribution to the development of the base was particularly apparent during this initial period because there were few if any other leaders—either outsiders or local revolutionaries—who had anything like his combination of powerful personality and extensive national-level political experience, and because the base-building process was being carried out in almost complete isolation from higher-level party leaders. As will become evident, when these conditions changed, so also did the political and personal dynamics of the regional leadership and the nature of Mao's participation in the base-building effort.

Growing enemy resistance also slowly began to affect the dynamics of base area expansion. Despite their continued preoccupation with military and political conflicts elsewhere, the armies garrisoning Jiangxi and Hunan were still occasionally able to detach units for brief forays into the Jinggangshan region. These interventions were too intermittent and ponderous to destroy the Red Army, but at this point they still kept the Communists from extended occupation of the region's county seats and their populous and prosperous environs, with the exception of the area around Xincheng in Ninggang.

Moreover, Communist attacks had succeeded in bloodying but not in destroying existing large and well-organized elite militias such as those of Xiao Jiabi and Yin Daoyi, while in areas threatened by revolutionary upsurges, other elites were rapidly creating and deploying new militias for protection and revenge. By this time even the strongest militias were really no longer a match for the entire combined Red Army, but the army often dispersed into separate units to proselytize among the peasants or to project its limited power across a broader area, and for these individual units the threat posed

by the major militias was very real. At a lower level of militarization, the proliferating local militias likewise seriously challenged the expansion of the newly established Communist-dominated governments, mass movement organs, and guerrilla forces.

The establishment of a base in the Jinggangshan region had occurred during a period of relative isolation, in which for a time neither strong military challenges nor compelling political constraints impinged from the outside on the actions of Red Army cadres and their local allies. Led by Mao, regional revolutionaries had taken full advantage of this window of opportunity to work out a mutual *modus vivendi* and lay the foundations for a growing base. Eventually, however, the growth of the base engendered growing resistance from threatened local elites. At the same time, changes on the national scene and perturbations caused by expansion of the base itself led both friendly and unfriendly outsiders alike to pay closer attention to what was happening in the region. As its relative isolation drew to an end, the Jinggangshan revolutionary base area entered into a new and considerably more tumultuous period in its history.

NOTES

1. The most extensive recent English-language account of the 7 August Emergency Conference is found in Marcia R. Ristaino, *China's Art of Revolution: The Mobilization of Discontent, 1927 and 1928* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1987), chap. 3; see also "Introduction," in *Mao's Road to Power: Revolutionary Writings, 1912–1949*, ed. Stuart Schram (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1995), vol. 3.

2. Ristaino, *China's Art of Revolution*, chap. 4; Roy Hofheinz, Jr., "The Autumn Harvest Insurrection," *The China Quarterly*, no. 22 (October–December 1967): 37–87.

3. After initially formulating my own opinion—in contrast to the impression conveyed by many party histories—that the decision to establish Jinggangshan as a base was a gradual and tentative one, I found one recent party history source that expresses a similar view, supported with relevant evidence. See Yu Boliu and Xia Daohan, *Jinggangshan geming genjudi yanjiu* [Research on the Jinggangshan revolutionary base area] (Nanchang: Jiangxi renmin chubanshe, 1987) (hereafter cited as *JGGY*), 33–39.

4. *JGDS*, 24–29; *JF*, 16–26; *JGGY*, 289–90.

5. Mao's Hunanese informant was Wang Xingya, a native of Liuyang county who had led a peasant self-defense army in Jiangxi's Anfu county and participated in the July 1927 attack on the Yongxin county seat which freed many captured Jinggangshan CCP members. Wang was killed during the Autumn Harvest Uprising. *JF*, 31; Wang Xingjuan, *He Zizhen de lu* [He Zizhen's road] (Beijing: Zuojia chubanshe, 1985), 58–59; He Minxue, "Yongxin baodong" [The Yongxin uprising], in *Xinghuo liaoyuan congshu zhiyi (Jinggangshan douzheng zhuanji)* [A single spark starts a prairie fire collecteana, vol. 1 (A special collection on the Jinggangshan struggle)] (Beijing: Jiefangjun chubanshe, 1986), 55.

6. *JF*, 33; Yu Jinan and Mao Chonglin, "Geming huozhong ran Jinggang—ji Chen Muping lieshi" [The sparks of the revolution burn on Jinggang—remembering the martyr Chen Muping], *Wuhan daxue xuebao*, no. 6 (1977): 67.

7. In reminiscences by participants in the Gucheng Conference, estimates of the number of people attending the conference vary from around forty to over sixty.

8. Arguments on the subject are summed up and evaluated in *JGGY*, 33–41, 73–80, where the process of deciding on Jinggangshan as a base is divided into three stages: a "fermenting" stage during the discussions held at Sanwan, an initial decision made during the Gucheng Conference, and a subsequent "settling in" stage when the Red Army moved to Yuan's base at Maoping at the foot of the Jinggangshan massif. I have drawn upon this formulation and evidence in the present account, but have conceptualized and analyzed the process somewhat differently.

In addition to the topics mentioned in the text, the subjects discussed at the Gucheng Conference included summing up the lessons to be learned from the failure of the Autumn Harvest Uprising, plans to send some of the army's cadres to work secretly in nearby enemy army units and rural localities, and the need to rebuild ties with higher-level party organs, with which Mao's force had by this point been out of touch for a month or more. See *JF*, 27–30; *JGDS*, 31–32; He Changgong, "Qiushou qiyi he yinbing Jinggangshan" [The Autumn Harvest Uprising and leading the soldiers to Jinggangshan], in *JGG*, vol. 2, 214–15.

9. *JF*, 32; *JGGY*, 32.

10. On the presence of Yuan's representative at the conference and on the negotiations with him, see *JGGY*, 35–36.

11. *JF*, 32.

12. *JF*, 33–36; Yu Jinan and Mao Chonglin, "Geming huozhong ran Jinggang," 68; Su Lanchun, "Huigu Ninggang de geming douzheng" [Thinking back on the revolutionary struggle in Ninggang], in *JGG*, vol. 2, 90–91. Some sources state that the cash Yuan gave to Mao was money seized from local elites, but Su (who was an eyewitness to the Yuan-Mao meeting) says that some of the money belonged to Yuan and the rest was loaned to Yuan by two local families.

13. Su Lanchun, "Huigu Ninggang," 91.

14. He Zizhen relates several stories of how Mao's desire for newspapers led to extreme efforts, including a special raid on the well-defended hometown of the Hunan warlord Tan Yankai simply for the purpose of obtaining papers and elaborate efforts to smuggle papers through the government blockade of the region. Wang Xingjuan, *He Zizhen de lu*, 98, 108–10.

15. *JF*, 39–42; *JGGY*, 286–87.

16. *JF*, 42–44; *JGDS*, 33–34. Zhu Chiliu had originally been a subordinate officer in Zhu Kongyang's bandit gang before coming to serve as Wang Zuo's private secretary after the former's gang broke up. Later he served as one of Wang's scouts, and then was placed in charge of the detachment of seven to eight scouts which Wang eventually established. *WZ*, 192–93.

17. *WZ*, 188–93.

18. *JF*, 43–44; *WZ*, 193–94.

19. *WZ*, 194–98.

20. *WZ*, 198–222; *JF*, 45–48.

21. Accounts of troop movements in Hunan and Jiangxi are commonplace in newspapers such as *Shibao*. Many contemporary CCP documents also contain summaries of warlord army conflicts and troop movements. One good source of these is Jiangxi sheng dang'an guan and Zhonggong Jiangxi shengwei dangxiao dangshi jiaoyan shi, eds., *Zhongyang geming genjudi shiliao xuanbian* [A selection of historical materials on the Central Revolutionary Base Area] (Nanchang: Jiangxi renmin chubanshe, 3 vols., 1982), vol. 1.

22. *JF*, 76–86; *JGDS*, 35–37.

23. *JF*, 87–90, *JGDS*, 57–60.

24. *JF*, 90–94; *JGDS*, 60–62. The situation in Caolin during this period is discussed in greater detail in chapter 7.

25. *JF*, 94–99; *JGDS*, 60–64.

26. *JF*, 100–109; *JGDS*, 71–77.

27. The term "bandwagon effect" was suggested by the brief discussion of the subject in Roy Hofheinz, Jr., "The Ecology of Chinese Communist Success: Rural Influence Patterns, 1923–1945," in *Chinese Communist Politics in Action*, ed. A. Doak Barnett (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1969), 28.

28. Su Lanchun, "Yuan Wencai yu 'Heping weiyuanhui'" [Yuan Wencai and the "Peace Committee"], *Jiangxi wenshi ziliao*, no. 20 (1986): 31–36; Su Lanchun, "Huigu Ninggang," 92–93.

29. *JF*, 60–63; *JGDS*, 47–50; *WZ*, 223.

30. *WZ*, 223–28.

31. *WZ*, 238–70; He Changgong, "Gaizao Wang Zuo budui" [Reforming Wang Zuo's detachment], in *Xinghuo liaoyuan* [A single spark starts a prairie fire], ed. "Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun sanshi nian" zhengwen bianji weiyuanhui (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 10 vols., 1958–1960), vol. 1, 266–77; *JF*, 64–74; *JGDS*, 50–56.

32. I am unaware of any comprehensive list of the numerous informal and formal conferences which the Red Army party leaders convened with local leaders during this period, and there is little to be gained by trying to compile one by close examination of the large body of primary and secondary materials. To provide some inkling of the scope of this activity, however, it is worth noting that sources indicate that the Front Committee directly assisted in the formation of county- or district-level party organs in all of the counties in the base area (Lingxian, Lianhua, Yongxin, Suichuan, Ninggang, Chaling, and Guidong) between October 1927 and April 1928. In addition to these contacts with cadres from single localities, the Front Committee also convened significant meetings of cadres from more than one county in the Maoping area in October and November and in Suichuan in January. *JGGY*, 282–83, 298–301; *JGDS*, 65–69; *JF*, 50–53.

33. *JGGY*, 298–99.

34. It was from the Qiaolin area, for example, that Huang Sanxiang had recruited followers and launched his celebrated attack on Xincheng at the end of the Qing period. During the United Front period the area had also been a center of party and mass movement activity, which Mao Zetan now revived. He reopened and taught in a night school, led attacks on wealthy elites, recruited new members into the CCP, and supervised the reestablishment of a township party branch. *JF*, 52–55.

35. The tactics used in Qiuxi were typical of those used by the Red Army throughout the base area. After defeating an enemy militia and killing its leader, they confiscated the iron-pot factory of a well-known local elite, executed him at a mass rally, and distributed his stockpiled pots to the populace. Next Mao and the soldiers dispersed in small groups to organize and proselytize, with Mao going to Houshan and other nearby villages in Yongxin. During several weeks' work in the township, the Red Army attacked several other elites and confiscated their goods; formed new party branches, a township soviet government, and a small guerrilla force; and set up several secret liaison and communications points in local villages. *JF*, 55–57.

36. *JF*, 59; *JGGY*, 300–301.

37. The formation of soviets had earlier been an issue of contention between Mao and higher party leaders, a fact which has attracted considerable attention among Western scholars exploring the development of the political programs of Mao Zedong and his relationship to higher-level party and Comintern officials. Both during the 7 August Emergency Conference and later during the preparations for the Autumn Harvest Uprising, the question had arisen as to whether it was appropriate under current Chinese circumstances to form "soviets" (*suweiai*), governmental organs such as had been established during the Russian Revolution. Mao thought that it was proper to form soviets in central China and urged that this be done immediately. However, echoing Stalin's thinking on the subject, Comintern representatives and most CCP leaders took the line that although it was appropriate to begin to acquaint the masses with the concept of soviets, conditions were not yet ripe for their actual formation.

In mid-September, the CCP's central leadership changed its policy and began to advocate forming soviets after all. As by this time Mao and his force were beginning their trek south toward Jinggangshan and had lost touch with higher-level party organs, they must have been unaware of this vindication. This and several related issues are frequently cited as evidence of Mao's independence of thought, and as part of the early stages of his growing opposition to high party authorities. See Benjamin Schwartz, *Chinese Communism and the Rise of Mao* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1951), 100–103; John E. Rue, *Mao Tse-tung in Opposition, 1927–1935* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1966), 76–81; Ristaino, *China's Art of Revolution*, 49–50, 59–60, 71.

Although none of the above sources does so, it is possible to take the issue of Mao's attitude toward high-level guidance on this point even further. Because the Jinggangshan forces appear to have remained almost completely out of touch with outside forces until at least December 1927, when Mao and the Red Army officers encouraged the formation of a worker-peasant-soldier government in Chaling in November, they were probably following Mao's own judgment and contravening what they still believed to be Comintern and CCP policy.

38. Although Mao had been stripped of his position as alternate member of the CCP's Politburo in November 1927, this news did not reach the Jinggangshan base until March 1928.

39. The two accounts that Mao wrote of conditions in Ninggang and Yongxin were the first of many such "rural surveys" that Mao eventually prepared, the most well-known of which are those of Xunwu and Xingguo counties in Jiangxi, written in 1930. Texts of all of the surviving surveys are available in *Mao's Road to Power*, ed.

Schram, vol. 3. Unfortunately, the texts of Mao's Ninggang and Yongxin surveys were left behind and lost when the Fourth Army abandoned Jinggangshan in January 1929.

40. These and other details of the courtship of Mao and He are drawn primarily from an article by the local historian Liu Xiaonong, which utilizes reminiscences by people who were intimately acquainted with He during this period, including her older brother, a former classmate, Yuan Wencai's wife, and a number of other local cadres and red guards. See his "Mao Zedong dierci hunyin neiqing" [Inside information on Mao Zedong's second marriage], *Jizhe xie tianxia*, no. 21 (May 1992): 4–11.

Liu Xiaonong's historical novel about Jinggangshan provides the additional information that He approached Mao later on the day of the conference to complain that the fact that the nunnery where the conference was held was also being used as a Red Army office was causing great inconvenience to the small group of nuns who still lived there. Mao is said to have agreed to see that the situation was remedied. Liu Xiaonong, *Jinggang yanyi* [The romance of Jinggang] (Beijing: Nongcun dushu chubanshe, 1989), 476–77. (In response to my inquiry, Liu has stated that this and other material on He Zizhen in the novel is based on the same sources used in his article cited above.)

41. Liu Xiaonong, "Mao Zedong dierci hunyin," 5. The concubine, Chen Baiying, was a woman in her mid-twenties who had spent several years outside of the county as the concubine of a county magistrate. After the magistrate died, she returned to Ninggang and met Yuan Wencai, who was infatuated by the relative sophistication and cultural polish she had acquired in her time "abroad." A reminiscence by an early CCP member from Ninggang states that Chen Baiying also had romantic relationships with two other Ninggang party leaders (Long Chaoqing and Xie Xi'an), and that jealousies stemming from this romantic competition contributed to the eventual demise of Yuan Wencai. Reminiscences of Su Lanchun (date unclear), in *Yuan Wencai shimo cailiao* [Materials on the whole story of Yuan Wencai], a volume of typed materials, dated October 1981, held in the Jinggangshan Huishi Museum, Ninggang.

42. Liu Xiaonong, "Mao Zedong dierci hunyin," 6–7.

43. Liu Xiaonong, "Mao Zedong dierci hunyin," 8–9; Liu Xiaonong, *Jinggang yanyi*, 477–78, 480–82; Wang Xingjuan, *He Zizhen de lu*, 65–67.

44. Liu Xiaonong, "Mao Zedong direci hunyin," 9–11; Liu Xiaonong, *Jinggang yanyi*, 478–87. At the time of his marriage to He Zizhen, Mao was still married as well to Yang Kaihui in Changsha, a fact of which He Zizhen was apparently fully aware. What, if any, formal arrangements the couple may have made in light of Mao's preexisting marriage (regarding, for example, He's rights and obligations within the family) are not known. Nor is it known whether Yang Kaihui was informed of Mao's remarriage before her death.

6

"All That Is Needed Is to Go in Circles": Contending for the Base

The helpful isolation of the Jinggangshan base could not last forever. By spring 1928, their own increasingly visible activities, the evolving military situation in central China, and the gradual restoration and reextension of party equilibrium and control led to increasing attention being paid to the Jinggangshan communists. The first manifestation of this was the arrival in March of a Hunanese party representative, who promptly reshuffled the base's party leadership and dispatched the Red Army on a costly expedition to aid an uprising in southern Hunan. The collapse of this uprising brought many of its survivors to the Jinggangshan base in late April, including most notably the experienced band of soldiers led by Zhu De. Though these reinforcements represented a welcome infusion of strength, they also brought new logistical and personnel complications. In addition, the base area's growing military strength and its aggressive expansiveness attracted the unwelcome attention of increasingly worried opponents. As a result, during the spring of 1928, the base area, its inhabitants, and especially its defenders became the objects of a series of assaults launched by hostile government armies and elite-led militias.

Not surprisingly, given their pace and scale, these outside intrusions by friends and enemies alike created serious challenges for the region's revolutionary movement. In addition to the inherent problems of relative distribution of personal prestige and power among numerous strong-minded individuals, the matter of relations between base area leaders and higher party authorities also involved contentious issues of long-term political and military strategy. As subsequent chapters will make clear, over time these issues would come to assume a prominent place in the discourse between Mao and party leaders at various levels.

In the spring of 1928, however, the most urgent issue was how to ensure the immediate survival of the base area and the Red Army in the face of increasingly determined enemy efforts to destroy them. This was first and foremost a military problem, and it is therefore on military issues that the present chapter concentrates. Beginning with brief narrative accounts of the Southern Hunan Uprising and the enemy's spring campaigns, the chapter then discusses the growing militarization of the base and concludes with an analysis of various facets of the Red Army's capabilities and performance vis-à-vis its warlord opponents.

THE SOUTHERN HUNAN UPRISING AND ITS AFTERMATH

While the Jinggangshan base was being established during the fall and early winter of 1927–1928, higher-level party authorities certainly knew at least the rough location of Mao's force and probably of its intention to construct a base in this part of the Jiangxi-Hunan border region. Some sources note that a letter from the secretary of the Jiangxi provincial committee had reached the Red Army in Lianhua on the last stages of its march south to Jinggangshan, though the vagueness of the references to the region's "peasant masses and peasant armies" in the Jiangxi committee's subsequent reports suggest that it may not have realized for some time that Mao's force had remained in the area. Other relevant party organizations, on the other hand, clearly possessed specific information as a result of information received by the Hunan provincial committee (and re-transmitted to national leaders) from cadres dispatched by the Red Army during its initial foray into southern Hunan in October.[1]

Although higher leaders thus knew the Red Army was in the Jinggangshan area, they appear to have provided Mao's force with little if any specific guidance during its first few months in the region.[2] This neglect was largely the result of preoccupation with the high-level housecleaning and finger-pointing then going on among Chinese and international Communist leaders, coupled with the disruption afflicting virtually all urban party organs during this period of intense "White Terror" in urban China. Provincial-level organizations in both Nanchang and Changsha were broken up with heavy losses, and similar problems also affected party organs in smaller cities such as Ji'an, Ganzhou and Hengyang, through which communications with isolated hinterland regions such as Jinggangshan were normally routed.

This disruption had allowed the Jinggangshan Communists to concentrate on the localized problems of developing the base area in blissful ignorance of the profusion of pronouncements, which higher leaders had begun to launch like showers of poorly-aimed Parthian shots as they hastily retreated from the debacle of the United Front's collapse. In the winter of 1928, however, this isolation from higher authority ended as other nearby party organs relayed news of changing party policies into the region.[3]

The Arrival of Zhou Lu

The most notable and consequential contact came in early March with the arrival of Zhou Lu, a representative of the South Hunan Special Committee (Xiangnan tebie weiyuanhui) who employed his own forceful opinions and equally blunt messages he had brought from provincial and central party leaders to throw the emerging base area's leadership and policies into serious turmoil.[4]

After briefly examining local conditions, Zhou declared that the work of the Jinggangshan-area party had been "rightist," mainly because the cadres there had taken such a lenient attitude in dealing with local elites that there had been "too little killing and burning." In making these accusations, Zhou was expressing the current policies of both the South Hunan Special Committee and the provincial committee, which in turn were derived from resolutions and statements made at a plenary session of the CCP Politburo held in November 1927.

The November Plenum had been held at a time when national party leaders were still very optimistic about the prospects for rapid revolutionary success. Stimulated not only by the views of Stalin and other foreign Communists but also by numerous reports of rural unrest during the fall of 1927, party leaders had called for more aggressive efforts to rouse a new wave of popular uprisings and had condemned past failures, including those of Mao Zedong, whom they removed from Politburo membership and stripped of his other party offices.[5]

Zhou Lu transmitted belated news of this resolution to Jinggangshan cadres, though whether through error or maliciousness he exaggerated its terms by stating that Mao had been completely expelled from the CCP rather than simply from the Politburo. In a subsequent general reorganization, Zhou abolished the Red Army's Front Committee (which Mao had headed) and the army's soldiers' committees and transferred Mao to the post of military commander of what was now called the First Division of the First Army. Despite the general confusion and resistance that these actions provoked, Zhou also successfully insisted that the Red Army must move immediately into southern Hunan to support a peasant uprising that was then occurring there with the help of the Communist-led troops of Zhu De.

The Hunan Uprising and the "March Defeat"

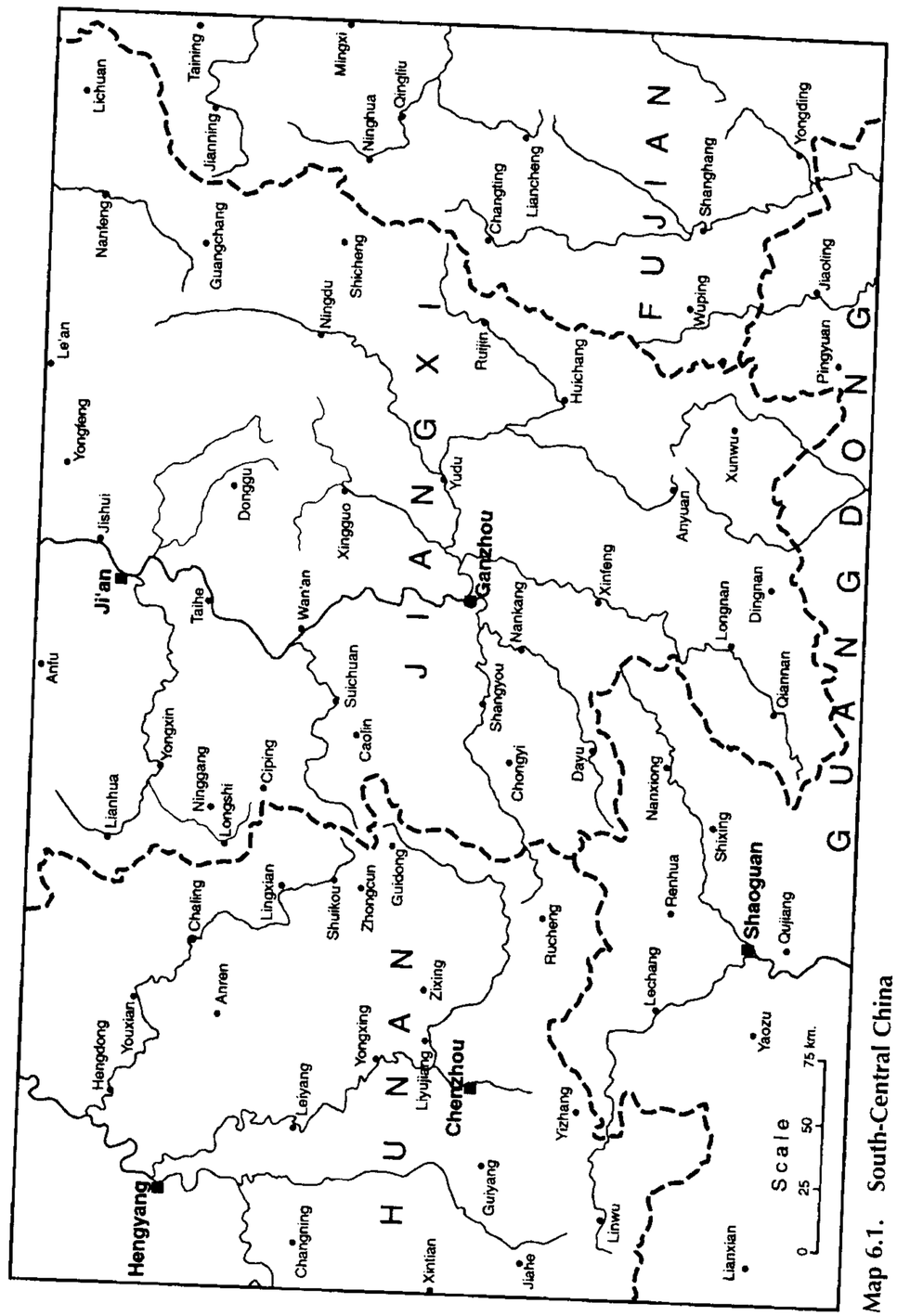
Zhu's force had originally been part of the larger body of revolutionary troops who had marched south after the failure of the Nanchang Uprising

in August 1927. After the main body had been defeated and dispersed near Shantou (Swatow), Zhu had led part of the force inland first to the Fujian-Guangdong border and then westward across southern Jiangxi into northern Guangdong, where they contacted and temporarily joined a Nationalist army whose sympathetic commander Zhu had previously known. In early January 1928, a combination of threatening moves by hostile Nationalist forces and pressure from high CCP leaders to abandon their "roving bandit" behavior led Zhu's force to move north into southern Hunan, where local Communist cadres (themselves also under pressure to promote the "revolutionary high tide") had for some time been preparing to launch peasant uprisings.[6]

As party leaders had hoped, the presence in southern Hunan of Zhu's relatively well armed and determined force encouraged local cadres and peasants to increase the pace and scope of their uprisings. Because most warlord troops were away from the region due to conflicts elsewhere, Zhu's force and swarms of newly mobilized peasant "armies" managed to capture several major administrative centers in southern Hunan and to begin to form local soviet governments. Heartened by these successes, the CCP's Hunan provincial committee sent representatives to the region to encourage and exploit what they felt must be the start of the long-awaited nationwide revolutionary upsurge and also dispatched Zhou Lu to draw Mao's force out of its self-imposed isolation and lead it into the developing struggle.[7]

Despite Zhou's hectoring, however, Mao and his troops made haste as slowly as possible in moving toward southern Hunan. Having been dispersed in bivouacs in different parts of the base when Zhou Lu arrived, various components of the Jinggangshan Red Army moved slowly westward by separate routes until they finally rendezvoused around 18 March at the town of Zhongcun in southern Lingxian county, on the edge of the territory within which they had largely confined their operations since October. Instead of pressing on promptly, they remained in Lingxian for a week or more, proselytizing among the local population and further training the Red Army troops.[8]

As they lingered on the fringes of the base area, the Jinggangshan forces received word in late March that the southern Hunan uprising had suddenly and disastrously collapsed. The support or neutrality that many of the region's urban inhabitants had initially displayed toward the uprising had rapidly eroded in the face of the harshly confiscatory and extremely violent policies that provincial party leaders had implemented in the captured cities. At the same time, the evident threat posed by the insurrection had led warlords in both Guangdong and Hunan temporarily to abandon their squabbles and redirect their forces against the uprising. The growing popular backlash against excesses of the "Red Terror" and mounting military pressure from strong enemy armies eventually forced even the most



Map 6.1. South-Central China

hard-line Hunanese cadres to accept the need for at least a temporary abandonment of the captured cities.[9]

As many peasants and local cadres melted into the countryside, therefore, Zhu De's seasoned forces, accompanied by a few of the larger and more cohesive of the armed peasant units formed during the uprising, the cadres of the CCP's South Hunan Special Committee and their headquarters entourage, and a large number of family members and other non-combatants, left the cities of the Xiang River valley and marched eastward in two long, straggling columns toward the rugged mountains on the Jiangxi-Hunan border and toward the hoped-for security of the Jinggangshan base which nestled among them.

Not far behind the retreating Communists, several warlord army columns probed cautiously along their trail, while ahead of them deeper in the mountains the Jinggangshan Red Army forces—which had now split up once again into two large combat units and a small reconnaissance and liaison detachment—sought to move into position to block the enemy and escort the refugees back to the base. Lacking modern communications or accurate intelligence, all of the participants in this multi-sided minuet spent several weeks marching and counter-marching half-blindly in search of one another along the primitive roads and through the small river valley market towns that dotted this rugged border country.

Although the columns of uprising survivors were slowed to a near crawl by increasing numbers of non-combatant refugees and by the faltering resolve of southern Hunan peasants who saw the distance between themselves and their homes steadily increasing, they eventually managed to stumble into contact with Red Army units from Jinggangshan before warlord troops could catch and destroy them.[10] While the Red Army moved into defensive positions and fought a series of sharp engagements to ward off the pursuers, the retreating forces moved on toward the base. By late April the enemy had abandoned the chase, and the last of the Red Army covering force had likewise wearily retraced their steps to join their comrades in Longshi, at the foot of the Jinggangshan massif.

Although in the end troops from the base had played an important role in shielding the withdrawal of the refugees, aspects of the behavior of Mao's force during the Hunan expedition suggest that Mao had not moved as aggressively as he might have to involve himself and his men in what he clearly felt was an ill-considered action undertaken by his own recent critics within the Hunan party leadership. In addition to the fact that the Jinggangshan troops lingered for a week in Zhongcun rather than immediately advancing to help hold the cities seized by the uprising, even after news had arrived of the perilous situation facing the retreating Hunanese Communists, only a few of the Jinggangshan forces (mainly the reorganized regiment led by Yuan Wencai and Wang Zuo) were ordered to advance to the

southwest, directly along the refugees' logical axis of withdrawal. Mao and the most well-trained and trustworthy of the Red Army units meanwhile continued to operate in the border country for another week, mostly proselytizing and training in the town of Shatian. They thereby remained parallel to and some distance from the Xiang River valley where the uprising had been centered.[11]

The fact that Mao's force spent a week in this kind of routine activity after they had already been informed of the danger facing the remnants of the failed uprising suggests at the very least a marked lack of enthusiasm for the entire endeavor on Mao's part and quite possibly a deliberately spiteful desire to encourage through his own inaction the complete defeat of his enemies and their policies. Lest this seem too far-fetched, it should be remembered that Mao was then operating under the (false) assumption that he had been stripped not only of his alternate politburo post but also of his very membership in the CCP.

Whatever Mao's motivation might have been, the practical impact of his actions was quite limited at the time. Mao's proclivity, expressed in the Autumn Harvest Uprising as well as after arrival in the Jinggangshan region, to act according to his own estimate of the situation rather than simply to accept the dictates of higher authority, doubtless irritated members of the South Hunan Special Committee and other higher-level Hunanese cadres, but many of those who were most directly involved in dealing with him (including Zhou Lu) perished in the collapse of the South Hunan Uprising.

Nor is it likely that Mao's grudging involvement in the uprising materially affected its outcome. Even considering the superior fighting spirit and skill that Red Army units habitually displayed in battles with the lackadaisical warlord troops, the enemy forces that gathered to suppress the uprising were so strong that it is extremely doubtful whether earlier intervention by the Jinggangshan forces would have led to a Communist victory. In fact, regardless of whether he acted because of personal pique or a shrewd calculation of the military situation, Mao's refusal to plunge headlong into Hunan may well have saved his own force from destruction.

Recovery from Disaster

The successful retreat of the refugees could not obscure the fact that the Hunan uprising had been a major disaster for the regional revolutionary cause. For the Hunan Communists the costs had been particularly serious. In addition to the heavy loss of lives and property among ordinary people that had occurred when "red" and "white" terrors swept through the area in rapid succession, both the policies and the leading organs of the southern Hunan party hierarchy lay in ruins. Most of the region's party leaders had lost their lives in the debacle, and though their deaths may have struck some of the

survivors as appropriate payment for their sins, the loss of experienced leaders and the disruption of communication channels also exacerbated the already difficult tasks of rebuilding the movement's shattered fortunes.

The cost to the Jinggangshan base had likewise been significant. Besides the numerous casualties local Red Army units had suffered while protecting the refugees, their sortie into Hunan had also allowed troops from Ji'an and militia from Suichuan to attack Ninggang and the Jinggangshan massif in their absence. Although the few dozen troops that Wang Zuo had left behind somehow managed to defend the massif, hundreds of peasants and soviet government cadres in Ninggang were killed, many houses were burned, and large quantities of grain and other property were taken.[12]

Moreover, though the Red Army's return at least temporarily ended these depredations, it also brought a vast influx of hungry Hunanese peasants and soldiers to tax the area's limited resources. Accounts vary on the number of people who entered the base at this time, but it is generally agreed that the figure was at least 10,000, and it may have been 12,000 or more when the Jinggangshan forces were included. The bulk (8,000 or more) of the new arrivals were newly recruited Hunan peasant forces, Zhu De's division of Nanchang Uprising veterans added another 2,000 or so experienced soldiers, and Mao's unit of Autumn Harvest Uprising participants and former Jinggangshan bandits numbered around 1,600.[13]

A force this large, especially if concentrated in a small portion of the base area's territory, put tremendous pressure on food and housing. As advance elements of the retreating forces reached the base and brought news of the much larger numbers still to come, cadres who had remained behind began to requisition the scant remaining supplies of grain and to survey the available accommodations. It was with such logistical concerns in mind that the refugees were ultimately quartered in the town of Longshi and in its surrounding villages where housing and food were both in relatively good supply. Nonetheless, conditions were far from ideal.[14]

For the moment, however, worry about living conditions and future prospects faded in the face of the important rituals of ceremony, celebration, and negotiation that marked the meeting and subsequent amalgamation of the Communist forces from southern Hunan and those from the Jinggangshan region. Shortly after they returned to Longshi, Mao and a number of aides went to the Longjiang Academy to meet Zhu De and Chen Yi, who had already arrived and awaited him there with other leaders from the Hunan peasant forces. The assembled leaders soon concluded that their respective units should be merged into a single army, which after some discussion was designated the Fourth Worker-Peasant Revolutionary Army.[15] In this and subsequent meetings of various groups of cadres, the delicate details involved in amalgamating the two Red Army units and the southern Hunan peasant levies were worked out. At some point during this period, Jinggangshan cadres apparently also learned from documents possessed by Zhu's force that, contrary to Zhou Lu's earlier assertion, Mao was still a member in good standing of the CCP and had simply been removed from his position as alternate Politburo member.

By the morning of 4 May, all the necessary arrangements had been made, and the leaders convened a formal ceremony involving soldiers and local people to celebrate both the establishment of the new army and the anniversary of the famous May Fourth Incident of 1919. As announced in the ceremonial speeches, Zhu De became commander of the new army, with Mao serving as chief CCP representative, Chen Yi as head of the army's soldiers' committee, and Wang Erzhuo as chief of staff. For the moment, the army consisted of three divisions, though these were soon abolished. Beneath the divisions were a number of regiments. Sources differ over whether six or nine regiments existed at this point, with the main argument being over how many units of Hunanese peasants were formed, but there is no disagreement that the army's core consisted of only four regiments: the Twenty-eighth, composed of Zhu De's Nanchang Uprising survivors; the Twenty-ninth, made up of Hunanese peasants from Yizhang county; the Thirty-first, which contained Mao's Autumn Harvest veterans; and the Thirty-second, formed from Yuan Wencai's and Wang Zuo's bands. With the exception of the Twenty-ninth Regiment, which was destroyed a few months later, these regiments remained the heart of the Fourth Army and the main forces protecting the Jinggangshan region from this point until the army left the base in January 1929.[16]

The formation of the new army improved both the spirits and the prospects of the gathered revolutionaries, facts that undoubtedly help explain the vigorous celebration that accompanied the ceremony. Among the most salient reasons for optimism was the dramatic increase in personnel, arms, and experienced cadres that resulted from the arrival of Zhu De's force. Even without the ill-equipped and soon-to-depart Hunanese peasant forces, the combination of Zhu's Twenty-eighth Regiment and the well-officered Yizhang levies of the Twenty-ninth Regiment with the existing Jinggangshan troops had more than doubled the fighting strength available in the base. Equally important, the new troops brought a welcome infusion of experienced cadres to supplement the modest number of trained personnel available from Mao's Autumn Harvest outsiders and the original Jinggangshan region party organs. For Zhu's forces, arrival in the base area similarly promised a long-overdue respite from the enervating uncertainty and unpredictable danger of the roving life they had been leading as well as the unfamiliar pleasure of being among trustworthy compatriots and a friendly and largely mobilized population.

For PRC scholars as well, the extended, multipart meeting of Zhu's and Mao's troops, known formally as the Jinggangshan Junction of Forces

(*Jinggangshan huishi*), is regarded as a noteworthy event in CCP history. The linkup after difficult defeats and retreats of the survivors of the Nanchang Uprising under Zhu De with those of the Autumn Harvest Uprising under Mao Zedong brought together in one place the two largest and best-equipped Communist-led military forces then extant in China and led to their reorganization into a single army. In addition to its role in Jinggangshan, the Fourth Army later formed the core of the Red Army forces that built and defended the Central Revolutionary Base Area in southern Jiangxi, embarked on the Long March, and contributed significantly to the military leadership of the famous Eighth Route Army during the war against Japan. The joining of Mao and Zhu's forces is also significant for party historians because it marked another stage in the gradual assemblage and mutual interaction of a large number of cadres who would eventually become core leaders of the post-1949 Communist government. In addition to Mao and Zhu themselves, Chen Yi, Lin Biao, Tan Zhenlin, Xiao Ke, Su Yu, and Luo Ronghuan were among the well-known national leaders whose long and intimate association really began on Jinggangshan.

PROTECTING THE BASE

As stimulating and significant as the amalgamation of forces may have been, it was by no means a completely unmixed blessing. For one thing, as anyone observing the horde of hungry soldiers, militiamen, and family members that gathered for the Fourth Army's inaugural celebration could easily surmise, the problem of housing and feeding the huge influx of new people would have to be addressed promptly. Even more serious, by dramatically heightening the visibility and strength of the Communist military threat, the conjunction of the two forces had also significantly increased the seriousness with which the military governments of Jiangxi and Hunan sought their extermination. These issues would remain persistent worries for the Jinggangshan revolutionaries throughout the history of the base area. At least in the short run, however, it proved possible to ameliorate both of the problems.

Sending the Hunanese Back Home

The short-term solution to the resource problem was the rapid departure of most of the thousands of Hunanese who had arrived with Zhu's forces. Most of the units into which these peasants had been grouped during the Southern Hunan Uprising or at the time of the Fourth Army's formation were much less cohesive and militarily effective bodies than the regiments of Zhu's and Mao's veterans or even the regiment of Yuan Wencai and Wang Zuo. In addition, the peasants' restiveness at being so long and so far away

from their homes and their concern for the well-being of the numerous dependents who had accompanied them made it difficult to deploy these units freely and flexibly.

Under these conditions, the costs in food and other resources incurred by the peasant units far outweighed their limited military value. One obvious solution was for the peasants to return home, either to establish local guerrilla units or to resume farming. During the several weeks after the 4 May ceremony, therefore, all of the Hunanese except for the relatively well-organized and well-led Twenty-ninth Regiment of Yizhang natives gradually left the base. Because the dissolution of the Hunanese regiments is barely mentioned in most published accounts, it is hard to tell whether this was the planned outcome of an explicit decision or the end product of spontaneous erosion by peasants leaving on their own, but their departure did reduce pressure on local resources at negligible cost to the Red Army's fighting ability.[17]

Battles to Protect the Base

No sooner had the Red Army eased its logistics burden than it was forced into a period of intense defensive military activity. During May and June 1928, the Jiangxi government of Zhu Peide launched three increasingly massive military campaigns against the Jinggangshan region. As even the smallest of these campaigns involved professional armies whose size and weapons power were several times that of the newly formed Fourth Red Army, it required both great exertion and considerable ingenuity by the Communist forces to defeat them.

In all of the enemy campaigns, the initiative and the main military force came from units dispatched from the nearest major Jiangxi garrison in the Gan River valley city of Ji'an. They approached the Jinggangshan region along the most direct land route from Ji'an, which entered the base area via the Yongxin county seat, the region's economic, cultural, and political center. From this logistics and communications hub, various smaller roads and paths branched out across the county, providing access westward to the interior of Yongxin, Lianhua, and Chaling counties; southward to the Nashan basin region of Yongxin bordering the Jinggangshan massif; and southwestward across the narrow Qixiling mountain range to the heart of the base area in Ninggang county. Control of the Yongxin county seat and the prosperous and densely populated agricultural basin that surrounded it was therefore a key objective of both the revolutionaries and their opponents in all three military campaigns.

The first campaign involved a division of the Jiangxi army. Keeping one of his three regiments in reserve in the Yongxin county seat, the commander sent his remaining troops to attack the core of the base, with one regiment advancing directly toward Ninggang and the Jinggangshan massif while the

other embarked on a long flanking movement around the eastern edge of the base before curling around to approach from the south. To counter this threat, the Red Army essentially mirrored the actions of its enemies: while one of its regiments (units which were considerably smaller and less well armed than their enemy counterparts, despite their identical designation) garrisoned the massif, another quickly moved north to occupy defensive positions in the mountain passes astride the direct route into the base, and the remaining two regiments rushed south to attack the enemy's flanking force before it could complete its maneuver.

In a series of sharp engagements, the Red Army first soundly defeated the enemy's flanking regiment and forced it back in disarray to the Yongxin county seat and then bloodied the city's garrison regiment when it sortied to meet them. Threatened with being cut off by the Red Army force in its rear, the third enemy regiment had no choice but to break off its attack and join the rest of the division in a rapid retreat toward Ji'an. When the enemy army abandoned Yongxin, victorious Red Army troops immediately moved to incorporate the county into the base area: they seized the county seat, established a Yongxin Worker-Peasant-Soldiers' Government on the pattern of those set up earlier in other counties, and dispersed half of the Red Army into the rural hinterland to mobilize popular support.[18]

A second campaign began almost immediately, however. The defeated enemy division regrouped and reinforced, marched back to reoccupy the Yongxin county seat, and—proceeding more cautiously than before—began stockpiling supplies prior to a new offensive. Red Army guerrilla attacks against the city and its supply lines eventually goaded the enemy into sending two regiments out on a vain search-and-destroy mission, but this strong force—which by itself almost certainly had more men and weapons than the entire Red Army—remained too cohesive to be attacked and so marched south unimpeded to establish a forward base just north of the mountain passes into Ninggang.

In the end, the spark that precipitated a decisive conflict between the two rival forces occurred miles away across the Hunan border. Although three of the Red Army's four main regiments had remained either in the Ninggang-Jinggangshan massif area or hovering around the flanks of the enemy forces ready to react immediately to their advance, the Thirty-first Regiment (with Mao's Autumn Harvest veterans at its core) had withdrawn deep into western Yongxin, where it had dispersed to engage in mass mobilization work. In the midst of this work, one battalion also launched a quick raid on the town of Gaolong in Chaling county, apparently intended mainly to gather newspapers to satisfy Mao's well-known desire for up-to-date information. However, the town proved to be so well defended that to save the battalion it was necessary to commit the entire Twenty-eighth Regiment, which had been in Ninggang awaiting the start of the enemy offensive.

Hearing of this Red Army activity, the Jiangxi army commander in Yongxin logically concluded that the base must now be largely undefended. He therefore ordered his two southernmost regiments to cross the mountains into Ninggang, while his other two regiments remained in the Yongxin county seat to protect the city and the communications lines to Ji'an. But the commander had failed to account for the remarkable speed and flexibility with which the Red Army could shift its forces. Even as the enemy regiments began ponderously to bestir themselves, Red Army leaders had already ordered units that had been harassing the enemy supply lines to move in to defend the passes in place of the absent Twenty-eighth Regiment and had started the Twenty-eighth and Thirty-first regiments on a forced march from the Hunan border eastward toward the developing battle.

The two regiments marched rapidly to a large market town only about ten miles west of the Yongxin county seat, whence word of their presence—but not of their strength—reached enemy forces in the city. After largely destroying a regiment that casually sortied to deal with what it assumed was only a small band of guerrillas, the Red Army advanced immediately on the still-unsuspecting county seat, where the shock of their sudden appearance sent the remaining garrison fleeing toward Ji'an. When the two southern enemy regiments heard of this disaster in their rear, they also retreated. Rather than risking an attack on a Red Army force protected by strong walls, they simply marched on by the county seat and back to Ji'an.[19]

After this debacle, enemy pressure eased for several weeks. In early June, however, the campaigns resumed, this time with simultaneous attacks from both Hunan and Jiangxi. As a Hunanese division moved slowly through Chaling and Lingxian toward Ninggang, a fresh Jiangxi army division joined the two regiments remaining from the division that the Red Army had previously defeated to form a strong new expeditionary force, which once again advanced to Yongxin. Because commanders of both components of the combined force were surnamed Yang, a name which sounded similar to the common word for "sheep" (*yang*), the Jinggangshan Communists often referred to them disparagingly as "the Two Sheep."

Because Hunanese troops had already proven themselves to be much more formidable foes than the Yunnanese garrisoning Jiangxi, Red Army leaders chose to make only a brief diversionary attack to slow the Hunanese advance before directing their primary effort against the Jiangxi garrison troops. After once again leaving the weak Thirty-second Regiment to garrison the Jinggangshan massif and sending Mao and a single battalion of the Thirty-first Regiment to western Yongxin to join local guerrillas in creating a very visible threat on the enemy's flank, the bulk of the Red Army moved into strong positions guarding the two narrow passes that cut through the wooded and deeply-ravined mountains dividing Ninggang and Yongxin.

With Mao's noisy flank demonstration to remind them of the disaster that had struck from this quarter during the previous campaign, the generals Yang kept two entire regiments back to defend the Yongxin county seat and tried to force the passes with the remaining three. Though this force, as usual, was much larger than the Red Army, the terrain favored the defenders by funneling the warlord soldiers into narrow defiles where they could not utilize their superior numbers. In a fierce struggle, the Red Army, aided by their defensive advantages and by a timely guerrilla raid that spread panic in the enemy's rear, destroyed one enemy regiment and routed two others, killed or wounded several hundred enemy soldiers, and captured almost as many men and weapons. Then they re-took the Yongxin county seat after the remnants of the enemy force fled to Ji'an. Hearing this news, the Hunanese army also retreated.[20]

CONSTRUCTING THE RED ARMY

The Red Army that won these victories in the spring of 1928 is generally said to have been "born" on 1 August 1927—the date of the Nanchang Uprising. Moreover, close party control over the compilation and publication of materials on party history, together with the softening and simplifying effects on memory of the passage of time, have produced a public image of an early Red Army that from its inception was a cohesive, disciplined, and precociously mature military force.

Reality was considerably more complicated than this idealized picture suggests. While it may be convenient and symbolically useful to view the Red Army as having sprung suddenly into existence on a specific date, it is more accurate to think of it as having emerged following a much more gradual gestation. Similarly, as successful as the army may have been in fighting such as that described in the preceding section, neither its commanders nor its soldiers were anything like the preternatural paragons of military virtue portrayed in many popular histories.

An important part of the extended development that eventually produced the mature Red Army took place in the Jinggangshan region in 1928. During this period the Red Army was both literally "under construction" and figuratively "being constructed." That is to say, a number of separate groups (the forces of Mao, Zhu, Yuan-Wang, and Hu Shaohai) were being physically assembled and organizationally integrated into a larger entity, while at the same time the army's behavioral dynamics—its style, spirit, methods, "practice"—were emerging and being defined. Neither aspect of the Red Army's "construction" was as passive as the verbs used above imply. Indeed, the army's formation involved processes of active, often contestatory, interaction among actors both internal and external to the force

itself. Internally, the army formed and defined itself through the opinions and personalities of the army's main leaders, through the thoughts and actions of the rank-and-file soldiers, and through their mutual interaction. Externally, the army took shape through contact with the base area population and with the intruding armies against which it fought.

Power and Personality in the Army's Leadership

The arrival of Zhu De's troops raised various issues relating to the loci and distribution of power within the emerging Red Army. The fact that the core of the new arrivals was a cohesive armed force (now designated the Twenty-eighth Regiment) that was larger than Mao's force, distinct from it in experience, style, and self-image, and led by men (Zhu De and Chen Yi) whose experience and revolutionary credentials were equal (and in some respects superior) to Mao's own, meant that there existed the obvious potential for rivalries and problems of integration.

Some pressing issues concerning unit structure and distribution of command slots were formally (if temporarily) resolved at the time of the Fourth Army's formation. Basic assumptions of personalistic militarization—the notions that units were the creations and possessions of their commanders and that soldiers owed allegiance to individual leaders rather than to impersonal institutions—common in warlord army units and also apparent in the manner in which the bands of Wang Zuo and Yuan Wencai had earlier been added to Mao's forces, were likewise implicitly reflected in the Fourth Army's structure. Thus, each of the army's four core regiments was the institutional acknowledgment of both a distinct cluster of shared experiences and practices and of a different personal constituency:

28th Regiment	Nanchang Uprising veterans	Zhu De
29th Regiment	Hunan Uprising peasants	Hu Shaohai
31st Regiment	Autumn Harvest veterans	Mao Zedong
32nd Regiment	Jinggangshan ex-bandits	Wang Zuo, Yuan Wencai

The allocation of top leadership positions—with Zhu De as military commander and Mao Zedong as party leader—clearly reflected the fact that with the arrival of the large new force the distribution of military power had shifted. Zhu's Twenty-eighth Regiment alone substantially outnumbered the combined forces of the Thirty-first and Thirty-second regiments, and when the Hunanese of the Twenty-ninth Regiment were added in, the disparity in favor of the new arrivals was even greater. This fact, together with Zhu's extensive military experience, insured that he would exert considerable influence in an arena within which Mao had previously been preeminent.

Neither contemporary documents nor later reminiscences provide detailed information on how the arrival of Zhu's force affected the interpersonal or policy-making dynamics of the base area leadership. Given Mao's lifetime history of seeking to be "alpha male" in virtually all political and social situations, however, it is not to be supposed that he accepted this development with complete equanimity. Nor is it likely that Zhu, ten years Mao's senior and with a habit of command dating back to his early days as a warlord general, would shrink from asserting his own prerogatives and policies.

Indeed, in the months after the Fourth Army left the Jinggangshan region in 1929, public and very divisive conflict between the two men did eventually emerge in the context of larger debates over the army's organizational style and leadership practices. In a letter written in mid-June 1929, Mao acknowledged that although the dispute had been "concealed for various reasons" before its recent public exposure, it had "been going on for a year," since the initiation of the Fourth Army.[21] It thus appears that there was indeed some tension in the Zhu-Mao relationship from the time their forces joined in May 1928.

In addition to competition for personal status and power within the revolutionary movement, arguments over method and policy rooted partly in differences of personality and experience played an important role in the conflict that eventually developed between the two men. Zhu was a long-time party member, and like many early party members he had taken part in May Fourth–era political activities. He had also lived in Europe for several years. Nevertheless, since his youthful sojourn as a military academy student, his primary occupation had been that of army officer, with much of his time spent in warlord units. He was a bluff, plain-spoken person by nature, and his early life in the bandit- and sect-filled Sichuan hinterland and lengthy association with the peasants and "lumpen" elements who filled most warlord armies had left him with an understanding of rural life—and especially of its dark and violent side—that was at least the equal of Mao's.

Mao was of course also of peasant origin, and was well known for his persistent personal expression and public invocation of peasant qualities and values. He also later achieved fame for his writings on the strategy and tactics of "people's war." Nonetheless, his interests went far beyond simply military affairs and peasant life, and he had so far spent most of his adult life (except for a few months' service as a warlord soldier) in the company of urban-centered, educated people interested in the interplay of abstract ideas and political action. Insofar as his occupation at this point in his life can be specified at all, it would be difficult to label him anything other than "politician," simplistic as the appellation might be in this context.

Mao was certainly more imaginative, dynamic, and intellectually curious than Zhu. Whereas experience and inclination alike led Zhu to remain focused primarily upon the military sphere, Mao was interested and involved

in the exercise of power in all its diverse forms, including its political, cultural, and symbolic manifestations.[22]

Some of the differences between the two had been reflected in the armed forces each had led before they met in Jinggangshan. Zhu's force was in some respects little different from an ordinary warlord unit. At the time of a restructuring undertaken while marching through southern Jiangxi, for example, the entire force had only about fifty or sixty CCP and CYL members (much less than 10 percent of the force at that time), most of whom were high-ranking officers. The reorganization did try to redistribute party members so that at least a few were in each subordinate unit, and a few more may have been added before the force reached Jinggangshan, but the total number remained small. Moreover, while in southern Hunan, the force abolished the system of "party representatives" that had existed in tandem with the military commanders at each level of unit. All in all, Zhu De's force was less a "party army" than an army with a few party members.

At the same time, the appearance and behavior of the force still resembled ordinary Chinese armies. For example, the soldiers continued to wear their old NRA uniforms, Guomindang flags flew over the units, and the force agreed to be "reorganized" and subsequently served briefly as part of a warlord army commanded by one of Zhu's former military associates. This behavior fooled many people along the way into thinking they were in fact an NRA unit, and inspired the CCP's worried national leaders in Shanghai to warn them to abandon their association with warlord forces and their "roving bandit" style.[23]

By contrast, Mao's force was much more politicized. A major aim of the Sanwan reorganization had been to establish a network of party branches throughout the force that actively sought to recruit soldiers into the party. Through training sessions, mass meetings, and the promulgation of rules of conduct, Mao sought to promote a level of political awareness and forms of behavior that would ensure that Red Army soldiers stood out from rather than blending into the vast mass of miscellaneous armed forces then infesting the Chinese landscape.

These distinctions between the two men and their forces were significant on a broader programmatic as well as a personal level. What they represented, expressed, and promoted were not only unique individual concatenations of emotion and opinion, but also different—to some extent competing—and much more widely shared clusters of attitudes toward and approaches to some of the issues of power involved in constructing a rural revolutionary movement. These issues—which will be discussed at greater length in a later chapter—included the relationship between party and nonparty institutions and leaders, between individual and collective leadership, and between the ideals of popular deliberation ("democracy") and authoritarian direction ("centralism").

Though it is useful in light of later developments to note the sources of both personal and programmatic tension between Zhu and Mao, it is also important not to over-emphasize the depth or intensity of their differences. The army-wide controversy of 1929 in which they became opponents flared fiercely for a time, but it was both preceded and followed by long stretches of time during which the two men managed their tensions and cooperated fruitfully. Unlike a great many other people over the years, Zhu survived his conflict with Mao with his reputation, position, and relationship to Mao essentially intact.

In large measure this was due to the fact that their personalities and skills were more complementary than antagonistic. The interplay of personality, experience, and power between Zhu and Mao, in fact, had considerable similarities to that involved in the relationship between the local revolutionaries Wang Zuo and Yuan Wencai. Like Zhu and Mao, Wang and Yuan both had rural backgrounds and shared many basic attitudes derived from this background. Wang—like Zhu—was an outspoken man of action who had chosen a violent career, while Yuan—like Mao—was a more subtle, manipulative man of words who had broader horizons and political ambitions. Yuan and Mao were clearly the more imaginative, volatile, ambitious—and ultimately dominant—members of the pairs, while Wang and Zhu provided the sort of heft, solidity, and endurance needed to anchor their respective enterprises effectively in day-to-day realities.

In May 1928, many aspects of the Zhu-Mao relationship had yet to be worked out. Nevertheless, the two had succeeded in establishing a working arrangement that enabled the new army to function effectively both in combat and in the broader process of base-building, and that allowed for a tentative, permeable separation of roles and orientation between the army's two most experienced and powerful leaders.

Red Army Personnel and Their Character

Documentary and anecdotal evidence alike makes it clear that the subsequent collective behavior of what contemporaries commonly termed the "Zhu-Mao Army" owed much to the persistent influence over time of the army's eponymous leaders. At the same time, however, the army's behavioral dynamics were also influenced—often in countervailing ways—by the actions and attitudes of its other officers and enlisted men.

In light of the praise often heaped upon the Red Army, it is important to recognize from the outset that during this early period a high percentage of the army's personnel were drawn either from the ranks of warlord armies or from local bandit/brotherhood bands and that neither officers nor men had their past habits magically altered simply by virtue of joining the communist-led force. As previously noted, Mao's initial efforts to spell out a code of conduct for the army had been prompted by problems of theft and general poor

discipline among the soldiers he personally led. Despite the code, these and other similar problems (of gambling, opium use, and desertion, for example) persisted during the following months, because of difficulty in eradicating long-ingrained habits of some veterans, and especially because of the almost continuous absorption of new individuals and groups into the army: the Yuan-Wang forces, Zhu De's troops, southern Hunan peasants, and numerous bands of defectors from enemy forces.

In addition to reinforcing the bad habits of rank-and-file soldiers, the near-constant infusion of organized new units with existing command structures further complicated issues of officer conduct and relations between officers and enlisted men that were already matters of concern within the Red Army. The gap between officers and enlisted men in Chinese armies of whatever provenance was traditionally great, and the power of officers to inflict physical punishment on their subordinates was largely unfettered. Many officers with prior military experience (including party members who had served in NRA units during the United Front period) brought similar expectations regarding power and obedience with them into the Red Army.

These expectations meshed well with assumptions about hierarchy and discipline that were by this time well established within the CCP itself. Yet at the same time, an ethos of intra-army egalitarianism and participatory decision making was also being fostered in the army. As will become more apparent in subsequent chapters, these divergent conceptions of power relationships did not easily or amicably coexist within the Red Army during this period. Indeed, achievement and maintenance of the proper balance between hierarchical authority and egalitarian interaction within the army proved to be a difficult and persistent problem that continued to bedevil army leaders long after they left Jinggangshan.

If the nature of authority and power relationships were matters for extended negotiation throughout the force as a whole, individual Red Army units were far less uniform than is often assumed in their relative cohesion, spirit, and fighting ability. Even after months of training and assistance, for example, the Thirty-second Regiment, with the bands of Wang Zuo and Yuan Wencai at its heart, was not considered generally employable as part of the army's main strike force but instead was usually relegated to garrison duty on Jinggangshan or to anti-militia operations in the immediate vicinity. Likewise, troops of the Twenty-ninth Regiment (mostly Hunanese peasants) suffered from a persistent and deepening dissatisfaction with their long absence from home that ultimately led to what amounted to a unit-wide mutiny. The Red Army's reputation for high élan and effectiveness, therefore, is based primarily on the actions of the Twenty-eighth and Thirty-first regiments—the units of Zhu's and Mao's veterans who composed the real core of the army.

If the young Red Army was therefore much less perfect than many adulatory histories suggest, there were nonetheless still noticeable differences in

purpose, attitude, and atmosphere between it and its warlord adversaries. The very fact that those officers with prior experience had chosen to abandon careers in established military hierarchies in favor of the uncertain rewards of joining the Red Army suggests what their subsequent record confirms: that as a group they were more adventurous, dynamic, and imaginative than many warlord officers. Moreover, despite their relatively limited knowledge of Marxist-Leninist theory, both Red Army leaders with and those without prior military experience had a degree of emotional commitment to an ideological "cause" that most of their opponents lacked. The purpose and persistence that this commitment provided were intensified by necessity: unlike many of its opponents, the Red Army had to fight to survive, and this fact heightened the concentration and focused the energy of the army's leaders to an extent rarely seen among their enemies.

If senior Red Army officers generally performed better than their warlord counterparts, so on the whole did the army's junior and non-commissioned officers and its enlisted soldiers. Though Red Army soldiers were no more immune to homesickness, vice, and desertion than were the warlord armies and bandit gangs from which the army's first recruits were largely drawn, the Red Army had greater success in creating and sustaining esprit de corps and unit cohesiveness, qualities that made the army better able to engage in and survive sustained combat operations. This esprit derived from several related sources. Probably most important initially was a kind of technical pride of performance: satisfaction in military proficiencies acquired through training, sharpened in field experience and validated by combat success—a version of the kind of "crack unit" mentality known to many armies. To this was gradually added over time a degree of ideological motivation, a sense of participation in a personally meaningful, principled struggle instilled and reinforced through the army's widespread and ongoing programs of political education. And finally, there was the influence of the army's widely publicized complex of policies mandating fair treatment for soldiers and egalitarian relations between officers and men.

Despite the army's ongoing unresolved policy conflicts and persistent authoritarian practices, ideological consciousness and egalitarianism nonetheless made a meaningful contribution to the army's spirit and cohesion. One need not assume that such factors played the dominant motivating roles assigned to them in standard party histories to nonetheless recognize their value in helping to differentiate the Red Army from other military forces and in reinforcing other sources of cohesiveness.

Warlord Armies and Their Constraints

The fact that much of the preceding discussion of Red Army attitudes and behavior has been couched in comparative terms is an indication that in addition to being influenced by abstract concepts and goals, the army also in substantial measure defined itself and was defined by others in concrete reference to its warlord and government army opposition. Red Army leaders sought to garner popular support and recruits for the army by explicitly contrasting its practices and policies with those of other contemporary armies. This was a desirable and effective strategy: if the Red Army seemed sadly deficient when measured against ideal standards of behavior, it appeared markedly superior when seen in contrast to the actual activities of its rivals.

Useful at the time for attracting support and recruits, emphasis on the psychological and behavioral contrast between the "culture" of the Red Army and its military opponents has also long been a common explanation for the ineffectiveness of warlord armies. The inflexibility, sloth, and other deficiencies exhibited by many warlord units, for example, are often attributed to a combination of the incompetence of individual commanding officers and the multitude of bad habits engendered among officers and men alike by warlord army culture as a whole.

These factors certainly do help explain the poor performance of warlord units. For senior warlord officers, career advancement often had more to do with excellence in interpersonal relations, negotiation, and intrigue than with tactical skills; high living and ostentatious display were seen as more appropriate status markers than field-soiled uniforms and battlefield aggressiveness; and destruction of enemy forces was given a much lower priority than preservation of the troops and weapons that constituted the warlords' own primary investment capital and the basis of their personal power. For junior officers and enlisted men, poor living conditions, irregular pay, and the arbitrary and brutal discipline meted out by their superiors all combined to depress morale, dilute loyalty, and deaden individual initiative.

Much more than different self-conceptions, attitudes, and military cultures was involved in the consistent pattern of warlord defeats, however. Even acknowledging the Red Army's advantages in the areas of motivation and personnel, the overwhelming superiority of the warlord units in size and weapons would almost inevitably have resulted in the Red Army's defeat if the warlord armies had been able to devote their full attention to suppressing the Communists and had managed consistently to engage the Red Army in planned set-piece battles. That these conditions did not obtain was in part the result of a variety of strategic, structural, and situational problems faced by the warlord forces and in part the result of the Red Army's own strategic and tactical skill.

One of the major problems facing units assigned to Communist-suppression was that such work occupied a relatively low place in the hierarchy of priorities facing the armies from which these units were drawn. On a strategic level, the collapse of the United Front and the success of the Northern Expedition in 1927–1928 had not only destroyed the CCP-GMD partnership but

had also disrupted the complex and unstable network of military relationships among warlord generals throughout central and southern China. For several years thereafter, the reverberations from this major slippage of the region's politico-military fault zones continued to manifest themselves in the form of near-constant troop movements as warlords and their political allies readjusted their relations through flurries of wars, skirmishes, and threats.

During this period, most army units were naturally deployed to protect major cities and communications routes, and those units that might occasionally be dispatched on anti-Communist campaigns had perforce to hold themselves ready for recall at a moment's notice. In addition to sending a clear message to commanders that zealousness in the Communist-suppression effort was an unlikely route for personal career advancement, the low priority and sporadic prosecution of the suppression campaigns made it difficult for officers to give them their undivided attention.

Other problems had to do with the nature of the warlord units and the manner in which they were employed. By comparison with their contemporary Western counterparts, Chinese military units of the period were relatively small and ill equipped, were more accustomed to living "off the land," and therefore typically had much higher combat-to-support unit ratios and much less extensive logistical trains. Nonetheless, their design still reflected the assumption that they were components of large-scale structures, building blocks to be assembled into massive armies and deployed in coordinated fashion in conventional warfare, rather than self-contained, independently operating strike forces. In the context of the rugged terrain of the Hunan-Jiangxi border region, their heavy weapons, rigid command hierarchies, and habit of deploying in relatively large units made warlord forces much more ponderous and slow-moving than the small, lightly armed, and extremely mobile Red Army units.

Moreover, in a mountainous region with an extremely poor communications network and an economy so precarious that the presence of only a few thousand Red Army soldiers put severe strains on local provisions, the resources required to support even a short-term intrusion by an additional six to eight thousand warlord army soldiers (the approximate number that might be contained in a division of three regiments) severely constrained the length of an invading force's campaign, its practicable routes of march, and its choice of bivouac sites. As a result, warlord units generally had little choice but to spend much of each campaign passively gathered in static encampments in and around the few settlements (such as the Yongxin county seat) that could feed and house such large masses of troops. Sorties from these bivouacs into the region's mountainous interior were perforce brief, due to the difficulty of maintaining the troops on extended operations and to the tactical and logistical complications involved in maneuvering units of several hundred to several thousand soldiers and their equipment over

earthen or flagstone "roads" that were often barely wide enough for two or three people to walk abreast. Despite their primitive nature, the main access routes into the heart of the base were few enough, and their use predictable enough, to allow them to be watched easily by the Communists, thus providing them with early, accurate intelligence of enemy troop movements.

Leadership and Tactics

Also playing a significant role in the Red Army's victories, of course, were the military methods its leaders employed. Analysis of the campaigns reveals that even at this early stage they possessed a keen understanding of the principles of mobile or "guerrilla" warfare whose skillful employment was to become one of the most remarked-upon characteristics of the army's subsequent history.

While the term "guerrilla warfare" accurately conveys the swift-moving, hit-and-run character of the army's combat style and the emphasis that CCP leaders placed on close interaction between the military and civilian populace, it also suggests an ad hoc, "irregular" quality to Red Army operations that in fact fit neither the self-image of the army's members nor the reality of their activities. In the eyes of Red Army leaders, theirs was a regular army (albeit an embryonic one) whose ultimate military task—one that could be performed by no other force in the base—was not merely to harass but instead to engage and defeat the enemy's frontline combat units. Therefore, while the main Red Army regiments did occasionally participate in ambushes, raids against enemy logistics trains, and other similar types of classic small-unit guerrilla operations, the bulk of such activities were carried out by units further down the base area's emerging militarization hierarchy, the local red guard detachments, and especially the intermediate-level units actually referred to as "guerrilla detachments" (*youji dui*).

Although the Red Army thus differed from typical guerrilla units in its aims and ambitions, there is no question that its operational style drew upon some of the best principles of guerrilla warfare. As summed up in the famous saying "the enemy advances, we retreat; the enemy camps, we harass; the enemy is tired, we attack; the enemy retreats, we pursue,"[24] this style emphasized methods by which a small force could defeat a much larger enemy by using superior mobility, patience, and the advantage of surprise to avoid combat until it was possible to concentrate the full strength of the smaller force against an isolated portion of the larger enemy. These were methods that took full advantage both of the Red Army's strengths—its mobile, hardy, and well-motivated troops, its flexible yet well coordinated command procedures, and its excellent local knowledge—and of its opponents' weaknesses—their dependence on urban bases, their unwieldy movements and force structure, and their rigid, unresponsive, and easily distracted commanders.

The Red Army leaders' use of these tactics was certainly not the result of attitudes acquired either through training in Chinese military academies or through experience as junior officers in warlord armies. Nor did such ideas magically emerge in the form of fully articulated military doctrine from the head of an omniscient Mao Zedong. Instead, they were most likely suggested by a combination of sources. One of these was common cultural memory of the repertoire of martial behaviors employed by the protagonists in traditional literary works such as *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* and *Water Margin*. Mao was, of course, well known for frequently evoking such works of popular culture, but materials written during this period by other party leaders indicate similar knowledge of the traditional methods used by "rebels against authority."

Another source was knowledge (gained from newspapers, anecdotes, or personal experience) of the tactics employed against government suppression efforts by contemporary bandits and sworn brotherhoods, including those in the Jinggangshan region described in previous chapters. For example, the formulation "it's not necessary to fight, but only to go in circles" used by the Jinggangshan bandit Zhu Kongyang in the early 1920s to describe his tactic for confusing and wearing out warlord armies by making constant rapid marches among various mountain hideouts, was picked up (presumably through conversation with local people such as Wang Zuo) and repeated—often with modification—by CCP leaders.[25]

Finally, the concrete imperatives of the specific situation faced by the Jinggangshan Communists likewise strongly influenced the tactics they used. Given the topography and other characteristics of the region and their own limited personnel and armaments, hit-and-run tactics were unquestionably the best option available for engaging a strong, well-equipped enemy and surviving to fight another day.

As CCP leaders both in and outside of the Jinggangshan base were well aware, however, good guerrilla tactics could easily engender bad guerrilla habits. That is to say, when engaged in excessively or simplistically, such guerrilla virtues as secrecy, mobility, and elusiveness could become transformed into compulsive, counterproductive behaviors that hindered rather than helped the revolutionary struggle. Thus, practitioners of guerrilla tactics could become so concerned with maintaining their forces intact that they spent all of their time lurking in inaccessible hideouts (a vice that CCP documents frequently labeled "mountain-topism"),[26] or ran at the mere sight of the enemy ("flightism"), or roamed aimlessly from place to place without attempting to establish close relations with local communities ("roving-banditism"). Such behaviors might preserve military units, but at the expense of rendering them irrelevant or (by attracting enemy troops to an area and then not remaining to defend it) actually harmful to the local population.

Party leaders had reason to be worried about the impact of these and other aspects of the relationship between military action and the processes of base-building: questions about the proper usage and behavior of the Red Army occupied a prominent and contentious place on the agenda of party leaders for at least several more years. Despite the persistence of such problems, however, the Red Army was able on the whole to retain the useful attributes of guerrilla warfare and at the same time to meld them with features usually considered more characteristic of "professional" armies such as strategic vision and the ability to coordinate the maneuvers of multiple sizable units across extensive expanses of space and time.

This hybrid mixture of guerrilla and conventional army traits was clearly demonstrated in the methods used by the Red Army during the three suppression campaigns against the base in the spring of 1928. In defeating these campaigns, the Red Army took advantage of its decentralized command style, its superior local knowledge, and its interior lines (the fact that from its massif base at the center of an imaginary circle, the Red Army need travel only short distances to shift forces to attack separate enemies on the outer circumference of the circle, while enemy units had to travel much greater distances to aid each other) to conduct aggressive, proactive attacks on the slow and poorly coordinated warlord armies. In these attacks, the Red Army employed (either singly or in combination) several main tactics.

The primary tactic was to maneuver two or more of the Red Army regiments separately, and then bring them together to launch unexpected attacks on one isolated and unsupported enemy unit after another. As long as the enemy remained confined to a few predictable approach routes and did not push forward with great aggressiveness, it was relatively simple to interpose a single regiment (often supplemented by local guerrillas) to block the advance of one enemy force while the Red Army's main strength maneuvered either to attack a more vulnerable enemy unit elsewhere or to outflank the blocked force and attack its unprotected rear areas.

Another common tactic was to launch a feint or a subsidiary attack on one front (usually Hunan) in order to distract or mislead enemy forces about Red Army activities on another front. Sometimes this involved an attack threatening the lines of supply and communications of Hunanese forces and was designed to make them break off their attacks on the Jinggangshan base to deal with the threat to their rear. On other occasions, short but very visible dashes into Hunan were used to persuade enemy troops on the Jiangxi side of the border that the main Red Army strength was so far away that they could abandon their usual caution and advance deep into the base. Then the Red Army would suddenly break off the raid and, before word of their move arrived, return to strike the unsuspecting enemy in the flanks and rear.

In addition to mobility, excellent intelligence, and unusual boldness on the part of individual unit commanders, the effectiveness of these tactics

owed a great deal to the shock and fear that they engendered. When warlord armies fought among themselves, battles were frequently serious, bloody affairs, but they were generally preceded by a period of mobilization and negotiation that allowed the participants to prepare themselves both physically and mentally. Warlord suppression campaigns against ordinary bandit gangs, on the other hand, involved a great deal of surprise and secrecy, but the poorly armed gangs almost always sought to avoid combat rather than to initiate it. Such campaigns might therefore be frustrating, but they were rarely dangerous for the troops involved.

To the consternation of their warlord opponents, the Red Army refused to adopt either of these modes of behavior but rather insisted on combining elements of both. As elusive as bandits but also at least as pugnacious as any warlord unit, the Red Army launched attacks whose combination of surprise and ferocity shocked their unprepared opponents. When sudden Red Army assaults struck tired, mistreated troops with low morale and little commitment to the cause for which they were supposedly fighting, the result was often a contagious panic that turned limited attacks into widespread routs. Over time, knowledge of such events diffused, coalesced, and was perpetuated as reputation, thereby further eroding the confidence of warlord forces, increasing their apprehension and multiplying the impact of additional Red Army attacks.

The success of Red Army tactics in the three suppression campaigns of spring 1928 helped ensure that similar methods would be used against future enemy attacks. Continued success and the persistence of suitable circumstances for their employment led to the gradual adoption of mobile or "guerrilla" war as the habitual mode of Red Army combat operations, not only for the remainder of the army's stay in the Jinggangshan base, but also after it left to embark on the extended period of roaming through southern Jiangxi and western Fujian that led to the formation of the Central Revolutionary Base Area.

THE "HIGH TIDE" AND MASS EXPANSION

The security provided by Red Army victories, the militarization of the local populace, and the expansion of socioeconomic reform efforts (a subject to be discussed in the next chapter) all interacted synergistically during the spring and early summer of 1928 to create and sustain a sense of excitement and belief in the success of the revolutionary movement not only among active participants but also among much of the rest of the population. The combination of the movement's actual accomplishments and the extrapolated expectation that more would be forthcoming led to a self-reinforcing "bandwagon" effect that resulted in a further dramatic expansion of the movement. This phenomenon, usually referred to in PRC accounts (along with the period during which it occurred) as the "High Tide," may ultimately have been grounded on military success, but its reach extended into virtually all aspects of the movement's organizational infrastructure and psychological consciousness.

Militarizing the Populace

The increase in the scale and tempo of Red Army activity as it defended the base during the spring of 1928 was accompanied by a corresponding expansion in efforts to develop indigenous armed forces. Beginning with a few poorly armed remnants of mass movement forces that had survived the breakup of the United Front, by the middle of 1928 most parts of the base bristled with locally raised paramilitary and guerrilla units that, while generally much less capable than regular Red Army regiments, were nonetheless constituent strands of a widespread, loosely-meshed web of armed forces that performed a variety of more localized but equally vital military tasks.

As noted, as the level of rural violence grew toward the end of the United Front period, party and mass movement leaders in most counties in the region had formed armed units (usually known as "peasant self-defense armies"), drawing personnel either from mass movement organs or from existing bandit gangs and militias. By spring 1927, peasant "armies" throughout the region—including the forces of Yuan Wencai and Wang Zuo—possessed a total of 970 guns (though, as many in such units were armed with swords and other primitive weapons, the total number of people in the units was certainly considerably higher than the number of guns). Aside from peasant forces in two Hunan counties (Youxian and Chaling) which each had 300 guns, units in most other counties averaged around 60 guns each.[27]

Regardless of their armament, none of these units except for the forces of Yuan and Wang showed much fighting capacity or cohesiveness when tested, and almost all were broken up and their weapons lost in the rightist attacks accompanying the end of the United Front. As local cadres and Red Army personnel sought to reconstitute and redesign the revolutionary movement's shattered institutional infrastructure in the new context of all-out civil war, development of more effective local armed units was given high priority.

To initiate this process, a number of local party cadres set out into the countryside, some of them with a few rifles provided by the Red Army, to recruit and lead paramilitary units. In addition, in December 1927, the Red Army established an officers' training detachment at Longshi to train local military cadres for this work. Each class was about three months in length; at least three were held, with one graduating fifty, another sixty, and a third one hundred cadres. Graduates were sent to their homes to help raise and manage local military forces.[28]

Initially, emphasis was placed on the formation of small, village- and township-centered paramilitary units. Most often called "red guards" (a term borrowed from the Russian Revolution, though used in a different context in China) but sometimes referred to by other names as well,[29] these units at first generally had few if any modern weapons, and their members were almost all still fully "engaged in production," that is, they normally worked full time at their regular occupations and mobilized temporarily for military action only when an alarm was sounded. The functions of these units (and also, most likely, the motivations of their participants) were primarily defensive or "protective" (to use Elizabeth Perry's terminology) in nature. Preoccupied with guarding their own families and possessions, they generally had little interest in or ability to engage in long-term or long-range operations outside their communities. They also tended to operate as discrete units, with only very loose connections to one another.[30]

As village-level red guards proliferated, local cadres also gradually began to form other significantly more mobile and highly militarized units. The terminology used to describe these units varied: in some places they were called red guard "large detachments" (*da dui*) and in other places "guerrilla detachments" (*youji dui*). Whatever their name, members of these units were full-time rather than part-time soldiers, tended to be armed with more and better weapons than village red guards, and were capable of extended deployment away from their home areas. Some (probably most) of the guerrilla detachments were upgraded versions of previously established local red guard units or at least used such units as convenient sites for recruiting individual soldiers. Other detachments were formed from the survivors of failed uprisings or collapsed revolutionary organs from outside the core of the base.[31] It is also likely that some recruits or whole detachments came from the region's surviving bandit gangs and from the small bands of defecting warlord army soldiers that continued to sift into the region.

On occasion, the guerrillas accompanied frontline Red Army regiments on forays outside of the base and participated in attacks on warlord army units. The quality of at least a few guerrilla detachments may also eventually have become, as one organizer later remembered it, "basically the same as the Red Army," especially if the base of comparison included locally raised Red Army units such as the ex-bandits of Yuan's and Wang's Thirty-second Regiment.[32] On balance, however, most guerrilla units were not as well equipped or led as frontline Red Army regiments, and the attention of both guerrillas and red guards alike remained focused less on engaging regular warlord units than on dealing with more localized and localistic adversaries—to wit, elite-led counterrevolutionary militias.

Though the Red Army had destroyed or driven away a number of elite militias when first carving out the Jinggangshan base, this diminution of armed elite opposition was only temporary. Over time, elites who had fled

to Ji'an and other places outside of the base pooled their resources to revive and reinforce existing militia units and to create new ones. By the late spring of 1928, with warlord army incursions distracting the Red Army and providing a modicum of support for their own activities, militias began to raid into the base area and, where possible, to establish small spheres of operation within it.[33] These militia forces posed a significant and growing threat to the base area. On occasion, especially large and professionalized militias such as that of Xiao Jiabi in Suichuan could fight even Red Army units to a standstill. In general, however, the danger of the militias came not from their capacity to combat regular troops but from their ability to compete effectively with the red guards and guerrillas that were the primary defense for most of the base area population and its developing political infrastructure.

Because militia leaders and financial supporters were typically wealthy elites for whom the revolutionary movement posed a direct personal threat, they were able and willing to spend the money needed to equip the militias with much larger complements of modern rifles than most red guard or guerrilla units could muster. Moreover, the strong motivation of their leaders and supporters, coupled with their intimate knowledge of local terrain and conditions, meant that militias were often every bit the equal of the local revolutionary forces in perseverance, cunning, and overall combat effectiveness. The militias' local connections also facilitated their use of spies and informers to locate revolutionary military units and determine favorable opportunities for attacks.

Guarding against potential militia assaults and subversion and coping with them when they actually occurred therefore became vital tasks absorbing much of the time and energy available to red guard and guerrilla units. But the anti-militia work of the local forces was by no means entirely defensive. The large quantities of high-quality arms that made militia units formidable opponents when they were alert and motivated also made them attractive potential sources of new weapons if they could be caught unaware. This happened often enough to make local militia the second-largest supplier (after the Red Army) of modern weapons for revolutionary local forces.

A deadly cat-and-mouse guerrilla war thus gradually developed in and around the base, with elite militias and revolutionary local forces probing for opportunities to launch surprise attacks not only on each other's armed units but also on non-combatant populations and property in areas controlled by their opponents. During the spring and early summer of 1928 the revolutionary forces were able to gain the upper hand in these struggles. This was due primarily to the Red Army's victories over the warlord suppression campaigns, which not only generated an impressive (if transient) groundswell of popular support but also left Red Army regiments in possession of the field and in position to help local guerrilla forces cope with their pesky militia

rivals. Even under these favorable circumstances, however, the militia threat could not be extinguished, but only diminished when conditions worsened, militia units again began to infiltrate the region and torment supporters of the revolution.

Party Expansion

Along with the militarization of the base area population went a concomitant increase in the region's party membership and administrative apparatus. In a manner analogous to the military expansion, in which both regular Red Army units and newly mobilized local paramilitary forces had participated, the growth in party organization was a process that involved both the party's core of experienced veteran cadres and also a much larger group of new recruits drawn from the mass of the region's population. As in the militarization case the dynamics of the growth process were rather different at the top and bottom of the party hierarchy.

By the time Zhu De's forces arrived, months of organizational growth had brought the base's political institutions (especially party organs) to a stage where they needed more formal coordination and integration, a process which also involved the articulation of collective and personal power relationships. The sudden need to interact with yet another group of armed outsiders and the more gradually accumulating pressure to coordinate separate components of an emerging political infrastructure together led base leaders to deal with the conflicting forces involved in constructing a few well-integrated institutional structures from a congeries of potentially competitive individuals and personalistic groups.

Up to this point, in technical organizational terms county party committees and their subordinate branches had functioned largely as independent systems: the next highest levels in their formal chains of command were organs (such as the Hunan Provincial Committee or the South Hunan Special Committee) that were preoccupied with other concerns and in any event often inaccessible. As early as December 1927 Mao had therefore begun to ask both the Hunan and Jiangxi provincial committees for permission to establish a special committee responsible specifically for the Jinggangshan region. Pending this authorization, the Red Army's Front Committee (headed by Mao) had informally expanded its role to include advising and coordinating local party operations.

However, Zhou Lu had abolished the Front Committee in March, and the army party committee that had been established when the troops of Zhu and Mao combined into the Fourth Army had responsibility for all party affairs (including the task of fleshing out and invigorating the hitherto sketchy party apparatus in the newly arrived units) in an army several times the size of Mao's original force. Moreover, the army's party cadres were fully occupied

in the spring's stressful military campaigns. Fortunately, sometime during the spring the long-awaited permission to form a new special committee finally reached the base.

These factors, as well as the need further to articulate and formalize the relative positions and relationships among local and outside party leaders as the number of party members present in the base expanded, led to the convening of the First Congress of the Hunan-Jiangxi Border Area Party in Maoping, from 20 to 23 May. A majority of the sixty-odd delegates in attendance were representatives of local party organs, but leading Red Army cadres were also prominently present. Although Zhu De and Chen Yi as well as Mao were chosen as members of the nineteen-member Border Area Special Committee chosen by the congress, Mao became the committee secretary, and the remaining full members of the standing committee were either outsiders associated with Mao's force or local Jinggangshan cadres. Zhu and Chen became alternate standing committee members, and Chen Yi replaced Mao as the secretary of the Fourth Army's party committee after Mao's election as special committee head.

In addition to forming the special committee, the congress produced a number of other important results, including a renewed commitment to the consolidation and growth of the Jinggangshan base and a consensus on the need to expand land reform. The process of implementing these commitments was furthered a few days later when the Hunan-Jiangxi Border Area Worker-Peasant-Soldiers' Government was also established in Maoping, with Mao as its chair and Yuan Wencai as vice-chair. Once the government was formed, efforts began to carry out land revolution, strengthen red guard organizations and implement other sorts of reform activity.[34]

Together with the consultations that had earlier formed the Fourth Army and its leadership organs, these meetings further developed and formalized political arrangements through which base area affairs could be handled. Despite the evident tripartite institutional division among party, army, and government, however, the precise relationships among the three institutions were still somewhat ambiguous. The idea of overall party leadership was of course clear in principle, and the interlocking directorate of top party cadres holding multiple positions in different institutions helped tie the three organizational systems together in practice. But a variety of nettlesome questions of jurisdiction, competence, and attitude—many of them foreshadowing the "red vs. expert" issues that came to prominence after 1949—remained unresolved.

Even within the party apparatus the relationships among different top leaders and organs were blurred and contested. This was particularly true of the relationship between the Fourth Army's party committee and the new Border Area Special Committee. Although the CCP's predominant national preference was for hierarchically arranged structures and clear chains of command, in this case neither the army committee nor the special committee

was unquestionably superior to or in charge of the other. Probably this situation resulted from a combination of factors, including the special salience of military power in the current stage of the revolutionary struggle, the persistence of distinctions between local natives and outsiders, and the need for organizational parallelism to maintain a tacit presumption of equality between potential rivals such as Mao and Zhu. Despite these ambiguities and unresolved tensions, the high-level political structure that emerged in the aftermath of the "March Defeat" and the arrival of Zhu De's troops proved effective enough to knit the many scattered local revolutionary branches into a loosely coordinated regional enterprise and to coordinate the mobilization of military and political resources.

Accompanying this top-down effort to reorganize the overall political apparatus was a rapid growth in basic-level party membership, especially following the Red Army's victories over the enemy's "bandit suppression campaigns." Where the high-level restructuring was a modulated and calculated process designed to increase stability and control, the explosion in basic party membership was a dramatic, sprawling, emotional process with a different and somewhat contradictory dynamic. Promoted partly by the period's overall mood of optimism and enthusiasm and partly by the synergistic effect of other reforms such as land reform, the dramatic expansion in party membership also stemmed from a marked relaxation in the party's standards of admission and from the extensive use of high-pressure recruiting tactics.

In the exhilarating atmosphere that prevailed after the defeat of the Two Yangs, the usual secrecy and recruitment through personal recommendation that had generally characterized party membership practices gave way to openly proclaimed memberships and rapid recruitment efforts. According to later reminiscences, these party-building activities frequently took on a kind of frenetic, mass-marketing flavor that readily led to excesses of various sorts. In some places cadres held large mass meetings to proselytize about the joys of party membership and sign people up on the spot; in others party leaders gave existing cadres quotas of new party members which they were to sign up within a specified period; and in still others cadres relied on an ominously-named "press-gang-style" (*lafu shi*) of recruiting in which party size was to expand ten-fold through unspecified methods that may well have been as coercive as the name implies.

The combination of favorable circumstances, celebratory mood, and high-pressure, hucksterish techniques led to extremely rapid growth in party membership throughout the region generally, particularly in its core counties of Ninggang and Yongxin. In many relatively small townships in these core counties, party organs expanded from an initial half-dozen or so members to forty or fifty, while those in many larger townships easily reached or exceeded 200. Yongxin county alone had over 4000 party members; Ninggang, with a much smaller population, had almost 2000;

and Lianhua had over 500. CCP membership in the entire border area grew to approximately 10,000.[35]

Not surprisingly, under such circumstances many new recruits knew little of the party's traditions about personal behavior or the meaning of membership. Rather than signifying submergence in an elitist, hierarchical organization, it was for most peasants apparently a much shallower sort of association, often entered into as a spur-of-the-moment group activity rather than as a serious individual commitment. Moreover, for a considerable number of those who did give party membership careful consideration beforehand, the main motivation for joining appears to have been self-centered opportunism rather than principled commitment. Some hoped to attain personal power and prestige or to gain privileged access to scarce resources; others, particularly lower-level elites who already possessed a modicum of wealth or informal authority, sought to use party membership to protect themselves and their assets. Though temporarily disguised by the expansionist optimism of the late spring, the deleterious consequences of allowing such large numbers of casual and calculating converts into the party were to become painfully apparent within a few short weeks.

CONCLUSION

During their first few months in the Jinggangshan region, Mao and his fellow outsiders had been preoccupied with the task of establishing themselves as a noteworthy local presence. In a period of near-constant movement over several months they had marched through virtually all parts of the region, and in each area had prominently displayed their ability to defeat militias and to humiliate, kill, and replace elite power holders. While they had thus marked a territorial range, they had also begun to root themselves by establishing links with local oppositional elites, including both prominent one-time bandit leaders such as Yuan and Wang and "rural intellectuals" such as Long Chaoqing.

During the spring of 1928, however, the outsiders became insiders in their turn as a variety of external political and military forces impinged upon them. In the course of their responses to demands made upon them by higher-level party authorities, other sojourning revolutionary military units, and attacking enemy armies, Mao's force and its local allies were forced to wrestle with issues of political and military organization, mobilization, and strategy that went well beyond what had been required initially to establish a base.

On both a structural and an attitudinal level, party leaders faced new problems of assimilating and integrating disparate groups. During its initial forays around the region, Mao's Red Army force had devoted much of its attention

simply to making its presence known and to reviving dispersed and moribund local party organizations. Its primary organizational effort in this initial period had focused on the peaceful incorporation of the forces of Yuan and Wang, an activity which as already noted was spurred by high-priority, short-term military imperatives. County-level party organs were loosely connected to the Red Army's political leadership in a sort of spokes-and-hub arrangement but remained largely separate from one another.

The expansion of local party organs and the arrival of Zhu De's forces required new and more complex arrangements. It had been relatively easy for Mao's much larger and stronger Red Army to engulf the bands of Yuan and Wang, but it was a very different story when two sizable Red armies with roughly equivalent clusters of resources met and interacted. Moreover, neither the Red Army nor the region's localized party branches could function as flexibly and efficiently as desirable when the latter revolved exclusively around the former. As the Red Army girded for prolonged combat with invading armies, it had less attention to spare for coordinating local party activities. Similarly, as party organs sought to expand their memberships and undertake reform campaigns, their activities needed to be integrated into a region-wide network that concentrated on local politics to a greater extent than the preoccupied Red Army could manage. Taken together, these factors prompted the organizational restructuring recounted in this chapter.

In tandem with greater organizational elaboration and integration, large-scale mobilization activity began to take place in the Jinggangshan base during the spring of 1928. This chapter has focused on the dramatic growth in popular militarization and party membership, efforts which were among the most directly connected to the movement's immediate concerns with security, cadre recruitment, and formal, visible political participation. These forms of popular mobilization were not entirely unprecedented in the Jinggangshan region. As noted in part I, both "predatory" and "protective" forms of local militarization were quasi-permanent features of the region's social landscape. More indirectly, at least part of the rush to join both the party itself and the revolutionary movement more generally seems to have been rooted in the sort of opportunistic "loot/revenge" mentality that never lay far from the surface in Chinese rural life and that often prompted people to group together to attack those who were temporarily or permanently disadvantaged.

Nevertheless, the scale, duration, and organized interconnectedness of the mobilization activities that began during the spring of 1928 were greater than they were for the region's more ordinary forms of military and political mobilization. Even the acute guest people–early settler conflicts of the early 1920s had apparently been confined mostly to Ninggang county rather than extending throughout the multi-county region in which the Communist presence was felt. Moreover, the propagation of a formal, hierarchically constructed political party that deliberately tried to enlist non-elites and that sought to link political, military, and socioeconomic policies together, was something altogether unprecedented.

Both the organizational and the mobilization aspects of base area development during the spring of 1928 were at root manifestations of political and military strategy. Though organizational and mobilization processes were affected by and to some extent proceeded through their own individual dynamics, they also constituted implicit statements about the general goals and methods of the revolutionaries. More particularly, decisions about how organizations should be structured, people should participate, and the Red Army should act in the Jinggangshan area were also practical comments on and components of an evolving strategic discourse on the conduct of the Chinese revolution. Among other things, this discourse involved the articulation of answers to a variety of divergent questions about the roles of bases and armies in the current stage of the Chinese revolution. What precisely *was* the primary purpose of a base such as the one emerging in the Jinggangshan region? Was it a refuge, a place to hide out until conditions improved in more important places? Was it a laboratory and testing-ground for economic, political, and military policies? Or was it a radical seed, a miniature model of a revolutionary society that might grow, replicate, and spread to other areas?

Similarly, what was the role of the Red Army in the present stage of the revolutionary struggle, and how should the army interact with the base area, however the latter might be conceptualized? Was the army primarily a base-protection force, whose individual units should be tied closely to one or another specific geographic area? Alternatively, was it better used as a "fire-brigade," dashing from crisis-point to crisis-point? Or as an itinerant proselytization force spreading the revolutionary word from place to place (lighting sparks that would merge into a prairie fire, as party imagery had it)? Or employed as a shock force whose sharp attack on one or more major cities would precipitate a sudden systemic collapse?

These various conceptions and roles for base and army were not all mutually exclusive, and elements of most of them can be found in the words and actions of the revolutionary forces in the Jinggangshan area during the spring of 1928. In this early period, party leaders (including Mao) were feeling their way rather by trial and error, and ambiguous and contradictory opinions were both directly and indirectly evident. As will become apparent in later chapters, controversies over the concept and function of "base areas" and the organization and strategic role of the Red Army were to continue for some time both within the regional revolutionary movement and between regional leaders and higher-level party authorities. That said, it is clear that the actions taken in the spring of 1928 were important early moves in the long process of conceptualizing what became known as the "rural revolutionary base areas strategy" associated with Mao Zedong.

NOTES

1. On the letter to the Red Army from the Jiangxi provincial committee secretary, which informed the army that there were armed revolutionary forces (those of Yuan Wencai and Wang Zuo) in the Jinggangshan area, see *JGGY*, 44; I have found no published copy of this letter, and it may well be that it has been lost. For mention of the Jinggangshan region in autumn 1927 Jiangxi provincial committee documents, see *JGG*, vol. 1, 49, 52. For the Red Army messenger sent to the Hunan provincial committee, see *JGG*, vol. 1, 529; He Changgong, *Nanwang de suiyue* [Unforgettable years] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1982), 43. For national-level documents from late October and late December 1927 locating Mao's force in the Jinggangshan region, see *JGG*, vol. 1, 45, 57.

2. With the exception of the letter from the Jiangxi provincial committee secretary received by the Red Army in Lianhua en route to Jinggangshan, I have not located any textual references to the receipt of materials from higher-level party authorities before March 1928; nor do any letters from high-level authorities to Mao and his fellow leaders appear in the published documentary collections on the Jinggangshan base area. Unless other documents bearing on this issue remain unrevealed in party archives, it therefore seems that there were no directives sent specifically to the Jinggangshan leaders during this period.

3. The first outside news about party affairs may have come as early as January 1928, when during its raid into Suichuan the Red Army Front Committee met in the county seat with the party committees of Suichuan and Wan'an counties to discuss coordinating their efforts with those of other regional counties. Wan'an, which straddled the Gan River just east of Suichuan, had much better communications with Nanchang than the Jinggangshan region, was home to a group of well-known CCP cadres with a long involvement in provincial party affairs, and had been the site of a well-reported uprising lasting from the autumn of 1927 until early 1928. All of these facts make it almost certain that the Wan'an cadres were in touch with provincial party leaders, and they may well have passed on such news as they possessed during their January meeting with the Front Committee. Whether or not this occurred, other contact with the outside definitely took place in March, when the South Hunan Special Committee passed on word of policies announced by the new national party leader Qu Qiubai. *JF*, 51–52, 110–13; Chen Zhengren, "Yi Wan'an lianxi huiyi" [Recalling the Wan'an joint conference], *Xinghuo liaoyuan congshu zhiyi (Jinggangshan douzheng zhuanji)* [A single spark starts a prairie fire collecteana, vol. 1 (A special collection on the Jinggangshan struggle)] (Beijing: Jiefangjun chubanshe, 1986), 77–79.

4. Zhou was a native of Xupu county in Hunan; he had formerly been an instructor at the Hengyang Peasant Training Institute, secretary of the CYL's South Hunan Special Committee, and head of the propaganda department of the CCP South Hunan Special Committee. He was killed by the enemy shortly after his trip to Jinggangshan during the Southern Hunan Uprising. *JF*, 112.

5. *JF*, 110–11; Marcia R. Ristaino, *China's Art of Revolution: The Mobilization of Discontent, 1927 and 1928* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1987), chap. 5; John E. Rue, *Mao Tse-tung in Opposition, 1927–1935* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1966), 79–81.

6. The movements of Zhu De and his force are recounted in many detailed reminiscences and narrative accounts, in which, however, there are a considerable number of divergences and contradictions. The present brief summary relies primarily upon what I consider to be the most thorough, accurate, and synthetic version of events available: Zhonggong Chenzhou diwei dangshi bangongshi, "Xiangnan qiyi" [The Southern Hunan Uprising], in *Zhonggong dangshi ziliao zhuanti yanjiu ji: Dierci guonei geming zhanzheng shiqi (yi)* [A collection of research on specialized topics using materials in CCP history: The Second Revolutionary Civil War period (part one)], ed. Zhonggong zhongyang dangshi ziliao zhengji weiyuanhui zhengji yanjiu shi (Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi ziliao chubanshe, 1987), 56–60. My account is also informed by material in the following: Agnes Smedley, *The Great Road: The Life and Times of Chu Teh* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1956), 203–19; *JF*, 118–19; Su Yu, "Jiliu gui dahai" [A tumultuous torrent returns to the sea], in *JGG*, vol. 2, 303–17; *JGGY*, 163–65; and Gong Chu, *Wo yu hongjun* [The Red Army and I] (Hong Kong: South Wind Publishing Co., 1954), 89–106.

7. As with the earlier movements of Zhu's force, there are many available sources which describe the events of the Southern Hunan Uprising. The account provided here is a synthesis of material in Zhonggong Chenzhou diwei, "Xiangnan qiyi," 60–69; *JF*, 118–26; *JGDS*, 84–91; Su Yu, "Jiliu," 317–21; Smedley, *The Great Road*, 219–26; Gong Chu, *Wo yu hongjun*, 100–128.

8. *JGDS*, 88–89; *Jinggangshan de wuzhuang gezhu* [The Jinggangshan military base] (Nanchang: Jiangxi renmin chubanshe, 1980), 120–24.

9. Zhonggong Chenzhou diwei, "Xiangnan qiyi," 66–67; Su Yu, "Jiliu," 322; Liu Xiaonong, *Jinggang yanyi* [The romance of Jinggang] (Beijing: Nongcun dushu chubanshe, 1989), 427–32.

10. *JGDS*, 90–91; *JF*, 124–26; Peng Ru, "Cong Xiangnan dao Jinggangshan" [From southern Hunan to Jinggangshan], in *JGG*, vol. 2, 353; Liu Xiaonong, *Jinggang yanyi*, 427–31.

11. *JGDS*, 87–90; *JGGY*, 148–53, 314–15; Li Ziren, "Hongjun zai Shatian," in *JGG*, vol. 2, 273–75.

12. *JF*, 114; *WZ*, 282; Liu Xiaonong, *Jinggang yanyi*, 453.

13. *JF*, 128; He Changgong, "Weida de huishi," 370.

14. *JGGY*, 236–37; He Changgong, "Weida de huishi," 369–70; Peng Ru, "Cong Xiangnan dao Jinggangshan," 356; Liu Xiaonong, *Jinggang yanyi*, 454.

15. He Changgong, "Weida de huishi," 370; Liu Xiaonong, *Jinggang yanyi*, 455–57. Liu's account says that some at the meeting favored calling the new force the First Army, others the Second Army, and so forth, but that Zhu De won the day when he suggested that Fourth Army was the best designation because it would commemorate the famous Fourth ("Ironsides") Army of the Northern Expedition period. Another account states that Zhu's force had already—perhaps for the same reason—adopted the designation of Fourth Army when it first openly assumed a Red Army identity after seizing the Yizhang county seat in January. If true, this, along with Zhu's assumption of the title of commander-in-chief of the army, suggests that Zhu's power at the time was at least equal to, if not superior to, Mao's.

16. *JF*, 128–30; *JGDS*, 92–96; He Changgong, "Weida de huishi," 371–72; *JGGY*, 168–75; Liu Xiaonong, *Jinggang yanyi*, 457–60. The disagreement over whether there were six or nine regiments at this time turns on the question of how many regiments

were constituted out of the large mass of Hunanese peasants who had arrived along with Zhu's troops. Since some sources provide precise unit designations and names of top leaders for several Hunanese regiments, and others note that all of the Hunanese peasant forces except for the Twenty-ninth Regiment soon left the base to resume fighting in their home areas, the most likely scenario is that nine regiments did exist for at least a brief time, but that the number was reduced first to six and then to four as the Hunanese departed.

17. *JF*, 130; Liu Xiaonong, *Jinggang yanyi*, 467. Liu's account states that Fourth Army leaders held a meeting following the Wudoujiang battle and specifically decided to send the Hunanese regiments away, but I have been unable to confirm this from any other source.

18. *JF*, 133–41; *JGDS*, 96–98.

19. *JF*, 143–151; *JGDS*, 98–101.

20. *JF*, 152–63.

21. "Letter to Lin Biao" (14 June 1929), in *Mao's Road to Power: Revolutionary Writings, 1912–1949*, ed. Stuart Schram (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1995), vol. 3, 177.

22. Agnes Smedley, who had extensive contact with both Zhu and Mao in Yan'an, provides an interesting comparison of the two in *The Great Road*, 226, excerpts from which are as follows:

> There were many striking similarities, as well as deep differences between the two men. Mao was ten years younger than Chu [Zhu]. . . . Both were educated peasants and both had taken part in every revolutionary struggle since the 1911 Revolution. Mao had played a leading role in the great May 4th Movement while Chu [Zhu] had existed on its periphery and was stumbling in confusion in the morass of warlordism in Szechwan [Sichuan]. . . .
>
> In both appearance and temperament Chu Teh [Zhu De] was more of a peasant than Mao. Both men were as direct, forthright and as practical as the peasants from whom they sprang, but Mao was basically an intellectual . . . [Zhu], though politically intelligent, was more a man of action and a military organizer.

23. Su Yu, "Jiliu," 313; Zhonggong Chenzhou diwei, "Xiangnan qiyi," 56–60; *JGGY*, 289–90, 292; Smedley, *The Great Road*, 212–18.

24. This saying is said to have been first articulated by Mao and Zhu De in May 1928, though the earliest available written document quoting this formulation dates from April 1929. See *JGG*, vol. 1, 537; "A Letter from the Front Committee to the Central Committee" (5 April 1929), in *Mao's Road to Power*, ed. Schram, vol. 3, 155.

25. In a memoir, Xiao Ke, who was a young Red Army soldier in Jinggangshan, records that Mao Zedong referred to Zhu's phrase, but said it should be modified to read: "one must both be able to fight and to go in circles." See Xiao Ke, "Yong ming zai xin de qinqie jiaohui" [Kind teachings forever engraved on the heart], in *Huiyi Jinggangshan douzheng shiqi* [Reminiscences of the period of the Jinggangshan struggle], ed. Zhonggong Jinggangshan dangwei xuanchuan bu (Nanchang: Jiangxi renmin chubanshe, 1979), 129.

26. The term "mountain-topism" also had additional usages and connotations in party documents—referring, for example, to party organs and cadres who kept themselves aloof from the concerns of the populace, or who were unresponsive to orders and requests from other party organs—but the basic theme of inaccessibility and isolation remains common to all.

27. Distribution of the weapons was as follows: Youxian 300, Chaling 300, Lingxian 60, Suichuan 50, Yongxin 80, Lianhua 60, Ninggang 120 (combining 60 in Yuan Wencai's group in the county's lowlands and 60 in Wang Zuo's group on the Jinggangshan massif). *JF*, 176–77.

28. *JF*, 178.

29. In some parts of the Jinggangshan region (most notably in Yongxin), for example, many of the first post–United Front paramilitary units were referred to as "uprising detachments" (*baodong dui*), a terminology that was also adopted in some other parts of Jiangxi. See He Minxue, "Huiyi Jinggangshan de geming douzheng" [Remembering the Jinggangshan revolutionary struggle], in *JGG*, vol. 2, 242–43.

30. For an overview of red guard and guerrilla unit formation, see *JF*, 175–85. For the distinction between "predatory" and "protective," see Elizabeth J. Perry, *Rebels and Revolutionaries in North China, 1845–1945* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1980), 59–95.

31. Examples include the guerrilla unit formed by refugees from a failed uprising in Wan'an county in Jiangxi. See Kang Keqing, *Kang Keqing huiyilu* [The reminiscences of Kang Keqing] (Beijing: Jiefangjun chubanshe, 1993).

32. He Minxue, "Huiyi Jinggangshan," 242.

33. *Ninggang xianzhi* [Gazetteer of Ninggang county] (1937 ed.), *houzhi* section, 156; *houji* section, 10–12; *JF*, 179–81; Liu Xiaonong, *Jinggang yanyi*, 496, 536–37.

34. *JGGY*, 301–3, 125; *JGDS*, 101–5; *JF*, 152. In a later report, Mao stated that the number of people elected to the special committee was twenty-three, but he provided no list of names. However, a contemporary party document captured by the government and preserved in the archives of nearby Anhua county in Hunan lists a total of nineteen specific names. Though some secondary sources continue to accept Mao's figure of twenty-three, most newer sources follow the Anhua document's list of nineteen.

35. Xu Chunhua, "Xiang-Gan bianjie de xidang yundong" [The party cleansing movement in the Hunan-Jiangxi border area], in *Ninggang geming douzheng ziliao congshu—Ninggang Jingganshan geming genjudi de zhongxin (xu bian)* [A collecteana of materials on the Ninggang revolutionary struggle—centered on the Ninggang and Jinggangshan revolutionary base area (continuation)], ed. Ninggang xian zhengxie wenshi ziliao weiyuanhui and Zhonggong Ninggang xian weihui dangshi bangongshi (N.p., n.p.), 262–63.

7

Socioeconomic Reform

As efforts continued to defend the base militarily, other activities were simultaneously underway to dig the revolutionary movement deeper into the region's complex social terrain and to mobilize the population to participate in socioeconomic reforms promoted by the CCP. Among the party's most loudly proclaimed and widely articulated reform programs were those calling for the large-scale redistribution of land and other forms of wealth, the overthrow and replacement of the existing rural socioeconomic power structure, and the introduction of more egalitarian forms of ethnic relations. None of these areas of reform was entirely separable, and each of them also involved complex clusters of interrelated issues and problems.

As this chapter shows, the socioeconomic programs launched in the Jinggangshan region were volatile and variable in their results. In part, this was because conditions were far from ideal: the base was generally under siege, so that revolutionaries had to devote much attention to such immediate problems as repelling attacks, building and preserving military and political organizations, and maintaining supplies of food and other essential goods. Complicating matters further were general inexperience and persistent intraparty disagreements over the appropriate policies to follow.

In addition, however, the intractable complexity of rural society itself frustrated revolutionaries and forced numerous unwelcome compromises upon them. Early efforts at mobilization and reform, taking place amid military strife punctuated by successive Red Army victories, fostered a sense of urgency and contagious excitement that led to impressive short-term results. In the longer run, however, the region's jumbled jackstraws of cross-cutting socioeconomic division proved much too delicately balanced to be easily rearranged, and the revolutionary movement's mixture of militarization,

organization-building, and popular mobilization not only fell short of its goals but also contributed to a counterproductive inflammation of many of the emotions and tensions that had long made this such a violent and conflict-ridden region.

THE ECONOMIC ATTACK ON THE EXISTING RURAL ORDER

The Resurgence of Peasant Collective Action

Despite a few small-scale and ephemeral early experiments such as those of Peng Pai in Hai-Lu-feng in the early 1920s,[1] at the time of the split between the GMD and the CCP in 1927 most CCP members possessed neither any practical experience in land redistribution nor even any detailed guidelines as to how such a program should be carried out. In addition, the party's severe losses in prestige, personnel, and organizational integrity during the breakup of the United Front and the "White Terror" that followed further hindered the rapid implementation of land reform.

Even if they had had the experience and organizational resources to launch an immediate land revolution, moreover, the fluid military and political situation that continued to exist at all levels long after the breakup of the United Front made it impossible for the party to provide the security and uninterrupted period of time necessary to carry out a thoroughgoing and successful land redistribution program. Where peasants felt that there was a strong likelihood that revenge-minded landlords would soon return with army or militia support, they were unwilling to risk cooperating with redistribution initiatives. And where—as was certainly the case in Jinggangshan—land use was only one aspect of what were typically multifaceted and intricately interconnected individual and familial economic survival strategies, painstaking and protracted efforts were required to investigate conditions and develop plans that would be sophisticated and comprehensive enough to bring to peasants the economic revolution the party had promised.

All of these reasons help explain why the revolutionaries in the Jinggangshan region began not with widespread land redistribution but with an intensification of the sorts of rent-resistance and anti-usury campaigns and attacks on exemplary individual landholding elite families that had been used by United Front–era peasant movements. These activities were easier to start and sustain than full-fledged land redistribution, for a variety of reasons. To begin with, withholding rent, opening landlord granaries, and other activities of this sort were parts of a repertoire of peasant collective action whose history long antedated their most recent use in the mass movements of 1926–1927. Their persistence over many generations meant that they were already established local social practices whose efficacious employment could

proceed with little need for explanation and indoctrination by scarce, preoccupied, and inexperienced party cadres.

By the same token, as might be expected from actions which were habitually undertaken in an environment where physical retaliation was commonplace, many parts of the traditional collective action repertoire could be aimed at a few selected targets, were frequently difficult to trace to individual perpetrators, and were relatively reversible. These qualities meant that, depending on the scale of the collective action and the specific local circumstances, it was possible for both the initiators and the targets of such activities to conceive of them as sanctions taken against the behavior of specific individuals rather than as blanket indictments of the entire rural order.

Land redistribution, by contrast, constituted a much more direct and fundamental challenge to the entire rural power structure, and it was much more difficult to implement. Land redistribution had almost by definition to be widespread to be useful and involved a much more comprehensive redistribution of wealth than resisting rent or ransacking granaries. Land, moreover, was much more enduring, immobile, and identifiable than withheld rent money or confiscated grain, which meant that land reform entailed a more serious risk and demanded a deeper commitment on the part of participants than did the activities of the traditional collective action repertoire.

Besides being somewhat less risky than land redistribution and less demanding of either peasant commitment or party resources, the familiar forms of collective action had the additional advantage for the revolutionary movement of helping in the important task of grubbing out the underbrush of rural elite power to make room for the more extensive clear-cutting yet to come. Local elites were impediments to the revolutionary movement's military and political expansion as well as to the implementation of land redistribution. In addition, their wealth could be put to good use by financially strapped revolutionary organs. Rent resistance, granary openings, and struggle sessions against certain particularly exploitative landlords therefore served several useful functions simultaneously: to apply economic pressure on elites and to mobilize peasants who could later be involved in more radical land reform activities, to distract elites and weaken their ability to organize military and political opposition to the revolutionary movement, and to provide money and grain that could support Red Army soldiers and party cadres.

Confronting Market Towns and the Commercial Economy

In the course of their efforts to weaken elites, obtain needed resources, and lay the foundation for later and more radical programs, the revolutionaries were drawn inevitably into contact not only with the complications of rural land relations but also (and for some of the same reasons) with the

equally complicated and inseparably connected economic and political issues involved in the Jinggangshan region's market towns and commercial economy. Although the region's economy was not highly commercialized relative to Jiangxi's core areas or to other prosperous parts of China such as Jiangnan, it still possessed at least a rudimentary hierarchy of basic-level and intermediate market towns in which grain and a variety of mountain products were exchanged for salt, machine-made cloth, and other goods that were not produced in the region.

Market towns throughout China were centers where resources and elite power were concentrated and were sites for a variety of interactions among peasants and elites. In the Jinggangshan region they were also often sites of confrontation between and ethnic domination of guest people by early settlers. In addition, the extensive overlap and interpenetration that existed in practice between the analytically distinct categories of "landlord" and "merchant," with many merchants investing some of their capital in land and landlords using some of theirs to open market-town stores or pawnshops, increased still further the many connections that bound markets to their rural hinterlands.

As centers where wealth and power were concentrated and which had close ties both to the region's numerous small villages and to the wider outside world, market towns quickly became prime foci of attention for the revolutionary movement. At this early stage in their involvement with rural China, however, the Communists had not yet clearly settled on how they would deal with a variety of socioeconomic issues, including many that were posed by aspects of market-town life. Although CCP leaders therefore recognized the importance of reshaping these towns into centers that would better support their movement, the multiplicity of market town functions led to a great deal of ambivalence and ambiguity—and sometimes even to a kind of schizophrenia—in the early attitudes and policies adopted toward them by the revolutionaries.

On the one hand, as both symbolic and practical centers of elite power and counterrevolutionary sentiments, markets seemed to be appropriate targets for harsh attack. The living quarters and armories of elite-led militias were typically located in market towns, for example, as were the homes and properties of many of the militias' elite patrons. Market towns were also the closest equivalents to centers of capitalist influence as could be found in this largely rural environment; market town merchants in particular seemed almost by Marxist definition to be exploitative capitalists, and thus unambiguous opponents to those who held Communist ideological tenets. Adding pragmatic fuel to this ideological fire was the fact that market towns generally, and especially their merchant firms and families, were among the best sources in the region for grain and cash which could be used to support

chronically impoverished Red Army units and other revolutionaries who were "removed from production."

On the other hand, market towns' functions as entrepots for the import and export of goods, as sources of loan capital for agriculture and other activities, and as providers of specialized products and services all were essential to the economic well-being of the entire population of the region and not just to townspeople. In addition, the market towns were the home of many of the specialized handicraft workers, porters, apprentices, and other categories of people who together made up the local "proletariat" and whom party ideology designated as a constituency needing special support and attention.

Because the CCP's aim went beyond simply expropriating and killing landlords and merchants to embrace the broader goals of building a viable rural base and carrying out successful socioeconomic reforms in the region, its members needed not only to nurture the embryonic proletariat but also to ensure the survival of an effectively functioning overall economic infrastructure capable of supporting both the normal population and also the thousands of Red Army soldiers now concentrated in the area. Concern with maintaining a vibrant economy with continuing commercial relations outside of the region only increased as the government/elite blockade gradually became tighter and more punishing.

The tension between the alternate faces of market towns as at once dangerous dens of elite iniquity and valuable engines of economic prosperity was not immediately or fully apparent to all revolutionary leaders. Especially in late 1927 and early 1928, when the revolutionary movement's long-term survival prospects were still very uncertain, the desire to carry out harsh reprisals against the perpetrators of the "White Terror" was very strong; the resources vital for military and political base-building were in short supply; and the party's national ideological line stressed the imminence of a revolutionary upsurge, the emphasis of many revolutionary leaders in Jinggangshan and neighboring regions was on striking the most visible, damaging, and materially profitable blows possible against market towns and their exploitative inhabitants.

Gradually, however, experience began to persuade many leaders that popular support for their cause could be severely damaged if overly harsh treatment was meted out to market towns and their resident elites. Some more thoughtful and sophisticated cadres eventually moved beyond this concern with short-term popular perception to recognize the long-term implications of a prosperous market town economy for the success of their struggle to build a viable alternative to the existing rural order.[2]

A major spur to the development of a somewhat more benign policy toward market towns and their inhabitants was the evident backlash that developed against the "Red Terror" conducted by CCP cadres in late 1927 and

early 1928, most notably in southern Hunan but also in the Jinggangshan region. As noted previously, in conjunction with their efforts to launch a southern Hunan uprising, the CCP's Hunan Provincial Committee and Southern Hunan Special Committee had endorsed a massive campaign of what was later termed "excessive killing and burning" aimed at punishing opponents of the revolution.

Because many of these opponents lived in market towns and cities, the effects of this campaign were particularly evident in urban areas seized by the hastily mobilized and poorly disciplined peasant armies. Although the widespread executions of merchants and other urban elites and the extensive looting and burning of houses, stores, and government buildings eliminated some present opponents and raised the cost of opposition, these actions also alienated many neutral inhabitants and created bitter new enemies. Because the actions were carried out peremptorily and without thorough explanation, the party achieved temporary acquiescence through fear rather than lasting acceptance through understanding. As a result, when revolutionary control was threatened by returning enemy armies, popular support for the CCP rapidly melted away.[3]

In the Jinggangshan region as well, similarly harsh and destructive actions were undertaken during this period, albeit less systematically and on a smaller scale. Following the Red Army seizures of the Lingxian, Ninggang, Yongxin, and Suichuan county seats in late 1927 to early 1928, for example, there was evidently considerable destruction of private dwellings as well as the execution of exemplary class enemies and the carting away of large quantities of confiscated movable property. Similar activities occurred during the Red Army's March 1928 incursion into southern Hunan, with Zhou Lu's active encouragement.

By this point, however, Mao Zedong and some other cadres had begun to question the wisdom and effectiveness of the policy of widespread killing and burning, and the entire issue had become a matter for debate within the regional leadership. By the time the Red Army returned to Jinggangshan, the collapse of the Southern Hunan Uprising had made the counterproductive results of the former policy evident enough to prompt the general adoption of a somewhat more moderate and nuanced approach.

Caolin Market

Mao's own thinking on the subject had been shaped by his involvement in the situation that had developed in the wake of the Red Army's January 1928 seizure of the market town of Caolin in Suichuan county. Because of the way in which it illustrates the frustratingly convoluted mixture of positive and negative features that CCP members perceived when they viewed the market-town environment, it is worth examining the Caolin case in some detail.

Caolin was a large regional market town—usually listed third in a formulaic list of the "Four Great Markets" of Suichuan—that drew merchants from several surrounding counties. The needs of these guest merchants, the rural people who came to Caolin from the market's large hinterland, and the town's own three thousand or more inhabitants had been sufficient in the early twentieth century to support more than 200 stores. This diverse and competitive environment, however, had eroded during the 1920s due to the sustained efforts over a several-year period by a small group of the town's upper elite households, most of which were surnamed Huang and Guo. The most powerful among these families was that headed by an archetypal wealthy and well-connected regional elite figure named Huang Lirui.[4]

Together the Huangs and the other dominant Caolin families controlled a number of the town's largest rice, salt, oil, and cloth firms, and over the years they used their superior competitive position to acquire a near-monopoly in these market segments, taking over or forcing out of business in the process around one hundred smaller firms (about half of the town's original complement of stores) that had fallen into debt to them. They also used their commercial dominance to levy various licensing, management, market rental, and "doing business" fees on both local people and outsiders wishing to use the market. Outside of town, they used militia forces to staff transit tax stations controlling traffic on the roads to market. All of these profitable endeavors were buttressed and protected by the broad network of political and kinship connections possessed by Huang Lirui and the other dominant elite families.

If Caolin's upper elites thus clearly dominated economic, social, and political life, however, to Communist eyes they were far from being the only significant group in the town and its environs. Despite the large number of bankruptcies and buyouts that Huang and his associates had induced over the years, the vast majority of the businesses that remained in Caolin when the Red Army seized the town were those of what party cadres termed "small capitalists." Of the 111 stores still existing in the town at the time, only sixteen were owned by "large capitalists" and another eleven by "medium capitalists"; the remaining eighty-four were in the hands of small capitalists. These small entrepreneurs were generally under the hegemonic thumb of the dominant upper elite conglomerates and found it necessary as a condition of survival to pay the "doing business" fees to and otherwise to follow the economic lead of Huang and his associates. Nevertheless, they constituted a large group of commercially active individuals who might be of use to the revolutionary movement if their support could be obtained.[5]

The difficulty was in prying the small merchants loose from the control of the dominant upper elites. When the Red Army entered Suichuan in January 1928, they shut down the transit tax stations Caolin elites had established on the road from Huang'ao on the southern fringe of the Jinggangshan massif. This action, together with the general fear and turmoil generated by the Red

Army's seizure of the Suichuan county seat, was enough to prompt Huang Lirui and most of his associates to close their businesses and depart posthaste for the greater safety of one or another of Jiangxi's major cities.

Before leaving, however, the dominant elites had used a variety of threats and rumors to shut down the rest of the town as well as their own major firms. In addition to the potent threat that the militia of Xiao Jiabi (to whom Huang Lirui was related by marriage) would soon return and retaliate against anyone who cooperated with the Red Army, Huang and his associates also spread the word that the Communists had already communized all of the stores in the Suichuan county seat, and that when they came to Caolin they would engage in simply burning, looting, and confiscation of the goods of even small shopkeepers. These arguments were credible and persuasive, the former in light of the way that Huang et al. had obtained and maintained their power, and the latter in light not only of people's general knowledge of the habitual behavior of roving bandit gangs and warlord army units but also of the widespread (and not inaccurate) stories of the "Red Terror" tactics then being used in Jinggangshan and elsewhere in the region.

Under the circumstances, all of the stores in Caolin remained shuttered after the Red Army arrived, despite the efforts of party cadres to persuade merchants that they had nothing to fear from reopening to serve the local populace and the Red Army, both of which were growing short of salt and other essential supplies. This standoff still existed when Mao Zedong arrived in the town on 14 January.

After Mao had surveyed the situation, he embarked on a moderate policy that allowed some confiscations but still achieved the goal of "protecting labor and commerce" (*baohu gongshang ye*). Instead of taking immediate, forceful—and under the circumstances inevitably coercive—steps to bludgeon the market open, Mao articulated a nuanced, proportional, and differentiated policy under which most small and medium merchants would not be fined or have their goods confiscated. Such confiscations as did take place were to be tied specifically and publicly to the exploitative activities of particular individuals, and the goods seized were to be given to the masses, not kept by the Red Army. Even after word of this policy was spread via a determined propaganda campaign, the stores were still slow to open, doubtless because of the continued presence of underlings and informants of the absent elites. After a couple of days, however, the shutters came down and trading began once again.

Once commerce resumed, the CCP finally felt free to strike directly at the town's dominant elites. Though the elites themselves were out of reach, their property remained, and the cadres soon confiscated all the available stocks of merchandise and cash in the large enterprises which had long served as the main dynamos of the elites' economic power. At the same time, they destroyed the fortified tower that Huang Lirui had constructed as a refuge from bandits and seized the weapons stored within. To try to ensure that the elites were unable to regain power, cadres encouraged the prompt formation of carpenters' and tailors' unions, red guards, and workers' picket detachments.

On 16 January, in a mixture of periodic market and mass rally, over twenty thousand people gathered in Caolin, including merchants and peddlers from Nankang and Shangyou counties over a hundred *li* away. While people milled around bargaining, celebrating, or just watching the excitement, Mao seized the opportunity to reiterate that there was a place in the CCP's policies for commerce as well as agriculture and that small merchants in particular were encouraged to pursue their business opportunities freely. Then the Red Army distributed a large quantity of confiscated foodstuffs to the assembled populace.[6]

Caolin was one of the larger market towns in the entire Jinggangshan region, and as such it may not have been entirely typical in the prosperity and influence of its largest firms and their associated elite households. Yet it does clearly illustrate the more general fact that market towns contained not only powerful and dangerous enemies of the revolution but also numerous small merchants and artisans who were at least potentially open to cooperation with the revolution if approached properly. It also provides a successful example of how a nuanced and multi-faceted strategy that balanced coercion and concession could—at least in the short run—disarticulate the intertwined web of power relations that secured upper elite domination over market-town society, and do so in a way that produced more good will and cooperation than the sullen acquiescence induced by the Red Terror's confrontational steamroller tactics.

Unfortunately for the CCP, they were soon forced to withdraw from Caolin and most of the rest of Suichuan when enemy armies arrived. There is no information available about what happened in Caolin after the Red Army retreated, so that it is impossible to say, for example, whether or not Huang Lirui returned and regained some or all of his former prominence. Even if he himself did not, however, it is known that the strong militia forces of Xiao Jiabi (whose main base was not far away in Dafen) reoccupied the area, and there can be no doubt that with their support Caolin fell once again under the sway of local elites.

Such rapid reversals of fortune were common, given the frequent fluctuation in the base area's boundaries as the military situation ebbed and flowed, and the fact that most of the region's major market towns were located in river valleys and other lowland areas that were relatively accessible to invading armies and elite militias. Because their control of urban areas was generally so fleeting, it was often difficult for the revolutionaries to achieve in practice much of the long-term advantage that moderate policies toward market-town populations might otherwise have brought them.

Moreover, in the context of an increasingly lengthy, bitter, and costly civil war, the repeated captures and recaptures of territory fostered escalating cycles of harsh treatment and reprisals by both the rival military forces and the general population. Under these volatile circumstances, there was also a persistent and quite understandable tendency for long-term strategy to give way to spur-of-the-moment decisions based on emotion, simplistic slogans abstracted from poorly understood ideologies, and the imperatives of the immediate military and political power struggle.

For all of these reasons, the moderate strategy that Mao and other regional CCP cadres gradually formulated for dealing with commerce and merchants in the Jinggangshan region was neither as widely employed nor as effective as it might have been under different conditions. Though the weaknesses of a harsh, full-scale Red Terror were recognized, demands for revenge and the dictates of ideology combined to ensure that suspicion of and antagonism toward urban elites remained strong and frequently expressed.

In addition, as supplies and cash within the core of the base area became depleted and the economic blockade began increasingly to hinder their replenishment through normal commercial processes, raids on market towns on the fringes or outside of the base area became more and more essential to the provisioning and survival of the Red Army. The brevity of these hit-and-run raids precluded any attempt at careful sociological analysis or sorting out of the market town populations such as Mao had attempted at Caolin, and the fuzzy line between planned expropriation legitimized by revolutionary policy and impromptu looting stimulated by growling bellies was doubtless often crossed in the raids' execution.

The "Red Market" and Economic Investment

Although the revolutionary movement was unable to deal thoroughly with the complex task of establishing long-term control over and reforming most of the region's major market towns, it was possible to revamp and manage a few smaller towns lying deep in the heart of the base, where the Red Army presence and popular support were relatively secure. In these localities, party leaders did try in various ways to stimulate economic activity, make market relations more egalitarian and non-exploitative, and provide useful recycling outlets for Red Army booty.

Among the most visible and successful of these market reform efforts was that undertaken in Dalong, a small market in southern Ninggang county not far from Maoping and the Jinggangshan massif. In mid-July 1928, a so-called "Red Market" (*hongse xuchang*) began to operate there on a 2–5–8 schedule, following a month or so of preparatory work. The Red Market was tightly managed and regulated by the Dalong district revolutionary government, which had established a special organization for the purpose. This body mobilized

red guards to patrol the market, supervised activities to prevent cheating and sharp practices, and sent representatives outside of the base area to encourage merchants from elsewhere to patronize the market. The district government also itself opened a store in the market, stocked with plentiful goods at low prices—probably goods obtained in the course of Red Army raids.

The latter was probably also the case with goods in other stores opened and operated by the base area government in Ciping and Dajing on Jinggangshan and in Tangbian in Yongxin. Capital for these stores was raised by selling interest-bearing public shares, many of them to local peasants. According to descriptions of these stores, some of their goods were obtained by purchases made and passed along by underground party organs outside of the base area or by smuggled goods bought from individual entrepreneurs, but many of them were allegedly obtained by Red Army "purchases" during their raids. Chances are that more of these goods were simply seized than openly purchased.[7]

It is unclear exactly how long the Dalong Red Market and the government stores established elsewhere in the base during the summer of 1928 remained active, but given the widespread disruption which occurred during the later summer, it is likely that they were short-lived. It is in any case certain that their impact was not broad or sustained enough to change significantly the nature of market relations or the level of commercial activity in the base area. Nevertheless, as was the case with many other reform initiatives carried out in the Jinggangshan base, these explorations and experiments with the reform of the market-town interface between the rural and urban economy were important in identifying issues and suggesting policies that would be pursued more thoroughly in subsequent years and other base areas.

DEEPENING THE LAND REVOLUTION

As recounted in earlier chapters, by the spring of 1928 the combined efforts of the Red Army and CCP cadres had succeeded in laying the military and political foundation for the Jinggangshan base. In the process, the revolutionary movement had also achieved at least the minimal levels of security, organization, and popular confidence necessary for moving beyond the simple encouragement of traditional forms of peasant collective action to launch a campaign for widespread, fundamental land redistribution.

The Introduction of Land Redistribution

Land redistribution had begun as early as the end of February 1928 in certain parts of Lingxian and Ninggang, most notably in the guest people–dominated area around Qiaolin at the foot of the Jinggangshan

massif, where Mao's brother Zetan played a prominent role in directing the process. These early efforts, however, were small-scale and superficial activities that were largely undone when the base area was temporarily occupied by enemy troops during the March Defeat.[8] A much more widespread campaign was undertaken during the so-called High Tide period of base area expansion that began in May 1928 and continued well into the summer. In the optimism of the moment, the First Border Area Party Congress in May decided to make the land revolution a high priority program, and with this official emphasis and the active involvement of Red Army forces, extensive efforts were made to encourage local peasants to deepen their collective actions to include full-scale land redistribution.[9]

On paper at least, the redistribution process was closely linked to popular mobilization and the expansion of the soviet government apparatus. Soviet government organs at the county,[10] district, and township levels formed land committees (*tudi weiyuanhui*), with five to seven members each, that were charged with investigating local conditions, setting up regulations specifying class distinctions, and generally overseeing the distribution program.[11]

However, it remains uncertain just how active or effective these committees were in actual redistribution. In many places the land committees were at least aided, and may have been for all practical purposes supplanted, by small Red Army units that maintained their habitual practice of dispersing to help with rural mass mobilization in the intervals between enemy military threats. Some army efforts remained devoted to expanding the base by proselytizing in peripheral areas where the revolutionary movement had not yet become firmly established,[12] but an increasing amount of energy went into supporting the land revolution.

In one of the most well documented of these Red Army operations, in June, Mao Zedong led a Red Army battalion to carry out land redistribution in Tangbian township in Yongxin county. Earlier in the year Mao, accompanied by the county party secretary, his new wife He Zizhen, and a Red Army detachment, had visited the same area to survey local conditions and establish a local party branch and soviet government organization. Now Mao's force supervised the work of the local party branch as it launched a full-scale land redistribution that expropriated all landlords, divided land into three grades, and redistributed it equally to all in the township; each person, regardless of age, sex, or labor power, received about 2.5 *mu*.[13]

With active Red Army support, land redistribution proceeded rapidly in the Jinggangshan region, though it was still concentrated primarily in the base's core areas. By July, land had been distributed in all of Ninggang, most of the western half and certain other areas of Yongxin, large parts of Lianhua, and scattered localities in Suichuan and Lingxian. Elsewhere the rudimentary state of party and mass organs, a more sporadic army presence, and the vigorous activities of elite-led militias still made redistribution impossible.[14]

Learning How to Redistribute Land

Because the newness of the program had not yet permitted the formulation of a coherent body of doctrine and (more importantly) because of variation in local socioeconomic circumstances, there was considerable diversity and experimentation in the land redistribution procedures used in different places. Although by mid-1928, small reform campaigns had also begun in a few other places, the Jinggangshan base was still well ahead of most centers of revolutionary activity nationwide in the pace and extent of its land revolution. Because land redistribution was still at an embryonic stage, because party leaders disagreed over the timing and scope of the process, and because so many other pressing problems—including personal survival—demanded their attention, national party leaders had not given high priority to developing detailed guidelines for implementing the land revolution.

As party leaders had met and corresponded to make plans immediately after the collapse of the United Front, they had generally accepted both that the long-term goal of the revolution was to carry out a full-scale program of fundamental land reform and that with the beginning of violent civil war it had now become appropriate to undertake at least some immediate land redistribution. They disagreed, however, on the extent of distribution and on the degree to which the long-term goal of a fundamental land revolution should be publicized.

Those who still hoped somehow to reconcile with some factions of the GMD, or who wanted to soothe local elites whose armed mobilization was disrupting rural mass movements, wished to limit the land revolution to confiscating and redistributing only the land of "large landlords," a category which was variously and often vaguely delimited by size of landholding but which in any case involved only a small fraction of the population and a relatively small amount of land. Others wished to move immediately to the confiscation and redistribution of all land, including that of small landlords and of owner-cultivators, making the interconnected points that complete confiscation was needed to provide enough land for widespread redistribution and that this approach was the only way to mobilize the peasantry. Still others adopted various intermediate positions on the issue, urging for example that public policy be limited to confiscation of large landlords but that broader expropriation be encouraged in practice wherever conditions allowed.

During autumn 1927, as hopes of reforging a united front dwindled and the ferocity of the civil war increased, high-level party land reform policy gradually became more radical. For example, where in August Party Central had insisted to the Hunan Provincial Committee that expropriation should be limited to large and medium landlords, in November a plenary session of the Politburo called for the immediate confiscation and nationalization of all land and the use of rural soviets to redistribute cultivation rights to the peasants.

The party leadership's continuing uncertainty over the issue is indicated, however, by the fact that this policy was issued as a "draft program," which was to be reviewed and commented on by party members for a time before being formally considered at the next party congress.[15]

None of these high-level party pronouncements provided clear-cut strategies or specific tactics for achieving their stated goals. Not until the CCP's Sixth Congress met in Moscow in June 1928 and issued a resolution on the subject was there any attempt to move beyond ambiguous general slogans to formulate concrete land reform policies. Even then, because of the slowness and unreliability of communications during this period, it took several months or more (until the late autumn in the case of Jinggangshan) for the texts of the congress resolutions to reach party cadres working in the scattered and isolated sites deep in the rural interior where land redistribution was actually feasible. In the meantime, local cadres were left largely on their own when it came to developing both the theory and practice of land reform.

The Jinggangshan revolutionary movement was fortunate in this regard in that it contained in the person of Mao Zedong one of the relatively few CCP leaders who had both already given land reform considerable thought and had practical investigatory experience in Hunan and elsewhere. In Jinggangshan, Mao added considerably to his existing knowledge and refined his ideas about how to carry out land redistribution. In addition to combining ad hoc information gathering with practical action, as he did during brief visits to Caolin and Tangbian, Mao also interviewed local cadres and other Jinggangshan natives about local socioeconomic conditions and summarized this information in written form in two extensive "social investigations" (*shehui diaocha*) of Ninggang and Yongxin. These surveys, now unfortunately lost, were precursors of the much more well-known documents that Mao compiled later while working in southern Jiangxi.[16]

Even for someone with Mao's depth of observational knowledge, however, it remained impossible to comprehend or fully account for in advance the complex interplay of forces and the variety of issues that would arise with the introduction of large-scale land redistribution into rural China. Only lengthy experience under a variety of circumstances, coupled with much policy-making flexibility, would lead ultimately to the development of a satisfactory land reform program. The land distribution efforts in the Jinggangshan region constituted only one early stage in this protracted and contentious process.

Even in its initial stages, land redistribution required revolutionary leaders to deal with a number of fundamental technical issues, among them such basic questions as the size of the territorial units within which redistribution was to be carried out, the criteria to be used in determining how much land people would receive, and how differences in land quality would be dealt with. Though on one level merely "technical" matters of procedure and

process, all of these issues were also intimately connected with the distribution and maintenance of socioeconomic power in the region, and discussion of them was influenced and often inflamed by complicated and intractable underlying issues of class, ethnicity, and kinship.[17]

Typical of the variability and experimentation that characterized the Jinggangshan land reform experience was the wide range of geographical units used for redistribution, with some places using a single village, others a township (*xiang*), and still others several townships or even an entire district (*qu*). In part, the variability resulted from the need to have an area that was small enough to make it practical for people to move easily between homes and fields and yet large enough to contain the quantity and diversity of land needed to ensure that recipients ended up with roughly equal allotments. The territory needed to achieve this balance varied depending on several (often co-varying) factors, most notably population density and the amount and degree of contiguity of available land. For example, in basins, valleys, or plains, where population was generally dense and fields were numerous and clustered, the conditions needed for equitable redistribution could often be provided within a much smaller area than was the case in mountainous territories with sparse populations and fields that were widely dispersed and sharply divergent in productivity. Because administrative units such as townships and districts often differed widely in population and size, so did the number of them needed to make up a viable land redistribution region.[18]

In addition to the varying relationships among population density, arable land distribution, and geographical territory, land redistribution had to take into account other aspects of the region's complex socioeconomic relationships and structures of domination. Many of these were powerfully and (from the revolutionary perspective) disruptively evident at the village level, which often made it inadvisable for cadres and activists to use this fundamental rural socioeconomic entity as a bounded, exclusive land redistribution unit.

At the village level, kinship ties and interpersonal relations of dominance and dependency were inescapably present and often difficult to counteract without reliance on wider pools of impersonal strangers. For one thing, villages and lineages or lineage segments were often essentially coterminous in this region, so that, as Mao put it, "Party members with the same surname often make up a branch, and the branch meeting is simply a clan [i.e., lineage] meeting," and "a fairly long time will be required for class polarization to take place in the villages and for clan ideology to be overcome."[19] Given the hierarchical and authoritarian nature of most such kinship organizations, this made it very easy for resource-rich local elites who were lineage elders to use their kinship ties to avoid or subvert land redistribution.

Similarly, as accounts of village-level land reform in different times and places have shown, the deep involvement of villagers in each others' lives

was both an advantage and a liability in implementing the land revolution. On the one hand, villagers' intimate knowledge of each other's resources and activities made it very difficult for people to hide their wealth once redistribution got underway. On the other hand, long-term interaction and close relationships also often made people who might have to cooperate in the future reticent to make the confrontational moves needed to begin this inherently divisive process.

For all of these reasons, over time most cadres came to prefer to use territories containing several villages or more as the individual arenas for land redistribution. In a majority of places the township—which typically contained several villages or hamlets, and often comprised a single marketing district—was found to be the unit whose features most closely approximated the ideal balance of size, diversity, and socioeconomic coherence.[20]

In addition to the diversity of territorial units used, land reform in the region also involved experimentation and variation in the methods used to allocate land to individuals within units. There were two major dimensions to this issue: which (if any) categories of people should be denied land or given reduced allotments, and what criteria should be used to determine the allotments of eligible individuals. Entwined and implicated in the answers to these procedural questions were a variety of fundamental issues involving the most appropriate strategies to be used by the revolution and its relationship with society.

One way in which these issues manifested themselves was in uncertainty at both ends of the socioeconomic spectrum over who should receive land. At the upper end of the scale, of course, it was always perfectly clear that landlords would have to give up large amounts of land and other forms of wealth. It remained a matter for discussion, however, whether or not landlords and their families would be given at least a modicum of land to till. In addition, revolutionaries recognized that instead of treating all elites as an undifferentiated group of opponents, properly-crafted policies might make it possible to gain acquiescence if not support from at least some lower-level elites.

One step in this direction was to allow landlords and their households to receive full allotments of redistributed land. Though they would still lose the bulk of their land and other "surplus" resources, they could at least avoid total destitution and remain capable of serving as productive members of society on the same terms as other peasants. This policy of including landlords in land redistribution appears to have been widespread during this period in Jinggangshan, and as far as can be determined, it was accepted by Mao and other high party leaders. As the vast majority of upper and middle elites had either been killed or had fled to areas beyond the easy reach of the revolutionaries by the time land redistribution got underway, the practical impact of this policy was felt almost exclusively by the lower elites.

At the other end of the social scale, similar questions were raised about whether to give land to rural and market-town handicraft workers. Most of these workers were people whose family backgrounds, experiences, and skills were intimately connected to life on the land, and many of them were presumably part of the human froth constantly brought foaming to the surface of rural society by the roiling wave action of changing family fortunes. For many of them, land owning was still a very desirable prospect. Some of them probably already had a little land as part of the pattern of multiple and diversified part-time employments commonly followed by inhabitants seeking to wrest a living from the inhospitable hill country. For those who did not have land, its acquisition was still often a powerful motivating force, as a source of supplemental income, a hedge against unemployment or adverse market shifts, and a legacy to following generations.

Unfortunately for these handicraft workers, the codification of the region's land reform practices presented in the November 1928 Jinggangshan Land Law provided that those who wished land would be eligible for only half-shares.[21] So far as I can tell, contemporary CCP documents contain no explicit discussions of this issue, which makes it impossible to pinpoint the exact reasons for the policy, but it probably derived from a mixture of ideological and practical considerations.

In class terms, handicraft workers were the closest approximations to "proletarians" that existed in the base area, and it may have been that party cadres wished to move them still closer to the productive circumstances (and presumably attitudes) of a fully-proletarianized labor force rather than allow them to slip backward into the world of "feudal" agriculture. Handicraft labor was also important in its own right because the goods produced (the vast majority of which used local products as raw materials) helped increase regional self-sufficiency. In addition, land was none too plentiful in the base area, and giving land to urbanized or itinerant handicraft workers meant smaller average allotments for other rural inhabitants. Taking these factors into account, it is plausible to interpret the provision of half-shares to those handicraft workers who wanted land as a compromise designed to provide some incentives for such people to support the revolution, while not providing too much encouragement for them to abandon productive non-agricultural activities or reducing too greatly the land allotments of full-time peasants and agricultural laborers.

There were also thorny issues concerning the techniques for actual distribution of the land to eligible individuals. One of the most important of these questions, one that was intimately interconnected with other questions about the distribution of power and wealth in the transitional social zone where elite and peasant met, had to do with the criteria for land distribution. More specifically, this involved a major disagreement—which would continue for several years—over whether land should be distributed on an equal

per capita basis regardless of age, gender, or resources, or whether it should be distributed on the basis of relative labor power, with those who were considered to be more productive receiving larger allotments.

So far as can be determined from the terse discussions of the question that remain extant, supporters of distribution according to labor power based their argument primarily upon issues of efficiency and productivity. It was inefficient and wasteful, ran their argument, to distribute the same amount of scarce land to children, the elderly, and women as to able-bodied men in the prime of life, since the latter normally had much higher productive capacities than people in the former three categories. Indeed, it was patently obvious that many very young children, the very elderly, and women with bound feet could not till land at all. Moreover, since at this stage the party also sought to avoid the reemergence of exploitative relations and the re-concentration of land by prohibiting the sale (and presumably although not explicitly also the rental) of distributed land, it would be hard for those who could not work the land to put it into the hands of others who could. Given these facts, it was better to use labor power—determined from some combination of characteristics such as age, gender, and possession of draft animals and tools—as the criterion for allotting land.

Those who advocated per capita distribution argued that it was more egalitarian and administratively much simpler to give equal allotments to all individuals in eligible categories. Though in the abstract, land would be allocated on an individual basis, in practice most women, children, and old people neither lived nor worked alone but as members of households and other kinship networks that contained one or more able-bodied workers, and in which available labor power could in any case be pooled.

Of equal or greater weight was the argument that distribution according to labor power effectively but undesirably preserved some of the economic advantages that more prosperous peasants and landlords had formerly enjoyed over their poorer neighbors. Although the land revolution forced landlords and rich peasants to give up much of their land, they were still better equipped than poor peasants, with tools, draft animals, seed stocks, and other essentials for efficient farming. When land was distributed on the basis of labor power, their equipment and productivity entitled them to receive correspondingly larger allotments, thus perpetuating at least a relative advantage over those with fewer resources.

The debate over per capita versus labor power–based distribution was not easily or quickly concluded. Mao (who personally advocated per capita distribution) later noted that labor power–based distribution was supported by a substantial number of party cadres in the Jinggangshan region in 1928, and diverse evidence likewise indicates that advocates of this method remained influential within the party both there and elsewhere at least until late 1930.

In addition to whatever reasons advocates of labor power–based distribution within the party may personally have had for supporting this method, they were also clearly echoing an influential strand of public opinion within the rural communities undergoing land distribution. Numerous documents from Jinggangshan and elsewhere in southern Jiangxi between 1928 and 1931 identify those both inside and outside of the party who supported labor power–based distribution as being primarily people ranging from owner-peasant to small landlord background, a group that Mao Zedong at the time lumped together into what he called "the intermediate class."[22]

Even allowing for oversimplification caused by the persistent tendency of party documents to "tidy up" messy social realities by categorizing them in neat class-based shorthand labels, this assessment is sufficient to place the social center of gravity of the labor-power advocates within what I have termed the lower elite stratum. As contemporary documents repeatedly assert (and aggregated biographical data confirm), the family backgrounds of many party members from Jinggangshan and elsewhere in southern Jiangxi placed them within this rather diverse group. In addition, lower-stratum elites were influential community leaders and opinion makers as well as powerful economic figures.

Following the upsurge of the Jinggangshan revolutionary movement, many of the lower elites who had remained in the region had maintained their community influence reasonably well. Considerable numbers of them also took advantage of the enthusiasm and lax standards of the spring 1928 "High Tide" period to join the CCP. Using various channels, they brought their power and persuasive skills to bear upon other cadres and their peasant neighbors when it came to land redistribution.[23] Allocating land on the basis of labor power was one of several ways through which, as the advocates of per capita distribution correctly argued, lower elites sought to survive the land revolution with the minimum possible economic loss.

Similar issues of the preservation of relative economic advantage arose as well in other technical aspects of land reform, such as the complex process of assembling specific plots of land into individual allotments. In this region (as in much of China) the holdings of individual owners often consisted of scattered small plots of widely varying quality, a fact that added greatly to the complexity and potential for contention and manipulation already involved in land reform. In most if not all localities, time pressure, cadres' inexperience, peasant conservatism, and the impracticality of altering significantly the laboriously constructed paddy dikes and waterworks all made it necessary to accept the existing patchwork of small plots as the building blocks for land redistribution.

Given this requirement, it then became necessary to devise methods to ensure the closest possible equivalence among numerous individual allotments, each of which might be cobbled together from several tiny sub-parcels of

different quality land. In a few of the earliest efforts at land redistribution in the region, naive cadres tried to sidestep this thankless task by allowing peasants to go out on their own and place markers on the plots they desired. Not surprisingly, this proved totally unworkable: dozens of competing markers soon popped up all over well-situated and high-quality fields, while poorer plots were completely ignored.

Once this approach was abandoned, cadres could still have simply pooled all plots and then redistributed them to people regardless of who had previously tilled them. In practice, however, the disruption of lives and habits that such a comprehensive redistribution would have entailed in a region where so many people already owned at least some tiny amount of land was more than the revolutionary movement was willing to impose (and probably more than local inhabitants would have willingly tolerated). So land redistribution campaigns in Jinggangshan instead typically took existing holdings as a starting point and added or subtracted from these as necessary to reach a specified local allotment size. Under this procedure (later labeled "drawing on the plentiful to make up for the scarce" or *chou duo bu shao*), existing owners, whether large landlords or poor peasants, retained at least part of their holdings in their allotments, while only those who were formerly completely landless received all newly redistributed land.

For several reasons, however, this procedure helped ensure that local elites maintained their existing relative economic advantages. Because they tended to have greater capital, connections, and inheritance and to reside in agriculturally well-situated larger towns and villages, local elites also tended previously to have acquired higher percentages of good quality land than poor peasants. In addition, when redistribution started with original holdings, those with surplus land naturally tried to keep their best and give up their poorest land. In the end, although the size of the post-distribution holdings of most local elite landowners was considerably less than they had originally possessed, they retained a core of high-quality land, while the land gained by many formerly landless peasants was of poor quality and/or inconvenient location.[24]

Another troublesome question was how to allocate harvests from and compensate for capital and labor invested in land that was redistributed partway through the agricultural cycle. This was a particular concern in the Jinggangshan region because the bulk of land redistribution occurred between May and July 1928, a period that lay in between the transplanting of most of the main rice crop and the fall harvest. Having just invested in seed, fertilizer, and the laborious transplantation, landowners faced with redistribution naturally wished to receive a return on their investment. This fueled demands from those who had land taken from them in mid-cycle that recipients of the land should be required to repay the costs of planting.

Although even relatively small landowners might be affected by this issue, which in the parlance of the time was referred to as the question of "dividing the green [sprouts]" (*fenqing*), it was obviously of particular interest to those—such as local elites—who had formerly owned (and planted) larger expanses of land. If the sprouts were divided, that is to say if owners were repaid for their short-term investment in the current year's main crop, it would go some way toward offsetting the long-term loss of their land.

The fact that modestly endowed cultivators who owned just slightly more than the local average could find it advantageous to seek compensation for their investment in the current crop broadened support for this measure and made it harder for cadres to refuse. Years later, after learning much more about the complexities of Jiangxi society and the mutually reinforcing networks of local elite economic advantage, Mao and other cadres firmly prohibited the practice of "dividing the green," but under the more experimental and conciliatory conditions prevailing in Jinggangshan, it was apparently tolerated.

In various ways, then, the complexities of land reform, the inexperience of cadres, and the revolutionaries' desire to maintain a broad coalition of people who would actively support or at least passively acquiesce in their policies combined to preserve a significant part of the relative economic advantages enjoyed by many lower-stratum elites. Jinggangshan was not the only area where early land redistribution efforts had this outcome. Party documents describing conditions in southern and central Jiangxi and western Fujian during the 1929–1931 period refer to the same phenomena, and similar conditions almost certainly prevailed elsewhere in China as well. It was to take several years, much further experimentation, and a succession of steadily more strongly worded directives before party cadres would finally agree unambiguously on the draconian policies of near-total economic expropriation, social discrimination, and political isolation that subsequently became the party's standard approach to dealing with "rich peasants" and other lower-level elites.

LOCAL ELITES AND REVOLUTIONARY PROGRAMS

In all of the major socioeconomic arenas in which the movement sought to make its influence felt, revolutionaries found it necessary in one way or another to confront local power holders. Indeed, land redistribution and many other reform programs had as prime aims the destruction of the influence (and often the physical elimination) of the interlocking elite of large merchants, landlords, and "local bullies" who dominated the rural power structure and their replacement by newly empowered peasants and rural proletarians.

Nevertheless, elites were diverse people who stood in varying relationships both to existing power structures and (at least potentially) to the revolution. As noted in chapter 1, the differences in resources and power that existed between, for example, the several dozen elite "great households" (most or all of whom had sizable land holdings within their varied portfolios) that typically inhabited a given county and the thousands of petty landlords and successful peasants who lived in villages or small market towns and rented out a few surplus *mu* were so great as to place them in what in many respects amounted to two separate worlds.

These diverse elites likewise formed their own estimates of the revolution's likely impact on their lives and developed their own strategies for dealing with it. Not surprisingly, the region's largest landlords, wealthiest merchants, and most powerful militia leaders responded to revolutionary programs with near-universal opposition that typically manifested itself in overt "fight or flight" reactions. However, the responses of less powerful elites were considerably more variable and ambiguous.

In their actions, such marginal elites were influenced by their own relatively scant resources and options. Whereas more prominent elites could use their liquid capital and extra-local connections to move to safer areas, small landlords and other low-level elites often had most of their resources tied up in land, grain, and other immovable property. Aware that relocation would probably lead to destitution and loss of status and that overt resistance under current circumstances would likely mean their death, many lower elites sought accommodations that would enable them to retain as much as possible of their existing way of life.

Hopes that such accommodation might be possible were encouraged by efforts of the revolutionaries to make at least rough-and-ready distinctions among local elites on the basis of their attitudes toward the revolution and their possible contributions to it. For the Communists there were several reasons for considering a more accommodating attitude toward the relatively more disadvantaged elites comprising what Mao Zedong termed the "intermediate class," a rather vague and inelegant term which at this time included most if not all of the marginal elites inhabiting the liminal social space where the conventionally conceptualized categories of rural elite and peasant shaded into one another.[25]

For one thing, "intermediate class" elites tended to be influential local opinion makers; in addition to whatever impact they might have by virtue of their economic or military resources, they were more likely than most peasants to be literate and aware of events in the outside world, and they were disproportionately likely to be elevated to the status of village and lineage elders, to serve as local conciliators and dispute arbiters, or to be employed as local schoolteachers. These characteristics meant that lower elites were in many respects prime potential cadre material. Indeed, a good many of the

early adherents to the CCP both in Jinggangshan and elsewhere (Yuan Wencai and Mao Zedong, for example) had themselves come from just this sort of background. Established cadres of similar origins thus had a keen personal appreciation of the ability and drive such individuals could bring to the revolution.

Moreover, lower-elite landlords often possessed economic resources that were more acceptable or useful to CCP leaders on either ideological or practical grounds than was the management of land itself. Significant numbers of lower elites, for example, simultaneously rented out land, loaned money and grain to peasants, and managed small stores, seeking thereby to maximize their income and economic security through diversification. Given the prevailing CCP and Comintern assumption that the Chinese revolution was still primarily in an anti-feudal rather than an anti-capitalist stage, the lower elite's small-scale mercantile activity was ideologically less objectionable than their exploitative land relations. This was especially true in light of the need to maintain a viable base area economy. Similarly, given the increasingly severe financial exigencies facing the revolutionary movement and the virtual absence of alternative sources of agricultural financing, overly harsh expropriation of lower elites could seriously disrupt the rural economy.

Though their resources and reputations paled by comparison with those of the "great households," lower elites were also a much more constant *presence* in the socioeconomic and geographical arenas of village and local market town where the CCP's political mobilization and socioeconomic programs were implemented. This was due not only to their numbers and dwelling patterns but also to their limited options in the face of the revolution. That they had their own incentives for seeking accommodation with the base area regime increased the likelihood that relative leniency toward them would bring a concrete response.

With such a variety of mutual interests thus involved, it is not surprising that numbers of the region's more marginal elites found their way into the revolutionary ranks, there to join the many local and outsider cadres of elite background who had presided over the movement's inception and growth. Some of the newcomers seeped into the movement gradually, as they were chosen to participate in village soviets, land reform committees, and other positions of local leadership. Others were swept into the movement helter-skelter in the course of party recruitment drives such as those of the May-June "High Tide" period.

Even at the time of their recruitment it must have been apparent to established party leaders that many elite participants were passively acquiescing to rather than actively supporting the revolutionary movement. Certainly it was evident that both in ideological and practical terms they were not "ideal" revolutionaries. Nevertheless, for inexperienced and optimistic cadres in a

rapidly expanding movement with a severe shortage of basic-level administrative personnel, it seemed both necessary and appropriate to utilize such talent and resources as were available.

With regional military and political developments during the spring of 1928 suggesting the likelihood of further expansion in revolutionary power and influence, marginal elites of the "intermediate class" were particularly willing to accommodate to the movement, while at the same time seeking to manipulate it to their own advantage. For example, they used kinship ties and social status to delay or avoid giving up their land for distribution; took advantage of the proliferation of soviet government and party organizations to gain positions of influence within the new bodies comparable to what they had in the past; and used the organs created to execute reforms in ways that preserved as much of their former position as possible.[26]

In the short run, elite accommodation to the revolution, however transparently self-promoting, still increased the human and material resources available for expanding the movement's range and reach and provided an aura of social and political acceptance by virtue of their acquiescence that encouraged other people to participate in it. At the same time, however, these elites also functioned like burrowing termites whose opportunistic chewing hollowed out the revolutionary movement's still-fragile infrastructure and threatened to bring the whole sprawling edifice crashing down when conditions changed.

ETHNIC CONFLICT AND THE DEEPENING REVOLUTION

Interwoven with and intensifying the socioeconomic and political struggles inspired by the revolutionary movement was the multi-dimensional early settler–guest people conflict that had long convulsed parts of the region. Although large-scale direct manifestations of this conflict were confined mainly to Ninggang and some portions of Suichuan and Yongxin, its indirect effects gradually percolated through the regional party and army organization and were eventually to have very serious repercussions on the fortunes of the entire regional revolutionary movement.

As noted earlier, most Ninggang county party leaders were early settler intellectuals, and it appears that the same pattern generally held true elsewhere as well, particularly in Yongxin. As also noted, the initial alliance between the early-settler–dominated Ninggang party leadership and the guest people bandits led by Yuan Wencai and Wang Zuo was based on a complicated and at base rather fragile convergence of interests, which by no means totally overcame the mutual suspicions and antipathies engendered by generations of inter-group conflict. While the alliance had lasted through the high tide of mass movement activity after the NRA's arrival, the

revolution's 1927 collapse and the *sauve qui peut* atmosphere accompanying it must have led to considerable strain in relations, though not yet any outright rupture.

Once Mao and the Red Army leaders decided to cooperate with Yuan and Wang, they sought to reduce ethnic tensions to make the cooperation a success. This they endeavored to do primarily by trying to integrate the Yuan-Wang military forces into the Red Army and secondarily by attempting to redress an imbalance in favor of early settlers in the ranks of local party organizations. In addition to avoiding frictions that might have resulted had the training been carried out by early settler cadres, efforts by Red Army cadres to train and indoctrinate the Yuan-Wang troops sought to further both of these goals. Improved discipline, the infiltration of outside officers and party cadres into the ranks, and the nearby presence of watchful larger nonnative Red Army units all aimed to bind the Yuan-Wang forces fully into the matrix of the larger regional revolutionary organization, thus reducing their propensity for bandit-style attacks that fell disproportionately on early settler communities. At the same time, political indoctrination sought to increase the overall political sophistication of the Yuan-Wang forces and the pool of politically aware guest people cadres to help even the balance between guest people and early settlers in the local party apparatus.[27]

Such efforts to ease ethnic tensions and expand guest people representation in the local party were far from completely successful. In fact, as the Red Army marched and counter-marched through the hills defending the base from government assaults, and as party cadres encouraged land redistribution and other fundamental reforms, the level of ethnic tension grew alarmingly both within the party and among the general population of Ninggang and other sites of mixed guest people–early settler habitation.

One major problem was that in the harried circumstances of the time it proved impossible fully to redress ethnic imbalances in political and military organizations. County-level party organs in Ninggang and elsewhere remained controlled by early settler cadres, while improved training and a leavening of outside cadres did not alter the fact that soldiers of the Thirty-second Regiment—the main locally recruited Red Army unit and the one typically left to garrison the Jinggangshan massif when the main force sortied—were still primarily drawn from the guest-people–dominated bands of Yuan and Wang. In recognition of this persistent pattern, people in the region frequently characterized the revolutionary movement as being divided between an "early settler party and a guest people gun."

Personal animosities, the activities of the Thirty-second Regiment, the gradual expansion of revolutionary organizations, and the implementation of reform programs all either reinforced or provided new occasions and issues for the expression of ethnic tensions. The most consequential personal animosity developed between Yuan Wencai and the influential Ninggang

county party cadre Long Chaoqing. Although the causes of this animosity are obscure, its existence and impact are acknowledged by knowledgeable participants in the events of the period. According to Su Lanchun, a scion of a Ninggang guest people family who was then a young intellectual and local party member, among the experiences contributing to bad blood between the two men was an incident that occurred at a conference in early 1928. Long, who then headed the county party committee, arrived ostentatiously wearing a pistol, despite the fact that he was neither a military officer nor in a situation of immediate physical danger. Yuan Wencai and his associates confronted him over this, first questioning why a cadre controlling the entire county party organization would come armed to a peaceful meeting and then—consciously or unconsciously conforming to the popular perception that guest people controlled the "gun"—humiliating and angering Long by seizing the pistol from him.

Su further suggests that romantic rivalry also contributed to bad feeling between Yuan and Long. He recalls that during this period Yuan, Long, and another Ninggang early settler party leader named Xie Xi'an all sought the favors of the same well-known local beauty—a competition that Yuan appears to have won. Little is known of this romance, but if true it would indeed help account for the bad blood between Yuan and Ninggang early settler cadres such as Long and Xie.[28]

In addition to personal animosities, various destructive acts in which the guest-people–dominated Thirty-second Regiment engaged also intensified ethnic tension. One such act was the burning of the Xunfeng Academy, a school in the county seat that prominent local elites had frequently used to plan militia raids and other counterrevolutionary acts. Although in the context of the times, destruction of such enemy "nests" was an acceptable tactic, in this case circumstances made it possible for those so inclined to ascribe ethnic motives to the attack. Among factors supporting such a conclusion were the fact that the Xunfeng Academy was one of several county schools that educated early settler children and excluded those of guest people origin, that the conservatives against whom the attack was aimed included some very well known members of the early settler community, and that the overt characteristics of the incident itself—a sudden armed attack launched from the Jinggangshan massif against centers of early settler dominance in and around the county seat—closely resembled those of the guest people raids of the early 1920s.

For similar reasons, revolutionary attacks on exemplary Ninggang local elites also lent themselves to ethnically charged interpretation. During the stage of consciousness raising and peasant collective action that occurred before full-scale land redistribution, many newly reestablished peasant associations targeted a few elite individuals for struggle, expropriation, and in many cases eventual execution. Given the well-established economic and

political dominance of early settler elites in the county, it might seem logical to expect that they would also be prominently represented among those chosen for attack, but when it turned out that a full seventy-five percent (six of eight) of the elite targets chosen in Ninggang were early settlers, some elements of the early settler community were quick to ascribe the outcome to ethnic discrimination.[29]

New revolutionary organizations and programs also quickly became sites for ethnic competition and conflict. In February 1928, for example, Ninggang county established a soviet government and set the term of its head at three months. It seems likely, though sources do not spell this out specifically, that the position was supposed to alternate between guest people and early settlers. At any rate, the first head—an early settler—was indeed succeeded by a representative of the guest people community. Shortly after he assumed office, however, the county party committee (controlled by Long Chaoqing and other early settlers) acceded to a request from early settler community leaders that he be fired for incompetence and replaced by an early settler. This action naturally infuriated the guest people and contributed to their intransigence later in the year when widespread land redistribution began in the county.[30]

In much of Ninggang, including its southern and western portions where guest people were concentrated, cadres had originally used the township (*xiang*) as the unit for land redistribution. But in this region the rugged terrain and lack of arable land meant that in many townships the per capita land redistribution was much smaller than in nearby lowland townships inhabited by early settlers. Therefore, local guest people leaders prevailed upon Yuan Wencai (with the Thirty-second Regiment no doubt at his back) to demand that the county committee redistribute the land using the larger district (*qu*) as the unit so that land from richer early settler areas might be included in the pool. This request was approved and another distribution carried out, but many of the early settler peasants colluded to keep their land from being reported so that it could not be transferred to new guest people owners. Even after a third redistribution was conducted late in 1928 the results remained unsatisfactory to all sides.[31]

In addition to these larger-scale conflicts over land redistribution, there were also more personalized connections between land and ethnic conflict. Notable among these was the fact that Yuan Wencai and Wang Zuo—both of whom had been raised in straitened circumstances but whose earlier careers had enabled them to acquire a certain amount of land—apparently originally resisted the idea of land redistribution (though Wang was willing to see others' land divided if his own could be spared). No doubt at least in part because of the damage that having two prominent and powerful guest people maintain their holdings did to ethnic relations when attacks were being made on the properties of early settler elites,

other party authorities strenuously objected and eventually persuaded Yuan and Wang to go along with the policy.[32]

Examination of the issues and occasions through which ethnic rivalry in the region was nurtured and expressed reveals that in this, as in many similar conflicts around the world, the existing situation was perceived and evaluated differently by the various major constituencies involved both inside and outside of the revolutionary movement. Within the revolutionary camp, evaluations of the ethnic situation and how to respond to it tended to vary between non-native sojourners such as Mao and his Red Army associates on the one hand and local cadres such as Long Chaoqing and Yuan Wencai on the other. For Mao and his associates, the highest priority was to preserve and expand the unity and fighting capacity of the revolutionary movement. In regional context this required the fullest possible integration of Yuan and Wang and their armed guest people bands into the broader revolutionary movement. Accomplishing this in turn implied the need to counteract discrimination and accommodate the desire of guest people revolutionaries for a more equal role in the movement's power structure.

For Long, Yuan, and other local cadres of either ethnic background, on the other hand, the desirability of long-term revolutionary unity and strength was often outweighed by more immediate concerns with personal and factional prestige and power rooted in the ongoing patterns of regional ethnic conflict. In this regard, of course, the concern of Mao and the Red Army with obtaining the full cooperation of the Yuan-Wang forces worked to the advantage of Yuan and the other guest people leaders and against the entrenched interests of their early settler rivals.

To many outsiders, this ongoing internal rivalry was not readily apparent. To them, the movement as a whole seemed to be primarily a vehicle for expressing guest people interests. In large measure this perception was a result of the disproportionate visibility and importance of military affairs during this period of the revolution. The indispensable ingredient in the connected processes of movement survival and base-building was military force to protect against invading armies and root out entrenched local militias. This reliance on military force meant that Red Army apparatus and the local guest-people–dominated "gun" were much more visible to the region's population and—to people unfamiliar with Marxist-Leninist ideas about political struggle but long accustomed to recognizing the power and prestige conferred by armed might—much more closely identified with the essence of the revolutionary struggle than were various soviet governments, mass movement organs, and the region's early-settler–dominated party.

Because regular Red Army forces were regarded as the core of the revolutionary movement, success in enrolling the Yuan-Wang forces as the army's Thirty-second Regiment had a double-barreled effect. Not only did the one-time bandit gangs thereby become more effective, disciplined, and

responsive combatants, but to the region's population they also came by virtue of their integration to share in the Red Army's reputation as a centrally-important actor in the revolutionary struggle.

This association was deepened by the manner in which the process of establishing the Jinggangshan base had led, largely unwittingly, to the assimilation of the Red Army and its cadres into long-established patterns of guest people mobilization and raiding. In settling into the region, after all, the army had forged close ties with individuals (Yuan and Wang) who were well-known guest people powerholders, sited its headquarters in a locality (the Maoping-Ciping area) that was a long-time guest people bandit "nest" and locus of popular resistance to lowland early settlers, and selected methods and targets (seizures of elite wealth, raids on lowland urban centers) that resembled those of guest people lamb-hangings and jacqueries.

Given the potency of these associations, juxtapositions, and similarities, there was from the beginning strong reason for local people to conflate both the Red Army and the revolution in general with the special interests of aggressive guest people ethnic assertion. Subsequent actions of the army and (with army encouragement) of the regional revolutionary movement as a whole had the effect—again largely unintended—of reinforcing these perceptions. For example, the fact that the Red Army continued to maintain hospital and other support facilities on the Jinggangshan massif and that army units regularly returned there after operations was due largely to the massif's relative safety from attack, but it accentuated the geographical juxtaposition—and the conceptual association—between Red Army bases, bandit lairs, and areas of concentrated guest people settlement. Similarly, the party's call for peasants to attack their landlords was part of a general policy of implementing fundamental socioeconomic reform throughout China, but it took on clear ethnic overtones in a region where "landlords" disproportionately specified early settlers and their lineages.

Under such circumstances, it was easy for both landlords and peasants, guest people and early settlers alike, to see revolutionary policies as favoring guest people interests, to view the Red Army as the agent of guest people vengeance, and to confound thereby the attempts of CCP leaders such as Mao to portray themselves as even-handed dispensers of class-based justice.[33] Such feelings, together with the factionalism within the revolutionary movement's own ranks, deepened the rifts in the already divided community and led in Ninggang to the reemergence—only lightly disguised and not at all transformed by the terms of the new revolutionary/counterrevolutionary discourse in which it was articulated—of the cycles of ethnically based raids and retaliations that had ravaged the county in the early 1920s.

The first instance of this occurred in February/March 1928. In February the Red Army, prominently including the forces of Yuan Wencai, seized the Ninggang county seat of Xincheng in a fierce fight during which the county

magistrate was killed. Though in one sense this attack was obviously a logical and necessary step in the process of clearing a space for the new base area, it was also interpreted as an ethnically motivated attack by early settler communities in and around the city. In response, during the Red Army's March expedition into Hunan, the magistrate's widow and a group of early settler elites led warlord army forces in extremely damaging attacks which specially targeted guest people villages. Only a major party-sponsored education program after their return enabled Red Army leaders to forestall retaliation by persuading guest people that only a few individual early settler elites rather than the whole early settler ethnic community bore responsibility for the attacks.[34]

CONCLUSION

All in all, the efforts of Communist leaders to carry out fundamental socioeconomic reforms in the Jinggangshan base made only limited headway. Party leaders were inexperienced and disunited, the base itself was militarily insecure, and regional society proved to be much more difficult than expected to alter fundamentally and permanently. As the Communists began to move beyond "contending for the country" in coalition with existing local power holders to attempts at major structural change in the agrarian order, their efforts also revived rivalries between guest people and early settlers and roused reactions from elites who saw their wealth and status threatened.

Revolutionary policies in the region were driven by general Marxist ideological assumptions about social structure and economic relations and by specific analyses, resolutions, and orders promulgated and circulated by various provincial and national party organs. In addition, however, revolutionaries' actions were strongly influenced by participation in and interaction with local society. The attitudes and behavior of revolutionaries who were regional natives naturally reflected their local upbringing, and their policies and activities and those of sojourning revolutionaries from elsewhere were constrained, channeled, and sometimes altered by local social practice and mentality.

Under the dangerous and uncertain circumstances prevailing in the base area, military and political activities had to take priority over socioeconomic reforms except where—as in the case of destroying the power and wealth of influential local elites—the same action could serve a variety of purposes simultaneously. In addition to distracting attention from socioeconomic reforms, expedient decision making to solve immediate political and military exigencies also more indirectly encouraged a kind of centralized, top-down "commandist" leadership and policy-implementation style that was poorly suited to the analysis and resolution of complex social or economic issues but that was nonetheless frequently applied to such tasks.

Throughout the revolution's history, party leaders at all levels were quite ambivalent regarding the relative inclusiveness not only of the party itself but also of the types of people who were considered potential supporters and those who were thought of as implacable opponents. If party documents of the period are any guide, evaluation and discussion of "who are our enemies and who are our friends" also preoccupied Jinggangshan party cadres.

Not surprisingly in view of the complexity of local society and the revolutionary movement's fluctuating fortunes, it often proved difficult in practice to draw a clear and enduring dividing line between friends and enemies. For one thing, the interests and behaviors of the region's inhabitants—especially as they related to the revolution—were too multifarious and cross-cutting to be comprehensively explained simply by the crude, seat-of-the-pants class categorizations that were then in general use. With inexperienced cadres making what for most were their first attempts at practical, systematic rural social analysis and policy implementation, understanding of the complexities of rural society and of the sociopolitical ramifications of their actions were still relatively limited.

Moreover, both party and popular attitudes shifted depending on the perceived state of the revolution, and these variations in psychology and perception affected the tactical flexibility and willingness to cooperate of cadres and population alike. To a certain extent, the relationship between party and populace was affected by marketing psychology. Periods when the revolutionary struggle was going well were in a sense sellers' markets, during which people had reason actively to associate themselves with what looked like the winning side, and cadres had less need to make tactical compromises to broaden their support; conversely, periods of revolutionary reverses were to some extent buyers' markets, when people were more reluctant to participate in a losing cause, and cadres had incentives to be inclusive in their appeals.

Despite these ongoing difficulties and a discouraging degree of progress when measured against the party's utopian programmatic goals, it must nonetheless be said that what was implemented in Jinggangshan still constituted one of the most precocious, widespread, and fundamental programs of socioeconomic reform that had thus far been conducted by the Communist-led revolutionary movement. This was particularly true in regard to land redistribution, arguably one of the most ramified and complex aspects of the changes in rural life that the party had promised. Only in the home area of Peng Pai, Haifeng and Lufeng counties in Guangdong, is it likely that a comparable amount of land redistribution took place as early as in Jinggangshan, and even there neither the duration nor the long-term impact of what occurred could match the Jinggangshan experience. Information obtained and issues identified in the course of the region's work played a major role in shaping the party's evolving land reform policies in later years. In this as in

many other respects, base-building efforts in the Jinggangshan area, in both their successes and failures, mirrored and contributed to the ongoing processes through which rural base-building became a central part of the Communist Party's strategy for revolutionary success.

NOTES

1. Fernando Galbiati, *P'eng P'ai and the Hai-Lu-feng Soviet* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1985).

2. Issues of this sort were common in southern China and not just in Jiangxi. The example of Yongding county in western Fujian, site of an uprising in early 1928, provides an illuminating discussion of the interdependence of town and country and of the ways in which deteriorating relations between them could spark mutual animosity and violence. Following an organized campaign of peasant resistance to elite exactions, communications between the county seat and the several townships surrounding it were cut because during the resistance movement, many elites had lodged accusations against peasants, who now feared to enter the city. An economic panic then ensued, as normally peasants had heavily depended upon selling firewood in the city, and had borrowed money to finance this; but now the large landlords did not want to lend, and the peasants also did not dare enter the city to sell, so all the money and grain of the peasants were depleted. Therefore, peasants felt the only thing to do was to attack the city to relieve their economic distress. "Zhonggong Fujian linshi shengwei wei Yongding baodong gei zhongyang de baogao (qi er)" [Report of the CCP's Fujian Provisional Provincial Committee to Party Central on the Yongding uprising (part 2)], in *Fujian geming lishi wenjian huiji* [Compilation of historical materials on the revolution in Fujian], Zhongyang dang'an guan and Fujian sheng dang'an guan (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 1987), vol. 3 (Provincial Committee Materials, 1927–28, part 2), 151.

3. Zhonggong Chenzhou diwei dangshi bangongshi, "Xiangnan qiyi" [The Southern Hunan Uprising], in *Zhonggong dangshi ziliao zhuanti yanjiu ji: Dierci guonei geming zhanzheng shiqi (yi)* [A collection of research on specialized topics using materials in CCP history: The Second Revolutionary Civil War period (part one)], ed. Zhonggong zhongyang dangshi ziliao zhengji weiyuanhui zhengji yanjiu shi (Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi ziliao chubanshe, 1987), 66–67; Su Yu, "Jiliu gui dahai" [A tumultuous torrent returns to the sea], in *JGG*, vol. 2, 322; Liu Xiaonong, *Jinggang yanyi* [The romance of Jinggang] (Beijing: Nongcun dushu chubanshe, 1989), 27–32.

4. For details on Huang's sources of wealth and connections, see the description and citation in note 23 in chapter 1.

5. "Jinggangshan geming genjudi de jingji douzheng" bianxiezu, *Jinggangshan geming genjudi de jingji douzheng* [The economic struggle in the Jinggangshan revolutionary base area] (Nanchang: Jiangxi renmin chubanshe, 1977), 56–57; *JF*, 90–91; *JGGY*, 246–47.

6. *JF*, 93–94; *Jinggangshan geming genjudi de jingji douzheng*, 57–61.

7. *Jinggangshan geming genjudi de jingji douzheng*, 61–67; *JGGY*, 248–51.

8. *JGGY*, 201–6.

9. *JGGY*, 100–108; *JF*, 165–71; *Jinggangshan geming genjudi de jingji douzheng*, 23.

10. Tso-liang Hsiao, *The Land Revolution in China, 1930–1934: A Study of Documents* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1969), 292.

11. *JGGY*, 106–8; Chen Zhengren, "Mao Zedong tongzhi chuangjian Jinggangshan geming genjudi de weida shijian" [The great practice of Comrade Mao Zedong in founding the Jinggangshan revolutionary base area], *Jiangxi wenshi ziliao*, no. 1 (1987): 53.

12. On 26 June, for example, a conference of local party and army cadres in Yongxin decided to split the Red Army up again for rural mass mobilization work in areas little affected by their former efforts. The Twenty-eighth Regiment went to the Anfu county border area, the Twenty-ninth to Lianhua, and the Thirty-first to the Ji'an county border. *JF*, 163–64.

13. *JF*, 165–71; for another case of Red Army support for land reform in Ninggang, see *JGGY*, 208.

14. *Jinggangshan geming genjudi de jingji douzheng*, 23.

15. Marcia R. Ristaino, *China's Art of Revolution: The Mobilization of Discontent, 1927 and 1928* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1987), 31–32, 53–54, 76, 79, and passim; Brantly Womack, *The Foundations of Mao Zedong's Political Thought, 1917–1935* (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1982), 135; Hyobom Pak, ed., *Documents of the Chinese Communist Party, 1927–1930* (Hong Kong: Union Research Institute, 1971), 87–96; *JGGY*, 196–99.

16. For discussion of the circumstances of Mao's compilation of the Ninggang and Yongxin rural investigations, see *JGGY*, 194–96. Mao's surviving rural investigations have been collected and published in several different editions. The most recent, which also contains several essays written during the Yan'an Period, is Mao Zedong, *Mao Zedong nongcun diaocha wenji* [A collection of Mao Zedong's rural investigations] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1982). These investigations have been discussed and summarized in the works of various Western scholars, such as Hsiao, *The Land Revolution*, 27–34; and Womack, *The Foundations of Mao Zedong's Political Thought*, 114–29. Recently, they have at last been made available in full English translation, in *Mao's Road to Power: Revolutionary Writings, 1912–1949*, ed. Stuart Schram (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1995), vol. 3.

17. For descriptions of the variations in land reform practice and the issues involved, see *JGGY*, 208–14; *JF*, 170–74; and Chen Zhengren, "Mao Zedong tongzhi," 52–54. The following lengthy discussion is based on these sources, supplemented by information drawn from CCP documents discussing land issues elsewhere in Jiangxi during the 1929–1931 period.

18. It is important to realize that in this part of Jiangxi (and apparently in most parts of China) subcounty administrative units such as the township were generally quite closely aligned with coherent socioeconomic arenas such as market towns or clusters of related hamlets. When party cadres referred to these administrative units in their documents, they were generally using the terms as shorthand referents to the underlying socioeconomic arenas rather than the bureaucratic structures imposed upon them.

19. "Report of the Jinggangshan Front Committee to the Central Committee" (25 November 1928), in *Mao's Road to Power*, ed. Schram, vol. 3, 109, 103–4.

20. By the time the Jinggangshan Land Law was set forth in the autumn of 1928, the township had become the standard redistribution unit, with larger areas such as several townships or a district being used "under special circumstances." The law made no mention at all of using individual villages as redistribution units, presumably because this was no longer regarded as acceptable practice. "Jinggangshan Land Law," in *Mao's Road to Power*, ed. Schram, vol. 3, 129.

21. "Jinggangshan Land Law," 130.

22. "Report of the Jinggangshan Front Committee," 103.

23. "Report of the Jinggangshan Front Committee,"103–4, 108.

24. In later years CCP cadres adopted another procedure (also apparently encouraged by Mao Zedong) known as "draw on the fat to make up for the lean" (*chou fei bu shou*), which supplemented the "draw on the plentiful to make up for the scarce" method by also attempting to roughly equalize land quality. The "draw on the fat" procedure was not used during the time Mao was in the Jinggangshan region. See Hsiao, *The Land Revolution*, 18, 24–27, and passim.

25. "Report of the Jinggangshan Front Committee," 103–5; Philip C. C. Huang also discusses the "intermediate class" in "Mao Tse-tung and the Middle Peasants, 1925–1928," *Modern China* 1, no. 3 (July 1975): 271–96.

26. "Report of the Jinggangshan Front Committee," 103–5.

27. Chen Zhengren, "Mao Zedong tongzhi," 50; Liu Xiaonong, "Guanyu Yuan Wencai, Wang Zuo beisha de zeren wenti" [The problem of the blame for the killing of Yuan Wencai and Wang Zuo] in *Yu hong san juntuan youguan de lishi wenti ji wenxian* [Historical problems and materials concerning the Red Third Army Group], ed. Jiangxi xiandai shi xuehui (Nanchang: Jiangxi renmin chubanshe, 1980), 42–43; Qiu Zhizhuo, "Lun Jinggangshan geming genjudi de tukeji maodun wenti" [On the problem of the contradiction between early settlers and guest people in the Jinggangshan revolutionary base area], in *Tudi geming zhanzheng shiqi genjudi yanjiu* [Research on base areas during the period of the land revolution war], ed. Quanguo Zhonggong dangshi yanjiu hui (Ji'nan: Shandong renmin chubanshe, 1987), 95–97.

28. The woman involved was apparently the same person whose jealousy of He Zizhen is said to have led Yuan Wencai to encourage He's romance with Mao Zedong. See Liu Xiaonong, "Mao Zedong dierci hunyin neiqing" [Inside information on Mao Zedong's second marriage], *Jizhe xie tianxia*, no. 21 (May 1992): 4–11.

29. These various sources of personal and ethnic animosity are drawn primarily from published and unpublished reminiscences of Su Lanchun, such as "Huigu Ninggang de geming douzheng" [Reflections on the revolutionary struggle in Ninggang], in *JGG*, vol. 2, 103–4, and his untitled reminiscences collected in the *Yuan Wencai shimo cailiao* [Materials on the whole story of Yuan Wencai], a volume of typed materials, dated October 1981, held in the Jinggangshan Huishi Museum, Ninggang. Su's accounts are apparently the sources for the comments on these issues in other secondary accounts, such as Liu Xiaonong, "Guanyu Yuan Wencai, Wang Zuo." See also Qiu Zhizhuo, "Tukeji maodun wenti," 100.

30. Liu Xiaonong, "Guanyu Yuan Wencai, Wang Zuo," 44.

31. Liu Xiaonong, "Guanyu Yuan Wencai, Wang Zuo," 44; "Yang Kemin guanyu Xiang-Gan bian suqu qingkuang de zonghe baogao" (25 February 1929) [A comprehensive report by Yang Kemin regarding conditions in the Hunan-Jiangxi border soviet area], in *JGG*, vol. 1, 47.

32. For Wang's resistance to land reform, see Chen Zhengren, "Mao Zedong tongzhi," 38, 53. For Yuan's opposition, see "Yang Kemin guanyu Xiang-Gan bian suqu," 50.

33. The perception that the Jinggangshan revolutionary struggle was dominated by guest people interests was widespread. For example, a February 1929 report by two government generals noted that "most of the banditized people are guest people." See "Jinggang gongke houji shanhou" [Rehabilitation in recaptured Jinggang], *Shibao*, 22 February 1929, 5.

34. Qiu Zhizhuo, "Tukeji maodun wenti," 98.

8

The Midyear Crisis

While Jinggangshan revolutionaries were focusing inwardly and becoming absorbed in managing the political and social complexities of base building in the region, party leaders at all levels elsewhere were also trying to cope with the demands of transition from an urban to a rural revolutionary struggle. As in Jinggangshan, local cadres in many other places in central and southern China had also resumed activities and begun to carve out small rural spheres of influence after recovering from the 1927 defeats. Party members in most of these areas, however, had far less military power at their disposal than the Fourth Red Army made available to cadres in the Jinggangshan base. While this lack of large, visible bodies of troops may have allowed these small areas of party activity to avoid attracting the sorts of large-scale suppression campaigns that plagued Jinggangshan, it also left them extremely vulnerable to the depredations of militias and to occasional casual forays by nearby army garrisons.

As these spontaneous sprouts of rural revolution emerged in many separate locales, higher-level party cadres in Jiangxi and Hunan also continued efforts to foment larger and more broadly coordinated regional rural uprisings. These risings were intended as detonating devices for even larger-scale explosions of pent-up mass anger whose shock waves—in the form of massive peasant "armies"—would hopefully sweep out of the countryside to destroy the structures of counterrevolutionary power in the cities. They thus retained an urban focus despite their rural location.

Whether for protecting and nurturing the growth of tiny delicate proto–base areas, or for stiffening and spearheading inchoate peasant assaults on major cities, there was desperate—and under the circumstances largely unmet—need throughout central China for effective organized military forces such as

the Fourth Red Army. There was therefore an irresistible temptation for higher-level party leaders to try to use the Fourth Army as a roving regional reaction force, to be deployed here and there as enemy attacks threatened or new opportunities for uprisings presented themselves. Zhou Lu's effort to drag Mao's force into the collapsing Southern Hunan Uprising in March/April 1928 was one manifestation of this phenomenon.

In late June the Hunan provincial committee once again endeavored to exert control over Jinggangshan party leaders and their valuable military resources. In ways that doubtless reminded regional cadres uncomfortably of the methods (and the outcome) of Zhou Lu's earlier mission, provincial committee representatives brought letters to the base that not only requested the Red Army's prompt and energetic military expansion into southern Hunan but also directed regional cadres to make a variety of organizational, personnel, and programmatic changes to correct perceived problems in the base area's development.

At about the same time, the anti-Communist governments of Hunan and Jiangxi cooperated to launch another massive joint military campaign designed to destroy the Red Army and the Jinggangshan base. The combined impact of renewed military invasion and outside political incursion on a regional revolutionary movement and society already stressed by months of social and political turmoil was exceptionally severe. For the revolutionary movement it precipitated a disaster that destroyed nearly all the hard-won gains that had been made in the previous months and so weakened organization and morale that the resulting debilities eventually contributed significantly to the decision by Fourth Army leaders to leave the Jinggangshan region altogether. At the same time, the friction over base area policies and Red Army movements between higher-level party authorities and Mao and his regional allies built up more heat across a range of interrelated ambiguities and difficulties involved in the base-building strategy that would subsequently flare up into a major intra-party conflagration.

THE HUNAN COMMITTEE'S JUNE LETTERS AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES

As was common for high-level party organs throughout China in this period, during the first half of 1928, the Hunan provincial committee and the urban-based regional special committees directly subordinate to it had frequently been disrupted by government security operations. In late May, the provincial committee was reorganized and reestablished in Xiangtan, away from the intense government pressure that existed in Changsha. In early June, the committee moved again, this time to the major mining center of Anyuan on the Hunan-Jiangxi border, where the party had long dominated the strong

local labor movement and where the party's East Hunan Special Committee had also been headquartered for several months.[1]

As one of the last remaining centers of at least semi-urban labor activity in which the Communists retained some influence, Anyuan was an important staging area—along with southern Hunan—for the Hunan party's persistent efforts to implement national party leaders' call for uprisings to seize the cities of the middle Yangzi valley. Determination to implement this plan, in which Hunan was to play an important part, probably increased when soon after its transfer to Anyuan the provincial committee fell under the control of several new cadres appointed by Party Central.

The committee's move to Anyuan made communication with Jinggangshan somewhat easier, despite the difficult terrain that lay between the two areas. In addition, the sizable Red Army forces in the Jinggangshan area were strategically situated about halfway between Anyuan and the Communist guerrillas operating in southern Hunan. From Jinggangshan, as past experience had shown, the Red Army could easily strike either southwest into southern Hunan or west and northwest into the immediately adjacent Hunan counties which lay between the southern guerrillas and the Communist-influenced workers and guerrillas in the Anyuan area.

The provincial committee's interest in deepening connections with and control over Jinggangshan cadres had been further spurred by receipt of their first extensive information on the Jinggangshan base, in the form of a report they received in mid-June from a provincial inspector named Du Xiujing who had visited the region. Du's report included a brief account of how the troops of Mao and Zhu De had first reached Jinggangshan and joined forces and of the fate of the Hunan peasants who had retreated to Jinggangshan following the spring uprising. The heart of the report, however, was a detailed analysis of the composition and condition of the Fourth Red Army, along with a similar discussion of the activities of the Border Area Special Committee and the soviet governments.

Though presented in a straightforward factual fashion, Du's report nonetheless contained much explicit or implied criticism of the base's military and political organizations. Among other things, he noted the limited territory fully controlled by the Jinggangshan revolutionaries, the excessive dominance of the party over the soviet governments and of the military over the party, the variable but generally deficient state of party organizations within the Red Army, the continuing problems with land redistribution, and the disorganized and rather shabby way in which the Jinggangshan leaders had dispatched the refugee Hunanese peasants back to their homes.[2]

Du's report sparked an immediate reaction from the provincial committee. Eager to draw upon the Fourth Army to support and expand revolutionary influence throughout eastern and southern Hunan, the committee was clearly exasperated with Du's news about the base area's deficiencies.

On 19 June the committee drafted two documents addressed jointly to the Border Area Special Committee and the Fourth Red Army's party committee and dispatched them to Jinggangshan in the care of a Hunanese cadre named Yuan Desheng. On 26 June, the committee followed these documents up with two more, which it sent in the hands of Du Xiujing and another cadre named Yang Kaiming.

The Letters of 19 and 26 June

One of the 19 June documents was a resolution which had clearly been written in immediate response to Du Xiujing's mid-June report, while the other was a letter that supplemented and expanded upon various matters touched upon in the resolution.[3] To the provincial committee, with its unquenchable optimism and constant preoccupation with the revolutionary potential of Hunan, current conditions provided an opportunity for aggressive military action. Thus, while agreeing with the Jinggangshan leaders' intention to establish a base in the "middle section of the Luoxiao Mountains" (that is, in the Jinggangshan region), the provincial leaders also stressed the need to expand this base to include adjacent areas, particularly those in Hunan.

To this end, the committee resolved that the Jinggangshan forces should expand to the west and north. This expansion would have the short-term aim of disrupting enemy preparations for an imminent attack on the existing Jinggangshan base but also the even more important long-term aim of linking this now-isolated base with other struggling nodes of Communist activity in southern Hunan and in Anyuan to the north. Besides enabling the Red Army to provide military support to local guerrillas, expansion of the base would help open up more reliable channels of communication between Jinggangshan and party organs in the Anyuan area. With these channels in place, Jinggangshan leaders could observe the proper chain of command, and there would be no need for them to communicate directly with the Jiangxi provincial committee or with Party Central.

In conjunction with expansion north and west, the provincial committee urged the Jinggangshan leaders to intensify their base-building efforts. Rather acidly the committee pointed out that despite all the talk of establishing a base, only Ninggang county was currently under firm revolutionary control. The committee stressed the need to abandon a "conservative conception" (*baoshou guannian*) of base-building by upgrading and tripling the size of the Red Army, intensifying land reform, and expanding rapidly in all directions but with a special emphasis on Hunan.

Although the committee phrased its arguments in terms of the advantages which compliance would bring to the base, there was no mistaking the critical tone of the documents. They explicitly noted that the Jinggangshan leaders' past disobedience had contributed to the party's ongoing difficulties in southern Hunan, while their reference to the need to use proper channels and announcement that the committee was dispatching a representative (presumably Yuan Desheng) to "participate in the work" of Jinggangshan party organs were more indirect but no less evident expressions of the committee's feeling that the Jinggangshan cadres had been careless, insubordinate, or both.

Both of the 26 June letters were much more explicit and insistent than the correspondence of the previous week in insisting that the base area's armed forces should take prompt and aggressive steps to consolidate the base and expand into Hunan.[4] The blunt text of the letter to the special committee, quoted below in full, conveys the essential message and tone of both documents:

> The provincial committee has decided that after the Fourth [Red] Army has attacked Yongxin, it must immediately expand toward southern Hunan, while Comrade Yuan Wencai and a battalion remain to defend [Jinggang]shan. [In addition], two hundred rifles are to be taken from the Twenty-eighth Regiment and used to equip the Lianhua and Yongxin peasants, and the utmost effort is to be expended to expand red guard detachments and to implement a red martial law (*chise jieyan*), so as to use the fighting strength of the masses to stop the enemy army's invasion and to construct a Hunan-Jiangxi border base which is based on the workers and peasants. You ought to correct the attitude of relying on the Red Army and actively to raise the masses' self-confidence and creative power. This is vital! This is vital!
>
> Comrade [Mao] Zedong must accompany the army when it sorties; the provincial committee has dispatched Comrade Yang Kaiming to become special committee secretary [in his place]. Comrade Yuan Wencai is to participate on the special committee, and you are to appoint two of the ablest comrades from Lianhua to work on the committee as well; the rest [of its members] may remain as before.
>
> For details, consult the provincial committee's circular (*tonggao*). In addition, you can hear everything personally from the provincial committee inspector Comrade Du Xiujing and from Comrade Yang Kaiming.

The letter to the Fourth Army party committee reiterated and elaborated some of these instructions. According to this letter, after first dealing with the enemy in nearby Chaling and Yongxin counties, the Red Army was to "kill their way along a bloody route" (*sha chu yitiao xuele*) into southern Hunan, find the peasants who had returned there from Jinggangshan, form a rural base, and finally strike back along the Hunan-Jiangxi border to link up with an uprising to be launched in eastern Hunan. To enhance these operations, the army was to expand from four to twelve regiments, replace its party committee by a revived Front Committee with a standing committee consisting of Mao (as chair), Zhu De, and Gong Chu. Du Xiujing, as provincial inspector,

was to "assist the committee in its work," and Yuan Desheng was to return to work at the provincial committee.

The provincial leaders had responsibility for advancing the revolutionary struggle throughout the entire province, and they were under intense pressure from the party's national leadership above to encourage widespread uprisings, and from struggling local party branches and uprising committees below to provide them with the military assistance needed to create secure arenas for activity. Their pronouncements therefore stressed that the Jinggangshan base should not be considered as an isolated, self-sufficient island but rather as one among many components whose resources and activities were linked by the party hierarchy into a larger regional undertaking. Mao and his fellow base area cadres, however, had a rather different conception of their proper functions and responsibilities.

The Yongxin Joint Conference

Although the documents they bore had been written a week apart, the emissaries carrying the provincial committee's correspondence of 19 and 26 June appear to have arrived within a few hours of each other on 30 June in the Yongxin county seat, where much of the base area's leadership and military strength had concentrated after defeating the Two Yangs. The local cadres immediately convened a meeting, which has become known to party historians as the Yongxin Joint Conference (*Yongxin lianxi huiyi*), to discuss the combined correspondence.[5]

According to Du Xiujing's later reminiscences, information he had received en route had made him realize that parts of the letters he carried had been outdated by recent events, most notably the victory over the Two Yangs that had led to the reoccupation of almost all of Yongxin and energized the revolutionary "High Tide" in the region. When he presented the 26 June letters to the assembled base area leaders, therefore, Du states that he prefaced his remarks by noting that the provincial directions were now "inappropriate" (*bu shiyi*). This, he recalls, succeeded in calming what would otherwise have been a very contentious meeting and turned it into a productive discussion of how to respond to the provincial directives and how to follow up on their recent victory in Yongxin.

Considering Du's position as provincial committee representative and the central if murky role that he was to play in subsequent events, it may be that Du was less supportive of Mao and other local leaders at the time than his retrospective and perhaps self-serving memoir suggests. Nonetheless, the fact remains that when the meeting finally broke up late that night and the participants made their way out past the sleeping guards, they had decided not to comply with some crucial parts of the provincial committee's directives, most notably the order to attack into southern Hunan. Instead, they

would keep the army in the base area, both to defend against further enemy attacks and to help in consolidating and extending the recent gains.[6]

While the bulk of the Red Army and the base area leadership proselytized among the inhabitants in and near the Yongxin county seat, Mao drafted a letter (dated 4 July) to the provincial committee explaining why they had decided not to follow some of the orders they had been given. In essence, Mao's explanations stressed the basic point that Jinggangshan was simply more hospitable to the revolution than southern Hunan and was likely to remain that way. In southern Hunan, enemy military forces were large and effective and the economy was so battered that the area could not solve the Red Army's pressing problems of finance and supply. By contrast, in Jinggangshan the Communists had a well-located, easily-defensible base where the population was mobilized and supportive, where ill and wounded Red Army soldiers could be cared for, and where the potential for further expansion, especially in the direction of Yongxin and adjacent counties where their opponents were the relatively ineffective Jiangxi troops, was quite high.

Mao criticized the provincial committee's approach as "seeking only to build up the momentum of the insurrections without attempting to consolidate the bases," and noted that past efforts along this line had been "easily swept away like water flushing the river bed" when the enemy had counterattacked. As he noted (doubtless with some irony), it was only after considerable effort that the Red Army had at last begun to abandon the "roving-bandit-style activity" and reluctance to concentrate on developing mass work in a single area for which it had previously been criticized by the provincial committee. Now that the base had begun develop, it would be counterproductive abruptly to abandon the intensive base-building work that provincial leaders had stressed so strongly and to send the army haring off into Hunan to try to protect numerous scattered nodes of party activity in areas that were very exposed to the depredations of enemy armies. Only at some indeterminate point in the future, when the base had been consolidated and external circumstances were right, should the Red Army strike into Hunan and take part in a province-wide uprising.[7]

The Strategic Dilemma

Mao's assertion of a sort of self-centered local autonomy was more than a little hypocritical in that he and his fellow Red Army leaders were even then taking much the same sort of authoritarian integrative approach toward the "localistic" tendencies of Jinggangshan-native party members that they were criticizing on the part of the provincial committee. They would, moreover, even more determinedly encourage similar sorts of centralizing processes later, when they knit the patchwork of local nuclei of revolutionary activity in southern Jiangxi together to form the Central Revolutionary Base Area.

Still, Mao's position had considerable logic. This was not only because of the evident needs for intensified mass work and base consolidation that he explicitly articulated but also because of an implicit strategic dilemma involving the relationship between the Red Army and the base that had begun to become apparent during the spring campaigns and that would become increasingly salient in the minds of party and army leaders in the future. A central issue in this dilemma was how to reconcile the conflicts between waging effective mobile warfare against a stronger enemy on the one hand and preserving intact the population, property, and other material and symbolic resources located in an immobile territorial base on the other.

Warlord army invasions of the base area had two major potential targets. One of these was the Red Army, which was the core of the regional revolutionary movement's military power; the other was the Jinggangshan massif, which was the movement's territorial and symbolic epicenter. The fact that the Red Army had made the massif into its main headquarters and staging area, however, meant to warlord commanders that the two potentially separate targets had essentially merged into one: an attack on the massif functioned in some important senses also as an attack on the Red Army. It was primarily because of this convenient juxtaposition that the massif became the main objective of the initial suppression campaigns. Even when it became apparent that the mobile Red Army units in fact roamed widely throughout the region, their movements were so erratic (and often so invisible) to their opponents that the massif still offered the only steady aiming point against which military attacks might profitably be launched.

This situation had both advantages and disadvantages for the Red Army. The enemy's fixation on attacking Jinggangshan made their movements quite predictable and thereby made it much easier for the Red Army to position their forces for defense and to decide where to counterattack most effectively. Moreover, so long as enemy forces focused on seizing terrain and property rather than on pursuing and destroying military units, the Red Army remained a force to be reckoned with, capable both of unexpected attacks on warlord armies and of influencing the population and supporting the revolution in various other ways.

On the other hand, the massif and the concrete and symbolic resources associated with it did possess real value to the revolutionary movement. Because the Red Army and the party aspired to build a base rather than simply to occupy a lair, they could not rely simply on the "roving bandit" tactics of "traveling in circles." The massif and the adjacent areas filled with movement supporters could not be left open to enemy assault without undermining Red Army claims to be able to protect the people and ensure the permanence of their radical reforms. Whether their opponents recognized the fact or not, policy and aspiration tethered the Red Army—albeit loosely—to the massif and its environs, and warlord attacks on Jinggangshan therefore provided

them with leverage that constrained and partly compensated for the Red Army's mobility and tactical advantages.

Compelling as the need to protect immovable resources may have been in reinforcing the desire to remain in the area that Mao expressed at this time on behalf of the regional party leadership, this view nonetheless ignored an equally compelling strategic argument implicit in the position of the provincial committee. As sensible as it might have seemed in the short run to focus on consolidating a single base, such an approach finessed the question of how it contributed to the revolution's long-term success to take the movement's most well-armed, professionalized military forces and hole up with them in an isolated base area such as Jinggangshan. In stressing the need for the Red Army to provide aggressive support for other struggling nodes of Communist activity, the provincial committee was in effect promoting a core element of the sort of proactive, expansive program of rural base-building upon which Mao and the Fourth Army would themselves embark following their departure from Jinggangshan.

The disagreement between the provincial committee and Jinggangshan leaders was thus more over short-term priorities, timing, and targets than it was over long-term strategy. As overly optimistic and urban-oriented as the provincial committee may have been, its members had still perceptively recognized that a key problem in the development of any successful long-term rural strategy would lie in working out how numerous small isolated rural bases could be linked, integrated, and focused on the ultimate task of seizing major urban power centers. In this respect they were at least as farsighted as Mao, whose thoughts were perforce divided between such long-term strategic issues and the manifold immediate problems of keeping the Jinggangshan base healthy and growing.

Renewed Enemy Pressure

Those problems and pressures were growing even as the response to the provincial committee was being prepared, due to the launching of a second joint effort by Hunanese and Jiangxi military forces to destroy the base area. In early July, taking advantage of the Red Army's dispersal in the countryside, a portion of the Hunanese Eighth Army entered Ninggang from Chaling. On the Jiangxi side, five regiments of the Third Army and six regiments of the Sixth Army began advancing from Ji'an and Anfu counties toward Yongxin.

The party leadership immediately decided to re-concentrate most of the Red Army and use it first to attack the invading Hunanese. Meanwhile, the population of Ninggang hid their provisions to deny them to the enemy, while Yuan Wencai's portion of the Thirty-second Regiment (which had remained in Ninggang when the bulk of the Red Army moved into Yongxin) and various red guard units also mounted constant guerrilla attacks on the

Hunanese. Harassed and hungry, the enemy force moved quickly on through Ninggang toward Yongxin to link up with the advancing Jiangxi army force.[8]

When the hastily assembled Red Army regiments reached Ninggang on 11 July, the Hunanese troops had already departed. Adopting well-tested tactics, Red Army leaders sent the Twenty-eighth and Twenty-ninth regiments to raid the enemy's rear areas in Lingxian and Chaling to divert the Hunanese from its drive into Yongxin, while the Red Army's other two regiments continued to protect the Jinggangshan massif and to harass the enemy's communications. As hoped, these moves convinced the Hunanese that the threat to their rear outweighed the need to continue with the suppression campaign, and by 14 July they had returned to Chaling (proceeding west via Lianhua county rather than taking the longer, guerrilla-ridden route back through Ninggang). Their departure from Yongxin began just hours before they would have linked up with the slowly advancing Jiangxi army troops.

As the Hunanese retreated, the Red Army's Thirty-first Regiment in Yongxin reorganized and redeployed to harry and obstruct the two-pronged advance of the Jiangxi forces. As a first step, the regiment divided into three "routes" (*lu*), each directed by a newly established CCP "action committee" (*xingdong weiyuanhui*) and by a military commander. Aided by local cadres, these units served as a rudimentary control apparatus coordinating the mobilization, expansion, and deployment of the Communist-led mass organizations and local guerrillas that had mushroomed in the Yongxin countryside. As Mao Zedong and county party committee members held rallies throughout the county to encourage the formation of still more organizations, over 30,000 participants in the county's already existing red guard detachments and youth groups were consolidated into larger units called (among other titles) Red Insurrectionary Regiments (*Chi dong tuan*), which were deployed in various places under the control of one or another of the three action committees.

To hinder the enemy, the Yongxin forces adopted scorched earth tactics similar to those used by their Ninggang compatriots, emptying villages, hiding provisions, fouling wells, and obstructing roads and tracks. At the same time, the Red Army regulars of the three routes harassed and ambushed enemy troops when they attempted to advance. Together these efforts bottled up all eleven enemy regiments within a thirty *li* radius of the Yongxin county seat for almost a month.[9]

THE "AUGUST DEFEAT"

Unfortunately for the revolutionaries, while the ill-armed but naggingly effective guerrillas stiffened by the Thirty-first Regiment of Red Army regulars swarmed around the befuddled and over-cautious enemy armies on the eastern and northern edges of the base during these hot July days, disturbing developments within the bulk of the Fourth Red Army forces located to the west in Hunan had already begun to undermine their efforts. The crisis began with an outbreak of dissatisfaction among the troops of the Twenty-eighth and Twenty-ninth Regiments, which was then manipulated by certain officers and party cadres to pressure the remaining leaders to agree to a belated implementation of the provincial committee's orders to attack southern Hunan. The attack itself was a bloody failure, and it set in motion a chain of events that in the short run led to a nearly catastrophic enemy invasion of the entire base area and in the long run contributed materially to problems which led to the abandonment of Jinggangshan by Mao and the Fourth Red Army.

Dissension within the Ranks

Following their strike into Lingxian and Chaling following the Yongxin Joint Conference, the Twenty-eighth and Twenty-ninth regiments headed back to Yongxin to help the Thirty-first Regiment face the Jiangxi enemy force. While still in Lingxian, however, many soldiers in the Twenty-ninth Regiment began to express dissatisfaction with the current state of affairs. These soldiers were mostly Hunanese peasants from Yizhang county who had joined the revolution during the abortive southern Hunan uprising. Now, after several months of almost non-stop fighting, many felt that they had done enough and that they should be allowed to return home. On 12 July, at a meeting from which party cadres were excluded, they decided to form unit committees to express their views to army leaders and set a deadline of 13 July for these demands to be met or else they would leave on their own.

After learning of the crisis by mail, Mao sent a message urging the entire force to return to Jinggangshan. In reluctant obedience to this request and the pleading of Red Army leaders, the Twenty-ninth Regiment did accompany the rest of the army when it set off for Ninggang on 14 July. When the force reached a settlement on the Ninggang border, however, the demands for a return to southern Hunan flared up again. By this time, discontent had spread to the Twenty-eighth Regiment as well. Although soldiers in this regiment were not particularly interested in going to southern Hunan, they also did not want to return to Jinggangshan. Instead, they wished to search out some other, presumably safer, area in southern Jiangxi.[10]

Red Army leaders had to treat the opinions of the soldiers very carefully. This was not only because failure to do so might have led to open mutiny but also because at this early stage of its development the Red Army consciously promoted a more open, democratic style of leadership and organization than

that which prevailed in other Chinese military forces. Differentials between officers and men in pay, clothing, and other privileges were kept as limited as possible, for example, and elected soldiers' committees were set up at the company level and above to adjudicate problems which arose concerning the relative treatment of officers and men.[11]

Army leaders justified this style as a manifestation of Communist concern with helping the workers and peasants from whose ranks most ordinary soldiers came. In addition, it may also (consciously or not) have been influenced by the close ties and personalistic relationships that existed among leaders and followers in bandit gangs such as those of Yuan Wencai and Wang Zuo and that had also been part of the military experience of a sizable number of the Red Army's men and some of its officers. In any case, concern for the feelings and conditions of ordinary soldiers and interest in maintaining egalitarian relations among officers and men impelled army leaders to take seriously the dissatisfaction being displayed by the war-weary and homesick Hunanese, especially when the problem was one that had been intensifying for a long time.

At the same time, however, resolution of this particular problem was hampered by other factors besides concern for the niceties of personnel management. Unfortunately, it is extremely difficult to construct a clear picture of what went on at this pivotal stage in what turned out to be a disastrous campaign: most available accounts of the entire foray into Hunan are either purposefully vague or unverifiably precise, and many are mutually contradictory as well. Nevertheless, it is evident that the issue of returning to southern Hunan was complicated by divisions among the army's leadership and apparently also by outright agitation on the part of some of them.

As far as can be determined from available information, the army commander (Zhu De) and party representative (Chen Yi) were the most notable advocates of a prompt return to the base area, while the Twenty-ninth Regiment's commander (Hu Shaohai), its party representative (Gong Chu), and the provincial committee representative (Du Xiujing) were the main supporters of a return to southern Hunan. Some high-level proponents of a drive into Hunan were, like the rank-and-file soldiers, doubtless excited by the prospect of returning to familiar territory (Hu Shaohai was a southern Hunan native, while Gong Chu was from adjacent northern Guangdong), but they also provided other rationales for the move. These included reminding Red Army leaders of the provincial committee's 26 June directives ordering just such action and suggesting that an attack into Hunan would draw enemy forces into pursuit and away from the Jinggangshan base. Some sources further suggest that one or more proponents of the southern Hunan move also deliberately instigated and manipulated rank-and-file pressure to leave the base by, among other things, informing the soldiers of the contents of the provincial committee's 26 June letter.[12]

After another meeting failed to reach consensus and a last-ditch attempt to consult with Mao misfired due to the latter's absence at the Yongxin front,[13] warnings from the Twenty-ninth Regiment's officers and men that they would soon take matters into their own hands finally led the army's leaders to agree to march into Hunan. Though a messenger bearing a long letter from Mao requesting their return soon caught up with the army and forced yet another pause to reconsider the issue, army leaders eventually concluded that the difficult terrain and distance between them and the base meant they were already basically committed and that the only chance for the incipient raid to be successful lay in the entire force carrying on together. On 17 July the two regiments moved out again, with the Twenty-ninth Regiment in the lead.[14]

The Attack on Chenzhou

After a rapid march which outran news of their coming, on 24 July the Red Army regiments surprised an enemy force as they approached the large county seat of Chenzhou, which earlier had been a major objective of the southern Hunan uprising. After driving the enemy off with a fierce attack, the Red Army quickly seized the city.[15] In the wake of this victory the need for Red Army troops to release tensions built up in months of constant fighting and hardship, already apparent in deteriorating march discipline and demands to return home, again became evident. Paying little attention to the retreating enemy troops, many of the army's soldiers meandered unconcernedly around town, scrounging for food, getting haircuts, or otherwise taking advantage of the amenities of the first sizable city most of them had visited in many months. Unusual for the usually well disciplined Red Army, there was also some looting.[16]

Even more disturbing was the fact that arrival in Chenzhou soon led to more requests from Twenty-ninth Regiment soldiers for permission to visit their homes in adjacent Yizhang county. One battalion commander even encouraged his troops to surround Zhu De and raucously demand that they be given leave to see their families and help with the approaching fall harvest. The situation grew so threatening that Wang Erzhuo, the commander of the Twenty-eighth Regiment, briefly contemplated using his troops to try to disarm the Twenty-ninth Regiment, an action that would surely have resulted in serious bloodshed.[17]

Before this tense situation could be resolved, however, events changed dramatically when the defeated enemy forces managed to regroup and launched an unexpected counterattack that threw the Red Army into total turmoil. Participants' recollections of the following events predictably differ on details, but they generally agree that in the surprise and confusion discipline at least partially broke down, especially among the Twenty-ninth Regiment.

During the ensuing pell-mell retreat, the Twenty-eighth Regiment managed to escape with relatively few losses, but a mass of disorganized stragglers who included the bulk of the Twenty-ninth Regiment were trapped and left to their own devices when the enemy seized a bridge leading out of town. When the survivors sorted themselves out over the next few days, they found that the Twenty-ninth Regiment had disintegrated. Most of its troops had apparently not even attempted to rejoin the army but instead had taken advantage of the proximity of Yizhang county to head immediately toward home. Only Hu Shaohai, Gong Chu, and a handful of the regiment's soldiers made it to the rendezvous.[18] The demoralized Red Army remnants retreated slowly eastward into Guidong county, pausing along the way to recuperate, to amalgamate the survivors of the Twenty-ninth Regiment into the Twenty-eighth, and to take out their frustrations on local elites and militia forces. Their progress was also slowed by the need to deal with several cases of mutiny and betrayal within their own ranks.[19]

Renewed Enemy Attack

While the Red Army survivors languished in Guidong in mid-August trying to shake off their traumatic defeat, the rest of the Red Army and local military forces sought to cope with the fallout from their own serious setbacks in the base area itself. As had happened previously under such circumstances, when the enemy near the Yongxin county seat heard that the main Red Army had left the area, they quickly found the energy to attack the heart of the base. Several columns moved westward deep into Yongxin and southwestward toward Ninggang, killing peasants and destroying property in the villages along the way. At the same time, elite militias emboldened by the army advance redoubled their efforts to wreak havoc among villages in the remaining territory under Communist control. Though the base area received a temporary respite in early August when conflict among two rival enemy armies led those of their units participating in the Jinggangshan offensive to break off their attacks and withdraw, by mid–late August the enemy on the Jiangxi side of the base was again on the march, accompanied now by a complementary attack from the west launched by Hunan forces through Ninggang toward the Jinggangshan massif.

In the face of this overwhelming force, most of the Communist forces that were "detached from production" (i.e., Red Army troops and large-scale red guard units and insurrectionary regiments) retreated into mountain enclaves in western and northern Yongxin and around the Jinggangshan massif, leaving most villages under the shaky protection of local red guards. The battalions of the Red Army's Thirty-first Regiment, which had been dispersed to help stiffen the screen of guerrillas and red guards holding the enemy inside the Yongxin county seat, now reunited and moved along with Mao Zedong

to the Xiaoxijiang area in western Yongxin, where they remained poised to move in a variety of different directions as circumstances developed.

At this crucial point Yuan Desheng, who had left over a month earlier with Mao's 4 July letter to the provincial committee, reached Mao's headquarters bearing another provincial committee letter dated 20 July. Mao convened an emergency meeting of the special committee, army officers, and local party cadres in the village of Jiupi to discuss the letter.

Just days before writing this letter, the provincial committee had suffered serious losses when its Anyuan operations were again exposed by government agents, and there was also abundant other evidence that a determined effort was underway to eradicate Communist influence in this important and volatile labor center. Despite these discouraging developments, the provincial committee's assessment of the current situation in its 20 July letter remained determinedly upbeat. The committee noted with evident pleasure that internecine conflicts continued to distract enemy military forces in the region and that a recent Communist-led uprising in Pingjiang county in northeastern Hunan was growing in strength. Several months later, the forces that had staged this uprising under the leadership of Peng Dehuai and others were to make their way to Jinggangshan. At this point, however, the committee considered this uprising as simply another sign that conditions were ripe for establishing an extensive rural base area extending all along the Hunan-Jiangxi border, beginning with Pingjiang in the north, running south through Anyuan and Jinggangshan, and ending up in southern Hunan.

Having received Mao's 4 July letter rejecting its request for an attack on southern Hunan (and being still unaware of the disastrous Red Army attack on Chenzhou that was then in progress), the provincial committee's 20 July letter now requested a new Red Army expansion toward Anyuan and eastern Hunan. This would support what was reported to be an imminent general uprising in the region around Anyuan and would make it possible to link up with the expanding Pingjiang uprising to the north. (Though not explicitly noted in the letter, provincial leaders were doubtless also aware of the relief that the Red Army presence would bring to their own harassment at the hands of government police). The committee recognized the need to consolidate the Jinggangshan base and defeat substantial enemy military forces threatening it before an attack on Anyuan could be mounted, but it also firmly insisted that nothing could be allowed to stand in the way of the attack's prompt launch and determined prosecution.[20]

Given the strong enemy attack then underway, as well as the fact that half of the Red Army had vanished into the dangerous depths of southern Hunan and remained completely out of touch, Mao and the twenty-odd other cadres gathered at the Jiupi Emergency Conference were predictably exasperated with what they considered poorly timed and ill-conceived instructions. In a series of mocking, ironic questions clearly designed to highlight the contrast

between the extensive mass mobilization underway in Jinggangshan and the much less well developed Communist programs in eastern Hunan, Mao reportedly asked the embarrassed Yuan how many strikes, or student protests, or peasant uprisings, or guerrilla units there were in the Hunan areas into which the provincial committee letter had called for the Jinggangshan Red Army forces to move "without the least hesitation" (*hao bu youyu*).

While this contentious conference was still deliberating, it is said, a local peasant who had accompanied Zhu De's force fortuitously returned with the news of the disastrous defeat at Chenzhou. Whether or not the timing was in fact precisely so dramatically perfect as this, the arrival of news of the defeat certainly provided the final excuse that Mao and his fellow cadres needed to reject the provincial committee's orders. Instead, they decided to send Mao and one of the Thirty-first Regiment's two battalions to Hunan to search for the defeated troops, while the remainder of the regiment stayed behind to help the Thirty-second Regiment and various red guard units defend what remained of the base area.[21]

The Defense of the Jinggangshan Massif

With the departure of Mao's battalion, the Red Army units still in the base faced an exceptionally difficult military situation. Formerly the army had generally relied on interior lines, superior mobility, and uncoordinated enemy movements to mass its full strength successively against individual enemy units, enabling them to concentrate roughly equal forces against each portion of their collectively superior adversaries' armies and thus defeat them in detail.

This time, however, the situation differed in several respects. For one thing, well under half of the Red Army's full strength of four regiments was now available to defend the base. Moreover, the absent elements included not only most of the Red Army's best armed, best led, and most professional units but also the bulk of its top leaders and headquarters personnel. Despite months of training and experience, the soldiers of Yuan Wencai's and Wang Zuo's Thirty-second Regiment, which mustered perhaps two-thirds of the "regular" Red Army personnel remaining in the base, still retained enough of the localism and raffish behavior of their bandit days to make it difficult to use them away from their Jinggangshan massif turf.[22]

In addition, the expansion and consolidation of the base—the cumulative investment in institution building, mass mobilization, and land redistribution—that had taken place during the previous few months meant that territorial defense was now more important than it had been to the Red Army and the people of the base area. If the population was to have enough faith in the viability of the revolution and its radical programs to participate freely in them, then the Red Army could not simply flee from superior enemy force but had somehow to show that it could protect the base from harm.

Finally, the enemy attack that developed in the latter part of August began in a much more focused and coordinated way than before, so that the Red Army's normal divide-and-conquer attack methods would have been less effective even if they had been at full strength. In another attempt at interprovince coordination, three regiments of the Hunanese Eighth Army marched from Lingxian to Dalong in Ninggang and then on to the village of Yuantou at the foot of the Jinggangshan massif. From the Jiangxi side, one regiment of the Third Army, taking advantage of the withdrawal of the Red Army's defensive screen from around the Yongxin county seat, advanced through the mountains separating the two counties to Xincheng in Ninggang and then moved on to Maoping, also at the foot of the massif.

Both enemy forces were now located in close proximity on the approaches to Huangyangjie, the most important of the several slight easings of the forbidding mountainous terrain that constituted the only feasible access routes up onto the massif itself. Huangyangjie's strategic value stemmed from its location on the northern side of Jinggangshan, at the junction of the several trails that provided the most direct routes between the massif and the bulk of the territory that the Communists sought to control in Ninggang and Yongxin counties. It was via Huangyangjie and these trails that in former years Jinggangshan guest people bandit gangs had launched many of their raids on the early-settler–dominated lowland communities of Ninggang and that Red Army units now most frequently made their way to and from their battles with government troops and elite-raised militias. Complete capture of this access route by the enemy would clear the way for an advance on the innermost reaches of the massif, and even firm enemy control of the lower end of the Huangyangjie route could effectively deny Red Army forces access to the population centers and agricultural resources of Ninggang and Yongxin.

Either of these options seemed well within the reach of the strong forces gathering at the foot of Huangyangjie. At the time, the remaining line battalion (the First) of the Red Army's Thirty-first Regiment was still operating in western Yongxin, trying to protect both the shrinking Communist-controlled areas there and the approaches to Jiulongshan, the other main Communist mountain redoubt in the base area. This left only the Thirty-second Regiment, the headquarters unit, and special operations company of the Thirty-first Regiment, some red guards, and a considerable number of service personnel and sick and wounded Red Army soldiers available to defend the massif.[23]

In preparation for just this sort of enemy attack, for some time Thirty-second Regiment soldiers and other massif inhabitants had been constructing trenches, crude pillboxes, tree-trunk cannon, and other fortifications guarding the various massif entry routes. In addition, the Border Area government and party had established a body known as the Border Area Defense Committee (headed by Wang Zuo) to coordinate the construction of defense works, transportation and storage of food and war materiel, and the

infiltration of goods and messages through the tightening enemy blockade of the border area.[24]

Despite these efforts and the formidable terrain advantages, cadres meeting to discuss the situation disagreed on whether the massif could be held with such a small force, with some arguing that the best course was to flee immediately before the enemy could organize a potentially fatal attack. In the end, the decision was made to stay and defend the base.[25]

Once this decision was made, the First Battalion of the Thirty-first Regiment in Yongxin was ordered to come immediately. Still anxious to help maintain a Communist military presence in this tenuously controlled portion of the base area, the battalion left two of its four companies behind in Yongxin, so that only two remained to arrive on the massif on 29 August after forced marches over small mountain trails to avoid the massing enemy units. Party leaders decided to use the newly arrived companies to defend the heights of Huangyangjie along with some Jinggangshan red guards, to use Yuan Wencai's battalion of the Thirty-second Regiment and some Ninggang red guards to harass the enemy's flanks around the foot of the access route, and to disperse Wang Zuo's battalion of the Thirty-second Regiment, some Lingxian red guards and various rear-echelon personnel to guard several other possible access routes to the massif against the possibility of a surprise enemy flanking move.[26]

On 30 August, the dormant enemy forces finally began to stir. Having already by their inaction provided the Communists with a breathing space in which to bring troops from Yongxin and to organize the best possible defense, the enemy now compounded their error by launching their attack with Hunanese troops alone, instead of coordinating a combined assault with Jiangxi forces. Several full-scale Hunanese assaults on the Huangyangjie defenses were thrown back by the outnumbered Red Army and local red guard forces in fierce fighting in which the Red Army defenders were able to use their mobility and greater familiarity with the terrain to full advantage, while the enemy troops toiling up the steep, rugged, and densely-foliaged mountain slopes through the summer heat and humidity found themselves stretched out along narrow mountain trails where they could not use their superior numbers and firepower.

After the failure of these assaults, the Hunanese force secretly withdrew from the area under cover of darkness and headed back toward Lingxian, leaving the still-immobile Jiangxi army regiment alone to face the Communists. Unwilling to try with one regiment an assault that had already proven unsuccessful when launched with three, the Jiangxi troops in turn soon withdrew. Probing attacks against other entryways onto the massif by enemy militia were likewise turned back by the Thirty-second Regiment, and the proud but relieved Red Army units were left in sole possession of the massif.[27]

Defections and Social Conflict

Impressive though this tactical victory was, it did little to change the overall strategic military situation in the base area. The bulk of the region was still dominated by enemy armies and swarms of elite militias who were by now well on the way to undoing the accomplishments of the revolution's spring "High Tide," while the badly outnumbered Communist forces remained confined to a few peripheral mountainous enclaves such as Jinggangshan and Jiulongshan, where they were in no position to project their power or protect their erstwhile supporters.

The shock of the unprecedentedly widespread military occupation, coupled with the cumulative effects of several months of intensifying socioeconomic conflict, led to the almost complete collapse of most of the base area's party, government, and mass organizations. They were shattered not only by the direct impact of the enemy invasion and the subsequent white terror but also by the traumatic effects of large-scale defections by party members and other one-time participants in the revolutionary movement. As Mao stated later in his well-known November report to Party Central, during this period "the rich peasants and the opportunists in the Party went over to the enemy in droves." The bulk of the defecting party members were poorly motivated and ill-trained "careerists" who had joined the CCP in the June High Tide's massive recruiting drive. During the summer defeat, Mao reported soberly, many of these "careerists defected. In many places, they led the reactionaries to hunt down our comrades."[28]

The party defectors were joined in these activities by large numbers of non-party members from the "intermediate class" stratum of small landlords, owner-peasants, and low-level elites. Though many of them had not resisted or had even actively participated in the revolution during the movement's spring expansion, they had been motivated more by the hope of thereby maintaining and expanding their existing power than by deep commitment to the ideals or policies of the revolution itself. When the prospects of the revolutionary movement declined during the summer, many opportunistic lower elites abandoned the revolution and began to cooperate with the enemy armies and militias seeking to suppress it.[29]

The defections contributed significantly to the devastating effects of the defeat on the land redistribution program. In addition to small-landlord defectors who had remained in the base, many expatriate landlords also returned to reclaim their former holdings and evict (often violently) the peasants to whom the land had recently been redistributed. Especially devastating was the fact that the reoccupation occurred during the late summer and lasted in many places well into the fall. Under the growing cycle prevalent in this region, this meant that peasants who had received the land during the late spring–early summer revolutionary High Tide and who had

invested money and months of labor in planting and nurturing crops on their newly acquired fields now had the land taken away just as the crops were becoming ready for harvest. This phenomenon, which local people ruefully characterized as a process whereby "the peasants divide the fields, the landlords cut the grain" (*nongmin fentian, dizhu gegu*), was one of the most discouraging and damaging aspects of the August Defeat.[30]

In some places, particularly in Ninggang, both evictions and the defections of party members and lower elites were also intertwined with the alarming resurgence of guest people–early settler violence that occurred during the August Defeat. Defections from the revolutionary ranks in Ninggang were particularly apparent among early settler elites and party members and were closely associated with early settler guidance and support of large-scale military assaults on guest people–dominated areas that were stigmatized as "Communist bandit lairs." As Mao described the process,

> when the native [i.e., early settler] despotic gentry returned to Ninggang, bringing the troops with them, they conducted large-scale propaganda claiming that the settlers [i.e., the guest people] were going to massacre the native inhabitants. As a result, most of the native peasants defected, put on white ribbons, and led the army to burn down houses and comb the mountains.[31]

Mao's terse description gives only the sketchiest indication of the impact on the revolutionary movement of this renewed explosion of large-scale ethnic violence. Defections from the ranks of revolutionary supporters in Ninggang's early settler communities were widespread and included not only elites whose power and wealth may have been threatened by the revolution but also many ordinary peasants who had presumably recently benefited from land redistribution. The subsequent damage to guest people communities resulted not only from the depredations of outside enemy troops but also from those of local early settlers who took advantage of the opportunity to plunder the largely defenseless guest people hamlets. In addition to the destruction and looting, some early settler leaders also added to the general fear and ethnic tension by reviving the oft-repeated (though impossibly impractical) demand that the guest people should all be "returned to Guangdong and Fujian."[32]

The Red Army Returns to the Base

As the desperate battle for the massif and the traumatic conflicts sweeping the base were underway, Mao and the other battalion of the Thirty-first Regiment had managed to locate and rejoin the survivors of the Chenzhou defeat on 23 August in the Guidong county seat. A conference of the Red Army Front Committee followed shortly thereafter, and not even another

sudden enemy attack that forced a hasty retreat from the county seat could more than briefly interrupt the inevitable assessment of responsibility for the August defeat.

By the end of the reconvened conference (in which Mao, Zhu De, Chen Yi, Gong Chu, and Du Xiujing were the main participants), Mao, Zhu, and Chen had predictably criticized Gong and Du for encouraging the Hunan raid and had purged them from positions where they could directly influence the army or the base. The conference abolished the Red Army Front Committee (established in late June by provincial committee order, with Gong Chu on its standing committee), and replaced it with an "action committee" (*xingdong weiyuanhui*) that was headed by Mao and excluded Gong. Though the conference decided that the main body of the army would return to Jinggangshan, Mao and his allies directed Gong and Du to remain behind to organize and lead another reincarnation of the CCP's Southern Hunan Special Committee.[33]

Under renewed enemy pressure, the Red Army left Guidong on 25 August and slowly returned to Jinggangshan via Chongyi and Shangyou counties in southern Jiangxi, encountering the usual incidents and battles along the route. The most notable occurred when the Red Army reached Suichuan county south of Jinggangshan in early September. As soon as they arrived, local people warned them that part of Liu Shiyi's enemy division had recently come to the county seat in hopes of surprising the retreating Red Army.[34] Though this was a substantial enemy force, Liu's division was known to have a rather low fighting ability, so Red Army leaders (who may also have been looking for a victory to help restore morale shaken by the defeats and internal strife of the Hunan campaign) promptly attacked and routed them on 12 September.

The following day, most of the army dispersed around the county in four regional groups to try to help overcome the discouragement, fear, and backsliding in revolutionary participation that had accompanied the "August defeats" here as in other parts of the region. In less than two weeks, their efforts had revived local party organizations, district and township soviet governments, and land redistribution activities. The forces in the eastern group also made contact once again with the CCP's Wan'an county committee, and arranged for more than eighty Wan'an peasants (including a young woman named Kang Keqing who was later to become Zhu De's wife) to travel to Jinggangshan to join the revolutionary forces there.[35]

Recovering the Base

On 26 September, the main Red Army abruptly left Suichuan and marched back to the Jinggangshan massif. Although the soldiers were doubtless glad to be back at last in friendly and familiar territory, they were unable to settle

down for the rest that they so richly deserved. Instead, they had to embark immediately on a new series of campaigns to drive off the numerous enemy army and militia units that still existed throughout the region, put an end to the widespread social conflict which had accompanied the August Defeat, and begin the long process of rebuilding the shattered revolutionary movement.

It was, in fact, in response to a messenger sent from Yuan Wencai to seek their aid in just such a campaign that the Zhu-Mao force had so suddenly abandoned Suichuan and returned to the massif. Some time previously, a battalion from one of the Jiangxi armies had come to garrison the Ninggang county seat of Xincheng. After their arrival, the battalion commander and a well-known Ninggang early settler militia leader named Yin Qizhong began to cooperate in taking action against remaining revolutionary "nests" in Maoping and the other predominantly guest people settlements on the northern edge of the massif.

After learning through a group of female spies who visited the area disguised as peddlers that there seemed to be no major Red Army units around, the enemy commander decided to lead his force, along with some of Yin's militia and a mob of early settler peasants from the Xincheng area, off to raid Maoping and other nearby villages. News of their preparations leaked out to Yuan Wencai, who promptly sent an urgent message to the Red Army in Suichuan. By the time they arrived, the enemy raiders had spent several days burning and plundering villages en route to Jinggangshan and were then not far from Maoping. The Zhu-Mao force joined with elements of the Thirty-second Regiment and local inhabitants to set up a hasty ambush site in a narrow defile on the approaches to Maoping where on 1 October they were able to surround, decimate, and eventually force the surrender of the entire enemy battalion.[36]

As was often the case during the Jinggangshan struggle, this victory brought about an abrupt change in the military climate and paved the way for the revival of Communist control over all of Ninggang and part of Suichuan counties, though the gains were not consolidated without considerably more back-and-forth fighting. Within a few days of its victory near Maoping, the newly reunited Red Army had fanned out across the county, seized Xincheng, and stationed a battalion to guard the approaches to the county from Yongxin over the Qixiling passes. During the same period, most of the enemy force that had retaken the Suichuan county seat also departed; on 13 October the Red Army recaptured the county seat without a fight, and its soldiers once more dispersed into the countryside for almost two weeks of mass organization work. At about the same time, revolutionary strength elsewhere on the outskirts of the base area was being augmented by mutinies and defections from enemy military units.[37]

Offsetting these gains, however, was the continuing guest people–early settler conflict in Ninggang. Though the main Red Army had returned in time

to thwart the raid by enemy troops and Xincheng early settlers on Maoping-area guest people communities, much damage had already been done, not only to the homes and lives of Ninggang's guest people minority but also and more significantly to the unity and feelings of common interest between people in the two ethnic communities that had begun to be fostered by the revolutionary movement's political and economic programs.

Predictably, after the Red Army returned, some guest people felt that the time for revenge had come, and they began to launch counterattacks. These began with small expeditions to early settler villages by groups of guest people peasants seeking to recover their looted property (and doubtless a little extra besides); as Mao noted, during this period the guest people "hastened to confiscate the pigs, cattle, clothes, and other property of the native peasants." Given the passions that had been unleashed, however, early settlers had reason to fear that these recovery raids might well escalate into large-scale violence as the guest people took advantage of what was widely perceived to be their special relationship with the Red Army and sought its help in retaliating.

Lending credence to these fears were incidents such as a raid by a unit of Yuan Wencai's Thirty-second Regiment on an isolated early settler village situated anomalously close to the guest people power center in Maoping. This village, whose inhabitants (all surnamed Yin) lived proudly and completely separate from contact with their guest people neighbors, was the hometown of the Ninggang early settler militia leader Yin Qizhong, who had been active in the August attacks on guest people, and the raid was aimed at arresting him. Yin himself escaped, but in frustration the Red Army raiders brought nearly a dozen of his family members back to Maoping and prepared to execute them. This personal and (for the revolutionary cause) public relations disaster was narrowly averted by the intervention of a high-ranking party cadre (Tan Zhenlin) who was fortuitously in Maoping recuperating from illness.[38]

Nonetheless, news of such activities contributed to the growing fear and ethnic polarization of the county's populace. As a result, a steady stream of Ninggang early settler refugees that may eventually have numbered nearly ten thousand people—an appreciable percentage of the county's entire population—began to flee across the mountains to Yongxin and Lingxian to avoid possible reprisals. Initial efforts by local party branches to stem the flight were completely unsuccessful, and it ultimately required the full-scale intervention of high-level party cadres and the diversion of a great deal of time and effort to damp down the panic. As short-term measures to deal directly with the fleeing early settlers, party cadres set up checkpoints on the main routes leading out of the county to persuade refugees not to leave their homes, held a rally in Xincheng at which Mao and Tan Chenlin urged the populace to remain calm and trust the Red Army and sent representatives to Yongxin and elsewhere to encourage refugees to return.

At the same time, party leaders attempted to defuse the social tension and animosity toward the refugees that existed among those who had remained loyal to the revolution during the summer's upheavals. To this end they put up posters around the county containing slogans such as "do not kill any of the turncoat (*fanshui*) peasants at all," "welcome the turncoat peasants back to distribute land," and "turncoat peasants return and be treated equally and without discrimination." They also enlisted the remaining district and township party organs to mount extensive campaigns to encourage both early settler and guest people communities to exchange the items they had looted from each other during the disturbances.[39]

Meanwhile, the complicated military minuet between the Red Army and enemy units also continued unabated. In late October, soon after part of the Red Army moved south to attack Suichuan, another enemy force in the north took advantage of its absence to recapture Xincheng in Ninggang county. On 2 November, the enemy forces that had earlier retreated from Suichuan likewise counterattacked Red Army forces in that county. As they usually did when faced with such simultaneous but uncoordinated threats, the Communists chose to attack the weaker of the two enemy forces and so sent the Red Army force in Suichuan quickly northward to face the enemy in northern Ninggang. In a series of short but sharp battles, they compelled the enemy to withdraw from Xincheng toward Yongxin, bloodied them again as they crossed the mountain passes between the two counties, and finally pushed the defeated remnants out of the Yongxin county seat and back toward Ji'an. In these battles the Red Army itself also suffered heavy casualties, however, and when word came that enemy reinforcements were en route, the Red Army abandoned the Yongxin county seat and retreated once more into Ninggang. By mid-November the contiguous area of the Jinggangshan base included all of Ninggang and parts of Yongxin, Suichuan, and Lingxian. There were also other separate splotches of Communist-controlled territory in Lianhua and Yongxin.[40]

CONCLUSION

As in the case of many other major setbacks in Chinese Communist history, party historians have been assiduous both in assigning primary blame for the "August Defeat" to the actions of a few treacherous or misguided individuals and in emphasizing the heroic nature of whatever small victories may be salvaged from the overall wreckage of the event. In regard to the August Defeat, therefore, standard party histories stress such things as the errors of the Hunan Provincial Committee and its local representatives and the pluck and fortitude of the tiny band that successfully defended Huangyangjie against such heavy odds.

In the case of the August Defeat, such attributions and emphases work to obscure both the severity and the nature of the disaster suffered by the regional revolutionary movement. Despite the fact that the Red Army managed to recover the core of the base area, substantial territory had been lost. Moreover, in much of the area recovered there had been grave loss of life and property, social tensions were acute, revolutionary programs and organizations were in a shambles, and the prestige of the party and army was at a low ebb. In many respects, the losses suffered during this period were to prove irreversible, at least during the remainder of the time the Fourth Army was in the region.

Various manifestations of dissension and disarray involving the Red Army and regional political leadership, such as the dispute with the Hunan Provincial Committee, the actions of Du Xiujing and his allies, and the semidesertion of the Twenty-ninth Regiment, clearly played an important part in the defeat. The distraction of army leaders and the physical dispersion of the army's forces just as a major enemy offensive got underway made it impossible for the revolutionaries to conduct the sort of focused coherent defensive effort that they had mounted so successfully against the three spring suppression campaigns.

But the disarray was not due simply to the actions of a few malicious or misguided individuals. Rather, it reflected more widespread uncertainty, tentativeness, and confusion within the movement over how to conduct a meaningful and effective rural armed struggle in a revolutionary context. As party leaders became more deeply involved—whether enthusiastically or reluctantly—in creating and utilizing rurally based armed forces, they also gradually began to become aware of and wrestle with some of the conundrums and contradictions involved.

Raising armed forces almost anywhere in twentieth-century rural China was easy. Maintaining these forces in a given area—particularly one as geographically isolated and socially sympathetic as Jinggangshan—in the face of suppression efforts by local elites and armies was more difficult, but it was still often possible, providing one "went in circles" either literally or figuratively by using mobile hide-and-seek tactics and/or by being open to compromise and accommodation with authority. But developing rural movements whose interests went beyond mere survival and the acquisition of locally significant power, prestige, and wealth to promote ambitious political organizations and socioeconomic reforms required, as Mao and many others all eventually realized, the construction of base areas within which a certain level of control and security could be maintained.

As described in this and preceding chapters, the emergence of such bases—most prominently in Jinggangshan but with varying degrees of size and effectiveness elsewhere as well—led to a number of strategic dilemmas. One of these involved the troubling contradiction between the mobility and flexibility needed to ensure the survivability of small Red Army forces and

the steadfast defense of specific geographic areas required to preserve bases and popular support. Another involved the question of how to utilize the bases once they were established and especially how to meld individual bases and their local supporters into a large-scale rural movement that could mount an effective challenge to the established regime.

The impact of these dilemmas was evident in the August Defeat. It was prominent in rhetorical form in the disagreement between the Jinggangshan leaders and the Hunan Provincial Committee and in practical form both in the division of the Red Army forces and in the subsequent destruction in the base area. Though the soldiers of the Twenty-ninth Regiment were homesick, they as well as some troops in other regiments were also tired of months of combat and poor living conditions spent in what seemed to be the meaningless defense of an isolated and unproductive region. It was difficult for them to see what besides simple survival they were accomplishing in the Jinggangshan region, and if survival alone was the aim, they preferred to pursue that aim closer to home or in a potentially more hospitable area. The consequences of their absence, meanwhile, soon became apparent as enemy armies marched into the heart of the base area, and the carefully nurtured political organs and reform programs promptly collapsed in a welter of confusion and conflict.

The rapidity and thoroughness of the collapse provided discouraging evidence of the difficulty of transforming political and socioeconomic relationships in the region. If one set of problems in building base areas lay in developing strategies for maintaining and coordinating them in the face of external challenges, another set lay in learning how to construct political networks and reform programs within the base areas that were robust and stable enough to stand up to the shocks and changing circumstances of an increasingly bitter civil war environment.

The August Defeat highlighted a number of significant and interrelated problem areas in this regard. One obvious issue was the continued salience and easy combustibility of early settler–guest people tensions in Ninggang and the Jinggangshan massif area, at the heart of the base. Of broader regional significance was the pivotal role now played in the destruction of revolutionary organs and programs by liminal elites of the "intermediate class" whose opportunistic participation and leadership had earlier been instrumental in the initial growth of these institutions and programs. Furthermore, the rapidity and extent of the collapse gave evidence of the persistence of a volatile "bandwagon effect" in regional public opinion, the sort of reputational calculus of comparative success that had encouraged people to flock to the Communist cause in the spring but that now proved capable of prompting them to abandon the cause just as readily.

The August Defeat thus provided a valuable, if discouraging, measure of the state of the regional revolutionary movement almost a year after the arrival

of the first force of outside sojourners. In light of this compelling evidence of problems unresolved and difficulties remaining despite months of work, it was clear to the leaders of the Jinggangshan revolutionary movement that immediate and substantial changes were called for in virtually all aspects of base area policies and programs. It was to the resolution of these varied and vital concerns that the Communists in the base area turned in the fall of 1928.

NOTES

1. Zhonggong Hunan shengwei dangshi ziliao zhengji yanjiu weiyuanhui, *Hunan dangshi dashi nianbiao (xin minzhu zhuyi geming shiqi)* [A chronology of major events in Hunan party history (The period of the New Democratic Revolution)] (Changsha: Hunan renmin chubanshe, 1986), 63–69.

2. In April and May of 1928 Du, a Hunanese cadre with considerable party and guerrilla work experience in the Anyuan area, had twice failed in attempts to reach Jinggangshan. On a third try in late May he finally succeeded and spent a week or two investigating local conditions (aided by several hours spent perusing Mao's recently prepared rural surveys of the area) before returning to Anyuan. Du Xiujing, "Si shang Jinggangshan" [Four times climbing Jinggangshan], in *JGG*, vol. 2, 419–25; Du Xiujing, "Bayue shibai" [The August defeat], in *JGG*, vol. 2, 522. Discussion of Du's report is based on the text of the report contained in *JGG*, vol. 1, 126–32. The text is also available in *JGGSX*, 15–21.

3. The following discussion of the 19 June documents is based on the texts presented in *JGG*, vol. 1, 133–37. The texts may also be found in *JGGSX*, 34–38.

4. Discussion of the 26 June documents is based on the texts presented in *JGG*, vol. 1, 142–44. The texts also appear in *JGGSX*, 39–41.

5. Du Xiujing, "Bayue shibai," 523. Du and Yang Kaiming had traveled together as far as Lianhua, where they had learned of the Red Army's recent victory over the Two Yangs. The two men then split up, with Yang heading for the heart of the base in Ninggang and Du continuing on to Yongxin. For a general overall account of the Yongxin Joint Conference and its context, see *JF*, 186–92, especially 189–90.

6. Du Xiujing, "Bayue shibai," 523–24; Zhonggong Yongxin xianwei dangshi bangongshi, *Yongxin renmin geming shi* [The revolutionary history of the people of Yongxin] (Jinggangshan: n.p., 1989), 60–61.

7. This summary of the 4 July report is based on the Chinese text in *JGG*, vol. 1, 148–50 (also available in *JGGSX*, 47–49), and the English translation in *Mao's Road to Power: Revolutionary Writings, 1912–1949*, ed. Stuart Schram (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1995), vol. 3, 51–54.

8. *JF*, 193.

9. *JF*, 193–96; *JGDS*, 132–33; Zhonggong Yongxin xianwei, *Yongxin renmin geming shi*, 61–63. These accounts agree on the main points, but differ somewhat on the precise titles of the various organizations involved. For example, *JF* and *JGDS* refer to an "eastern" route action committee, whereas the Yongxin xianwei account refers to a "northern" route; *JF* refers to "Red Youth Regiments" (*chi shao tuan*), while the Yongxin xianwei account refers to "Red Insurrectionary Regiments" (*chi dong tuan*).

10. "Yang Kemin guanyu Xiang-Gan bian suqu qingkuang de zonghe baogao" (25 February 1929) [A comprehensive report by Yang Kemin regarding conditions in the Hunan-Jiangxi border soviet area], in *JGG*, vol. 1, 253–54. "Yang Kemin" is a pseudonym for Yang Kaiming. See also *JF*, 196–97; *JGDS*, 129–30.

11. Song Renqiong, "Wang Zuo budui ji shibing weiyuanhui" [Wang Zuo's detachment and the soldiers' committee], in *Xinghuo liaoyuan congshu zhiyi (Jinggangshan douzheng zhuanji)* [A single spark starts a prairie fire collecteana, vol. 1 (A special collection on the Jinggangshan struggle)] (Beijing: Jiefangjun chubanshe, 1986), 331–36.

12. *JF*, 197–98; *JGDS*, 130–31; Du Xiujing, "Bayue shibai," 525; Li Buyun, "Bayue maojin Xiangnan" [The rash August advance into southern Hunan], in *JGG*, vol. 2, 671. Du's account of these events says that it all started with efforts to resolve the problem of soldiers who were unruly and undisciplined on the march but gives no information about what if any role he may have played in encouraging the soldiers' views. Gong Chu's memoirs (*Wo yu hongjun* [The Red Army and I] [Hong Kong: South Wind Publishing Co., 1954]) say nothing at all about the decision to attack southern Hunan. Zhu De's reminiscences to Agnes Smedley likewise provide virtually no significant information whatsoever about the southern Hunan expedition, which is characterized as "a diversionary maneuver . . . to cut off blockading troops advancing from Kwangtung [Guangdong] Province." See Agnes Smedley, *The Great Road: The Life and Times of Chu Teh* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1956), 234. The memoir of Li Buyun, then a 16-year-old ordinary soldier in the Twenty-ninth Regiment, states that Du told some of the regiment's officers of his wishes to return to southern Hunan and that they then rapidly spread the word throughout the regiment.

13. Du Xiujing, who states in his account of the events that he was concerned at this point primarily by the fact that Mao had not been consulted, obtained agreement to a further brief delay in making the final decision while he went to the Border Area Special Committee office in Ninggang to seek Mao's opinion. In Ninggang, however, he found that Mao had just left for Yongxin; Du recalls that when he discussed the situation with his fellow provincial committee delegate Yang Kaiming, who was now installed as the special committee secretary, Yang casually told him to go on into southern Hunan and that he would take care of telling Mao about it later. Du Xiujing, "Bayue shibai," 525–26.

14. "Yang Kemin guanyu Xiang-Gan bian suqu," 254; *JF*, 198; *JGDS*, 131; Du Xiujing, "Bayue shibai," 525–26. Apparently there was some discussion at this meeting (which was held at Shuikou, in southern Lingxian) of the possibility of splitting the force, with the Twenty-ninth Regiment going south and the Twenty-eighth Regiment returning to the base. Ultimately, however, the leaders concluded that by itself the Twenty-ninth Regiment would stand no chance of success, and the decision was made for the entire force to proceed together.

In his fact-based historical novel, Liu Xiaonong describes a rather different version of events in which the impatient soldiers of the Twenty-ninth Regiment decided they had waited long enough and just decamped in the night, leaving the Twenty-eighth Regiment to decide the next morning whether to chase after them or return to the base. As I have found no other evidence to confirm Liu's account, I follow the more conventional interpretation of party historians on this point. See

Liu Xiaonong, *Jinggang yanyi* [The romance of Jinggang] (Beijing: Nongcun dushu chubanshe, 1989), 525.

15. Many Chinese discussions of these events make a special point of mentioning the special relationship that had existed between Zhu De and Fan Shisheng, and their authors are clearly aware of the charges of moral faithlessness and failure to repay a kindness to which Zhu's attack on his former benefactor render him susceptible. The accounts of Du Xiujing and Gong Chu, both of whom have good reason to try to divert attention from their own behavior during this period, are particularly open in drawing out the negative moral implications of Zhu's actions, but the defensiveness of some orthodox party histories on this point suggests that PRC historians also find the whole matter rather embarrassing. Du Xiujing, "Bayue shibai," 526; Gong Chu, *Wo yu hongjun,* 150.

16. Du Xiujing, "Bayue shibai," 526; Yang Dezhi, "Qiqu de Jinggang" [Rugged Jinggangshan], in *JGG*, vol. 2, 383.

17. He Changgong, *He Changgong huiyilu* [The reminiscences of He Changgong] (Beijing: Jiefangjun chubanshe, 1987), 191–92.

18. *JF*, 201; *JGDS*, 131; Du Xiujing, "Bayue shibai," 526–27; Li Buyun, "Bayue maojin Xiangnan," 676–78; He Changgong, *He Changgong huiyilu*, 192–93; Yang Dezhi, "Qiqu de Jinggang," 383–84. In line with political imperatives inherited from the 1970s, some PRC accounts (such as *JF* and He Changgong's memoirs) attribute part of the blame for this defeat to Lin Biao, who is said to have been lackadaisical in driving the enemy troops away from the city after the initial battle. It is impossible to know to what extent, if at all, this blame is warranted.

Eventually, most of the Twenty-ninth Regiment soldiers who fled were lost to the revolutionary movement, either because they were killed by local militias and bandits or because they simply abandoned the struggle and blended back into the population. Most of those who rejoined the Red Army after the battle were in a single company commanded by the young Xiao Ke.

19. The amalgamation of survivors into the Twenty-eighth Regiment took place on 13 August, in Guidong's Shatian. "Yang Kemin guanyu Xiang-Gan bian suqu," 254.

The most serious and costly of the mutinies was that of a battalion commander named Yuan Chongquan whose force had been sent ahead as an advance guard, and who took the opportunity to abandon the revolution and send a letter back urging soldiers to rise up and kill their leaders. Although many of Yuan's men were unwilling accomplices in his betrayal and eventually made their way back to the Red Army, Yuan and a portion of his troops remained at large for a time in Jiangxi's Chongyi county. Not until the Red Army retreated toward Jinggangshan through Chongyi a number of weeks later did they meet up with Yuan again, and even then he managed to escape, killing the very able Twenty-eighth Regiment commander Wang Erzhuo in the process. *JF*, 203–4; *JGDS*, 140–41; Yang Dezhi, "Qiqu de Jinggang," 385–88; He Changgong, *He Changgong huiyilu*, 193–94. He Changgong also notes that three other battalion-level Red Army officers were executed in Guidong during roughly the same period on charges of fomenting mutinies. Even if not directly connected to Yuan's mutiny, these individuals may well have become suspects as a result of increased scrutiny given to the officer corps following Yuan's betrayal.

20. Text of the 20 July letter is in *JGG*, vol. 1, 160–62. On government pressure on Anyuan Communists, see report in *JGG*, vol. 1, 159; and Zhonggong Hunan shengwei,

Hunan dangshi dashi nianbiao, 70. For the Jiupi conference, see *JF*, 199–201; *JGDS*, 135–37.

21. *JF*, 199–200; *JGDS*, 136–37.

22. In mid-1928 the Thirty-second Regiment still had serious problems with gambling, womanizing, and opium addiction among its soldiers. Among the opium addicts was Wang Zuo's brother Yunlong, who was eventually able to break the habit and serve in a responsible position among the regiment's officer corps. Wang Zuo mounted an extensive and apparently quite effective campaign to break the opium habit among his unit's men. See *WZ*, 320–25.

23. *JF*, 205–6; *JGDS*, 141–42.

24. *WZ*, 326–32. Traces of the trenches and other fortifications constructed at this time are still visible today at Huangyangjie and other points of entry onto the massif, as I have observed on several visits to the area.

25. *JF*, 205–7; *JGDS*, 142; *WZ*, 342–43.

26. *JF*, 207–9; *JGDS*, 142; *WZ*, 342–44.

27. *JF*, 209–14; *JGDS*, 143–46; *WZ*, 343–50.

28. "Report of the Jinggangshan Front Committee to the Central Committee" (25 November 1928), in *Mao's Road to Power* ed. Schram, vol. 3, 76–77, 98.

29. "Report of the Jinggangshan Front Committee," 91.

30. "Yang Kemin guanyu Xiang-Gan bian suqu," 256; *JGGY*, 215–16.

31. "Report of the Jinggangshan Front Committee," 98.

32. Qiu Zhizhuo, "Lun Jinggangshan geming genjudi de tukeji maodun wenti" [On the problem of the contradiction between early settlers and guest people in the Jinggangshan revolutionary base area], in *Tudi geming zhanzheng shiqi genjudi yanjiu* [Research on base areas during the period of the land revolution war], ed. Quanguo Zhonggong dangshi yanjiu hui (Ji'nan: Shandong renmin chubanshe, 1987), 98.

33. *JF*, 201–2; *JGDS*, 138–40; Du Xiujing, "Bayue shibai," 528–29; "Yang Kemin guanyu Xiang-Gan bian suqu," 256. After leaving Guidong, the Red Army paused to complete dealing with Du Xiujing and Gong Chu. In Shatian, a conference of representatives from various army units voted to request that the provincial committee discipline Du. In Longxi, in Zixing county, a Yao ethnic minority area where the Twenty-eighth Regiment had stopped to recuperate following the Chenzhou defeat, the army stopped for several more days to help Gong and Du gather surviving party cadres from the surrounding counties to reorganize the regional special committee and local red guard units.

These events ended the involvement of Du and Gong in the Jinggangshan base area. However, neither man remained long in southern Hunan, nor in disgrace. In his frequently unreliable memoir, Gong claims that he received orders from Party Central to become secretary of the Hunan provincial committee, but was unable to make his way to Changsha and instead went home to northern Guangdong, where he worked for the Guangdong provincial committee. See *Wo yu hongjun*, 152–60. Du left sometime in 1929 and went to work for Party Central, where he recalls that he wrote a report on Jinggangshan conditions and also perused a report from Mao Zedong to Party Central which called for Du's punishment. I do not know whether or not he was punished, or what his subsequent career was. See Du's "Bayue shibai," 528–29.

34. The enemy troops were from the independent division of the southern Jiangxi warlord Liu Shiyi. Their timely arrival in Suichuan was due to information provided by the mutinous Red Army officer Yuan Chongquan. After barely escaping from capture by the Red Army as it passed through Chongyi county on its retreat from Hunan, Yuan fled to the Gan River valley, where he became a senior officer in Liu's division and passed on his knowledge of the Red Army's habits and likely route of march back to the base area. Yuan was killed in the subsequent fighting in Suichuan.

35. *JF*, 215–18; *JGDS*, 146–47; Kang Keqing, "Wan'an nongjun shang Jinggangshan qianhou" [The time when the Wan'an peasant army climbed Jinggangshan], in *JGG*, vol. 2, 554–56.

36. "Yang Kemin guanyu Xiang-Gan bian suqu," 257; Su Lanchun, "Huigu Ninggang de geming douzheng" [Thinking back on the revolutionary struggle in Ninggang], in *JGG*, vol. 2, 97–98; *JF*, 219–21; Chen Gang, "X toulong zhandou" [The battle of X toulong], in *Ninggang geming douzheng ziliao congshu—Ninggang Jinggangshan geming genjudi de zhongxin (xu bian)* [A collecteana of materials on the Ninggang revolutionary struggle—centered on the Ninggang and Jinggangshan revolutionary base area (continuation)], ed. Ninggang xian zhengxie wenshi ziliao weiyuanhui and Zhonggong Ninggang xian weihui dangshi bangongshi (N.p.: n.p.), 276–78; Liu Xiaonong, *Jinggang yanyi*, 579–84. Liu's account of this incident is based on discussions with Su Lanchun and other elderly Ninggang residents.

37. In mid-October in Guidong county in Hunan, 126 members of one enemy division defected to the revolutionary cause in a group, and were organized into a special work (*tewu*) battalion. In early November, the leader of another enemy military unit in Lianhua led his 156 men over to the Communist side and was redesignated as an independent battalion of the Red Army. "Yang Kemin guanyu Xiang-Gan bian suqu," 257; *JF*, 221–22; *JGDS*, 148; Liu Xiaonong, *Jinggang yanyi*, 584; Huang Lianqiu, "Yi Bi Zhanyun qiyi" [Recalling the Bi Zhanyun uprising], in *JGG*, vol. 2, 514–20; Bi Zhanyun, "Yi hongsijun tewu ying" [Remembering the Fourth Red Army's special work battalion], in *JGG*, vol. 2, 530–32.

38. "Report of the Jinggangshan Front Committee," 97–98; Qiu Zhizhuo, "Tukeji maodun wenti," 98; Ruan Xiaoyun, et al., "Weiye tong Jinggang changcun" [A great cause along with Jinggangshan will live forever], in *Huiyi Tan Zhenlin* [Recalling Tan Zhenlin], ed. Jin Ye (Hangzhou: Zhejiang renmin chubanshe, 1992), 35–36; Liu Xiaonong, *Jinggang yanyi*, 587–92. Liu Xiaonong has informed me that his account of these events is based on information gathered from elderly Ninggang natives.

39. Qiu Zhizhuo, "Tukeji maodun wenti," 99–100; Liu Xiaonong, *Jinggang yanyi*, 485–87. Liu has stated that his account of these conflicts is based on conversations with elderly Ninggang natives and on material contained in a non-Communist news account of this period written in the 1930s. I have not personally been able to examine this news account.

40. "Yang Kemin guanyu Xiang-Gan bian suqu," 257; *JF*, 222–24; *JGDS*, 148–50.

9

Autumn and the Fall of the Base

During the fall of 1928, regional revolutionary leaders worked to overcome the problems revealed by the August Defeat. First of all, they assessed the activities of the past few months and used the conclusions drawn to develop a more sophisticated understanding of the proper role of the Red Army and base areas such as Jinggangshan in the still-emerging strategy of rural revolutionary war. Likewise, they had to revive the spirits of the many party members who had become profoundly discouraged by the recent defeats and to rebuild as much as possible of the infrastructure, programs and psychological momentum that they had developed earlier. All this had to be done while trying to cope with an increasingly stringent enemy blockade and its adverse economic consequences. Finally, the recent defeat, the chronic difficulties engendered by the region's isolation and social contentiousness, and the prospects of renewed major enemy assaults contributed to a growing willingness on the part of the leaders to consider the possibility that the soldiers of the Twenty-ninth Regiment had been right after all (though for the wrong reasons), and that it was time for the Red Army to abandon the region in favor of more promising prospects elsewhere.

TAKING STOCK AND MAKING PLANS

Party Meetings

Much of the initial stock-taking and concrete planning took place at a series of party meetings that occurred between mid-October and mid-November 1928. The most important of these were the Hunan-Jiangxi Border Area's

Second Party Congress, which took place near Maoping on 4–6 October; an enlarged special committee meeting on 6 November devoted to discussion of a newly-arrived letter from Party Central; and the Fourth Red Army's Sixth Party Congress, held in Xincheng on 14 and 15 November.

Mao Zedong personally wrote the resolutions of the Border Area Party Congress and of the Fourth Army Party Congress. In addition, these meetings also set the context for and assembled much of the material Mao used in his revealing 25 November report to Party Central, which has become famous under its published title "The Struggle in the Chingkang [Jinggang] Mountains." Taken together, these materials provide useful information about the contemporary thinking of Mao and other regional party leaders and about the concrete conditions then prevailing in the base area.[1]

Part of each of these meetings was devoted to reorganizing the party organs that ran affairs in the base area. The nineteen members of the new Border Area Special Committee, like those of the committee it replaced, were a mixture of outsiders and Jinggangshan natives. Eight were holdovers; most of the new faces were regional natives representing the various counties of the base area or regional government and army units.[2] The army congress likewise selected twenty-three people to serve as its new party committee, with Zhu De continuing as secretary.[3] And, in line with newly received instructions from Party Central, in November party leaders also reestablished a Front Committee (an organ that had been abolished some time earlier) to serve as the main party organ for the base area, with authority over both civilian and military party members. Mao headed this committee, with Zhu De and representatives of local party organs (Tan Zhenlin), workers (Song Qiaosheng), and peasants (Mao Kewen) joining him on the standing committee.[4]

In addition to elections, all of the meetings spent much time discussing the interrelationship among the present general state of the revolution, the causes and lessons of the August defeat, and specific current conditions in the base area. Like many other contemporary CCP materials, the documents produced by these meetings (mostly written by Mao) used the imagery of ebbing and flowing waves or tides to describe the reciprocally shifting relationship between the short-term fortunes of the revolution and those of the various Chinese warlord forces. Given the disparity in strength between the tiny revolutionary forces and the massive warlord armies, it stood to reason that when relations among the warlords were relatively harmonious, the revolutionary tide would ebb, whereas when the warlords were conflict-ridden, revolutionary upsurges were much more likely.

To Mao and his associates, this reciprocal ebb and flow strongly influenced the proper timing and tactics for the party and army throughout Central China as well as in the Jinggangshan region itself. When the warlord regimes are preoccupied with internecine struggles, Mao noted, "we could adopt a comparatively adventurous strategy, and the area carved out by military means could be comparatively extensive," whereas when conditions within the enemy camp are more stable, "our strategy must definitely be one of gradual advance." Under either circumstance, the relatively weak revolutionary forces must remain concentrated to maintain a secure hold on a well-located, popularly supported base area, rather than dividing into small units to launch unsupported attacks which could be defeated in detail even by a preoccupied enemy.[5]

It was just such careless dispersion of forces and precipitate raids that Mao felt had led to the August Defeat. In both the Border Area Congress resolution and the report to Party Central, Mao explicitly blamed the provincial party committee and its representatives for the constantly shifting orders and impetuous strategic misjudgments that had opened the base to devastating enemy attack, destroyed much of the Red Army, and seriously eroded popular support for the revolution throughout the region. In making these charges, as in asserting the need for expanding "in a series of waves" and for concentrating rather than dispersing Red Army troops, Mao was clearly articulating his views in the party leadership's ongoing discourse over the strategic issues involved in waging a rural revolutionary struggle.

In regard to more local matters, both the resolution and the report provided discouraging evidence of the heavy cost of the defeat and of the cumulative effects of the months of nearly constant fighting that had preceded it. Besides the loss of nearly half the Red Army's strength in August with the dispersion of the Twenty-ninth Regiment, battle losses, illness, and desertion had also taken a heavy toll on the other Red Army units that had originally come to the base area with Mao or Zhu. Mao noted that after more than a year of fighting, only one-third of these soldiers—the experienced and dedicated troops who composed the army's core—still remained, and that in spite of continuing efforts to recruit deserting enemy soldiers and local peasants to take their places, "enlistment still cannot keep up with the increase in rifles."[6]

The class and ethnic tensions unleashed by the August Defeat had had a devastating impact not only on party and government organs but also on the mass movements and programs whose encouragement and oversight were major responsibilities of the revolutionary movement's political apparatus. In the course of the enemy reoccupation, White Terror, and social polarization that had affected most of the base area, peasant associations, Young Pioneer units, women's groups, and other mass organizations had been destroyed, while land redistribution and other socioeconomic reform programs had also been halted and sometimes reversed.

Rectifying and Restructuring the Army and Party

On the basis of their assessment, participants in the October–November meetings decided on various measures to repair the damage and rectify

some of the deficiencies that had contributed to the severity of the defeat. Among the most urgent and significant of these were major efforts to overhaul what remained of their army and party organizations.

The army had arguably come through the recent defeats as well as or better than any other base area institution. Nevertheless, the problems revealed by such traumatic episodes as the flight and destruction of the Twenty-ninth Regiment, the deteriorating morale evident among the army's combat-weary survivors, and the continuing influx of green new replacements, all pointed to the army's need for intensified discipline, training, and ideological instruction.

To meet these needs, the Red Army's party congress resolved on a program of unit reorganization, party centralization and recruitment, and expanded training of junior officers and cadres. Among other things, these reforms called for tightening supervision over lower-level party committees, increasing the percentage of party members from twenty-five to fifty percent of the entire army's strength, re-emphasizing the importance of the party representatives and soldiers' committees in low-level units, intensifying efforts to develop new propaganda materials to raise the soldiers' class consciousness, expanding efforts to teach literacy within the ranks, and continuing to run officer training courses. As was true of the base area's administrative apparatus, the Red Army suffered from a severe shortage of competent trained personnel, and Mao's report to Party Central several times pleaded for higher authorities to send suitable cadres to help them out.[7]

While the army was trying to increase the size of its party membership, efforts were underway to use precisely the opposite strategy to "cleanse the party" (*xi dang*) in the base. This campaign, which some party historians assert was the first major purge in the CCP's history, was intended primarily to remove uncommitted party members who had joined during the High Tide, and secondarily to improve the organizational and ideological consciousness of those who remained. Though the purge was most thorough in Ninggang and Yongxin, where party organs had been particularly afflicted by rapid overexpansion and where the exemplary effects of the "cleansing" were considered likely to be particularly widespread, all parts of the base were affected to one extent or another.[8]

The purge sought to remove three categories of people from the party: those who did not carry out the tasks of party members or carried them out in a perfunctory, "non-revolutionary" manner; those who had turned traitor during the August Defeat or had been captured by the enemy under suspicious or unclear circumstances; and those of bad class backgrounds who were also not active supporters of the revolution. The heart of the purge process consisted of a thorough party re-registration, which began in September when Mao convened a meeting of Ninggang and Yongxin county committee members to discuss the issue, and which expanded after the Border Area Congress in October.

As has generally been the case in subsequent CCP purges, definition of the purge targets on this occasion was fuzzy and ambiguous, and the three categories of people to be excluded doubtless overlapped considerably. These facts, together with the nature of the actual re-registration procedures themselves, imbued the process with both much flexibility and great potential for arbitrary decision-making.

The need for action, however, was abundantly clear. As noted earlier, the aid that defectors had provided to enemy troops and militias had contributed significantly to the high death toll, the shattering of mass movement organizations, and the exacerbation of guest people–early settler tensions that had occurred in August. Now it was vital to settle accounts with these dangerously fickle party members, a considerable number of whom had by this time again returned to nominal allegiance to the revolutionary cause as the military situation seemed once again to have shifted in the Red Army's favor.

As far as can be determined from the sketchy information available, the actual re-registration was carried out from the top down. First a general proclamation nominally abolished all existing party memberships in a county, then local meetings were convened to which only selected individuals were invited. The invitees were those deemed worthy of re-registration; at the meetings the shortcomings of the remaining former members were discussed one by one and their names expunged from the party rolls.

Since somebody had to convene the meetings and decide whom to invite, the entire procedure was inevitably authoritarian. Because meetings were not publicly announced, and those excluded were never directly informed of their expulsion, the reasons for it, or who had in fact attended the meetings, the process was a secret one as well. An authoritarian procedure was probably required, given that a considerable number of those to be expelled were local elites whose very reason for expulsion was the inordinate influence that their power had previously given them over local party affairs. Closed meetings were necessary because leaders had decided that party memberships should once more become secret, as they had been for most of the CCP's pre-1927 history, to reduce the risk of exposure if enemy forces ever regained control of the area.

Although it is difficult to know precisely how many people were expelled during the re-registration, it was certainly a very large number. Overall, party membership in the entire border area dropped from a high of 10,000 or more in June to about 4000 after the re-registration was completed in the fall. Reminiscences of various Ninggang county participants note that in Dalong township only nine of the original forty to fifty party members remained after the purge; in Bailu township twelve out of seventy-two; in Shangzhai's Sixth Township around twenty out of more than 100; and in Qiaolin a mere three out of more than 300, although the source of the latter statistic notes that some of this decline was due to the death of party members during the

August Defeat. Even if some of the other statistics cited above likewise include deaths or defections from the party during August, the magnitude and consistency of the declines reported suggests that the re-registration itself accounted for much of the drop in membership.[9]

Along with the re-registration, party leaders attempted to improve the ideology and work style of the remaining party members. One measure involved the establishment at Maoping and Ciping of party training institutes administered by the Border Area party to offer two-month courses to selected cadres. County party committees also organized shorter two-week training courses for lower-level cadres, and Red Army units temporarily detached cadres to help local cadres carry out the re-registration and improve their work style by becoming more egalitarian and frugal.

Although the overall result of the purge and its attendant indoctrination and training efforts was to make the Border Area party leaner, more efficient, and more committed, there were nonetheless inevitably irregularities in the process and problems remaining once it was complete. In some areas party leaders felt that local cadres had over-zealously prosecuted the purge and reduced the number of party members too greatly or too mechanically. Often this occurred during efforts to comply with national (and international) party leaders' urgings that all levels of the party increase the percentage of party members who were proletarians. On the other hand, other areas really didn't bother to carry out any re-registration at all but simply resubmitted the same list of party members they had used before.

Along with its attempts to improve the quality of rank-and-file members, however, the party was also forced to acknowledge and discuss several larger structural problems that had become increasingly evident during the preceding months of struggle. These problems—involving among other things the relative balance between democracy and centralized authority in the party and army and the relationship between the party and organizations such as the Red Army and soviet governments—affected all levels of the party.

Issues of organizational cohesion and authority had been salient and contentious in the CCP from its origins down through the United Front period.[10] With the transition to waging an armed rural struggle, the problems if anything only increased in intensity as the consequences of miscalculation increased to include lives lost and organizations destroyed as well as decreases in individual prestige and policy-making input.

Among the most controversial issues from the beginning were those involving the definition and implementation in the Chinese context of various aspects of "democratic centralism." One major manifestation of this concept in the Jinggangshan region was over the extent to which decision-making authority should be concentrated and individualized. For example, comments made in documents written both during the late period of the Fourth Army's stay in the region and during the several months following

its departure reveal significant discontent over the degree to which power was concentrated in the hands of party secretaries, most notably those heading major organs such as the Front Committee and the Border Area Special Committee. As Yang Kemin (himself a former Special Committee secretary) wrote in early 1929, "the Special Committee's affairs are generally managed by the secretary alone; one-person dictatorship, a dictatorship of the secretary, has become a common malady in the border area." In the October 1928 resolution of the second Border Area Party Congress, Mao Zedong also acknowledged that past work had been characterized by "autocracies of the Party secretary" with "no collective leadership or democratic spirit whatsoever. For example, Mao Zedong was the only member of the Special Committee, and Liu Zhen was the only member of the Party Committee of Yongxin *xian*."[11]

Bound up in comments about one-person rule were two separate but related issues. One was the relationship between the secretary and other members of the leading committees, that is, the extent to which high-level decision making should occur through collective discussion and consensus rather than through secretarial fiat. The other was the relationship between the collective elite of "responsible people"—the cadres on major committees—and ordinary party members, that is, the extent to which the overall style of intra-party decision making should be inclusive and "democratic" rather than elitist and authoritarian.

Discontent with the authoritarianism of Mao and a few other specific individuals also melded into a more general issue concerning the relationship between local party leaders and organs on the one hand and the sojourning outsiders and major base area committees they dominated on the other. Of course, the long-term goals and short-term interests of both locals and outsiders overlapped greatly, and the sojourners made extensive efforts to develop a political apparatus that integrated local cadres and gave expression to their interests. Nevertheless, some degree of tension between local cadres and outsiders had almost certainly existed from the time Mao and his followers abruptly muscled their way into the area and, with the rifles of the Red Army at their backs, took charge of the regional revolutionary movement.

As time passed, sojourners continued to fill the powerful regional secretaryships and, with the arrival of Zhu De's and Chen Yi's forces, further expanded their effective overall military and political power, relegating local cadres to subsidiary positions in strategic decision making and leaving them with undisputed control only over party organs at the county level and below. Moreover, individual and collective friction gradually built up between sojourners and local cadres over various issues, ranging from large-scale social problems such as early settler–guest people relations (including the Red Army's perceived tilt toward the "guest people gun" and away from the "early settler party") to personalized disputes such as the tug-of-war between Mao and Yongxin party secretary Liu Zhen over the services of He Zizhen.

Under the circumstances, local cadres and their organizations had become less responsive to instructions from regional party authorities. The worst offenders in this respect appear to have been from Yongxin, the site of the region's largest and most active pre-1927 party organization. The county party leadership included several strong-willed and assertive cadres (most notably Liu Zhen and Wang Huai) who assiduously sought to maintain under very different circumstances the county party's past regional preeminence and influence. When frustrated in this aim, Mao said, "the Yongxin Party wanted to break away publicly from the Special Committee and set up an 'independent kingdom.'" As he also noted, the region's other counties likewise tended to go their own way: "The other *xian*, such as Ning[gang], Ling[xian] and Lian[hua] and so on also paid no attention to reporting to the Special Committee and thereby forming a connection with it."[12]

Not surprisingly, given the congruity of circumstances in which they were acting and the extensive overlap in their memberships, questions of political style and method very similar to those facing the party were also salient within the Red Army. In the army, however, the situation was further complicated by the need to negotiate and define relationships between "political" and "military" actors and activities within the army and by the relatively egalitarian and participatory atmosphere that had been promoted within the army.

As noted in chapter 6, in June 1929, Mao wrote a letter to Lin Biao in which he laid out the context of a "struggle between two different systems of thought" that had "been going on for a year," since the initiation of the Fourth Army.[13] One of the major underlying dynamics in this persistent "struggle" was personal-cum-policy conflict between Mao Zedong and Zhu De, involving in part differences over Mao's policies emphasizing political considerations on the one hand and a "purely military viewpoint" implicitly evocative of Zhu De on the other. Whatever role power and personality rivalries may have played in these disputes, Mao's comments indicate that important matters of policy and principle were also involved. Chief among these was the question of the role of the CCP within the army. Much as some cadres felt that individual committee secretaries had too much power within party organs, some (particularly, one presumes, army officers) likewise felt that party organs and their leaders had too much influence within the Red Army. Full details of the debates are unknown, but references in Mao's June 1929 letter to accusations that "the party runs too many things" and interfered in the everyday administrative minutiae involved in military units give at least a general idea of the nature of the complaints. It is in any event clear that the Maoist precept that "the party controls the gun" was still far from being universally accepted at this point.[14]

Another aspect of the debates within the army involved relationships between the army leadership and the rank-and-file soldiers. As previously noted, the original force Mao led into the region placed much emphasis on

fostering egalitarian relationships between officers and ordinary soldiers and allowed soldiers a considerable amount of decision-making input through the soldiers' committees. These practices and institutions remained intact through the various incorporations of new armed groups of diverse provenance—including the Zhu De–Chen Yi forces, the Yuan Wencai–Wang Zuo bands, and numerous small bodies of warlord army deserters and prisoners—that occurred during the Fourth Army's stay in the region.[15]

Although participatory decision making is an important part of the political culture that differentiated the Red Army from its warlord opponents and helped build cohesion and spirit among its soldiers, the difficulties that could arise from such habits had become clearly evident at the time of the Twenty-ninth Regiment's return to southern Hunan in July. In this case, the demands of the discouraged and homesick soldiers had run contrary (at least in the view of Mao and other core army leaders) to the military needs of the moment, and the divergence of interests had been impossible to reconcile despite many meetings. While this particular situation was complicated by the activities of cadres who wished to undermine the decisions of the main army leaders, it still provided an object lesson as to the turmoil that could ensue when the principles of democracy and centralism came into conflict without clear arbitrating rules or understandings.

Though existing documents indicate that all of these issues relating to the internal workings of party and army and to party-army relations were discussed in the various meetings during the fall of 1928, little is known about the tone or dynamics of the meetings. Nor does it appear that the meetings made much progress in settling these contentious problems. To the contrary, the generalized and routine nature of the measures called for in the documents (more and better training, consciousness raising, recruitment), as well as the eruption several months later of a serious and extended conflict within the Fourth Army over many of the very same subjects, indicate that the fundamental issues remained unresolved. This is not surprising: given the magnitude and urgency of the immediate problems they faced in recovering from the defeat and preparing for new assaults, even had the leaders been in perfect agreement upon the issues it would have been virtually impossible to tolerate the further disruption of a major political reorganization and reorientation. Though papered over at the time, the tensions engendered by these unresolved problems festered beneath the surface and exacted a hidden toll on the unity, comity, and effectiveness of the revolutionary leadership.

COPING WITH SOCIOECONOMIC PRESSURES

Complicating the leadership's efforts to restore popular confidence and social stability was the growing economic pressure on the base area. Some of

this pressure came from the turmoil associated with the land revolution, which had already led to upheaval once when land was distributed to the peasants and again when landlords reoccupied their holdings at gunpoint during the summer. Another and ultimately more serious source of economic pressure came in the form of a gradually tightening blockade.

Reviving the Land Revolution

Because land reform was one of the most important of the movement's programs, party leaders recognized the need to recover from these reverses as quickly as possible. Moreover, the June letter from Party Central that arrived during this period also strongly urged the intensification of the land revolution. In the course of their meetings in October and November, therefore, base area leaders spent considerable time discussing land reform policy and methods.

The primary result of their deliberations was the so-called Jinggangshan Land Law, usually attributed to Mao. A draft of this document had been presented at the Border Area Party Congress in October, following which it had been discussed further and probably modified somewhat in light of the Party Central June letter before being formally promulgated in December 1928.[16]

In its final form, the Land Law called for all land to be confiscated and owned by the soviet governments. Under certain circumstances, soviets might keep some land to use as model farms or communal-use bamboo forests, but they would redistribute most of it to individuals, who would be free to cultivate it individually or collectively but not allowed to buy or sell it. Some of these provisions, most notably that calling for the confiscation of all land, were contrary to the policy set out in resolutions of the CCP's Sixth Congress issued several months earlier, which called for confiscation of the land of landlords alone. News of these resolutions, however, did not reach Jinggangshan until after land distribution had taken place, by which time it was deemed infeasible to reverse the procedure, as doing so would have meant taking some land away from the poorest peasants and giving it back to wealthier peasants.[17]

Although the law acknowledged that labor power might sometimes be used to determine the amount of land to be distributed and that areas as large as a district (*qu*) or several townships (*xiang*) might sometimes be appropriate units for distribution, it clearly indicated that the normal procedure would involve distributing the land of a single township to all of its inhabitants on a per capita basis, regardless of age, gender, or labor power. Red Army and red guard soldiers would receive full shares, which would be cultivated by hired labor in their absence. Although the law did not explicitly prohibit former landlord or rich peasant households from receiving full shares of land, rural handicraft workers were to be eligible only for half-

shares. Other provisions of the law made most inhabitants subject to compulsory labor service and to a light land tax and set out some criteria for the use and supervision of communal forest lands.[18]

The law reflected the diversity and inexperience within the party during this early period. Some items, such as those stipulating government ownership and prohibiting the buying and selling of land, and the provisions for collective cultivation and model state farms, all reflected the outmoded views of relatively idealistic, urban-centered, and Soviet-influenced national party leaders. They marked such radical departures from rural habits and would have needed such extensive efforts at explanation and persuasion that they were probably included only in nominal obedience to national party leaders' wishes and were almost certainly thought of locally as expressions of desirable future goals rather than policies to be immediately implemented. Indeed, so generally inappropriate to rural conditions were such products of the national party leadership's current radical mindset that they were soon dropped nationwide.

Variations in the criteria and units used for distribution, on the other hand, were signs of recognition of the need for flexibility and of a desire to accommodate divergent views within the base area leadership over which methods were most practical and ideologically appropriate. At the same time, the relative lack of class differentiation apparent in the law, especially its implicit lumping together with other rural inhabitants of powerful segments of the population such as landlords and rich peasants, indicated the relative inexperience of cadres in dealing with the land reform–related complexities of the rural power structure.

Many of these topics would long remain salient and controversial issues.[19] In the autumn of 1928, however, the provisions of the Land Law were probably more programmatic statements than practical policies. Not only were limited cadre energies diverted by other urgent rehabilitation priorities but it was also difficult to restore peasant confidence, which had been shaken by the ferocity of military-supported landlord revenge during the August Defeat. Though there is no definitive evidence available, it appears likely under the circumstances that whatever land reform activity went on during the period was confined primarily to recovery and consolidation of previously distributed land and the random seizure of early settler land by angry guest people rather than the planned and supervised process envisaged by the Land Law.

The Economic Blockade

As the enemy generals paused during the late fall to prepare for yet another massive suppression campaign, blockade provided enemy armies with a more passive—but in some ways much more dangerous—alternative to

outright invasion as a method of damaging the base. As indicated in part I, blockades—often combined with military search-and-destroy operations—had long been in the repertoire of methods used by lowland inhabitants and government armies to combat the bandit gangs of the Jinggangshan massif. For opponents of the Communists, blockades had the advantage of not requiring high mobility and aggressive combat engagements (areas in which government armies were notably inferior to the Red Army), and of putting a premium on the much easier work of deploying large numbers of personnel at static checkpoints, many of which could be located near urban garrisons. In addition, blockade enforcement was an activity that could take full advantage of elite militias' extensive local knowledge of mountain trails, peasant and merchant trade patterns, and traditional methods for disposing of bandit booty.

An economic blockade of the base area had gradually been imposed during the preceding several months, but it became much more stringent during the autumn of 1928, as several regiments of government troops and several thousand militia members dispersed along roads, trails, and navigable waterways leading to the Communist-controlled areas to interdict the movement of goods. By this time as well, the disruption caused by months of marauding armies, scorched earth resistance tactics, and the ebb and flow of refugees had already seriously affected the region's economy.

The blockade substantially impeded the large-scale trade in mountain products and certain manufactured items that normally played a significant role even in the isolated Jinggangshan economy. On the one hand, the timber, tea, and tea oil (and in some places opium) that had formerly constituted the main exports of Ninggang, western Yongxin, and northern Suichuan now piled up in the base, and the many peasants who normally relied on earnings from producing or transporting such goods for much of their cash income were deeply affected. On the other hand, the salt, cloth, and medicine that made up the bulk of the few essential imports into this largely self-sufficient area were also hindered in their entry, causing dramatic rises in their prices. The dramatic profits that could be realized from sales of contraband items under such circumstances insured that a few daring blockade runners would still risk their lives to import scarce goods, but the small trickle of goods from such sources was inevitably only a fraction of what was required.[20]

The problems of supply were complicated because of the number of soldiers now present in this poor region. The Red Army's need for provisions and cash (or for goods that could be turned into cash) was kept low by the abstemious lifestyle of its officers, the willingness of its mostly peasant soldiers to subsist on meager rations of poor quality food, and by the fact that soldiers were only given occasional pocket money instead of regular wages. Nonetheless, several thousand active combatants required a great deal of

food, clothing, blankets, and other everyday necessities as well as a growing amount of military supplies.[21]

In order to avoid antagonizing local people, the Red Army needed to make resource extraction as minimal and painless as possible. Some of their efforts focused on making both the Red Army and the base area as a whole as self-sufficient as possible by developing new methods and sources of supply for needed items. Others sought new ways to subvert or penetrate the blockade. And still others attempted to ensure that the substantial burden of resource extraction remaining after all other measures had been taken fell disproportionately upon the wealthy members of the Jinggangshan region's population who tended to oppose the revolution rather than upon the poor members who tended to support it.

Efforts at self-sufficiency were aided by measures that Wang Zuo and others had taken both before and since the outbreak of the revolution to build up facilities and resources within the base and to establish or strengthen clandestine links with the outside world. During his bandit career, Wang Zuo had come through bitter experience to recognize the need to develop diversified resources and contacts so that he and his band could cope with unexpected crises, cash-flow difficulties in lamb-hanging, and attempts to isolate them from outside sources of supply, and outlets for booty. To meet this need, Wang had established caches of arms and money at various places on the massif, had taken pains to include skilled metalworkers and gunsmiths among his close associates, and had developed close ties with merchants who had good commercial connections to the cities of the Gan valley.

After the base formed, Wang used these resources and connections to aid the revolutionary movement. During his bandit days, for example, his gang had seized a small metal-working operation used by counterfeiters and had used it to make their own coins when their genuine cash was short. Now Wang converted this operation into a small mint producing new coins (embossed with revolutionary emblems) to supplement the uncertain supplies of money from outside the base. In a similar vein, former gang gunsmiths were set to work in an expanded gun shop that produced, upgraded, and repaired a variety of different weapons, including primitive cannon made from tree trunks. Wang also drew upon his own background as a tailor to assemble cloth and sewing machinery captured in a raid on Suichuan to equip a clothing factory that turned out uniforms, bandoliers, and food bags.[22]

Wang also used bandit-era connections to help maintain linkages with the world outside the blockade. Among the most notable was the arrangement he worked out (after establishing a sworn brother relationship) with a distantly related merchant living in a village on the eastern edge of the base through which Wang had often passed on lamb-hanging forays. Taking advantage of the fact that this merchant and other villagers habitually marketed goods in Ji'an and other Gan valley towns, Wang arranged for them to bring

salt and other scarce items from the cities back to their village, whence Wang's agents arranged their secret shipment into the mountains. Through similar connections Wang also established a secret communications link between the base and Ji'an over which correspondence was exchanged with outside party organs.[23]

These activities by Wang, his regiment, and their civilian associates were bolstered by a variety of conservation, import-substitution, and distribution efforts by other cadres and the general population. Local herbs were substituted for scarce manufactured medicines, new uses were found for bamboo and other local products, and attempts were made to recover salt from the earthen walls of old buildings and the residue deposited on the insides of wooden urine pails.[24]

Such efforts were supplemented by ingenious smuggling procedures, some of which were organized and encouraged by the base area government and party organs and some of which relied upon spontaneous individual efforts by peasants or merchants spurred by the high prices that smuggled goods (especially salt) could command. Although salt was a particularly common item for smuggling, any number of other goods were also brought through the blockade. During this period, for example, the blockade made it even more difficult than usual for He Zizhen to keep Mao supplied with the newspapers of which he was so fond. To get a better supply, she contacted the small peddlers who ran salt in through the blockade and told them she would pay a high price for newspapers, especially for national papers such as *Shen Bao*. To escape detection, the peddlers used the newspapers as wrapping paper, so that the issues came in scattered and very wrinkled, but they provided invaluable information at a time when Mao and his fellow leaders were feeling increasingly besieged and were trying to decide the future of the base.[25]

To encourage trade of all sorts with the base, party leaders repeated and widely publicized their general policy of non-interference with the commercial activities of small and medium-sized merchants. They also revived the Dalong "Red Market" that had been established in the summer of 1928. This market attracted numerous merchants who sifted through the blockade from localities in surrounding counties.[26]

Encouragement of blockade-running and trade went hand in hand with efforts to make the Red Army as self-supporting as possible. Unfortunately, both the area's intrinsic ecological limitations and the effects of the army's previous activities made it increasingly difficult to sustain so many troops in the region. Even during the spring and early summer of 1928, when the Red Army had been in residence for a relatively short period of time, the difficulty of finding supplies within the base area had affected the army's behavior. Supply difficulties had been one factor encouraging the near-constant movement of Red Army units even when enemy attacks were not imminent, the

frequent dispersal of army units in small groups over large areas of countryside, and the army's numerous forays to attack urban areas well away from the massif.[27]

By late 1928, conditions had become much worse. By this time the income from elite expropriation, which had previously provided for most of the army's needs, had become much more difficult to obtain because the most obvious, accessible, and lucrative sources had already been exploited to the point of diminishing returns. Multiple Red Army occupations of county seats such as Yongxin, Xincheng, and Suichuan had led to the carting away of most of their wealth; the wealthiest and most mobile members of both urban and rural communities had moved themselves and many of their assets outside of the immediate danger area; the proliferation of local militias had increased the difficulty of expropriating the remaining elite powerholders; and the almost constant violence in the region, coupled with the effects of the government blockade, had slowed to a trickle the introduction of new commercial spending or investment.[28]

The growing exhaustion of elite wealth significantly added to the Red Army's difficulties in the fall, and led to a gradual reduction in the army's already spartan provisions. Many reminiscences and histories of the base area mention both the meager cash subsistence allowances (often no more than two or three cents per day) doled out to the soldiers and the poor quality and insufficient quantity of the pumpkins, sweet potatoes, and other undesirable foodstuffs that formed the bulk of their diet. The sick and wounded were especially hard hit, as able-bodied fighters were given priority in receiving what supplies were available.[29]

In most accounts these subsistence difficulties are presented proudly, as part of the sacrifices borne by the Red Army in order to attain the revolution's eventual success. Because many accounts cluster or juxtapose descriptions of the straitened conditions with descriptions of the army's policies mandating good treatment of the population, they consciously or unconsciously convey the impression that the soldiers voluntarily restricted their own diets to ensure that civilians retained enough to eat. Although Red Army soldiers certainly behaved much better toward the populace than did their warlord army counterparts, the fact remains that the cumulative effects of the blockade, months of incessant fighting and the presence of thousands of nonnative soldiers had simply overwhelmed the economic capacity of the region and that the resulting difficulties inevitably affected peasants and soldiers alike. Necessity more than altruism impelled the troops to tighten their belts.

Nor did all soldiers respond virtuously to the increasingly difficult conditions. Reminiscences and other accounts note that desertions were a significant problem during the period and that soldiers in Red Army units (especially the former Yuan-Wang bandit forces of the Thirty-second Regiment) sometimes misappropriated items seized in raids on elites and communities

outside of the base area.[30] When these observations are taken together with the other military organizational and morale difficulties alluded to in the October-November meeting reports and other contemporary documents, it is clear that the Red Army's fighting capacity continued gradually to erode despite strenuous efforts to overcome its many problems.

PREPARING FOR ENEMY ASSAULT

Worries over the festering problems of military supply and morale were heightened by growing signs that another enemy suppression campaign would soon get underway. To help resist this, CCP forces intensified efforts that had been under way for some months to fortify their two major military redoubts: the main one on the Jinggangshan massif and a lesser one that had developed at Jiulongshan (Nine Dragons Mountain) in the Ninggang-Yongxin-Lianhua-Chaling border area.

Work on the Jinggangshan defenses had started in the spring and early summer, when Thirty-second Regiment troops and other local inhabitants began fortifying the five main entry routes onto the massif. Well sited by people familiar with every inch of the rugged terrain and experienced in defending against pursuing elite militias, the fortifications that Wang Zuo and his associates constructed during this period had played an important part in repelling strong enemy attacks against the massif in August. Work on the fortifications continued during the autumn, and by December they were reasonably elaborate.[31]

Like Jinggangshan, Jiulongshan was a rugged, heavily wooded area with a sparse population and easily defensible access routes. Its development as a base began shortly after Mao's forces stopped to reorganize in the nearby town of Sanwan in October 1927. After the army moved on toward the Jinggangshan massif, cadres who were left behind helped local villagers organize a small red guard detachment. Other detachments emerged in the region after He Minxue and other Yongxin county party cadres (who had taken refuge on Jinggangshan after the United Front collapsed) returned to work in this part of western Yongxin.

The value of Jiulongshan as a secure refuge was amply demonstrated when cadres and local guerrillas retreated there during various enemy incursions in 1928. This led cadres from Yongxin, Ninggang, Chaling, and Lianhua to cooperate over a several-month period in building billets and defense works on the mountain. In addition to felling trees across trails and setting up an extensive system of patrols and lookouts along the outer approaches to the area, local guerrillas and party leaders further protected the core of the base by constructing several miles of deep anti-personnel trench lined with sharpened bamboo stakes.

During this period, Jiulongshan was garrisoned and used as a refuge mostly by local guerrillas and red guards, many of whom continued to farm part-time and were still at least partially integrated into the regional economy. The base was only sporadically visited by regular Red Army units, which generally regarded the Jinggangshan massif as their primary home. Spared from the need to house and provision the Red Army soldiers, local cadres were able to stockpile large amounts of provisions in the Jiulongshan area, much of it materiel captured in the repeated Red Army attacks on the Yongxin county seat and subsequently transported across the county for storage in the relative safety of the mountainous redoubt.[32]

In Jinggangshan, by contrast, under normal circumstances the supply of provisions appears barely to have kept pace with demand. In order to build up stocks sufficient to support them during the looming enemy offensive, therefore, the Red Army had to mount a major special effort to collect food after the fall harvest in 1928. Army personnel (including high-ranking officers) and people of the surrounding area joined in an intensive and laborious month-long project to transport (in sacks, on shoulder poles, and in any other conceivable manner) provisions from lowland areas up to the Ciping–Five Wells area on top of the massif.[33]

The very visible participation of Mao Zedong, Zhu De, and other high-ranking leaders in the heavy hauling work was a sign of the urgency of the need, but it was almost certainly also regarded as a useful way to engender the improved cohesion and sense of common purpose within the army that had been one aim of the reforms discussed at the army's party meeting in November. The frequency with which anecdotes about this campaign and the participation of high-level cadres in it appear in both reminiscences and secondary accounts suggests that it did contribute to reviving the pride and purpose of the battered organization, but subsequent developments largely obviated the effectiveness of its main function of helping the army resist attack. Moreover, accounts of the campaign say little about the origins or circumstances of collection of the grain and other provisions transported. If, as is perfectly plausible given the atmosphere then prevailing in the base, at least some of the provisions were simply taken rather than donated willingly by the lowland population, then the campaign may have been an exercise in "robbing Peter to pay Paul" that further undermined already-shaky popular support for what turned out to be ephemeral short-term military benefit.

No such complexities of motive or effect affected another aspect of the Red Army's preparations for conflict, the improvement of medical facilities. Providing the best possible care for their sick and wounded was one of the ways the Red Army tried to distinguish itself from warlord armies, which typically left most casualties to their own devices.[34] Soldiers' confidence that they would be looked after if incapacitated was an important force binding the army and motivating troops to continue fighting in spite of

heavy casualties. Fulfilling these commitments, however, was difficult when the army had to be ready to move and fight at a moment's notice and when combat capability could be severely degraded by the encumbrance of ill and wounded soldiers. Secure hospital and recuperation facilities were therefore significant factors in maintaining fighting strength. This fact explains, among other things, why the ability of Yuan Wencai and Wang Zuo to provide such facilities was an important consideration in the initial decision to make Jinggangshan a base.

The army's first hospital had been established in Maoping in October 1927. In spring 1928, the hospital and its associated recuperation facility moved to three villages in the Five Wells area atop the massif where Wang Zuo's men and local inhabitants constructed simple buildings for their use. Although they suffered little damage in the August Defeat, these quarters eventually became incapable of coping with the growing casualty lists and the lengthy recuperation periods needed by soldiers already debilitated by poor diet and unsanitary conditions, chronic illnesses such as malaria, and the unremitting heat and humidity of the long south China summer. Therefore, late in 1928 the party and government sent skilled local workers to aid soldiers and cadres in building a larger hospital in one of the villages.[35]

New hospital facilities, together with intensive efforts to fortify the base, ameliorate the blockade, and improve the organizational and ideological cohesion of the party and army, doubtless helped considerably to make the base as ready as it could be to cope with impending enemy attack. None of these measures, however, could do much to compensate for the Red Army's relative weakness in personnel and weapons or for the battle-weariness of the remaining soldiers. To overcome this deficiency, only an infusion of outside reinforcements would suffice. Fortunately, just such reinforcement was on the way.

THE FIFTH RED ARMY REACHES JINGGANGSHAN

In the second week of December 1928, the Jinggangshan Communists were pleased to hear of the approach of 800-odd troops of the Red Fifth Army under the leadership of Peng Dehuai. These troops, part of a larger force that had been waging guerrilla war for several months well to the north in the Hunan-Hubei-Jiangxi border region, provided welcome reinforcements and temporarily lifted the spirits of the base area defenders. Their arrival also marked the beginning of the productive but troubled association between Mao Zedong and Peng Dehuai, which was to last for the next thirty years.

Peng and many of the troops who accompanied him had been part of an independent warlord army division stationed in northern Hunan in late July 1928, when Peng (a regimental commander in the division) and several other

party members had led Peng's regiment in a rebellion known as the Pingjiang Uprising. The approach of enemy units intent on suppressing the rising forced them to flee into Jiangxi, where they contacted local revolutionaries and reorganized themselves into the Fifth Red Army. Peng became the army's commander and Teng Daiyuan became its chief party representative.

The Fifth Army fought in the Jiangxi-Hunan-Hubei border region with mixed success until mid-autumn. Though hampered by desertions, enemy attacks and peasant unfriendliness caused by the over-zealous depredations of some local guerrillas associated with it, the army managed to preserve its strength and to carve out a small base. In mid-October 1928, party cadres from this army and neighboring counties formally established the Xiang-E-Gan (Hunan-Hubei-Jiangxi) Border Region Special Committee, with Peng and Teng on the standing committee and with Teng as secretary. Ultimately, enemy pressure forced the Fifth Army to divide, with half remaining to continue guerrilla war under the leadership of Huang Gonglüe and the remainder (numbering around 700–800 personnel) departing for Jinggangshan led by Peng and Teng. In Lianhua county they were met by Fourth Red Army representatives alerted to their coming by newspaper accounts. Slipping at night by the enemy garrison in the Lianhua county seat, the Peng-Teng force finally reached Ninggang and contacted the main body of the Fourth Red Army on 10 or 11 December.[36]

As had been the case when the troops of Zhu De and Mao had joined, the two armies marked their meeting with a celebratory rally and a conference of high-level party cadres. The conference decided that for the moment the Fourth Army would continue with active guerrilla operations while the Fifth Army would serve as a reserve on the massif while resting from its journey. At a rally held a day or two later, a rickety platform collapsed under the weight of the assembled speakers, but the murmurs occasioned by this inauspicious omen were laughed off, the platform was rebuilt, and the ceremonies ended without further incident.[37]

Though party leaders could dismiss the possible symbolic significance of events such as collapsing speakers' platforms, they were unable to ignore the practical implications that the Fifth Army's arrival had for their already-serious logistics problems. Welcome as reinforcements were on the eve of an enemy attack, the fact remained that although the battle had not yet begun, the new arrivals still had to be supplied from the scant available resources, including the provisions that had been laboriously assembled on the massif.

In addition, the Fifth Army's arrival also raised possible command problems. Like most of the Communist-led military forces formed during this period, the Fifth Army was a self-made organization whose personnel had been shaped by their own shared experiences and felt strongest loyalty to their own comrades. Having fought to carve out a base in the Jiangxi-Hunan-Hubei border region and having left this still-intact base and a substantial body of their

fellow soldiers behind them, the Fifth Army and its leaders—unlike their Fourth Army counterparts—had scant personal investment in the Jinggangshan region and also the option of returning to another familiar base.

Moreover, Fifth Army soldiers had apparently still received little of the ideological indoctrination and instruction on how to treat civilians that had been such a noteworthy part of the Fourth Army's experience in Jinggangshan. Despite its base-building experience, therefore, the Fifth Army was still more akin to the numerous warlord "guest armies" and roving bandit gangs that had long been a prevalent part of the Chinese landscape than to new-style, politically conscious organizations such as the Fourth Army.[38]

Thus, the Fifth Army's arrival actually complicated rather than simplified the tasks facing Fourth Army and base leaders. As a force of substantial size (equivalent to between 15 and 20 percent of the size of the Fourth Army at that point) and corresponding appetite, deficient in arms, training, and political consciousness, and commanded by men of unknown character and capabilities, the Fifth Army would require considerable work and careful handling before it could be fully integrated with the existing base area forces. It was probably with these considerations in mind, as well as because of the newcomers' evident need for rest, that after the welcome ceremony the Fifth Army remained quietly bivouacked in the center of the base while its leaders and those of the base area sought to define its local role.

THE DECISION TO ABANDON THE BASE

Unfortunately for the Communists, they were not to be allowed the opportunity to deal with such issues at their leisure. The arrival of Peng Dehuai's troops had not gone unnoticed by the gathering enemy armies, and this led to an acceleration of the hitherto sluggish pace of preparations for another suppression campaign. By early January 1929, Hunan and Jiangxi armies under the overall command of the Hunanese military leader He Jian, with two Jiangxi generals as his joint seconds-in-command, had gathered what was up to this point the most massive military force yet deployed against the Communists: a total of twenty-five regiments with 30,000 soldiers divided into five routes to march from several directions against the fewer than 6000 Red Army soldiers in the base. The actual launching of the offensive was expected at any time.[39]

The Bailu Conference

In the face of this imminent attack, on 4 January 1929, CCP leaders met in Bailu village in Ninggang for a pivotal four-day conference of sixty-odd high-level cadres from the Front Committee, the Fourth and Fifth armies, and

local party organs. In addition to considering how to cope with the pending attack, the conference also discussed other important topics, including the amalgamation of the Fifth and Fourth armies and the contents and implications of documents from the CCP's Sixth Party Congress (held in Moscow during the summer), which had belatedly just reached the base. Most importantly, from these discussions emerged the fateful decision to send Zhu De, Mao Zedong, and the bulk of the Fourth Army into southern Jiangxi on what turned out to be its last, permanent departure from Jinggangshan.

The first item of business at the conference was the presentation and analysis of the documents from the Sixth Party Congress. Available accounts of the conference make no mention of any particular controversy or argument raised by most of the congress's resolutions, but one small section specifying how party cadres should deal with bandits and sectarians proved to be so sensitive and embarrassing in the Jinggangshan context that it could not be presented in the same public manner as the rest of the documents.

The section in question was contained in the "Resolution on the Question of the Organization of Soviet Political Power." It stated that although cadres could ally with bandits while they were making preparations for uprisings, once the uprisings had been launched the bandit gangs should be disarmed and their leaders "exterminated" (*xiaomie*). The statement also explicitly stated that bandits who had entered the Red Army or various government organs posed a great danger and should be expelled from these organizations.[40]

Given the deep involvement of the former bandits Yuan Wencai and Wang Zuo and their forces in all stages of the Jinggangshan revolutionary movement, and given their attendance at the conference, it had quickly become apparent to Mao and other leaders who perused the documents beforehand that even public presentation and discussion of this harsh, categorically worded section, let alone its implementation, had the potential to precipitate a major crisis at a particularly inopportune time. During the presentation of the congress materials at the conference, therefore, Mao made no mention of this section.

Either just before or just after the conference, however, a few army leaders and local cadres met privately to discuss how to proceed on this issue. Present were Fourth Army leaders Mao, Zhu De and Chen Yi, the Border Area Special Committee secretary Tan Zhenlin, and county party leaders Chen Zhengren (Suichuan), Wang Huai (Yongxin), and Long Chaoqing (Ninggang). At the meeting Wang Huai and Long Chaoqing (both early settler cadres with acrimonious relations with Yuan and Wang) allegedly favored implementing the congress statement as issued, which would have meant killing Yuan and Wang. Mao and the other leaders, however, are reported to have felt that the two former bandits' contributions to the revolutionary struggle outweighed whatever problems of background or behavior

they might have and that they should be kept alive and involved in the movement. This majority opinion prevailed at the meeting.[41]

Important as Yuan's and Wang's revolutionary records might have been in persuading Mao and his supporters to stand behind them, other issues were also involved in the decision. If party leaders obeyed the injunction to expel soldiers of bandit background and exterminate leaders such as Yuan and Wang, the Red Army would lose considerable military strength and most of its remaining popular support (especially in the strategic Jinggangshan massif area) just as a major battle loomed. If they publicized the section but made excuses why it should not be applied locally, they would still raise fears in the minds of Yuan and Wang—who were already suspicious about early settler intrigues against them—that their reprieve was only temporary and thereby undermine their confidence in and commitment to the movement.

Under these circumstances, the decision not to discuss publicly the section on bandits at the conference or afterward averted what would likely have been a major disaster for the revolutionary movement. To further defuse the issue, Mao went out of his way to caution Wang Huai and Long Chaoqing that they should continue to use a policy of "uniting and reforming" toward Yuan and Wang, and also soon arranged for administrative transfers (outlined below) that separated many of the key protagonists. Despite these palliatives, the issue was by no means fully resolved and would later come back to haunt local cadres.[42]

After presenting the Sixth Congress resolutions, the conference took up the interrelated questions of how to integrate the Fifth and Fourth armies and how to cope with the imminent enemy attack. The first issue was settled (though only temporarily, as it turned out) by deciding that the larger Fourth Army would simply absorb the new arrivals. The Fifth Army would be renamed the Fourth Army's Thirtieth Regiment; Peng Dehuai would command the new regiment and serve concurrently as second-in-command of the Fourth Army, while Teng Daiyuan would be regimental party representative and assistant party representative to the army. Aside from integrating the new arrivals, it appears that another aim of the merger plan was to defuse rivalry between the Twenty-eighth and Thirty-first regiments, each of whose personnel continued to think of themselves as being superior in some way due to their association with Zhu De and Mao, respectively.[43]

Combining the two separate military forces, however, would be of little use without a viable strategy for dealing with the enemy suppression campaign. It was in the course of discussions on this issue that the fateful decision was made for the bulk of the Fourth Army to leave the Jinggangshan base. As usual in the cases of such party conferences, the accounts of deliberations on this issue available in published sources are both sketchy and politically stereotyped, but they provide at least a starting point for analysis of how and why this decision was made.

Before getting into the specifics of the decision making, it is worth highlighting the fact that in formulating this plan, regional party and army leaders were also in effect acknowledging the development of what little more than a month earlier Mao had considered to be a remote, worst-case scenario. In his 25 November report to the Central Committee, Mao had stressed the comparative advantages of retaining a base in the "middle section of the Luoxiao mountain range" (i.e., the Jinggangshan region) rather than relocating to other possible base sites such as southern Hunan, the Hunan-Hubei-Jiangxi border area, or southern Jiangxi. In addition, he had clearly and emphatically insisted that with proper tactics the Jinggangshan base remained militarily defensible even against heavy enemy attacks such as the one that had ravaged the area during the summer. In a statement presumably written after completion of the campaign to transport provisions onto the Jinggangshan massif, Mao wrote:

> If we can continue to find ways of getting cash (food and clothing no longer constitute a big problem), then with the foundations for our work established in the border area, we shall be able to cope with these enemy forces, or even with larger ones. . . . If the Red Army remains, it can expand gradually in all directions from its current base, and the prospects will be very bright. . . .
>
> . . . Therefore, our contingent plan to use "southern Jiangxi as a retreat" will not be put into effect unless our economic situation worsens to such a degree that southern Jiangxi becomes the only place where we could survive. We might have to go there some time, but it would be due to economic rather than political reasons. Politically speaking, we have held from the very beginning that the strategy of creating and expanding political power in the middle section of the Luoxiao mountain range is absolutely necessary and correct.[44]

When interpreting these comments, it is essential to understand that they were part of a deliberate effort by Mao to promote his approach and contrast it to what he considered to have been an "incorrect" strategy of the Hunan Provincial Committee that had led to the summer's defeat. In this context he might well have articulated a more optimistic view of the prospects for success in the region than he actually felt. Still, the contrast between this positive assessment and the decision for the Fourth Army to abandon the base made less than two months later seems too great to attribute solely to rhetorical hyperbole.

Judging from Mao's remarks quoted above and others he and other leaders made shortly after leaving the base, economic considerations must have played a central part in the decision to leave. Even though the immediate food and clothing needs of the main Fourth Army had been resolved by the extensive fall campaigns to find and move provisions, money to pay for these provisions and for other expenses was always extremely tight.

Moreover, many of these were recurrent needs: Mao may have noted that food and clothing were not currently a problem at the time he wrote his November report, but daily consumption and wear and tear ensured that they eventually would be again.

Debilitating as these persistent problems were, Mao's cautious late-November optimism that they could be overcome and the base maintained might have been borne out had not the arrival of the Fifth Army soon thereafter added several hundred more hungry soldiers to the logistical burden being borne by the base. So far as can be determined from the available materials, in fact, the sudden arrival of this force appears to have been the only new development with significant economic consequences that occurred in the base between the time Mao's report was written in November and the decision to leave the base was made in January. Ironically, then, it may well have been the arrival of Fifth Army reinforcements that made the Fourth Army's departure inevitable.[45]

As crucial as economic factors were in the decision making, however, military issues played a considerably more significant role in the process than Mao's confident statements in the November report would lead one to predict. The new enemy offensive appears to have developed sooner than base area leaders expected, and it almost certainly appeared more sobering when faced in January as an imminent threat than it had seemed to Mao in November as an indefinite future prospect. Moreover, a January campaign meant that Red Army soldiers debilitated by months of poor food and hard fighting would have to abandon their billets and face a new round of extended combat operations in the open in the cold, sodden, and often snow-capped winter mountains.[46]

Beyond these more general considerations, there were tactical issues to be examined. According to He Changgong, who took part in the Bailu conference, the participants discussed a variety of opinions about how to deal with the enemy threat, each of which had its own advantages and disadvantages. Some wanted to follow essentially the same tactics as they had used to defeat previous enemy campaigns, namely to concentrate and move the Red Army quickly to attack one advancing enemy column after another in succession. On this occasion, however, the enemy forces appeared to be much larger and their movements better coordinated than before, which made such tactics more difficult. Others advocated temporarily leaving the base for safer areas nearby so that the enemy assault would strike empty air and fizzle out in the rugged terrain of the base. The problem with this tactic was that it would again expose the long-suffering people of the base to enemy retaliation, and it would remove the Red Army from the advantageous terrain and contact with its supporters that it now enjoyed. Still others wished to rely on these advantages to mount a full-scale, to-the-death defense of the massif. This strategy had the disadvantage of penning the 5000–6000 soldiers up in a confined area where they would face growing problems with ammunition and supplies, and from which they would have no line of retreat if defeated.[47]

In the end, conference participants adopted a plan (predictably and conventionally attributed to Mao Zedong) that sought to incorporate and implement aspects of most of these various strategies. This plan accepted the notion that the base should be defended, through a mixture of active and passive means. Rather than have all forces simply wait for the enemy to attack the base, the bulk of the Fourth Army would break through the blockade and drive into the rear of the encircling armies. Meanwhile, the Thirtieth Regiment (the former Fifth Army) would remain with the wounded and ill to defend the massif. The hope was that the Fourth Army breakout would not only divert enemy attention and draw forces away in pursuit but also in the process reduce economic pressure on the base by sending most of the Red Army troops outside of the blockade zone into territory where they could obtain supplies from hitherto untouched elites and markets.[48]

But where should the Fourth Army go after breaking out, and what if any relationship should be maintained with the Jinggangshan base thereafter? Regarding the first of these questions, He Changgong recalls that the issue of destination also led to acrimonious discussion at the Bailu Conference, with opinion divided among three main destinations: southern Hunan, the Hunan-Hubei-Jiangxi border region where the comrades of the Fifth Army were still waging guerrilla warfare, and southern Jiangxi. The drawbacks of southern Hunan were already well known to the assembled cadres from their past unpleasant experiences there. Similarly, the fact that the tri-province border area was bounded on the north by the Yangzi River and hemmed in on all sides by major communications routes and large enemy-held cities made it seem dangerously open to enemy armies.

Southern Jiangxi, by contrast, had several attractive features. Geographically, it offered a wide expanse of territory and numerous mountain regions that provided extensive room for maneuver that Jinggangshan lacked, it was far from major cities, and had poor communications, so that it would be difficult to mobilize troops against it, but it nonetheless had a strategic location that would allow for strikes into northern Guangdong and western Fujian. Militarily, many enemy units in Jiangxi were poor quality non-native troops who were not close to the local populace and were deployed in such a way that only a single weak unit (one that the Red Army had previously defeated) garrisoned the southern part of the province. Finally, considerable revolutionary activity already existed in the region, so that local support would be easy to obtain. These features, He asserts, eventually led the assembly to choose southern Jiangxi as the army's destination.[49]

He's account is almost certainly accurate in its general depiction of what party leaders during this period saw as the advantages and disadvantages of

various possible destinations.[50] It may also have been the case that some discussion of the issue took place as the final plan was being made during the Bailu Conference. However, Mao's mention in his November report of "our contingent plan to use 'southern Jiangxi as a retreat'" makes it evident that mulling over of alternatives had already occurred well before the conference and that at least a preliminary conclusion had been reached that southern Jiangxi was the preferred location.

It is important at this point to draw attention to a certain ambiguity present in most available descriptions of the circumstances under which the Fourth Army left the base. On the one hand, most accounts (including contemporaneous documents such as the February 1929 report of Yang Kemin [Kaiming]) characterize the decision to have most of the army leave Jinggangshan as a calculated and positive effort to disrupt the enemy suppression campaign rather than as a simple abandonment of the base. Although virtually none of the accounts explicitly mention long-term intentions, this characterization implicitly suggests that the Fourth Army's departure was intended to be temporary and that it was expected to return after the enemy campaign had been sufficiently disrupted.

On the other hand, many of the same accounts also contain elements that suggest that the departure was intended from the beginning as a permanent move. One of these elements is the fact that regions as distant as the Hunan-Hubei-Jiangxi border area and southern Jiangxi were among the locations considered as possible destinations. Both of these regions were separated from Jinggangshan by hundreds of kilometers and many days' march across rugged country and major enemy-held river valleys. Besides the difficulty involved in returning from these areas, their distance from Jinggangshan put them in the operational zones of enemy units that were involved peripherally or not at all in the current suppression campaign, a fact which seriously undermined the rationale of using the move to relieve enemy pressure on the base.

This sort of extended move to far-away areas also varied from the party leaders' well-established behavior. In past raids to disrupt the rear areas of invading enemy armies, the Fourth Army had rarely ventured more than a short distance from the base. In addition, Mao and other leaders had regularly opposed the Hunan Provincial Committee's efforts to deploy the Fourth Army on lengthy campaigns in southern or eastern Hunan, arguing that it was foolish to engage in such activities before the Jinggangshan base was properly defended and consolidated.

Moreover, some accounts of the Fourth Army's departure assert that besides disrupting the enemy offensive, the move had the additional aims of encouraging peasant uprisings in new territories and searching for a suitable site for a new base area. Such assertions are very compatible with a teleological party historiography that posits an omniscient Mao guiding the revolutionary struggle, and they may reflect an assumption that because a new revolutionary base in fact developed in southern Jiangxi, this was Mao's intention all along. At any rate, to the extent that they are true, both of these aims, but especially the latter, further support the hypothesis that the Fourth Army's departure was intended all along as a permanent act.[51]

The difficult circumstances then prevailing in the base and in the army lend further credence to this notion. Given the deteriorating economic conditions, the festering early settler–guest people antagonism, the persistence and increasing intensity of the enemy's suppression efforts, and the long-standing desire of at least some Red Army soldiers to relocate away from Jinggangshan, it is easy to see how Mao and other Fourth Army leaders could conclude that it was either impossible or no longer worthwhile to maintain the base. That the Fourth Army had in fact just basically given up on the idea of a base in the Jinggangshan area is given further credence by a report Mao wrote some two months after leaving the region, in which he stated that the army had left Jinggangshan in a "state of exhaustion and defeat," "mainly because we had no way out economically."[52]

Preparations for Departure

That the base was not viable must have been an unpleasant conclusion for Fourth Army leaders to reach, but it was even more unpalatable for those who were slated to remain behind. Unsurprisingly, many Fifth Army cadres were unhappy when Peng Dehuai and Teng Daiyuan briefed them on the conference. They complained—quite accurately—that the plan would leave their small force exposed and alone in a strange area to face a massive enemy assault, and they stubbornly insisted that their force should instead return north to their old familiar territory on the Hunan-Hubei-Jiangxi border. Not until the Front Committee transferred several trusted mid- to high-ranking Fourth Army officers to fill major posts on the command staff of the Fifth Army was the latter force's compliance with the plan secured.[53]

If Fifth Army officers were unhappy in part at being left isolated in an unfamiliar area in whose affairs they had little involvement, revolutionaries of Jinggangshan regional origin must have been equally unhappy at the prospect of the home area in which they had such personal and concrete stakes being stripped of its most potent defensive force. In addition, the departure of the Fourth Army would remove the major mediating force damping down the often-overlapping personal and ethnic rivalries among the regional revolutionaries, such as the vexing problem of Yuan and Wang that had come up at the Bailu Conference. As a regional minority, but one comprising the majority population of the massif area and the bulk of the Thirty-second Regiment remaining to defend it, the guest people of the massif would be particularly exposed both to the immediately looming enemy

offensive and to whatever subsequent early settler retaliation might ensue either in or outside of the revolutionary movement.

Those who were slated to be left behind were not the only ones aware of the local implications of the Fourth Army's departure. In his November report, Mao also outlined a depressing scenario regarding the likely consequences of such a move:

> As far as the border area is concerned, it would at once suffer devastation, just as it did in August, if the Red Army moved away. Although not all our red guards would be wiped out, the Party and our base would receive a crippling blow. Apart from bandit-style bases in the mountains, of which the independent regime could still maintain a few, in the plains we would all have to go underground as we did in August and September.[54]

To help deal with these and other issues related to the base area situation after the Fourth Army's departure, Mao and the rest of the Front Committee held another conference in Wang Zuo's home village of Xiazhuang. Among other things, the participants decided to make a number of personnel reassignments, most of which were carefully designed and balanced to reduce the likelihood of further guest people–early settler strife. On the one hand, Yuan Wencai and another well-known Ninggang party cadre of guest people origin named Liu Huixiao were transferred to the Fourth Army staff and ordered to depart from the base along with the army; with Yuan's transfer, Wang Zuo became commander of the Thirty-second Regiment. On the other hand, Long Chaoqing, the early settler rival of Yuan Wencai who was then serving as Ninggang county party secretary, was transferred to Lianhua county and replaced by Mao's "agent" He Changgong, who had gained Wang Zuo's confidence when serving as advisor to the latter's band, and who now concurrently became the Thirty-second Regiment's party representative.

As Ninggang was the site of the region's most intense ethnic strife, and as Yuan and Long had emerged as champions whose antagonistic relationship had become intertwined with and helped personify their increasingly polarized communities, these moves had the obvious intention of removing both the flint and the steel from the region's most flammable tinder. When coupled with the stern urgings toward cooperation with the ex-bandit leaders that Mao had given to Wang Huai (Long's ally and counterpart Yongxin county leader of the "early settler party"), and the appointment of He Changgong, a "neutral" outsider with Fourth Army connections who could also hope to influence the suspicious and parochial "guest people gun," the whole series of actions constituted a comprehensive effort to defuse the conflict that departing Red Army leaders clearly recognized had the potential to split the regional revolutionary movement asunder.[55]

CONCLUSION

Fourth Army leaders had hoped to spend additional time making the arrangements needed to disentangle themselves from the region. However, enemy pressure began to increase rapidly, and word was eventually received that the enemy attack was scheduled to begin on 15 January, before the army's originally planned departure date. To avoid the difficulties that this offensive would pose for the army's breakout, the departure date was moved up. On 10 January, the Twenty-eighth and Thirty-first regiments, the Fourth Army's special work battalion, and the experienced cadres who had been chosen to accompany the army all gathered on the massif. On 14 January 1929, the 3,600 or so soldiers of the assembled force (accompanied by 36 women, including He Zizhen) slipped out of the Jinggangshan base, moving at high speed southward through Suichuan and on toward southern Jiangxi.[56]

Behind they left not a vibrant, energetic, and expanding base area but a region whose population was economically prostrate, militarily exposed, politically and ethnically divided, and emotionally drained. Whiplashed between the impossible optimism of the High Tide and the desperate pessimism of the August Defeat, the regional revolutionary movement had fractured under the stress of the summer's events, and the effort to repair the damage and prepare for future blows had consumed almost all of the movement's available energy during the autumn of 1928.

As was the case with most of their endeavors during this period, the efforts of the movement's leaders to rebuild and revive the base made significant headway. The reasons for the summer's disaster were analyzed and assimilated, the area's shattered political apparatus was overhauled and partially rebuilt, a modicum of social stability and military security was restored, thought was given to resuming socioeconomic reform programs, and a variety of measures were taken to counteract the effects of the economic blockade and to improve the defensive capability of the base.

Despite their best efforts, however, the combination of internal and external difficulties faced by the region's revolutionaries had proved simply too much to overcome. After months of being squeezed hard by scarce resources, persistent and debilitating enemy attacks, and increasingly intense conflicts within the movement, the ultimate reaction of Mao and his colleagues in the Fourth Army was to abandon the area entirely. As the flexibility of their resources allowed the most prominent of the region's elites to escape the worst consequences of rural violence by fleeing to the cities, so the mobility and self-contained military strength of the Fourth Army enabled its members simply to pack up and leave Jinggangshan in search of better situations elsewhere. As was the case with more marginal and poorly endowed elites facing similar crises, however, most of the area's indigenous revolutionaries did not

possess the luxury of such mobility. Unlike Mao and his comrades, the bulk of the Jinggangshan region's local cadres and activists had little choice in the face of the gathering storm but to head for the hills, hunker down, and hope for the best.

NOTES

1. In addition to the version of the 25 November "Report of the Jinggangshan Front Committee to the Central Committee" that appears as "The Struggle in the Chingkang Mountains," portions of the "Draft Resolution of the Second Congress of *Xian* Party Organizations in the Hunan-Jiangxi Border Area" (5 October 1928) are also included in the *Selected Works* under the title "Why Is It That Red Political Power Can Exist in China." The "Resolutions of the Sixth Congress of Party Representatives from the Fourth Red Army" (6 December 1928) is not included in the *Selected Works*. The versions published in the *Selected Works* have been considerably revised, but English translations of unexpurgated versions of all three documents are available in *Mao's Road to Power: Revolutionary Writings, 1912–1949*, ed. Stuart Schram (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1995), vol. 3, 62–127. Chinese versions of the Second Congress and Sixth Congress resolutions are available in *JGG*, vol. 1, 181–95 and 199–204.

2. *JF*, 229–30; *JGDS*, 154–56; *JGG*, vol. 1, 471–72 has lists of the members of both the old and the new special committees. Yang Kaiming, whom the provincial committee had installed as the committee's secretary at the end of June, had subsequently become too ill to perform his functions, and Tan Zhenlin had been selected to serve as acting secretary. At the congress Yang was nominally reelected as secretary, but because he had not yet regained his health, Tan continued as acting secretary; when Yang's incapacitation persisted, he stepped down in November, and Tan formally replaced him. Other committee members included prominent outsiders such as Mao, Zhu De, Chen Yi, and Wan Xixian, and well-known locals such as Wang Zuo, Long Chaoqing, and Yuan Wencai.

3. *Mao's Road to Power*, ed. Schram, vol. 3, 122; *JF*, 33–34; *JGDS*, 173–75.

4. *Mao's Road to Power*, ed. Schram, vol. 3, 113–14; *JF*, 232–33; *JGDS*, 159–60.

5. *Mao's Road to Power*, ed. Schram, vol. 3, 82.

6. *Mao's Road to Power*, ed. Schram, vol. 3, 68, 85, 93.

7. *Mao's Road to Power*, ed. Schram, vol. 3, 96, 124–25. Given the shortage of trained cadres throughout the country at this time, it is very doubtful that national leaders attended to Mao's pleas for reinforcements. It is also not clear how fully the other measures to improve the cohesion, discipline, and consciousness of the Red Army were actually implemented at this time. An editorial note appended to the text of Mao's "Struggle" in the *Selected Works* gives indirect evidence that in at least one respect the army reforms did not reach their goals. Referring to the ratio of party members to non-party members within the army, the note states that instead of 50 percent party members, "Subsequent experience in the Red Army showed that a ratio of one Party member to two non-Party men [i.e., 33 percent] was adequate. This proportion was generally maintained in the Red Army. . . ." vol. 1, 104.

8. This account of the party cleansing process is drawn largely from Xu Chunhua, "Xiang-Gan bianjie de xidang yundong" [The party cleansing movement in the Hunan-Jiangxi border area], in *Ninggang geming douzheng ziliao congshu—Ninggang Jinggangshan geming genjudi de zhongxin (xu bian)* [A collecteana of materials on the Ninggang revolutionary struggle—centered on the Ninggang and Jinggangshan revolutionary base area (continuation)], ed. Ninggang xian zhengxie wenshi ziliao weiyuanhui and Zhonggong Ninggang xian weihui dangshi bangongshi (N.p.: n.p.), 261–70. See also *Mao's Road to Power*, ed. Schram, vol. 3, 111–12; *JGGY*, 306–8; *JF*, 230–31.

9. These figures are drawn from interviews and reminiscences cited in Xu Chunhua, "Xiang-Gan bianjie de xidang yundong," 265.

10. Arif Dirlik, *The Origins of Chinese Communism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); Hans van de Ven, *From Friend to Comrade: The Founding of the Chinese Communist Party, 1920–1927* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

11. *JGGY*, 304–5; "Yang Kemin guanyu Xiang-Gan bian suqu qingkuang de zonghe baogao" [A comprehensive report by Yang Kemin regarding conditions in the Hunan-Jiangxi border soviet area] (25 February 1929), in *JGG*, vol. 1, 269; "Draft Resolution of the Second Congress," in *Mao's Road to Power*, ed. Schram, vol. 3, 71.

12. "Draft Resolution of the Second Congress," 71. "Yang Kemin guanyu Xiang-Gan bian suqu," 274, also mentions this abortive breakaway attempt by the Yongxin party.

13. "Letter to Lin Biao," in *Mao's Road to Power*, ed. Schram, vol. 3, 177–79.

14. "Letter to Lin Biao," 181.

15. See the discussion of soldiers' committees in "Yang Kemin guanyu Xiang-Gan bian suqu," 263.

16. *JGGY*, 216–19; Chen Zhengren, "Mao Zedong tongzhi chuangjian Jinggangshan geming genjudi de weida shijian" [The great practice of Comrade Mao Zedong in founding the Jinggangshan revolutionary base area], *Jiangxi wenshi ziliao xuanji*, no. 1 (1987): 54.

17. "Yang Kemin guanyu Xiang-Gan bian suqu," 276. Chen Zhengren, "Mao Zedong tongzhi," 55–56, states that although the confiscation of all land was base area policy, in fact "only the land of landlords was confiscated." However, Yang's more contemporary account appears to contradict Chen's recollections, and I have followed Yang's version here.

18. English translations of the Jinggangshan Land Law are available in *Mao's Road to Power*, ed. Schram, vol. 3, 128–30; Tso-liang Hsiao, *The Land Revolution in China, 1930–1934: A Study of Documents* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1969), 291–92; and John E. Rue, *Mao Tse-tung in Opposition 1927–1935* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1966), 112–14.

19. See the discussion in Hsiao, *The Land Revolution*, including Mao's later comments on the errors contained in the Jinggangshan Land Law (293).

20. "Yang Kemin guanyu Xiang-Gan bian suqu," 246–47; *JF*, 235–36; *JGGY*, 266–68.

21. "Yang Kemin guanyu Xiang-Gan bian suqu," 265; *JF*, 236–40; *JGGY*, 266–72. Yang's report states that above and beyond the necessary rice supplies (which were obtained in kind from the local populace), it cost an additional 15,000 *yuan* each month to feed and supply the Red Army.

22. *WZ*, 308–19, 336–40; *JF*, 244.

23. *WZ*, 332–36.

24. *JF*, 237–42; *JGGY*, 272–73.

25. Wang Xingjuan, *He Zizhen de lu* [He Zizhen's road] (Beijing: Zuojia chubanshe, 1985), 108–10.

26. *JF*, 246.

27. *JF*, 236–40; *JGGY*, 236–37.

28. "Yang Kemin guanyu Xiang-Gan bian suqu," 265; "Report of the Jinggangshan Front Committee," 96–97.

29. "Yang Kemin guanyu Xiang-Gan bian suqu," 265; "Report of the Jinggangshan Front Committee," 96–97; *JGGY*, 237–39, 266–68; Chen Bojun, "Cong Gucheng huiyi dao bayue shibai" [From the Gucheng Conference to the August defeat], in *Xinghuo liaoyuan congshu zhiyi (Jinggangshan douzheng zhuanji)* [A single spark starts a prairie fire collecteana, vol. 1 (A special collection on the Jinggangshan struggle)] (Beijing: Jiefangjun chubanshe, 1986), 66. Chen's reminiscence is typical in its description of the hardships he endured as a soldier recuperating from a wound: a diet consisting primarily of red rice (*hong mi*) and pumpkin soup, no meat for three months, no haircut or shave for three or four months, and a single unlined garment and one blanket to use for warmth.

30. "Report of the Jinggangshan Front Committee," 93; *JGGY*, 267; *WZ*, 359–63.

31. *JF*, 247–49; *WZ*, 326–32, 342–50.

32. Zhonggong Yongxin xianwei dangshi bangongshi, *Yongxin renmin geming shi* [The revolutionary history of the people of Yongxin] (Jinggangshan: n.p., 1989), 39–41; Li Guobin, "Huiyi Jiulongshan de zhandou shenghuo" [Recalling combat life on Jiulongshan], in *JGG*, vol. 2, 485–91.

33. *JF*, 249–54; *WZ*, 351–56; Qiu Lige, "Zhu junzhang tiaoliang" [Army commander Zhu carries provisions], in *Hongse fengbao* [The red storm] (Nanchang: Jiangxi renmin chubanshe, 3 vols., 1958), vol. 2, 145–46; Yang Xingxun, et al., "Jinggangshan shang de gushi" [Stories from the summit of Jinggangshan], in *Xinghuo liaoyuan* [Sparks that started the prairie fire], ed. "Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun sanshi nian" zhengwen bianji weiyuanhui (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1958), vol. 1, 321; *Mao weiyuan zai Jinggangshan* [Committee member Mao on Jinggangshan] (Nanchang: Jiangxi renmin chubanshe, 1977), 260–67.

34. On conditions in warlord armies, see Diana Lary, *Warlord Soldiers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 57.

35. *JF*, 254–57; *WZ*, 302–7; *JGGY*, 260–65; reminiscences in *JGG*, vol. 2, 561–76. It appears that only a portion of the planned complex was completed before the departure of the Fourth Red Army in January 1929.

36. Among the many accounts of the Pingjiang Uprising and the Fifth Red Army's subsequent movements, see Peng Dehuai, *Memoirs of a Chinese Marshal—The Autobiographical Notes of Peng Dehuai (1898–1974)*, tr. Zheng Longpu (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1984), 144–227; *JF*, 258–70; and the reminiscences in *JGG*, vol. 2, 586–611.

37. *JF*, 269–70; Peng, *Memoirs*, 228–29; *JGGY*, 106–7.

38. "Yang Kemin guanyu Xiang-Gan bian suqu," 265–66; "Deng Qianyuan guanyu Xiang-Gan bianjie wuyue zhi bayue gongzuo dui zhongyang de baogao" [A report to Party Central by Deng Qianyuan on work in the Hunan-Jiangxi border area between May and August] (August 1929), in *JGG*, vol. 1, 339–40.

39. *JF*, 271.

40. For the text of this statement on "Relations with Bandits," see Zhongyang dang'an guan, *Zhonggong zhongyang wenjian xuanji* [Selected central documents of the Chinese Communist Party] (Beijing: Zhonggong zhongyang dangxiao chubanshe, 1989), vol. 4 (1928), 399–400.

41. Several reminiscences and secondary works note the difficulties that arose over the section on bandits contained in the congress documents. Accounts differ on whether the private meeting of Mao and other high-level cadres occurred at the time of or after the Bailu Conference itself. The biographers of Wang Zuo say that it occurred at the time, whereas Chen Zhengren, who as noted was one of the participants, says it occurred afterward. See *WZ*, 374–76; Chen Zhengren, "Mao Zedong tongzhi," 39.

42. Yuan Wencai eventually read the offending section of the congress resolution several months later while serving with Mao and the Fourth Army in central Jiangxi. His anger at what he read helped spur his rapid return to Jinggangshan and the increasing truculent and suspicious behavior thereafter which (as detailed in subsequent chapters) contributed to his eventual death. *WZ*, 422–26; Chen Zhengren, "Mao Zedong tongzhi," 39; Peng, *Memoirs*, 231; He Changgong, "Guanyu Jinggangshan douzheng de sange wenti" [Concerning three problems of the Jinggangshan struggle], in *Xinghuo liaoyuan congshu zhiyi (Jinggangshan douzheng zhuanji* [A single spark starts a prairie fire collecteana, vol. 1 (A special collection on the Jinggangshan struggle)] (Beijing: Jiefangjun chubanshe, 1986), 161–63.

43. "Yang Kemin guanyu Xiang-Gan bian suqu," 266–67; *WZ*, 371; *JF*, 276.

44. "Report of the Jinggangshan Front Committee," 118–19. Most of the second paragraph of this quotation does not appear in the *Selected Works* version of this document.

45. "Yang Kemin guanyu Xiang-Gan bian suqu," 265, and "Letter from the Fourth Red Army Front Committee to the Central Committee" (20 March 1929), in *Mao's Road to Power*, ed. Schram, vol. 3, 149, are among the sources that assign great importance to economic factors in the decision to leave the base.

46. The average January temperature for the Jinggangshan region is 3.2 degrees Centigrade, and the December–March period has the year's worst combination of low temperature and precipitation. Jinggangshan shi renmin wuzhuang bu, *Jinggangshan junshi zhi* [A military gazetteer of Jinggangshan city] (Beijing: Guofang daxue chubanshe, 1992), 18, 20.

47. He Changgong, *He Changgong huiyilu* [The reminiscences of He Changgong] (Beijing: Jiefangjun chubanshe, 1987), 204–5.

48. He Changgong, *He Changgong huiyilu*; "Yang Kemin guanyu Xiang-Gan bian suqu," 266–67; *JGGY*, 107–8; *WZ*, 370.

49. He Changgong, *He Changgong huiyilu*, 205–6; *JF*, 275–76.

50. Mao makes some of the same points in "Report of the Jinggangshan Front Committee," 116.

51. *JF*, 274. Party historians are not unanimous on this matter, with some arguing that although the Fourth Army's move into southern Jiangxi did indeed result in the formation of a new base area, this was a serendipitous development and not a prior intention. See *JGGY*, 108.

52. "Letter from the Fourth Red Army Front Committee," 149, 151.

Gradually, however, the regional revolutionary movement began to recover, and by mid-1930 it had not only recovered most of its losses but had also reached out to establish contact with other base areas that were developing during this period in central and southern Jiangxi. While similar in geographical extent, however, the reconstructed base was different in its orientation, internal political dynamics, and many other respects from what had characterized it during the period when Mao and the Fourth Army resided in the region. It was also enmeshed in a range of strategic issues and problems that, while significantly overlapping with those that had faced the base area leadership in the past, was also gradually becoming more expansive and complex.

One of the main aims of part III is to explore the reconstruction and reorientation of the base and the issues associated with it. As the base was recovering, a group of local leading cadres who now lacked the support—but were also freed from the constraints—of the Fourth Army and its powerful leaders began to reconsider how the base should be rebuilt in light of the changed circumstances in which they found themselves. Their reconsideration had to do in significant measure with calculations of population and material resources, accessibility to the outside world, and similar strategic concerns, but it also took into careful account such things as the region's patterns of ethnic conflict and recent revolutionary history. Chapter 10 recounts the destructive enemy occupation of the base and its subsequent reconstruction and treats at some length the factors involved in local cadres' decision significantly to reorient the base's center of gravity away from the guest-people–dominated Jinggangshan massif and toward parts of the base that were more compatible with the approach and interests of the region's predominantly early settler founding revolutionaries. Chapter 11 then considers the consequences of this reorientation, one of the most notable of which was a gradually worsening estrangement between the leading cadres and the armed guest people revolutionaries Yuan Wencai and Wang Zuo. In early 1930 the antagonism degenerated into a violent confrontation that left the regional revolutionary movement fractured and the entire region in a state of prolonged, polarizing crisis.

Although the local dynamics of this descent into crisis were particular to the Jinggangshan region, base areas elsewhere in Jiangxi and its neighboring provinces were then in the throes of their own crises. Despite the local particularities, the underlying causes of this general period of crisis were similar throughout the South China bases. They stemmed from a concatenation of significantly increased suppression campaigns by government armies and elite-led militias, tensions caused by the deepening bite of increasingly far-reaching and fundamental reforms such as land redistribution, friction engendered by the revolutionary movement's own political and military centralization efforts, and intra-party uncertainty and conflict over long-term revolutionary strategy.

As is apparent from various chapters in part II, some of these problems had begun to become apparent considerably earlier, when Mao and the Fourth Army had been present in the region—indeed, some of these factors had helped influence the army to leave the base. By late 1929 or 1930, however, they had become even more widespread and urgent as local revolutionary movements elsewhere in southern China that had lacked the level of military support available in Jinggangshan began to reach critical stages in their own growth processes.

Chapters 10 and 11 touch on many of these topics as they manifested themselves in the Jinggangshan area, and they provide insight into the perspectives that local cadres in such bases had on the issues, as well as the role that these cadres played in the more general intra-party discourse on base areas and revolutionary strategy that was then underway. This contentious discourse will be dealt with more comprehensively in the conclusion, at which point material from the Jinggangshan case presented in part III can be integrated into the discussion. Suffice it to say here that local cadres' concerns with the difficulties of base area construction and expansion were widespread and serious, that they were based not solely on ideological assumptions or personal vested interests but also on extensive firsthand experience, and that they presented a collective picture of rural base-building that was considerably more ambiguous and less sanguine about its long-term prospects than is readily apparent from most historical accounts of this period in the Chinese revolution.

10

Jinggangshan after Mao

The departure of the Fourth Army ushered in a new phase in the history of the Jinggangshan revolutionary movement. Shortly after the army left, the long-anticipated enemy attack on the heart of the base finally began. Within days massive enemy forces had overrun the massif, sent most of the Fifth Army fleeing to southern Jiangxi in search of the Fourth Army, and forced surviving local cadres and military units to take precarious refuge in mountain hideouts. For several months, a pall of death and destruction hung over the base as the occupying armies and vengeful elite-led militias engaged in a prolonged "White Terror."

Despite the severity of the defeat, however, the region's revolutionary organizations were not completely crushed. Gradually during the spring and summer of 1929, surviving cadres reassembled a local political and military infrastructure, the organizational orientation, center of gravity, and style of which all differed significantly from what they had been when the Fourth Army and its leaders had dominated the area. Without the Fourth Army and the powerful personalities associated with it, local cadres—particularly those from Yongxin—assumed greater visibility and influence. At their behest, the base area's core activities and center of power gradually shifted away from Ninggang and toward Yongxin. At the same time, aided by periodic brief reappearances by a Fifth Army that was much more peripatetic and wide-ranging than the Fourth Army had been during its association with the region, Jinggangshan cadres reoriented themselves away from revolutionary organs and activities in Hunan and toward those in Jiangxi.

As a result of these changes, by late 1929, the Jinggangshan revolutionaries had regained much of their former strength and territory and were also becoming integrated into a broad regional revolutionary movement that

sprawled across a large portion of Jiangxi's midsection. However, as the regional revolutionary movement revived and emerged somewhat from its extreme isolation, many of the same problems of base-building strategy and policies, interethnic strife, and personal animosities that had troubled the region's cadres while the Fourth Army was present again became salient issues affecting the base's development.

THE OCCUPATION OF THE BASE

The Enemy Offensive

When the Fourth Army broke through the enemy's blockade lines around Jinggangshan, one brigade of the investing forces pursued them into southern Jiangxi. This probably caused at least some disruption of the enemy's schedule and dispositions; in addition, the remaining enemy units' advance into the base proceeded very slowly. For these reasons, the enemy's offensive did not actually reach the massif until late January. This respite gave the area's remaining Communist forces time to make last-minute preparations for defense and contingency plans for escape.

After the departure of the Fourth Army, Peng Dehuai, Teng Daiyuan, Wang Zuo, He Changgong, and other stay-behind leaders held yet another meeting to discuss the defense of the massif. Although the participants recognized the need to continue fortifying the approaches to the massif, and though some may have hoped that somehow their force of around 1000–1200 soldiers would be able to repel this attack by well over 20,000 enemy troops as they had the past summer's much-weaker enemy assault on Huangyangjie, most appear to have accepted the near-inevitability of an enemy occupation of the massif.[1]

The main question was not whether the area would be occupied but for how long and with what consequences. As Wang Zuo and other massif natives knew from their bandit days, and as had also been demonstrated more recently elsewhere in the region, occupying armies were dangerous, destructive, but generally ephemeral phenomena. Based on this experience, they hoped that enemy forces would only remain in the area briefly before being forced to withdraw by supply shortages and the difficulties of engaging Red Army units that had dispersed or retreated deep into the mountains. Once the enemy had departed, the Communist forces could resume their activities.

However, some cadres, particularly Fifth Army outsiders who lacked local knowledge and kinship ties that would enable them to go "underground" if the base was occupied, insisted on considering the possibility of flight should the enemy attack make it otherwise impossible to maintain the army's

cohesion and fighting ability. In addition, they feared what would happen to the hundreds of Red Army invalids who were recuperating on the massif if the enemy overran the area.[2]

Following the meeting, therefore, some thought was given to the question of identifying hiding places in and escape routes through the mountains to use if the enemy broke through the defenses. To save time in an emergency, some of the ill and wounded were also moved out of the hospital and into hidden caves. These and other defensive preparations were hampered by bitter cold and the same heavy snows that had slowed the Fourth Army's southward march away from the base. Notwithstanding these problems, the forces of the Fifth Army and the Thirty-second Regiment were as well prepared as their limited resources could make them by the time the long-awaited attack on the massif finally began on 26 January. The bulk of the Fifth Army's units and the few available automatic weapons guarded Huangyangjie and Bamianshan, which were the two main approach routes and the ones most likely to be used by the aggressive Hunanese forces, while the Thirty-second Regiment and the remainder of the Fifth Army watched the remaining three routes. Peng Dehuai coordinated the entire defense operation from a central headquarters at Ciping.[3]

Unlike earlier assaults, this time the enemy were coordinated enough to launch near-simultaneous attacks on all approaches to the massif, though with the strongest pressure applied by the Hunanese on Huangyangjie and Bamianshan. On 29 January, they achieved a decisive breakthrough on the Huangyangjie front with the aid of a local informant. The informant, a once-prosperous peasant who begrudged the fact that his land had been confiscated by the CCP, guided soldiers up the massif by little-known and unguarded paths under cover of a dense fog. Their sudden appearance at the top of the massif on an unprotected flank threw the defenders into fatal confusion. By the time reserves reached the scene, the enemy were advancing toward Ciping in such strength that counterattacks were unsuccessful. On 30 January the defenders on the Bamianshan approach exhausted their ammunition and were overrun; soon thereafter one of the three remaining defense points likewise collapsed. By this time, the enemy advancing on Ciping had also captured the Red Army hospital in Xiaojing and killed more than one hundred helpless patients.[4]

The Flight of the Fifth Army

With enemy troops advancing in strength on Ciping from the north, west, and east, Peng Dehuai recognized that it was impossible to hold the massif, and he determined that the the Fifth Army must try to escape from the region entirely. Gathering his forces, Peng went first to Wang Zuo's home village of Xiazhuang, where Wang had by then concentrated most of his regiment.

Wang informed them of a rugged but relatively safe route south over mountain paths that would bring them to Suichuan, where the blockade lines had been weakened by the absence of the brigade pursuing the Fourth Army. After briefly assembling the soldiers to inform them of the planned escape (and to witness the summary execution of nearly two dozen captured local elites whose continued presence would encumber the marching column), Peng led the Fifth Army, swollen to one thousand or perhaps even more by the addition of several hundred local red guards and Red Army invalids, south for several days over the snow-covered trails that wound through the innermost recesses of the Jinggangshan massif.[5]

Although the army thus managed to escape relatively intact from the overrunning of the base, they were not so fortunate in Suichuan. When the column entered western Suichuan, they stumbled into Dafen, the stronghold of Wang Zuo's long-time nemesis, the militia leader Xiao Jiabi. Over the years, Xiao's militia had grown into a formidable force that had fared well in past battles with the Communists. On this occasion as well, Xiao's troops fought hard, and it was only after a fierce two-hour struggle that Peng and a bit more than half of the Fifth Army managed to escape from the battlefield and continue their march into southern Jiangxi in search of Mao and the Fourth Army. The remainder of the army and all of the accompanying red guards and invalids were forced to break off the battle and retreat to the Jinggangshan massif. In addition, the leading members of the Border Area Special Committee, who had apparently followed the army into Suichuan, were forced to scatter and go into hiding after the Dafen defeat and the ensuing confusion.[6]

Survival under the "White Terror"

Back in the base area the enemy continued its suppression campaign against the remaining Communist resistance and began a massive "White Terror" campaign which, much to the distress of local party cadres who had hoped for an early enemy withdrawal, lasted for several months. After occupying the massif, the enemy sent troops to suppress the smaller center of Communist military activity in the border region, at Jiulongshan on the Yongxin-Chaling-Ninggang-Lianhua border. The red guard forces of these several counties that constituted the main military presence in this small base fought fiercely amid winter snow and rain, but the outcome was never really in doubt. Although most of the red guards broke through the encircling enemy forces, they were forced to disperse to their home counties. Other small groups hid in the rugged countryside around Jiulongshan and survived despite a tight enemy blockade of the area established following the defeat of the main Communist forces.[7]

The enemy forces then turned their attention to tracking down CCP remnants and ensuring that local people learned the folly of supporting the revolution. Imitating the Red Army's habitual practice, some government military units broke up into small detachments to forage, track down hidden Communists, and punish local villagers. In this work they were joined and guided by the vengeful militia forces of several well-known regional elites (including Xiao Jiabi and Yin Haomin, the son of Wang Zuo's late Nashan rival Yin Daoyi). Destruction was widespread, but the enemy devoted special attention to areas—such as Xiaojiang district in Yongxin—where support for the CCP had been notable. Destruction was particularly thorough on the Jinggangshan massif, where entire villages (including Wang's home village of Xiazhuang) were burned, extensive property seized, and hundreds of suspected Communist sympathizers were killed.[8]

During this period, the surviving Communist cadres and soldiers eked out a nomadic existence as small groups hiding in the deepest mountains and most isolated hamlets of the Jinggangshan and Jiulongshan areas. The experience of Wang Zuo and his followers clearly illustrates the extreme difficulties facing local revolutionaries during this period and the tenacity with which they made use of their local knowledge and social ties first to survive and then gradually to reconstitute their organization and resume activity.

After the Fifth Army left Xiazhuang to break through the enemy blockade in Suichuan, Wang Zuo ordered the several hundred soldiers of the Thirty-second Regiment, stragglers from the Fifth Army and local inhabitants who were still gathered in Xiazhuang, to disperse into the mountains before reassembling at a designated rendezvous. As was the case with the Fourth and Fifth armies, the movement and sometimes the very survival of the scattered refugee bands were hindered by the unusually heavy snows that fell in the region during the winter of 1928–1929: people recall that Jinggangshan that year experienced more than forty days of heavy snow, and that there were still two or three feet (*chi*) of snow on the ground on the eve of the Spring Festival. In addition to slowing travel and causing extreme discomfort for fugitives forced to live in the open or in shallow caves, the footprints they unavoidably left in the snow provided unmistakable evidence of their whereabouts to the militias and enemy soldiers who roamed the hills in search of them.

Wang Zuo and his band of twenty-odd people barely avoided destruction in this way at the hands of Xiao Jiabi's seemingly omnipresent militia. After this narrow escape, they moved to a hideout near Ciping, but soon this location also proved to be exposed to militia attack and difficult to supply. After an initial move to Wang's sister's village failed when it turned out to be occupied by enemy forces, Wang and his followers made their way to the agreed rendezvous point to collect refugees who had gathered there and

then moved to a village on the northern slopes of Jinggangshan where Wang's brother-in-law's aunt lived.

During the more than forty days that Wang's force stayed in this village, its size grew as other stragglers from the Thirty-second Regiment were able to join them. As time passed, it became apparent that the unit would not soon regain its former size, both because of casualties suffered defending the base or in the guerrilla war waged since then and because the severity of the defeat had led many of the former "greenwoods boys" from the unit's pre-revolutionary bandit past to desert, much as bandits in the early 1920s had abandoned failing or fissioning gangs.

Despite these losses, for those who remained, the period of rest they now experienced began to restore vigor and confidence, and they began to launch small raids on militias and local elites in the area. Wang also began to feel the need to make some sort of grand gesture that would restore some of the "face" he and his fellows had lost because of the recent defeat. The impending lunar New Year festival provided an appropriate opportunity for Wang to demonstrate his continuing power and concern for the local populace by making it possible for them to stage a properly lavish celebration despite the recent travails. Through a series of raids on nearby settlements (including one on Nashan, the largely early-settler community that had long been a major antagonist of the massif's guest people), supplemented by the purchase of numerous pigs in the Dalong market, they accumulated a large quantity of meat, grain, and other useful provisions. Small groups of Red Army soldiers then carried the assembled items and donated them to the people of various hard-hit villages on the massif, keeping back just enough to have their own much-needed celebratory feast.[9]

REBUILDING THE BASE AREA INFRASTRUCTURE

Elsewhere in the region, other small bands of revolutionaries as well as numerous isolated individuals survived and accommodated to the new conditions in ways similar to those followed by Wang Zuo and his followers.[10] Gradually these individuals and groups reestablished contact and began rebuilding the revolutionary movement's shattered regional political and military infrastructure.

Much of this rebuilding activity emanated from and focused on the twin mountain redoubts of Jinggangshan and Jiulongshan, which collectively retained the same centrality in the regional revolutionary movement during this period that they had had before the January defeat. Now, however, as the geographical and political center of gravity of the larger base area shifted to the north and west, the relative importance of its two core mountain bases changed as well, with Jiulongshan becoming the site for key

political institutions and meetings and Jinggangshan assuming the role of secondary defense bastion.

Rebuilding the Party

One of the first priorities in rebuilding was to reestablish a high-level political agency to coordinate and legitimate party activities throughout the region and to serve as a conduit for communications and aid from party organs elsewhere. Before January 1929, these functions had been shared, informally and not altogether efficiently, by the Border Area Special Committee and the Fourth Army's Front Committee. The latter organ became irrelevant when the Fourth Army left the base, and most members of the former lost touch with one another when the base was overrun in January. With neither committee functioning, the surviving cadres and party branches drifted irresolutely.

In an attempt to restore some sense of direction and badly needed confidence, in mid-February Wan Xixian, one of the two members of the standing committee of the previously elected Border Area Special Committee who were still in contact with the main active node of party cadres in the Jiulongshan area, took it upon himself to reestablish a regional party organ. To this end, he convened a meeting of whatever "responsible persons" were available, most of whom were members of the Yongxin, Ninggang, and Chaling county party committees. This irregularly convened rump group formed a new body known as the Provisional Border Area Special Committee, with a standing committee consisting of three experienced cadres: Zhu Changxie (a Yongxin native and the other currently active member of the previously elected standing committee), Liu Zhen (another Yongxin native who had formerly served on the Special Committee), and Wan himself. Zhu Changxie was selected to be secretary.[11]

Then on 11 March, a third member of the officially elected standing committee, the Suichuan native Chen Zhengren, succeeded in making his way to Yongxin (probably to the Jiulongshan area). With a majority of the five-person standing committee now reassembled, official meetings of that body could once again be held. They immediately convened an enlarged special committee meeting on 14 March. This meeting abolished the provisional committee selected several weeks earlier and elected a new (though still "provisional") special committee, with two new members (Chen Zhengren and He Changgong) and four alternate members added to the three existing standing committee members. Zhu Changxie remained as secretary.[12]

The assembled party leaders also assessed the situation and made plans for reviving the regional revolutionary movement. Their assessment, reported in a letter to the Jiangxi and Hunan provincial committees written just after the meeting, was necessarily a depressing one. They noted that local

party and mass organizations were much reduced in size, visibility, and power. Compared to a high of over 10,000 party members in mid-1928, there were now fewer than 3000, a fair number of whom were wavering and trying to avoid open participation. In Suichuan the entire party apparatus had collapsed, leaving only the party secretary and a few battered branches still active. In Ninggang morale was low, many had abandoned the revolution, and early settler–guest people conflicts were still a serious intra-party problem. The party in Chaling, Lianhua, and Lingxian had been weak to begin with, and the latter two had not made contact since the defeat.

Similar conditions prevailed around the region when it came to soviet governments, military forces, and other revolutionary institutions, many of which had not yet recovered from the reverses of the preceding summer when they were once again buffeted by the enemy's January offensive. Many local governments and red guard detachments had been dispersed, and most of the land redistributed had been reclaimed by landlords. Though Wang Zuo's regiment was still functioning and responsive, desertion, dispersion, and the destruction wreaked upon the Jinggangshan massif had reduced it to a shadow of its former self.

Only in Yongxin did the situation seem to be relatively hopeful. Although the area around the county seat was in enemy hands, rural areas, particularly in the western section, still possessed relatively well-organized and active party branches, soviet governments, and red guards. The Jiulongshan base was on the border of western Yongxin, northwestern Ninggang, and southern Lianhua and thus was in the midst of this remaining area of revolutionary activity.[13]

Conditions in western Yongxin and adjacent areas were only relatively better than elsewhere: everywhere in the region the revolutionary movement was worse off in March 1929 than it had been in December 1928. Still, the contrast was great enough to encourage some leaders to argue that the movement ought more deliberately and thoroughly to shift the center of its activity from Jinggangshan to Jiulongshan. Chen Zhengren is said to have made this point at the 14 March enlarged Special Committee meeting, arguing—doubtless on the basis of observations made in the course of his own recent journey from Suichuan to Yongxin via the Jinggangshan massif—that the massif and the former Communist-controlled area in Ninggang were too heavily occupied by enemy forces to be used as a base. Although it does not appear that a formal decision was made at this time, the issue resurfaced at later meetings.[14]

Soon after the 14 March meeting, the regional party leadership underwent yet another reshuffling in the wake of the belated reappearance of Deng Qianyuan, the secretary of the original Border Area Special Committee and the last of its standing committee members to regain contact with the party following the organization's dispersal during the January defeat. Deng convened a meeting of the original standing committee that decided to scrap the new provisional committee established on 14 March and to have the original committee resume work. Because of the extensive overlap of personnel among these various incarnations of the committee, the main practical significance of this step was simply to confirm the reintegration of Deng himself into the regional power structure.[15]

Efforts were also underway to restore party organizations and local revolutionary movements in various counties around the area. In hard-hit Suichuan, for example, cadres managed after considerable effort to reconstitute several district party committees and red guard units.[16] In Lianhua the county committee moved to the inaccessible northern part of the county, and brought the county's main red guard detachment there to protect it. Alone or in concert with red guards from Yongxin, the Lianhua red guards attacked enemy militia forces, captured a sizable store of new weapons, and gradually carved out a reasonably secure area in which various party and local government organs could be reestablished.[17]

The Changing Military Situation

Much of this revived activity was made possible by the removal of the main enemy military units that had attacked Jinggangshan in January. Soon after the base had been overrun and the initial retributive destruction and mopping-up had been completed, the army units left the inhospitable terrain of Jinggangshan and Jiulongshan for more comfortable quarters in larger lowland towns, leaving the brunt of the patrolling and blockade duty in these areas to local militias. Then in March 1929 a conflict between Jiang Jieshi and the Guangxi Clique led to a face-off between Hunanese and Jiangxi troops along the main communications line between the two provinces, which ran through Pingxiang and Zhangshu, north of the Jinggangshan region. Two brigades of enemy forces that had been garrisoning Ninggang and Lianhua were promptly withdrawn to reinforce their respective sides in this confrontation.[18]

After the regular army troops left, numerous elite-led militias continued to operate throughout the region, actively searching for Communist cadres and extorting from the local population. To combat their depredations, party leaders began to reassemble the scattered bands of Red Army remnants left in the region and combine them with red guard detachments to form larger military units—units of a size that almost certainly could not have been maintained intact while major enemy regular army forces were still in the area.

Initially two such units coalesced in the region, one under a Fifth Army officer named Li Can and the other under Wang Zuo. Reinforcements from red guard detachments eventually enabled these detachments to be combined into a unit called the Independent First Regiment of the Border Area Red

Army. As often occurred in this sort of unit formation by amalgamation, the two main building blocks of the new unit—in this case the detachments of Li and Wang—continued to exist semi-separately. Wang Zuo's three companies became the first battalion of this regiment; it was based (as always) on the Jinggangshan massif, and its zone of operations included Ninggang, Suichuan, and Lingxian. The remaining five companies of the regiment, a mixture of Fifth Army stay-behinds and local red guards, made up a second battalion headed by Li Can; it was based at Jiulongshan, and its sphere of action included Yongxin, Chaling, and Ninggang. Wang Zuo became the regiment's commander and Li Can the second-in-command.[19]

Under the guidance and protection of the Red Army forces, new red guard units gradually reappeared in southern Ninggang, Lingxian, and elsewhere. The rate of formation of red guard units, as well as the overall security of sympathetic civilians in the heart of the former (and now reemerging) base, increased considerably following several military successes by Independent Regiment units, most notably the expulsion by Wang Zuo's forces of enemy militias that had been occupying Ciping and the Five Wells area in the heart of the Jinggangshan massif and the repulsion by the Independent Regiment of an attack mounted against Jiulongshan by an amalgamated force of militias from Yongxin, Chaling, Lingxian, and Ninggang.[20]

THE RETURN OF YUAN WENCAI AND THE FIFTH ARMY

The task of reviving the fortunes of the base area during the spring of 1929 was complicated in both positive and negative ways by the return to the region of two important political and military actors: the influential local politician, guest people activist, and former Thirty-second Regiment commander Yuan Wencai, and the revived and rebuilt main body of the Fifth Red Army under the command of Peng Dehuai.

The Return of Yuan Wencai

Yuan, it will be remembered, had accompanied the Fourth Army when it left the base in January. At some point in March, however, he unexpectedly reappeared in his old haunts on the Jinggangshan massif. His sudden return and the reasons for it threatened to disrupt the delicate and shifting relationships both among numerous conflicting individual egos and loyalties within the revolutionary movement and between the region's antagonistic ethnic communities.

When asked by Wang Zuo why he had returned, Yuan explained that while with the Fourth Army he had learned of the policy on the treatment of bandits contained in the Sixth Congress resolutions and had naturally become upset by its threatening personal implications. This worry, together with a growing homesickness, had prompted him to sneak away from the Fourth Army while it rested in Donggu (which in linear distance was not far to the east of Jinggangshan, though separated from it by the broad Gan River valley) and make his way back to the familiar and hopefully safer surroundings of his own home territory.

The less-worldly, less-educated, and less-ambitious Wang Zuo had always been the junior partner in the close relationship between the two men; as He Changgong later recalled, "Yuan was really Wang's soul (*linghun*)." Yuan's unauthorized return, the disconcerting news he brought and the depressed psychological state which it had induced in him therefore all had a strong impact on Wang Zuo.

In addition to reviving in acute form the nagging fears of treachery and betrayal that had been so much a part of Wang's thinking during his days as a bandit chieftain, Yuan's reappearance also raised the question of how the regional party apparatus (prominent within which were several of Yuan's early settler enemies) would react to his renewed presence in the area. In terms of official status, Yuan now existed in limbo: he had for all intents and purposes deserted his post with the Fourth Army (which was certainly grounds for his enemies to seek his punishment), and he also had no remaining official positions within the Jinggangshan party or military apparatus. Nonetheless, his influence among the regional guest people community and with Wang Zuo was strong enough that he could not simply be ignored by party leaders. Finally, there was the question of how the return of the one-time Thirty-second Regiment commander would affect Wang Zuo's own increasingly central position within the regional Red Army command structure.

Wang Zuo decided to communicate news of Yuan's return to He Changgong, the Red Army political cadre who in January had replaced Long Chaoqing as secretary of the Ninggang county party committee. He had earlier gained Wang's trust when he had helped integrate Wang's gang into the Red Army, and Wang now relied upon him to help resolve the problem of how to deal with Yuan. Together He and Wang worked out an arrangement whereby Yuan could resume work as a local party cadre after receiving mild punishment for abandoning the Fourth Army, but would not receive an officer's slot in the local Red Army from which he could intrigue to regain control of his old troops. In addition, Yuan's wife would be secretly enjoined to keep a sharp watch and other precautions would be taken to ensure that Yuan did not attempt to take his own life in his current emotional state.

After Yuan had accepted these conditions, He convened a county party committee meeting at which Yuan was formally reprimanded but allowed to resume his former position as member of that body's standing committee. Some cadres in the county party organization (and probably at higher levels as well) were unhappy with this arrangement, but the resistance was

either unable or unwilling to push hard enough to keep the measures from being implemented.

Over time, as Yuan threw his energies into rebuilding the county's weakened party organization, both his and Wang Zuo's moods became less depressed. Yuan also gradually wove himself back into the fabric of the regional revolutionary movement. Although he continued to be blocked from regaining his formal position as a high-level regional party leader, it proved impossible to prevent him from eventually resuming a substantive military role. Sometime during the spring or early summer of 1929, probably with the cooperation of Wang Zuo, Yuan once again became commander of a guerrilla unit with about seventy rifles (as compared to the eighty to ninety rifles in Wang Zuo's unit) made up predominantly of Ninggang guest people who were sworn brothers from his old unit. While the immediate problem posed by Yuan's return was thus overcome, the longer-term effects of his presence on the cohesion of the revolutionary movement and on the region's festering ethnic antagonisms were to prove very serious.[21]

The Return of the Fifth Army

About two months after Yuan Wencai's return, Peng Dehuai and the main body of the Fifth Red Army likewise suddenly reappeared on the Jinggangshan massif in early May 1929. As had been the case with Yuan, though in rather different ways, the unexpected return of the Fifth Army changed the calculus of local political and military possibility.

The Fifth Army had endured much since its departure from the base. After breaking out through Suichuan, the force had followed roughly the same route the Fourth Army had taken southward along the Jiangxi-Hunan border until it reached the town of Xincheng in Dayu county. There the exhausted army was caught asleep in the night by an enemy relief force. In the confused flight that followed, almost half of the army turned the wrong way at a road junction and permanently lost contact with the group led by Peng.

Peng's "army" (now reduced to fewer than 300 soldiers) moved on into Yudu county in the heart of southern Jiangxi. There in early March, they managed to surprise and outmaneuver a large enemy military force, briefly seize the Yudu county seat, and capture more than 400 rifles and several hundred prisoners (around half of whom eventually joined the Red Army).

For the next several weeks, the army roamed through Yudu and Anyuan counties, proselytizing for local party organizations, enlisting new army recruits, and raiding enemy-held cities (in the process sometimes having to confront antagonistic forces of thousands of peasants mobilized by lineages). Eventually they learned that the Fourth Red Army was operating not far away, in the Jiangxi-Fujian border region. The Fifth Army immediately

set out in search of them, and the two armies finally met in Jiangxi's Ruijin county in early April.

Like the Fifth Army, the Fourth Army had been steadily on the move. After marching eastward across southern Jiangxi toward Fujian, the army had fought a fierce battle with pursuing enemy forces at Dabai in Ruijin on 11 February. Immediately afterward, the army abruptly altered its line of march back to the northwest, deeper into the rugged heart of central Jiangxi, until it reached the small mountain town of Donggu in the southeastern part of Ji'an county on 16 February, barely a month after leaving Jinggangshan.

Like Jinggangshan, with which it shared a number of geographical and cultural similarities and with which it was sometimes compared, Donggu and its environs were an emerging base area and served as a staging area for two Red Army independent regiments. In this friendly environment, the Fourth Army rested for more than a week before heading east once again toward Fujian. By 13 March, they had crossed the border and captured the Changting county seat. For the remainder of the month they remained in this area, helping local revolutionary organizations and holding important meetings in which party leaders discussed changes in the army's organization and political style which several months later were articulated in Mao's well-known "Gutian Resolution."[22] In late March or early April, they met the Fifth Army in Ruijin.

After the meeting, the Fifth Army (now numbering over 600 soldiers) was once again nominally redesignated and absorbed into the Fourth Army. The combined force remained in Ruijin for several days while its leaders composed negative responses to a recent letter from Party Central which had requested that Zhu De and Mao Zedong leave the countryside to work with Party Central and that the Fourth Red Army should disaggregate and its personnel disperse to work among the rural masses.[23]

After this task was completed, the combined Red Army marched west into Yudu county, brushing off more blustering threats from elite-mobilized lineage braves along the way. In Yudu they held an enlarged conference of the Fourth Army's Front Committee whose participants included representatives from Party Central and the South Jiangxi Special Committee as well as the usual army leaders. The assembled cadres decided that, in light of the opportunity presented by enemy preoccupation with the Jiang Jieshi–Guangxi Clique struggle, the Fifth Army (once again acting as an independent unit under its former name) should return to Jinggangshan, while the Fourth Army remained in southern Jiangxi and western Fujian.

Setting off immediately after the conference, the Fifth Army made a circuitous way back toward Jinggangshan. After assorted military engagements and stops to absorb recruits from local guerrilla detachments, at the end of April the army arrived at Huang'ao, the southern entry point to the Jinggangshan massif. Fortuitously, one of Xiao Jiabi's ubiquitous militia units was then

in town, and the revived and reinforced Fifth Army gladly seized the opportunity to gain revenge for their previous defeat at Xiao's hands by immediately pouncing on and destroying the surprised enemy force. On 2 May the army reached the massif's main town of Ciping, where they met with the troops of Wang Zuo and Li Can and, amid much rejoicing and distribution of gifts to local inhabitants, took up residence once again in the Jinggangshan base.[24]

THE REORIENTATION OF THE BASE AREA

The Fourth Enlarged Executive Committee Conference

Little more than a week after the Fifth Army's arrival, the Special Committee held an enlarged meeting on 10 May in which the committee members were joined by major Fifth Army leaders and some local cadres to discuss a variety of important issues raised by the army's return and by recently-received information about conditions in the Donggu base.[25]

Among the issues of immediate organizational significance, the conferees moved to integrate the Fifth Army with the base area's existing political and military resources. One aspect of this integration was the selection of yet another, enlarged, Border Area Special Committee. Deng Qianyuan remained as committee secretary and most other members from recent versions of the committee were also retained, but the committee was expanded to fifteen by including Peng Dehuai and Teng Daiyuan from the Fifth Army and a number of cadres from various base area counties, including Wang Zuo. Yuan Wencai's name was conspicuously absent from the list.

In addition, the meeting either made or ratified a previously made decision to absorb the base area's recently formed Independent Regiment into the Fifth Army. Li Can's unit of old Fifth Army soldiers who had remained in the base area was merged with one of the existing "columns" (*zongdui*) into which the army was divided, but Wang Zuo's troops were put into a separate unit designated the Sixth Column with Wang as its commander and He Changgong as political representative. After the absorption of these troops and some additional new peasant recruits from the Jinggangshan area, the Fifth Army's strength almost doubled, from around 800 to between 1200 and 1500 soldiers.[26]

The Strategy and Tactics of Base Building

This military reorganization and expansion, like the reshuffling of the regional party leadership, was an obvious and rather straightforward step to take in response to the return of the Fifth Army. However, the issues raised by the army's reappearance also overlapped and reinforced a number of larger questions of strategy and policy that were then under discussion,

prompted by the conjuncture of evolving local evaluations of the region's revolutionary experience, knowledge acquired from Fifth Army leaders about the contents of their recent documentary exchanges with Party Central, and the receipt of a 13 April letter from the Fourth Army Front Committee prescribing lessons to be learned from the development of the Donggu base.[27]

As noted, the Fourth and Fifth armies had responded negatively to Party Central's request that the Fourth Army cease roving around as a unitary military force and instead break up and disperse as individuals or small groups to organize among the peasantry. The issue of whether or not to "concentrate troops" (*shouji bingli* or *jibing*) was also taken up by Jinggangshan region party leaders at the committee meeting following the return of the Fifth Army.

The conferees approved the policy of concentrating troops for several related reasons. For one thing, it was necessary for the Fifth Army to have the greatest possible strength if it was to be able to help restore and protect revolutionary political power in the base. The small guerrilla bands currently operating in the area were both unsuitable and inadequate for the task: unsuitable because their lack of discipline obstructed party policies and inadequate because they were often not up to the task of attacking the elite-led militias (which during this period were themselves growing in size and beginning to band together for joint action). In addition, the red guards were hampered by their localism and by economic deprivation that frequently led them to ignore discipline and undertake "non-revolutionary activities" (a phrase which probably referred to looting and other similar practices). Gathering local forces into larger units and integrating them into the Red Army would help transform them into more disciplined, cohesive, and capable troops.[28]

Although there were thus a number of good reasons for base area leaders to favor the policy of concentrating troops, there were dangers involved in the policy as well. More than any other single factor, the presence of large Red Army units in an area acted as a magnet for enemy military forces. By helping to build up a larger and stronger Fifth Army, therefore, base area leaders were also indirectly attracting further unwelcome attention to themselves at a time when they desperately needed a respite to rebuild their shattered local infrastructure.

Moreover, as both the Fourth and Fifth Armies had already demonstrated (and the Fifth Army would very soon demonstrate again), the first and most fundamental loyalty of the Red Army leaders was to the preservation of their own forces, not to the protection of the lives and property of base area inhabitants. The main Red Army leaders and the bulk of the troops were outsiders, with no close ties to the Jinggangshan area and no compelling personal reasons to base themselves there rather than somewhere else. The mobility, relative self-sufficiency, and strong unit cohesion that helped make

the Red Army an effective fighting machine also facilitated its ability to abandon an area quickly and to roam freely across wide expanses of territory. By depositing scarce local personnel and munitions in the Fifth Army, base area leaders were thus investing in an organization over whose leadership and activities they had only limited influence and whose past record indicated was likely to depart from the area when faced with a major military emergency.

The contradictory issues involved in evaluating the Red Army's role in base building were connected to equally troubling questions about the proper nature and location of the base area itself. Again, the salience of this topic was due to a combination of local concerns and considerations raised by Mao Zedong and other party leaders outside the base.

The Fourth Army Front Committee's 13 April letter to Jinggangshan leaders, which Mao wrote or played a substantial role in drafting, praised a number of attributes of the Donggu base area, many of which stood in implicit or explicit contrast to conditions in the Jinggangshan base. The Donggu base was conveniently situated and in close touch with provincial authorities, and it had a strong and effective guerrilla force (the Independent Second Regiment) that roved freely across a broad territory and whose well-paid soldiers had no difficulty maintaining themselves.

Even more important, the Donggu base exemplified a style of party and governmental operations that was more suitable to current circumstances than that practiced in Jinggangshan. As the letter put it, at the present time, "small-scale bases with public soviet regimes are harmful," in that they led to results quite contrary to those intended. In the counties of the Jinggangshan region and elsewhere where they existed, the ease with which these sorts of public regimes could be located and destructively suppressed by counterrevolutionaries had led to massive loss of support for the revolution by both masses and party members alike and had also contributed to a deepening crisis in the rural economy.

In the Donggu base, by contrast, party and government organizations were kept secret even though counterrevolutionary political power had already been thoroughly extinguished in the region. In addition, instead of fixed (*guding de*) red guard units that protected specific territories, the Donggu base had mobile and wide-ranging guerrilla detachments. These arrangements made it possible for mail and commerce to continue in a normal fashion throughout the region and also ensured that enemy troops would find no worthwhile targets when they passed through the area.[29]

In the report in which the Front Committee letter is quoted and in other writings during the spring and early summer of 1929 the Jinggangshan base leaders directly or indirectly commented on—and often agreed with—many of the issues expressed in the letter. They acknowledged that they were overly dependent on military power, which served as both the main manifestation and the main support of the revolutionary movement, and that they

needed to develop and rely more heavily upon much broader, denser, and more survivable (that is, more secret) networks of party and government organs than they currently possessed.

They also agreed that they needed to strive more aggressively to expand both the core of the base and its shifting penumbra of "gray areas" in which guerrilla activity and organization building were undertaken. A bigger base would provide more of a spatial cushion against enemy attack and more room to maneuver to defeat enemy suppression efforts, more resources, and thus potentially more self-sufficiency in the face of enemy blockade and (by extending further out of the isolated border mountains) more convenient and closer interaction with both high-level party authorities and other emerging base areas.[30]

CCP leaders conceptualized and contextualized issues involved in thinking about the most appropriate location, size, orientation, and operational style of the Jinggangshan base somewhat differently depending on whether they were focusing on inter- or intra-regional arenas. When thinking broadly and strategically, party leaders concerned themselves with questions such as the relative orientation of the base toward Hunan or Jiangxi and the possibility of building an interconnected, interregional base area running nearly the whole length of the Hunan-Jiangxi border. When thinking more introspectively about the dynamics of the revolutionary movement within the Jinggangshan region, the cadres concentrated on questions relating to the siting of revolutionary strongholds and the most desirable geographical and political center of gravity for the movement within the base area as a whole.

During 1928, the formal party chain of command had placed the base area and its party organs (including the Fourth Army's Front Committee) at least nominally under the jurisdiction of the Hunan Provincial Committee and its subunits such as the Southern Hunan Special Committee. Contact between the base and these higher authorities, however, had been infrequent and often confrontational. In addition, the effectiveness of enemy suppression efforts against Hunanese Communists, as well as the growing troubles facing the Jinggangshan base, created a dangerous environment in which party leaders in the base and throughout Hunan became increasingly preoccupied with personal survival and maintenance of their own individual organizations. It is thus not surprising that for more than six months after the August Defeat of 1928, party leaders in the Jinggangshan base had no contact with the Hunan Provincial Committee.

By contrast, during the same period, contact with Jiangxi party organs increased. Like its Hunanese counterparts, the CCP's Jiangxi Provincial Committee and its urban-centered subordinate units such as the West Jiangxi and South Jiangxi special committees were hunted, harried, and sometimes exposed by enemy counter-intelligence activities. However, the police in

Jiangxi were not as numerous or as effective as those in Hunan, and at least part of the energy that the province's politically involved non-Communist elites might have put into rooting out Communists was spent instead in debilitating and distracting intra- and inter-party struggles among groups such as the Reorganization Clique (*Gaizupai*), the AB Corps (*AB tuan*) and the Third Party (*Di san dang*). Nor were the army units in Jiangxi anything like as numerous or able as those in Hunan, a fact that meant a great deal to party cadres contemplating the possibilities of base area expansion.

Under these relatively favorable circumstances, the CCP's political apparatus in Jiangxi had gradually rebuilt from the disastrous losses of 1927 and revolutionary base-building activity in the province had become quite widespread by mid-1929. Among the most well-developed and extensive of these emerging bases was the Donggu base which was discussed in the Fourth Army Front Committee's 13 April letter. In addition, another smaller area of Communist-controlled territory had grown up even closer to the Jinggangshan base, centered on the market town of Yanfu in northwestern Ji'an county. Communist forces in these two expanding bases, whose activities were loosely coordinated by the CCP's West Jiangxi Special Committee, had begun to threaten seriously the key Gan valley city of Ji'an.[31]

The contrast between the rapid growth of the Jiangxi bases and the difficulties faced by the Communists in southern Hunan naturally inclined Jinggangshan party leaders to try to establish better connections with Jiangxi party organs. Familiarity and experience also encouraged this trend. As noted previously, most of the early party cadres in the Jinggangshan region had joined the revolutionary movement while studying or working in Nanchang, Ji'an, or other large Jiangxi cities. Ji'an in particular had been a major destination for young Jinggangshan sojourners who eventually became involved in the city's widespread mass movements and party organs before 1927. The emergence of other nearby bases focused on the eventual capture of Ji'an, and its reemergence as a revolutionary stronghold made it especially attractive for Jinggangshan region cadres to think of trying to expand their base in this direction as well.

Along with expanding east toward Ji'an and the Gan River valley, base area leaders also increasingly began to think of expanding north along the Hunan-Jiangxi border. The immediate goal of this expansion was to link up with the Anyuan mining district in Pingxiang county, where there was a long history of revolutionary organization and a well-established Communist presence. Not only did Anyuan have a sizable number of cadres who might help relieve the acute shortage of competent personnel that still plagued the Jinggangshan base, but it also possessed in abundance a commodity which was even rarer in rural China: real workers. At a time when pressure to proletarianize the party was being felt by cadres at all levels, the prospect of acquiring such a large recruiting pool of indisputably working-class people

must have been attractive to base area leaders, where by now 90 percent or more of party members were of peasant origin.

The longer-range target of a northward expansion from Jinggangshan was to link up with the Communist base area in the Hunan-Hubei-Jiangxi (Xiang-E-Gan) border region so as to form a long, more or less connected strip of Communist-controlled territory stretching along the entire northern half of the Hunan-Jiangxi frontier. In addition to offering certain positional advantages—such as relative proximity to Changsha and Nanchang—which might help hasten occurrence of the "general uprising to seize one or several provinces" that was then the immediate strategic goal of the CCP national leadership, linking up with the Xiang-E-Gan base was important because of its past connections with the Fifth Army force under Peng Dehuai that was now intermittently based in the Jinggangshan region. Given the eagerness that many cadres in Peng Dehuai's force had expressed for returning to Xiang-E-Gan several months earlier at the time of the Bailu Conference, expansion of the Jinggangshan base in that direction might encourage Peng's force at least to remain within striking distance, ensuring some protection against enemy military attack.

Strategic thinking about interregional expansion and connections with outside revolutionaries, however, intertwined and interacted in the minds of base area leaders with complicated local considerations that also involved the location and character of the Jinggangshan base. At the May Special Committee meeting in particular but also more generally throughout the spring and summer of 1929, party leaders discussed what many perceived as the desirability of shifting the regional revolutionary movement's overall center of gravity from Ninggang to Yongxin and of moving the base area's main military stronghold and dominant symbolic site from the Jinggangshan massif at the southeastern edge of the base to the Jiulongshan area in its northwestern corner. In addition, many argued for a flattening out of the existing co-variation between topographical height and politico-military authority, in which the most powerful organizations occupied the highest terrain. The complex interplay of issues on and under the surface of this discussion is important and revealing of the political and social dynamics in the base area.

Contemporary documents and later discussions of why a shift to Yongxin and Jiulongshan was appropriate make it possible to compile a series of explicit or implicit contrasts which these materials draw between the Yongxin/Jiulongshan and the Ninggang/Jinggangshan regions. Where Ninggang/Jinggangshan was a poor and isolated area whose people and revolutionary apparatus had been devastated by recent attacks and which had been irreversibly identified and targeted by the enemy as the chief "bandit nest" in the region, Yongxin/Jiulongshan was a prosperous and well-situated area, with a reasonably intact and active revolutionary movement and much less notoriety as a core revolutionary stronghold.

These contrasting characterizations were accurate, if incomplete. Ninggang was indeed much smaller and poorer than Yongxin, which had the largest population and the most prosperous economy in the entire region. Where Ninggang was an isolated and inaccessible bowl deep in the midst of rugged mountain ranges, Yongxin's eastern half was a fertile plain that was conveniently located for communication with or expansion toward the cities of the Gan River valley and the growing Donggu base beyond.

The Jinggangshan massif had also indisputably become as much a symbolic center of regional revolutionary power in the eyes of the government and local elites as it had been for the Communists themselves. The massif had been the primary bivouac for Red Army troops and the main site for fortifications; not surprisingly, it had also been the chief object of the enemy's January attack and the scene of particularly heavy reprisals afterward. By contrast, Jiulongshan clearly had long been a subsidiary stronghold, defended by red guards rather than the Red Army and attacked later and less ferociously by enemy troops. Less notorious as a "bandit lair," Jiulongshan was thus less of a beacon attracting unwelcome attention from vengeful armies.

Moreover, the relative states of the revolutionary apparatus in Ninggang/Jinggangshan and Yongxin/Jiulongshan were also quite different. Party documents reported that in Ninggang in the aftermath of the January defeat the defection of numerous party members, including many important "responsible persons," had crippled work and led to the collapse of a majority of the party branches. A substantial number of defections had also occurred among the members of Wang Zuo's forces on Jinggangshan, and support for the revolution had fallen sharply among the Ninggang/Jinggangshan population generally.

In Yongxin, on the other hand, party, soviet government, and red guard units were reasonably intact and active. Secret party branches were still operating as near as three or four kilometers from the county seat, and by August 1929 the 4000 or more party members in the county (up from 2000–3000 several months earlier, and compared to 300-odd then existing in Ninggang) were administered by at least six effective, well-organized district-level organs set up in the county's rural regions. In addition, support from the population was still strong, and red guard units were much more numerous and well-armed than in Ninggang. Popular support and revolutionary organization were particularly strong in the western part of the county which, not coincidentally, was where Jiulongshan was situated. Communist activities both in Jiulongshan and the rest of western Yongxin drew further strength from their proximity to a late-blooming but now expanding revolutionary organization in neighboring Lianhua county.[32]

Another related aspect of the discussion of the appropriate geographical center for the revolutionary movement had to do with the relative importance of highlands and lowlands in the siting of the military and political

command structure of the revolutionary movement. In the Special Committee's 20 May report, the regional leadership expressed the opinion that the movement's major administrative organs ought to be concentrated more heavily in the region's conveniently located and densely populated lowlands rather than in the isolated mountain redoubts (presumably including Jiulongshan as well as Jinggangshan) which had hitherto been favored. As a revealing passage in the report's section on "problems in work style" stated:

> One can say that in the past the Border Area's party organization was not a type of party organization at all, but rather an odd type of organization [which emerged under] special circumstances—a type of sect bandit (*huifei*) organization.
>
> Party organizations ought to be built in the enemy's camp, and the party's highest command organs ought to be established in this work area's political and economic central places. In the Border Area, however, this is not the case; the party's [highest] organs (such as the Special Committee) are established on the tallest mountain peaks, the second-tier organs (such as the county committees and special districts) are established on the mountain slopes, and the third-tier organs (such as the district committees) are established at the mountains' feet.
>
> Because of this, it is impossible to receive newspapers and all the important political news. Under the circumstances, if one wishes to be able to direct a political movement, to have this type of special organization which is based in a mountain range truly is completely mistaken.[33]

This passage clearly indicates party leaders' recognition that for long-term success the revolutionary movement had to move beyond isolated backcountry regions into more densely populated and prosperous areas that were more closely integrated into larger political and economic arenas. As part of this process, it was first necessary for the base area party's high-level organs to situate themselves in regional core areas such as lowland Yongxin where they could acquire information, mobilize populations, and control resources in ways that were simply impossible from either Jinggangshan or Jiulongshan. From regional cores such as Yongxin, the local movement would then be much better placed to participate meaningfully in the increasingly well-articulated network of party organizations that were beginning to speckle all of Jiangxi.

Yet, as the mention of strange "sect bandit organizations" in the passage quoted above indicates equally clearly, there was more to the issue of base area location and style than simply such long-term strategic considerations. In the context of the history of the Jinggangshan region's revolutionary movement, the juxtaposition in a single passage of critical comments on high mountains, sect bandits, and strange organizations which were not real parties constituted a precisely triangulated salvo directed against the guest people–dominated forces of Wang Zuo and Yuan Wencai. As such, it draws attention to the fact that another extremely important factor in the base-location

equation was the close symbolic and geographical connection between Jinggangshan and the intertwined conflicts between early settlers/guest people and party/army that had deeply affected the regional revolutionary movement.

The Jinggangshan massif and its immediate environs had long been known as the main regional locus of guest people settlement and of the various manifestations of militant predatory-protective collective action through which the guest people minority habitually interacted with the early settler majority. Early in the development of the revolutionary movement, Jinggangshan also became the primary regional center of its military power, first through the recruitment into the movement of guest people–dominated bandit bands such as those of Yuan Wencai and Wang Zuo and then through the use of the massif and its environs as the main base for the Fourth Red Army. With the Red Army came a group of non-native party leaders (mostly from Hunan) whose combination of military backing, extensive political experience and strong personalities gave them a disproportionately large influence on the policies and personnel of the base area.

By contrast, the regional party organization had a rather different ethnic, geographic and personal political center of gravity. The great majority of those county- and regional-level party cadres who were not concurrently part of the Fourth (and later the Fifth) Red Army's military and political apparatus were well-educated early settler elites who had been among the founders of the revolutionary movements in various base area counties. Cadres from Yongxin and (to a lesser extent) Ninggang were particularly well represented among these cadres.

Often graduates of the same middle schools in Jiangxi cities such as Nanchang and Ji'an and well acquainted after years of mutual interaction as local elites and young revolutionaries, many of these cadres had also been through a shared experience of relative political marginalization as their former dominance over local affairs had been rendered less salient by the power of the Red Army (including the highly visible, guest people–dominated Thirty-second Regiment) and the centralizing tendencies of Mao and his associates in the army's party organizations. Some of them—most notably Long Chaoqing and Wang Huai—had also developed increasingly strong personality conflicts with guest people leaders such as Yuan Wencai.

The departure of the Fourth Army and its associated political leadership, followed almost immediately by the enemy's destructive occupation of the Jinggangshan massif and the remainder of the base, had changed the balance of power not only between the revolutionary movement and its enemies but also within the movement itself. The events of January 1929 weakened the symbolic and practical salience of the Jinggangshan massif and its inhabitants in the regional revolutionary movement, cast doubt on the reliability and lowered the reputation of the Red Army, and removed most of the institutions and individuals that had formerly helped to mediate and constrain the conflicts that differences in background, experience, and personality engendered between what locals labeled the "guest people army" and the "early settler party."

With these points in mind, it is easy to see how ethnicity, localism, factional feelings, and individual personality differences interacted with and reinforced considerations of strategy, policy, and practical expediency in encouraging the geographical and political reorientation of the revolutionary movement. The main rationales offered in favor of a reorientation from Jinggangshan/Ninggang and toward Jiulongshan/Yongxin—the need to shift away from sect bandit gangs and toward party branches; away from mountain tops and toward their feet; away from the poor, isolated periphery and toward the wealthier, better-connected core; away from a regionally contained, militarily oriented struggle and toward a broader, more politically centered movement; and away from supervision by Hunan party organs and toward closer connection with their Jiangxi counterparts—all had a variety of sound reasons behind them. But in one way or another these rationales also articulated the desire of a regional party leadership that was predominantly of local origin and early settler background to move away from conditions that favored Hunanese outsiders and "untrustworthy" guest people and toward those that maximized their own background and experience.

In a larger sense, both the inter- and intra-regional manifestations of the discussion by Jinggangshan cadres of the proper base area location, orientation, and policies were part of a continuing discourse by party leaders around the country to conceptualize the nature, role, and limits of rural base areas in the current phase of the revolutionary struggle. Various chapters in part II have outlined the issues involved in this discourse as they developed in the course of the early exchanges of views between high-level Fourth Army leaders (especially Mao) and Hunanese and central-level party authorities. By mid-1929, most party decision makers had come to accept the notion that rural bases were necessary components of revolutionary strategy, given the overwhelming force of the "White Terror" in urban areas, but various issues concerning the formation, maintenance, and expansion of bases remained unresolved. Though the ongoing and often acrimonious public discussions of these issues between Mao and other high leaders have attracted by far the most historical attention, it is important to recognize that understanding and coming to grips with the problems of base building involved an extended process of thought and experimentation on the part of party cadres on all levels, including—as the foregoing account indicates—those in the post-Mao Jinggangshan region.

In addition to the difficulties involved in trying to implant and nurture a large-scale, multi-layered, ideologically based political organization in rural areas dominated by disparate well-established localistic political cultures and traditions of collective action, base building also suffered from a

locational contradiction imposed by the conflicting demands of security and access. On the one hand, the immediate security and survival of the revolutionary movement in the face of the enemy's overwhelming military strength depended on low visibility, physical inaccessibility, and constant mobility, factors which favored isolated mountainous regions and self-contained, peripatetic military units. On the other hand, long-term success in overthrowing the existing order required widespread recognition and secure control over large populations and extensive resources, factors which favored more prosperous, densely settled and accessible regions protected by specifically assigned garrison units.

To help cope with these contradictions, Mao and the Jinggangshan base leaders alike recognized that it was best to conceive of base areas as shifting, dynamic, and processual geopolitical entities rather than simply specific, bounded, immovable, and vulnerable pieces of land. Blurring the boundaries and flattening the contours of revolutionary movements in base areas—in both topographical and sociopolitical terms—made them less clear-cut targets and more protean nuclei for expansion. Notions of blurred boundaries, graduated degrees of revolutionary influence, and multi-staged processes of development for base areas likewise contributed to more sophisticated and nuanced understandings of how individual rural bases might be replicated, grow together, and expand from the hinterlands toward strategic, urbanized core areas.

Seen in these terms, base building ideally involved maintenance of a dynamic relationship between the two geo-strategic poles of isolated mountain redoubts and well-situated lowland areas. When revolutionary forces were weakest and least well rooted in rural society, the stress should be on the security of inaccessibility and mobility; as forces became stronger and more solitary, base building should gradually adopt a more settled, centrally located and assertively visible focus. Individual bases would also expand toward one another and toward major lowland cities such as Ji'an and Ganzhou. Throughout this unfolding process, land redistribution and other major reform programs would take place in consolidated base areas. These in turn would be surrounded by shifting penumbras of less-firmly-controlled "guerrilla areas" that hopefully would gradually be absorbed into the expanding base but that in the meantime still served a variety of important functions: as buffers and early-warning zones against enemy attack, as foraging grounds for money and provisions possessed by local elites, and as recruitment areas for new soldiers and cadres.

As the Jinggangshan case indicates, however, it proved to be no easy task for specific base areas actually to succeed in making this sort of dynamic transition process work. In addition to requiring flexibility, patience, and a delicate sense of timing on the part of decision-making cadres, the transition from peripheral, mountain-fortress style bases, with their predominant military orientation and strong resonances with the raid-and-ransom bandit life to central, miniature-state-style bases serving as focal points for reform presupposed a degree of stability and support that was not readily available under the circumstances then prevailing. In the Jinggangshan case, these general concerns were exacerbated by region-specific problems such as the persistent early settler–guest people tensions that made it impossible for local revolutionaries to devote their undivided attention to expanding the base and suppressing the nagging harassment of elite militias.

Most important of all, however, was the absence of a reliable and well-armed regular Red Army force to serve as a first line of defense and as a reservoir of organized personnel with mass-mobilizing experience. Despite the knowledge that major Red Army concentrations tended to draw unwelcome attention from enemy armies, local cadres felt that the known contributions they made to base construction outweighed the potential dangers of their presence, and it was with their many urgent needs foremost in their minds that base area leaders welcomed the return of the Fifth Army from its southern Jiangxi sojourn.

THE PEREGRINATIONS OF THE FIFTH ARMY

The Fifth Army Heads South

Unfortunately for local cadres, the enemy reacted too quickly for them to take full advantage of the Fifth Army's return. While the May Enlarged Special Committee Conference was still underway, strong enemy forces entered the reviving base in an attempt to destroy the Fifth Army, so army and regional party leaders went to Bamianshan on the Jinggangshan massif, where the interrupted conference was concluded. Because the suppression campaign continued, the Fifth Army leaders decided to move the army (including Wang Zuo's column) to neighboring Lingxian, from whence they planned to march around the enemy via a roundabout route to end up back in Yongxin. Enemy countermoves foiled this option, however, so the army leaders instead decided to head off deeper into southern Hunan.

Though described in some later accounts in terms that suggest it was a raid deliberately designed to replenish provisions and relieve pressure on the base, contemporary documents indicate that Fifth Army leaders decided on this action abruptly and without forethought. Soon after the army's departure, for example, a Special Committee report referred to it in exasperation as "a spontaneous action not in accord with [what had been] decided," and as "a roving-bandit-style flight" that had hindered work in the base area.[34]

Initial motivation aside, the Fifth Army's march away from the base developed into a broad and profitable two-month swing through southern

Hunan, northern Guangdong, and southern Jiangxi. After unproductive foraging and hard fighting in often-ravaged and heavily militarized southern Hunan, the army met with better luck after reaching the trade routes and prosperous mercantile communities of northern Guangdong. In Chengkou and Nanxiong, they captured large quantities of munitions and cash and bought badly needed medicines, salt, and cloth. They also provided information on the year-old Sixth Congress resolutions to local party branches whose policies were still very much out of step with the current line. In late June, as impending war between Jiang Jieshi and the Guangxi warlords led to large troop concentrations along the Jiangxi-Guangdong border, the spoils-laden army marched back north in the broiling summer heat through the now-familiar hills of southwestern Jiangxi to Jinggangshan, which they reached in early July.[35]

They found that the base had once again suffered in their absence. Knowing that with the Fifth Army and Wang Zuo's forces both gone there was little danger, the invading enemy felt free to repeat their January tactics of dispersing into small groups to plunder the countryside. The revolutionary hotbeds in Yongxin and Lianhua, which had suffered relatively little in January, were hard hit this time around. In addition to property losses, the base was also hurt in other ways: by the levies and fees for rebuilding and protection charged by returning enemy officials and militia leaders, the flight of peasants to avoid reprisals, the significant disruption of the planting season, and the inhibition of red guard guerrilla raids whose spoils were of increasing importance to the sustenance of hungry villagers.[36]

Given the extent of the destruction and the abrupt manner in which they had embarked on this second abandonment of the base in the face of enemy threat, it is likely that the Fifth Army met with a chilly reception upon its return to Jinggangshan. If that was the case, however, a combination of explanations by army leaders of how enemy movements and other circumstances had necessitated their departure, base area cadres' relief at once again having a sizable military force at their disposal, and the army's well-filled moneybags, cartridge cases, and medicine chests seems to have thawed relations considerably.[37]

The Attack on Anfu

In any event, having the mercurial Fifth Army back in their proximity, base area leaders hastened to make use of it. Soon after the army's return, the Special Committee held a meeting to discuss a possible Fifth Army attack from Yongxin into Anfu county, on the northeastern flank of the base area. Anfu was a well known and well protected center of Guomindang political influence and a common staging area for enemy armies en route to attack the base. It was also an area where local revolutionary organs were quite weak

and which Red Army forces had not previously raided extensively, so that its urban and rural elites had not yet been stripped of much of their wealth.

Although a raid into Anfu could therefore serve a number of useful strategic purposes, Peng Dehuai later recalled that the Special Committee meeting called to discuss the issue was very acrimonious, and that he was among a minority who strongly opposed the attack. With a majority of regional party leaders in favor, however, the attack went forward.[38]

As the army advanced aggressively toward Anfu's county seat, a weak enemy unit retreated provocatively before them, luring them on until the Red Army stumbled upon a large and well-entrenched enemy defense force near the city. With the advantage of surprise lost and worried by the possibility that the seemingly well-informed enemy might be able to launch a coordinated hammer-and-anvil attack in which enemy garrisons from the Lianhua and Yongxin county seats attacked from the rear to drive the Communists against the immovable enemy force to their front, the Fifth Army promptly retreated. During the retreat, they were caught in a deadly ambush, out of which they escaped with great difficulty.

The Anfu campaign was proclaimed both then and later as a great success, both because many enemy casualties had been inflicted and because the base area population was encouraged by seeing the Fifth Army finally fight a major battle instead of fleeing from enemy pressure. Nonetheless, the Anfu attack had in fact been at best a Pyrrhic victory. Not only had the campaign's main aims—capture of the county seat and preparatory work needed to incorporate the area into the base—not been achieved, but also several hundred Fifth Army personnel (including numerous important middle- and high-ranking officers) had become casualties. Instead of the common Red Army victory ritual of breaking up into small groups to proselytize in the newly captured countryside, the Fifth Army instead limped back to Yongxin to lick its wounds.[39]

The army's losses were especially frustrating because they were difficult to make up. People throughout the region—not only base inhabitants and high party leaders but also enemy soldiers as well—had come to think of the army as a particularly fierce, unruly, and unreliable force whose ill-disciplined soldiers routinely tortured and killed captured prisoners, refused to heed the orders of their party cadres, and felt no attachment to the Jinggangshan region. Not surprisingly, this reputation seems to have hindered the army's recruiting efforts.

Some aspects of the Fifth Army's poor reputation were unfounded or highly exaggerated. Reports that the army maltreated prisoners, for example, were largely propaganda efforts by enemy military officers trying to keep their troops from defecting and were undermined over time by testimonials of good treatment given by former prisoners who were released from Communist captivity.

On the other hand, army discipline *was* very poor. About 20 percent of the soldiers in the army's core units were long-time soldiers who had been in Peng Dehuai's old warlord unit, while the rest were former peasants from Pingjiang or from southern Jiangxi who had been recruited during the army's journeys. All were outsiders with little reason to be particularly solicitous of the base area population. In addition, many of the old soldiers were former vagrants and hoodlums (*liumang*) who were virtually uncontrollable by any of the party cadres except for Peng, toward whom they felt a close personal loyalty.

The discipline problem was compounded by the deficiencies of a complement of officers and party representatives whom—with the notable exception of Peng Dehuai himself—the Border Area Special Committee secretary Deng Qianyuan considered inexperienced, arrogant, and sorely lacking in ability. The leadership problem had become even more acute following the Anfu battles, in which at least twelve officers of company-level rank or higher had been killed or wounded. Given the chronic scarcity of cadre talent in the base as a whole, there was little chance of finding qualified local replacements for these losses.[40]

The Fifth Army Returns to Xiang-E-Gan

In early August, a strong enemy force from southern Jiangxi joined with the existing garrison in the Yongxin county seat to launch another attack on the Fifth Army. First, in an action reminiscent of many suppression campaigns of the previous year, the enemy force drove into Ninggang and seized the Five Wells area on the Jinggangshan massif. Although this attack was misguided, in that (perhaps unbeknownst to the enemy) Jinggangshan was no longer the center of regional revolutionary activity, it did cut off the main escape route south that had previously been used by the Red Army. The Fifth Army tried to avoid contact by moving instead into western Yongxin, but the enemy soon followed and the army leaders were forced to make another fight-or-flight decision.

As they had done in May under somewhat similar circumstances, Peng Dehuai and his associates decided to extricate themselves by a strategic withdrawal from the entire region rather than by undertaking some tactical move to outmaneuver or outfight the enemy force so as to remain in or near the base. In May they had headed south into southern Hunan and Guangdong; this time they headed north, back to the Xiang-E-Gan region from whence they had initially set out for Jinggangshan ten months earlier. On 8 August, the army marched out of Yongxin, passing in rapid succession through Lianhua, Pingxiang, and Wanzai on route to Tonggu county in the heart of Xiang-E-Gan, which it reached in late August or early September.

In a report written soon after the events, Border Area Special Committee secretary Deng Qianyuan provided a context for and some information on

the Fifth Army's decision. Time for weighing alternatives was short in this urgent situation, and only two members of the Special Committee's standing committee—too few to convene a meeting that might have issued contrary instructions—were in western Yongxin. To the west in Chaling, one logical destination that would have kept the army near the base, there was a sizable enemy garrison that, if it acted in coordination with the Jiangxi attackers, could have caught the Fifth Army in a pincer attack. Finally, by chance, a peasant had recently come to the base from the north with instructions from party organs there (allegedly including the Hunan Provincial Committee, though some doubted this) to reestablish contact with the Fifth Army. Under the circumstances, the Fifth Army decided that this would be a perfect time to go north to reunite with their former Xiang-E-Gan comrades and to try personally to fulfill the request for renewed contact.

The tone and phrasing of Deng's report suggests that he felt that the army had again made convenient excuses to preserve itself at the expense of the base. Given the Fifth Army's pattern of behavior, there were certainly plausible grounds for such an opinion. Peng Dehuai's memoirs say nothing about the departure motives but note that in practice the Fifth Army's march north helped rather than hurt the Jinggangshan base because the threat of its attacks on northern Jiangxi cities forced the over-extended enemy to withdraw from Jinggangshan to Ji'an, where they could move north if needed. Moreover, when describing the situation he and his troops faced after moving north, Peng stated: "Now the Fifth Army could easily replenish its strength by recruiting POW's [*sic*]." Read in light of the army's recruiting difficulties in Jinggangshan, this statement suggests another reason why army leaders might have wished to leave the Jinggangshan base.[41]

None of these statements is mutually contradictory, and it is likely that Deng's and Peng's accounts accurately portray different aspects of the complex motivational underpinnings of the Fifth Army's decision to leave. The bottom line, however, was that once again the largest and best-armed revolutionary military force available had left the area, complicating plans to expand the base beyond its habitual boundaries and throwing responsibility for defense back on the shoulders of red guards and the experienced but increasingly alienated remnants of the Thirty-second Regiment under Wang Zuo and Yuan Wencai.

CONCLUSION

In the event, even Mao's bleak November 1928 assessment of the consequences of a potential Fourth Army retreat from the Jinggangshan area had proven somewhat optimistic. In the immediate aftermath of the army's departure, local revolutionaries had suffered a near-fatal defeat, one that in proportional terms was even worse than either the August Defeat of 1928 or

the smashing of the region's initial revolutionary apparatus during the United Front's collapse in 1927.

Given that the survival of even vestigial party and military organizations had been seriously in doubt, the amount of base area territory and power actually recovered during the first half of 1929 was an impressive accomplishment. Unlike the former defeats, moreover, on this occasion, recovery depended predominantly on the activities of local revolutionaries themselves: though the Fifth Army's aid and protection was not insignificant, it was much more sporadic than that previously provided by the Fourth Army. Likewise, while communication with Mao and other Fourth Army leaders did not completely end with the army's departure, local voices undoubtedly enjoyed much more scope in base area decision making and policy formulation in the absence of the Fourth Army's powerful personalities and armed presence.

As they worked to rebuild, the local cadres who dominated the region's remaining party apparatus also sought to realign the base in ways that would facilitate its expansion and integration with neighboring bases and also conform to their own localized view of the appropriate spatial location and distribution of power. This realignment effort replicated motivations and processes that were broadly evident in many localities and levels of base-building activity throughout Jiangxi and surrounding provinces. At several places in this multi-province area, for example, scattered small bases and their associated institutions were being knit together into regional revolutionary nodes with more centralized military and political apparatuses. In the process, constellations of personal power relationships and spatial patterns of activity were altered in ways that often produced short-term tension and conflict, even as they promised long-term strategic advantages. Likewise, revolutionaries in the newly emerging regional bases—encouraged by Mao and his associates in the peripatetic Fourth Army—consciously gave priority to expansion out of the mountainous hinterlands to which most bases had hitherto been confined and toward the potentially greater resources and opportunities available in strategically situated lowland core areas such as those around Ji'an and Ganzhou.

If the developments in the Jinggangshan region therefore resonated with similar processes of base expansion and centralization underway elsewhere, the evolution of the regional revolutionary movement also traced an individual trajectory that reflected local circumstances. After the Fourth Army left, the "founding cadres"—the loosely knit group of local, predominantly early settler leaders who had built up the region's first revolutionary organizations—reemerged as dominant local figures. In the process they reacted against their uncomfortable marginalization at the hands of assertive Fourth Army leaders and the massif-based, guest people–dominated forces of Yuan Wencai and Wang Zuo. The departure of their Fourth

Army protectors, Yuan's temporary absence from the region, and the devastating impact of the enemy invasion of the massif weakened the guest people "gun," and allowed the early settler "party" to reassert its influence. In articulating a strategy for reorientation and expansion that stressed political centralization, the importance of lowland core areas, and the need for more contact with Jiangxi-centered party organs and bases, the founding cadres may have echoed ideas common to their counterparts elsewhere, but they also promoted policies that enhanced their own position against rivals within the Jinggangshan base itself.

Thus, for a time, the problems posed by broad strategic issues and internal factional concerns facing base area leaders could conveniently be addressed by identical policies and rhetorical utterances. However, this apparent conjunction between approaches to external and internal problems existed only on the surface and could not be maintained indefinitely. As external contacts multiplied and internal conflicts intensified, the attention of base area leaders likewise became increasingly fragmented, the bifurcated nature of their concerns became increasingly evident, and relations between the rival revolutionaries glaring at each other across the war-ravaged Ninggang basin from the opposing mountain redoubts of Jinggangshan and Jiulongshan gradually deteriorated from intrigue to acrimony and ultimately to deadly violence. It is on this traumatic turn of events that we now focus our attention.

NOTES

1. The strength of the Jinggangshan defenders is derived from information in a number of sources. "Xiang-Gan geming genjudi douzheng shi" bianxiezu, *Xiang-Gan geming genjudi de douzheng shi* [History of the struggle for the Hunan-Jiangxi revolutionary base area] (Nanchang: Jiangxi renmin chubanshe, 1982) (hereafter cited as *XGGDS*), gives the strength as "over one thousand"; Peng Dehuai, *Memoirs of a Chinese Marshal—The Autobiographical Notes of Peng Dehuai (1898–1974)*, tr. Zheng Longpu (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1984), 232, notes that the Fifth Army's strength was 700–800; other sources put the strength of Wang Zuo's Thirty-second Regiment at 300–500. Peng's memoirs, 234, gives figures for the strength of the enemy attack force.

2. He Changgong, *He Changgong huiyilu* [The reminiscences of He Changgong] (Beijing: Jiefangjun chubanshe, 1987), 209–10; *WZ*, 394–95.

3. *WZ*, 380–90; *JGDS*, 200–201.

4. *WZ*, 391–94; He Changgong, *He Changgong huiyilu*, 211–12.

5. *WZ*, 397–98; Peng, *Memoirs*, 234–35.

6. *WZ*, 397–99; Peng, *Memoirs*, 235.

7. *XGGDS*, 4; Zhonggong Yongxin xianwei dangshi bangongshi, *Yongxin renmin geming shi* [The revolutionary history of the people of Yongxin] (Jinggangshan: n.p., 1989), 67–68.

8. *WZ*, 400–404; *XGGDS*, 4; *JGDS*, 209.

9. This account of the activities of Wang and his band is drawn primarily from *WZ*, 400–420. For desertions of former bandit members of Wang's unit, see "Zhonggong Xiang-Gan bianjie linshi tewei xin" [A letter of the CCP's Hunan-Jiangxi Border Area Provisional Special Committee] (17 March 1929), in *JGG*, vol. 1, 288. This document is a report to the CCP's Jiangxi and Hunan provincial committees written after a Special Committee meeting on 14 March. The document also appears (under a somewhat different title) in *JGGSX*, 144–51.

10. For some examples, see He Changgong's account of the travails he witnessed as part of a group of surviving Fifth Army defenders of Huangyangjie headed by Li Can, in his *He Changgong huiyilu*, 213–21, and Peng Ru's account of hiding in the mountains with her husband Chen Zhengren and another Suichuan cadre in "Gongtong zhandou de suiyue—huiyi Chen Zhengren tongzhi" [Years of common combat—remembering comrade Chen Zhengren], *Hongqi piao piao* [The red flag fluttering] (Beijing: Zhongguo qingnian chubanshe, 1981), vol. 21, 184–85.

11. *XGGDS*, 5; *JGDS*, 212; biographies of Zhu and Liu are in Zhonggong Yongxin xianwei, *Yongxin renmin geming shi*, 252–57 and 229–34.

12. "Zhonggong Xiang-Gan bianjie linshi tewei xin," 285; *JGDS*, 212–13; *XGGDS*, 5.

13. "Zhonggong Xiang-Gan bianjie linshi tewei xin," 282–88.

14. *XGGDS*, 5.

15. *XGGDS*, 5.

16. Eventually a county party committee was reestablished, supervising six district committees and twenty-three local party branches. The red guards likewise grew to a strength of over one thousand people and eight hundred weapons, and later became the basis for the Seventh Regiment of the Xiang-Gan Red Army's Third Independent Division. Peasant associations were also reestablished at various places, and a number of secret communication points were set up in the county seat and several rural towns. *XGGDS*, 6–7.

17. By the summer of 1929 the number of party branches and party members in Lianhua had actually increased substantially over the levels reached in 1928. Red guard units began pressing out beyond the county's boundaries to affect the border areas of several surrounding counties, and the overall pressure of CCP activities had grown strong enough to force the county's GMD organization to relocate to neighboring Chaling county. *XGGDS*, 7–8.

18. He Changgong, *He Changgong huiyilu*, 213–21, provides an account of the travails of a group of surviving Fifth Army defenders of Huangyangjie of which he was a part and also mentions the withdrawal of enemy armies. For the withdrawal of the enemy troops, see also *JGDS*, 219; *XGGDS*, 9.

19. "Zhonggong Xiang-Gan bianjie tewei de baogao" [Report of the CCP's Hunan-Jiangxi Border Area Special Committee] (20 May 1929), in *JGG*, vol. 1, 307 (also see *JGGSX*, 156); *WZ*, 430–31.

20. *XGGDS*, 10; *WZ*, 427–29.

21. *WZ*, 422–26, 470; He Changgong, "Guanyu Jinggangshan douzheng de sange wenti" [Concerning three problems of the Jinggangshan struggle], in *Xinghuo liaoyuan congshu zhiyi* (*Jinggangshan douzheng zhuanji*) [A single spark starts a prairie fire collecteana, vol. 1 (A special collection on the Jinggangshan struggle)] (Beijing: Jiefangjun chubanshe, 1986), 161–63; Chen Peijun and Wu Zhixiong, "Yuan Wencai," in *Zhonggong dangshi renwu zhuan* [Biographies of personages in the history of the CCP], ed. Zhonggong dangshi renwu yanjiu hui (Xi'an: Shaanxi renmin chubanshe, 1981), vol. 2, 302–3. "Deng Qianyuan guanyu Xiang-Gan bianjie wuyue zhi bayue gongzuo dui zhongyang de baogao" [A report to Party Central by Deng Qianyuan on work in the Hunan-Jiangxi border area between May and August] (August 1929), in *JGG*, vol. 1, 341.

22. For the text of the Gutian Resolution, including the famous first section "On Correcting Mistaken Ideas in the Party," see *Mao's Road to Power: Revolutionary Writings, 1912–1949*, ed. Stuart Schram (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1995), vol. 3, 195–230.

23. The letter from the Central Committee was issued on 7 February 1929; the text is available in Zhonggong dang'an guan, *Zhonggong zhongyang wenjian xuanji* [Selected central documents of the CCP] (Beijing: Zhonggong zhongyang dangxiao chubanshe, 1990), vol. 5 (1929), 29–37. The response of Mao and other Fourth Army leaders is "A Letter from the Front Committee to the Central Committee" (5 April 1929), in *Mao's Road to Power*, ed. Schram, vol. 3, 153–61. The issues raised in this exchange are discussed in Schram's introduction to vol. 3 of *Mao's Road to Power*, xxxvii–xli.

24. There are many available accounts of the movements of the Fourth and Fifth Armies during this period. The account presented here is derived primarily from *JGDS*, 205–8, 214–18, 220–26; Peng, *Memoirs*, 235–56; and *WZ*, 438–40.

25. A major source of information about this conference is a report from the Special Committee completed ten days later: "Zhonggong Xiang-Gan bianjie tewei de baogao," 306–17 (also available in *JGGSX*, 155–66). Other sources are *JGDS*, 227–30; and *XGGDS*, 10–13. Unless otherwise noted, the following account is based on these sources.

26. In addition to sources cited in the previous note, see also Peng, *Memoirs*, 256; *Jinggangshan de wuzhuang gezhu* [The Jinggangshan military base] (Nanchang: Jiangxi renmin chubanshe, 1980), 294–95. The designation of Wang's forces as the Fifth Army's Sixth Column is mentioned in the Special Committee's 20 May report, but neither this report nor other available sources clearly indicate the precise timing or circumstances of the decision to undertake this reorganization. At the time of its original organization in northern Jiangxi, the Fifth Army had had five major subunits (first known as companies and then as columns), but three (the First, Second, and Third) had remained behind in the Xiang-E-Gan Border Area. The Fourth and Fifth columns were the main subunits in the portion of the Fifth Army that went to the Jinggangshan region; "Sixth Column" was thus the logical designation for Wang Zuo's forces when they entered the army.

27. I know of no fully published version of the 13 April Front Committee letter, nor is it certain how the letter was transmitted. The only descriptions of this letter I have seen state that the Border Area Special Committee received the letter "at the end of April," and that it was sent from Yudu county. As mid-April was the approximate time of the Yudu Enlarged Fourth Army Front Committee Meeting that ordered the Fifth Army to return to Jinggangshan, and as the Fifth Army arrived in Huang'ao in Suichuan county at the end of April and was in Ciping by 2 May, it is plausible to suggest that the letter was carried by the Fifth Army, but it may also have been sent separately. See *JGDS*, 228–29; "Zhonggong Xiang-Gan bianjie tewei baogao (di er hao)"

(Report of the CCP's Hunan-Jiangxi Border Area Special Committee (No. 2)] (dated 6 June 1929, but largely written around 15 May), in *JGG*, vol. 1, 318, 321.

28. "Zhonggong Xiang-Gan bianjie tewei baogao (di er hao)," 318–19.

29. "Zhonggong Xiang-Gan bianjie tewei baogao (di er hao)," 321–22.

30. See "Zhonggong Xiang-Gan bianjie tewei baogao (di er hao)," 321–25; "Zhonggong Xiang-Gan bianjie tewei de baogao," 312–14.

31. For a brief account of the growth of these bases, see Stephen Averill, "The Origins of the Futian Incident," in *New Perspectives on the Chinese Communist Revolution*, ed. Tony Saich and Hans van de Ven (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1995), 79–115.

32. Description of conditions in Yongxin and Ninggang is a synthesis of material in the following: "Zhonggong Xiang-Gan bianjie linshi tewei xin," 285–86; "Zhonggong Xiang-Gan bianjie tewei de baogao," 308–12; "Zhonggong Xiang-Gan bianjie tewei baogao (di er hao)," 321, 323; "Deng Qianyuan . . . baogao," 341, 343–44, and passim; *XGGDS*, 10–13.

33. "Zhonggong Xiang-Gan bianjie tewei de baogao," 312.

34. "Zhonggong Xiang-Gan bianjie tewei baogao (di er hao)," 323; *JGDS*, 230; *XGGDS*, 12; Peng, *Memoirs*, 257.

35. The Fifth Army's southern raid marked only the second time that Wang Zuo—and very likely most of his followers as well—had ever left the Jinggangshan region (the first time had been on the Fourth Army's campaign in southern Hunan in March 1928). *WZ*, 444–47; Peng, *Memoirs*, 257–58, 275; *JGDS*, 230–33.

36. "Zhonggong Xiang-Gan bianjie tewei baogao (di er hao)," 323–24; "Deng Qianyuan . . . baogao," 335–36; *XGGDS*, 12.

37. The tone of an August 1929 report by Special Committee secretary Deng Qianyuan, however, suggests that the Fifth Army leaders' explanations of their behavior were viewed skeptically. In the report, Deng prefaces his brief account of what happened with the phrase "according to how the Fifth Army [leaders] have explained themselves . . ." (*ju wujun shenbian*). Dictionary definitions of the term *shenbian* include "defend oneself," "explain oneself," and "plead one's case." All these definitions imply a process of accusation and response, and the use of the term in this context suggests that the author is reporting a claim rather than a fact. "Deng Qianyuan . . . baogao," 335.

38. The reasons Peng Dehuai listed to justify his opposition included the strength of the county seat's wall and moat, the presence of a local militia and an army garrison whose strength and condition were uncertain, and the potential of a dangerous counterattack from other garrisons located in surrounding counties. Given the fact that Red Army units—including the Fifth Army during its just-concluded Hunan-Guangdong campaign—had frequently launched successful attacks under just such circumstances in the past, these reasons sound suspiciously like ex-post-facto justifications for what turned out to be a very costly operation. See Peng, *Memoirs*, 258–61.

39. "Deng Qianyuan . . . baogao," 236–37; Peng, *Memoirs*, 261; *JGDS*, 233–34; *XGGDS*, 13–14.

40. "Deng Qianyuan . . . baogao," 337–40, 348; Peng, *Memoirs*, 261.

41. "Deng Qianyuan . . . baogao," 337–38; Peng, *Memoirs*, 262–63; *JGDS*, 235–36.

11

Crisis and Rupture

During the latter half of 1929 and throughout 1930, the by-now-familiar roller-coaster oscillation of circumstances and opportunities continued both in the core of the Jinggangshan base and in the increasingly connected adjacent areas in and near the Gan River valley to the east. Initially, the departure of the Fifth Army from Jinggangshan in August 1929 caused no unfortunate repercussions. Beginning about the same time, the entire province of Jiangxi experienced a brief period of political and military confusion, as the regime of Zhu Peide and its garrison forces were ousted and replaced by a new administration headed by General Lu Diping and backed by his Hunanese troops. This changeover, together with the withdrawal of the enemy units that had come to destroy the Fifth Army, gave the Jinggangshan revolutionaries a respite which they used to regain much territory they had lost over the preceding eight months and even to expand slightly into some new areas on the fringes of the base area's old boundaries.

Meanwhile, a fierce back-and-forth battle for control of Ji'an city and surrounding areas of the central Gan valley was underway between revolutionary forces from expanding bases on both sides of the valley and the combined forces of Jiangxi's new Hunanese garrison and the swarms of elite-led militias that grew up amid the area's growing social unrest. The Hunanese troops proved to be aggressive and effective "bandit suppressors," and in alliance with the militias for a time seriously disrupted revolutionary operations in parts of western and central Jiangxi. Despite these setbacks, revolutionaries gradually closed in on Ji'an until the city was under loose siege.[1]

These developments affected the Jinggangshan region, which as previously noted was becoming increasingly connected to the expanding Jiangxi bases. At the same time, however, the regional revolutionary resurgence was

accompanied by a dangerously deepening rift in the already-tense relations between the guest people military forces of the massif and the predominantly early settler county and regional party organs concentrated in the northern and western portions of the newly reoriented base area. Though the two competing power centers maintained at least the pretense of mutual cooperation throughout the fall of 1929, in early 1930 the volatile atmosphere finally exploded into deadly violence which sundered the last tenuous ties between the two groups and completed the transformation of the massif and its population from a dominant center of regional revolution into an isolated, bitterly hostile enclave of opposition to it.

By the summer of 1930, even such traumatic transformations shrank into insignificance in the face of the stunning new possibilities for revolutionary expansion that seemed to be opening up not just in the central Jiangxi region adjacent to Jinggangshan, but throughout the major cities and dense populations of the entire central Yangzi valley. Within a few months, however, momentum had shifted back once again: Red Army attacks on Nanchang and Changsha were bloodily repulsed and the CCP's national leadership was repudiated and replaced, large enemy armies launched a dangerous counterattack against the growing central Jiangxi bases, and the paranoid fears and factional rivalries of Mao and other Jiangxi party leaders combined to fuel the flames of an intense, violent, and destructive campaign to "suppress counterrevolutionaries" that in 1931 came close to crippling the revolutionary movement everywhere in the province, including the Jinggangshan region.[2]

THE RECOVERY AND EXPANSION OF THE BASE AREA

Statistics from an August 1929 report by Deng Qianyuan show that at roughly the time the Fifth Army left for Xiang-E-Gan in August 1929, the Communists fully controlled roughly forty percent of Yongxin, fifty percent of Lianhua, and twenty percent of Ninggang counties. From the descriptions contained in this and other reports of the period, it is clear that the bulk of the territory referred to in these figures was a largely contiguous swath of land astride the border region where these three counties met and where the revolutionary stronghold of Jiulongshan was located.

These reports show that by this time the reorientation of the base away from Jinggangshan and its environs was well established. Reports from 1928 had almost always indicated that the territory most thoroughly under revolutionary control was Ninggang and the Jinggangshan massif, and they had also often reported substantial Communist influence in Suichuan county south of the massif. Lianhua, by contrast, had then been a contested, peripheral part of the shifting base area. Now Suichuan was almost completely outside the sphere of Communist influence, as was all but a small portion of

Ninggang, and the geographical center of the base had shifted substantially to the northwest.

Information on party and military work provides further confirmation of this reorientation of the base. For example, Deng noted that of the total of 5000 or so party members in the base area, Yongxin county alone had around 4000, while Lianhua had another 500 or so. By contrast, Ninggang had 300 or so—a third of whom were listed as "hooligans" (*liumang*)—and Suichuan only thirty-odd; membership in other counties varied between ten and seventy.

The distribution of the 500-odd rifles in local red guard units was nearly as skewed: about 200 were in the hands of Yongxin red guards, 110 or so in Lianhua, 30 in Chaling, and 20 in Lingxian. Another 100 rifles that the Fifth Army had handed over to the Special Committee were in the process of being passed out to form new red guards—also in Yongxin, Lianhua, and Chaling. No rifles were listed for Suichuan and only 63 for Ninggang; these were held by a small detachment left behind by the Fifth Army and now controlled by Ninggang party cadres. Even adding in the 150 to 160 rifles held by the combined Jinggangshan forces of Yuan Wencai and Wang Zuo (which Deng enumerated separately), well over 400 out of a total of 700 or so rifles available were located in the areas which comprised the base area's realigned core.[3]

With only militia forces left to oppose them after enemy army units withdrew to Ji'an in August, regional CCP forces based in these core areas were able significantly to expand the territory under their control. First, large combined red guard units seized the Lianhua and Ninggang county seats and with their capture brought under Communist control virtually all of the territory in these two counties. Then they massed even larger forces to attack the Yongxin militia, which with over four hundred rifles was the strongest opposition remaining in the region. On 6 October they defeated a large segment of this militia force near the county seat, and on 30 October they took the city itself. With the exception of the southeastern portion of the county around Nashan, which was still stubbornly occupied by strong and experienced elite militia forces, all of Yongxin was now in CCP hands.

After a brief counterattack in November by Hunanese and Jiangxi troops was aborted when tension between Jiang Jieshi and the Guangxi warlords caused the enemy troops to be transferred south, base area leaders were able to consolidate recent gains and expand further in the direction of Ji'an. In line with its members' expressed desire to move high party organs down from the mountaintops, the Border Area Special Committee relocated from Jiulongshan to the Yongxin county seat. Meanwhile, Yongxin red guards and party organizers began to push northeast into Anfu county and east into western Ji'an county, where Communist activity was already quite widespread.[4]

"Storm Ji'an"

By the end of 1929, the Jinggangshan base was in reasonably frequent contact with the bases and party organs growing up elsewhere in western and central Jiangxi.[5] These contacts increased the already apparent trend toward increased interaction with higher-level Jiangxi party organizations such as (on a regional level) the West Jiangxi Special Committee and above that, the Jiangxi Provincial Committee. Though this contact led to more extensive cooperation in some respects between Jinggangshan region revolutionaries and their counterparts elsewhere, it also provided opportunities for friction and conflict that had not existed when cadres from different areas had operated in greater isolation from one another.[6]

The activities of the West Jiangxi Special Committee were centered on Ji'an city, and its jurisdiction included all of the several base areas that had grown up on both sides of the Gan valley, including Jinggangshan, Donggu, and a smaller base around Yanfu in northwestern Ji'an county. Together these three base areas formed an irregular triangle, with the city of Ji'an located in its center. Throughout 1928 and well into 1929, expansion by these bases had rendered the government-controlled area around the city smaller and less secure and increasingly threatened the vital Gan River communications line. Faced with this growing threat, the Hunanese forces of Lu Diping made the defense of Ji'an and the Gan River line a high priority when they arrived in the region late in the summer of 1929. More numerous and energetic than their predecessors, the Hunanese army units assigned to Ji'an engaged in a series of aggressive military operations during the fall/winter of 1929–1930 that were designed both to push the encroaching Communist areas back away from Ji'an and to ravage the interior of the bases and degrade their infrastructure and popular support.

Providing valuable support to the regular military units were numerous militias and quasi-popular associations formed and led by threatened and angry local elites, many of whom had come to Ji'an after having been forced from their homes by the rural unrest. Ji'an and the dwindling number of other county seats and large market towns in the region still free from Communist control were rallying points and places of refuge, not only for elites but also for expatriate militias from places enveloped by the expanding "red areas" and for large numbers of peasants, vagrants, and peddlers whose ordinary livelihoods had been disrupted by marauding soldiers and the socioeconomic upheavals of the revolution. Likewise, peasants in villages just outside the bases were often as fearful of the fighting and destruction that inevitably accompanied base area expansion as they were hopeful of the uncertain benefits that might accrue to them from incorporation into the revolutionary struggle. Recruiting and proselytizing among such refugees and frightened peasant populations, elites formed numerous irregular armed

units that were familiar with local conditions and motivated enough to be able to fight many of the Communist-led paramilitary units on equal terms.

Adding further dimensions to the counterrevolutionary struggle were the regional activities of several elite-dominated non-Communist political organizations. Notable among these were the Reorganization Clique (Gaizupai), the AB Corps (AB tuan), and the Third Party (Disan dang) The Reorganization Clique and the AB Corps were subgroups within the large, loosely-bound bundle of factional alliances known as the Guomindang (GMD); the Reorganization Clique comprised the followers of Wang Jingwei, while the AB Corps was one of a number of groups whose followers were quite closely identified with Chiang Kai-shek. The Third Party, led by Deng Yanda, was one of the largest and most influential of the numerous "third parties" that sought to provide political alternatives to both the Guomindang and the Communist Party; many Third Party members were themselves former left-wing GMD or CCP members.

Most members of these groups were modern-educated local elites, and all three groups to varying extents competed with one another for power in many parts of Jiangxi, including the multi-county region around Ji'an. At the same time, however, all correctly recognized that the CCP was an even more threatening opponent than their factional rivals, not only because revolutionary programs were radical and sought to expropriate the wealthy but also because the regional Communists were competing for the allegiance of the youthful, well-educated, and politically aware elites who comprised their own primary constituency.

While not putting their mutual rivalries completely aside, therefore, non-Communist political party members nonetheless energetically joined with local militia leaders, other emigre elites, and garrison commanders to try to roll back the revolution. In uncoordinated but collectively substantial campaigns involving a variety of activities—regular army sweeps; militia raids; propaganda, agitation, and mass mobilization; and subversion, sabotage, and rumor-mongering—counterrevolutionary forces moved against the base areas surrounding Ji'an. Beginning in early autumn 1929 with determined efforts to root out the vestigial CCP and CYL organizations still left inside the city itself, the suppression campaigns moved on over a several-month period to focus particular attention first on soviet areas north and west of the city and then on those in the mountains east of the river.

In the face of these assaults, revolutionary forces continued with their programs and policies as best they could. Party leaders at both regional and higher levels were anxious to keep the initiative and capitalize on the momentum that they had enjoyed during the summer of 1929. As one expression of this anxiety, in late October two provincial committee special emissaries came to Ji'an bearing a circular from Party Central which urged intensified efforts to expand the Red Army and the base areas and called for

the issuance of "central struggle slogans" (*zhongxin douzheng kouhao*) to encourage popular mobilization. After some discussion, the West Jiangxi Special Committee decided to use "storm Ji'an" (*gongqu Ji'an*, sometimes alternatively rendered *gongda* ["attack"] *Ji'an*) as the region's struggle slogan.

Even though by this time Communist-dominated areas at some points reached almost to the outskirts of Ji'an, the task of actually seizing the city itself was a difficult and dangerous one, especially given the aggressive counterrevolutionary efforts then beginning under the aegis of the newly arrived Hunanese forces. Almost immediately the task became more complicated when enemy agents closed in on the sketchy underground party organization (including some members of the West Jiangxi Special Committee) that remained in the city. The enemy pressure first forced the Special Committee to move to the nearby market town of Pitou and then succeeded in uncovering most of the remainder of the party organs in the city. The exposure of the urban party apparatus also precipitated a large-scale mutiny by a regional militia leader named Luo Binghui, who had been developing close ties with the revolutionary movement and now feared that these links would be discovered. He therefore led more than one hundred of his soldiers off to join the Red Army in the Donggu area, where his force was designated the Fifth Independent Regiment.

Useful as it was to obtain reinforcements for the Red Army, the premature exposure and flight of Luo and his troops deprived the revolutionaries of the potentially even more helpful role they might have been able to play as a secretly subversive force within the Ji'an garrison. Even more damaging in the short run were the deaths of dozens of irreplaceable administrative cadres, the unraveling of laboriously constructed secret communications networks, and the compromising of plans and procedures that occurred as a result of the exposure and destruction of the party apparatus in the city.

These losses for a time seriously disrupted the planning, liaison, and coordination work needed before thousands of people from local peasant "armies," guerrilla units, and regular Red Army forces could be gathered from rural areas as far away as the Jinggangshan region and moved into position for the planned "storming" of Ji'an. With these units originating in numerous locally chauvinistic party and army jurisdictions, most of which were themselves under threat of subversion, harassment, or outright invasion by counterrevolutionary forces, it was essential to have an authoritative regional command and control apparatus.

Recognizing the need for a denser infrastructure, the West Jiangxi Special Committee had some time earlier divided its jurisdictional area into five subregions designated the north, east, south, west, and central "routes" (*lu*). Party work in each route was assigned to a new committee reporting directly to the Special Committee. In addition, after deciding to "storm Ji'an," the Special Committee had also established a number of "action committees" (*xingdong weiyuanhui*) and military headquarters to coordinate the attack. The destruction of the city party organs and the effects of the mounting enemy counteroffensives against the bases hampered the work of all of these agencies.

The campaign to attack Ji'an was also hindered by growing internal tensions brought about by the interacting effects of deepening and intensifying the revolutionary movement itself. Particularly salient among these effects were those brought on by programs for socioeconomic change and by efforts to incorporate and "regularize" the leaderships of the multitudinous local party organizations that had grown up in southwestern Jiangxi. As noted in reference to the Jinggangshan region, the transition from reforms involving familiar rural repertoires such as rent- and tax-resistance to more radical changes such as land redistribution was complex, uncertain, and inherently conflictual. In late 1929 and 1930, as expanding base areas and pressure from higher-level party organs encouraged the implementation of such radical changes throughout southwestern Jiangxi, rural populations became enmeshed in a web of similarly contentious issues.

At the same time, the changing political and military situation was putting a variety of centralizing pressures on local revolutionaries. As formerly isolated party organs and guerrilla units expanded their operations and came into increased contact with one another, as main-force military units such as the Fourth and Fifth Red Armies sought to develop closer ties with local bases on whose resources they depended for recruits and provisions, and as national party leaders began to stress the need for mobilization to attack major cities, demands for more unified control over and integration of these disparate local components became more evident and compelling.

The pressures from suppression efforts, socioeconomic unrest, and higher-level demands for integration converged with particular force on the leaderships of party subregions and local bases. Most leading cadres in southwestern Jiangxi were educated young intellectuals from local elite backgrounds—many of them the original revolutionary organizers in their respective areas—who had drawn on their local ties and resources to maintain vestigial party organs through the "White Terror" of 1927 and thereafter had battled against heavy odds to build local spheres of influence. In the process, they had often allied with sworn brotherhoods and bandits and had made difficult decisions about how far to press with reforms that expropriated their own families' properties or threatened to erode volatile local popular support. When building coalitions with gangs and other power holders and adapting the party's generalized and changeable policies to their own specific realities, base area cadres had inevitably and frequently argued and compromised.

Now, top-down pressures to radicalize reforms and centralize administration further threatened their fragile institutional arrangements and

contested personal power just as outside counterrevolutionary campaigns against their local bases were intensifying. Both the salience of individual issues and the manner in which specific local leaderships dealt with these pressures naturally varied somewhat from place to place, but the general short-term result was to deepen rather than to ameliorate the divisiveness and localistic defensiveness that already hindered efforts to knit the scattered southwestern Jiangxi party branches and guerrilla units into a unified and effective network.

In the face of all of these difficulties, the initial high expectations of success for this early plan to seize a strategically important urban center proved to be overoptimistic. A first (unsuccessful) assault on Ji'an was not launched until January 1930, and it would not be until after seven more failed attempts spaced over many months that the city would finally fall briefly into Communist hands in October 1930.

The Return of the Fifth Army and the Formation of the Sixth Army

As the Jinggangshan base expanded toward the Gan valley in the fall of 1929, and as the West Jiangxi Special Committee simultaneously reached into the hinterlands of central and western Jiangxi to mobilize "militarized masses" for the attack on Ji'an, connections between base area leaders and the regional party hierarchy deepened. When part of the Fifth Army also returned to operate in the region in late autumn, it likewise became involved in the processes of militarization and political integration that were gradually transforming the scattered nodes of Communist activity into a widely ramified and increasingly well-articulated interregional network of bases.

When Peng Dehuai's Fifth Army had reached the Xiang-E-Gan region after leaving Jinggangshan in August, it had reunited with the smaller portion of the army that had remained behind in the three-province border area when Peng's force had originally gone to Jinggangshan the previous year. The combined army (numbering around 3000) now consisted of five "columns" (*zongdui*) of regular infantry, plus special work (*tewu*) and cadre-training companies assigned to the headquarters. Peng Dehuai commanded the reorganized army, while the Xiang-E-Gan military cadre Huang Gonglüe became deputy commander.

To take advantage of the opportunities for expansion afforded by nearly continuous conflicts among various enemy factions, the five columns of the Fifth Army soon dispersed to operate semi-independently across a broad band of territory stretching from southern Hubei along both sides of the Hunan-Jiangxi border to the Jinggangshan base. In early October the Fourth Column left to begin operations in Lianhua county in the Jinggangshan region, though it appears to have taken no part in the local red guard actions of that month that secured revolutionary control over neighboring Yongxin.[7]

In November, word of a possible renewed enemy offensive against Yongxin reached Peng's headquarters. Peng, Huang Gonglüe and several others led a major part of the army back to the Jinggangshan region, where in late November they joined the Fourth Column. Moving rapidly eastward through what was now largely Communist-controlled territory in western Ji'an county, the Fifth Army units surprised and bloodied an unwary enemy force just a few kilometers from Ji'an city and thus aborted the enemy offensive.

For the next three months, Peng and this portion of the Fifth Army campaigned tirelessly across an area of fifteen to twenty counties in western Jiangxi and eastern Hunan during a period of rapid expansion in the revolutionary movement. Operating sometimes as a single unified force and sometimes as a number of separate individual elements, the Fifth Army troops attacked militias and county seats, proselytized among peasants, and served as a leavening of experienced troops among the thousands of ill-armed and volatile peasant levies who were mobilized for the attacks on Ji'an.

As one of the army's earliest activities during this period, its party leaders met in late November or early December 1929 with members of the West Jiangxi Special Committee and the Hunan-Jiangxi Border Area Special Committee in a joint conference aimed at developing more effective cooperation among the revolutionary forces operating west of the Gan River before the imminent first attack on Ji'an. The conference tentatively decided on several steps toward this end, including merging the Hunan-Jiangxi Border Area Special Committee into the West Jiangxi Special Committee, establishing a provisional soviet government for West Jiangxi, and organizing a new army.

The planned merger of the two committees and establishment of a provisional soviet government soon stalled after they became objects of contention in intra-party factional and policy disputes, but the new Sixth Red Army was formally promulgated in January 1930, consisting of an amalgamation of Luo Binghui's recently formed Fifth Regiment, several other regiments formed earlier from what had originally been guerrillas in the Donggu and Yanfu base areas, and a substantial body of red guards from Yongxin, Ninggang, and Chaling counties in the Jinggangshan base. It appears to have taken several weeks to bring all of these forces together, especially the Jinggangshan red guards. The Fifth Army helped bind the new army together by transferring to it more than one hundred experienced soldiers from its cadre training company and a number of experienced officers, including Huang Gonglüe, who became the new unit's commander.[8]

Intra-Party Disputes and Conferences

The rapid growth of the base areas in western Jiangxi had produced some disagreement in the party over how to expand. One of a group of cadres who attacked the West Jiangxi Special Committee leaders was an inspector

from the provincial party committee named Jiang Hanbo. Among other things, Jiang and those associated with him considered that the expansion of military activities should not be given special emphasis as one of three basic activities for base building because it was already included by implication in the other two activities mentioned, namely expanding the soviets and deepening the land revolution. They also felt that the West Jiangxi Provisional Soviet Government had been established too precipitously and should be abolished, that land should not be distributed per capita but on the basis of labor power, and that the amalgamation of the Hunan-Jiangxi Border Area Special Committee into the West Jiangxi Special Committee and the formation of the Red Sixth Army should not have occurred because they had not been authorized by central party authorities.[9]

The arguments of Jiang and his followers were part of a broader pattern of confrontation and dissension that existed among the base area leadership from the autumn of 1929 on. In these disputes, which reflected national political conflicts associated with the so-called "Li Lisan Line" as well as local issues, no single group was initially able to gain a clear victory. The result was a protracted stalemate which led to a near paralysis of land reform in many places and obstacles to regional coordination and cooperation that made it difficult to mount effective large-scale military or other operations.[10]

Eventually local leaders met together with outside cadres of the Red Fifth and Fourth Armies to try to resolve this crisis. As noted, Peng Dehuai and a large portion of the Fifth Army had begun to operate in the region again in late 1929. In January 1930, the Fourth Army also returned from West Fujian to the northern part of the Donggu base area. When West Jiangxi Special Committee members heard this news, they asked Fourth Army leaders to send representatives to help them resolve their disagreements. From 6 to 9 February 1930, forty-odd representatives of the Fourth Army's Front Committee, the party committees of the Fifth and Sixth Armies, the West Jiangxi and Hunan-Jiangxi Border Area Special Committees, and various subunits met in joint conference at Pitou in Ji'an.

The Pitou Conference (also known as the 7 February Conference) was able, after intense argument, to settle on policies to deal with many of the various outstanding issues. One major undertaking of the conference was administrative consolidation and reorganization, including the establishment of an enlarged umbrella organization known as the General Front Committee that had representatives from both army and non-army party organs from as far away as western Fujian, a new regional party organ called the Southwest Jiangxi Special Committee formed by merging three separate special committees (including the Hunan-Jiangxi Border Area Special Committee), and a regional soviet government. In addition, the conference also decided to use the principle of equal per capita distribution in an accelerated program of regional land reform and to intensify efforts to expand the Red Army. On most

if not all of these issues, policies favored by Mao Zedong and his associates won out over those espoused by regional leaders such as Jiang Hanbo.

The Southwest Jiangxi Special Committee and the West Jiangxi Soviet Government were formally established at congresses in March. In recognition of the broad territory and difficult communications faced by the new party committee, the party congress decided to continue and expand the practice of dividing the region into subdivisions known as "routes" (*lu*), each with its own party subcommittee (later renamed "action committees" [*xingdong weiyuanhui*]). The Jinggangshan region was assigned to the West Route, and several of its representatives to the party congress were elected to the Special Committee, including Wang Huai (who was also on the standing committee), Long Chaoqing, and Tan Sicong. Wang Huai was also chosen to be a member of the Mao-dominated General Front Committee, as was Pan Xingyuan (a.k.a. Peng Qingquan), an inspector from Party Central who had been observing work in Jinggangshan for some time.[11]

These conferences temporarily dampened the main factional conflicts within the regional party and this, together with the administrative consolidation and other measures adopted, energized further rapid growth of the revolutionary movement throughout southwestern Jiangxi. In addition to successive assaults on Ji'an that continued at intervals of a month or so throughout the spring and summer, a new and much more frenetic wave of land redistribution washed through the region, and numerous new red guard units emerged, gained a little experience, and moved up the militarization ladder as they were amalgamated into newly formed Red Army units.[12]

Party cadres and military units from the Jinggangshan region, especially those from Yongxin and Lianhua, took full part in these activities. Virtually all of Yongxin underwent widespread, rapid land redistribution during this period, for example, and the former Yongxin-Lianhua-Ninggang red guards who made up the bulk of the Third Column of the Red Sixth Army (which after March 1930 was redesignated the Third Army) took part in a number of the attacks on Ji'an and other campaigns in which the army was involved on both sides of the Gan River valley. The Jinggangshan region revolutionary movement had truly emerged from its isolation and become closely integrated into the larger web of interconnected bases and party organs which were now bidding for domination over the entire southern half of Jiangxi province.[13]

Polarization in the Base Area

Not all of the attention of Jinggangshan party leaders, however, could be devoted to looking outward. As the base area was becoming much more deeply involved in the activities of revolutionary organizations operating in a far larger geographical arena, affairs within the base itself were becoming dangerously polarized as the shift in its orientation and center of gravity led

to the deepening marginalization and alienation of the surviving revolutionaries in the Ninggang/Jinggangshan area. As had long been the case, the state of relations between the massif leaders Yuan Wencai and Wang Zuo on the one hand and their powerful rivals elsewhere on the other was a crucial, emblematic issue through which were expressed a variety of socioeconomic, political, and cultural tensions prevalent in the region.

Although Yuan and Wang had been shaken by Yuan's discovery of the Sixth Congress resolution on "the bandit question," the immediate crisis had been resolved on terms which kept the two massif power holders involved in the revolutionary movement. The Border Area Special Committee's report of 17 March 1929, though lamenting the large number of desertions by former bandits and other problems within Wang Zuo's force, nonetheless noted of the unit's commander that "Wang still displays confidence (*xinfu*) in us, and also resolve toward the revolution; our relations with him are still the same as before."[14]

By the end of August, however, relations had deteriorated badly. By that time, Yuan Wencai, who had not been mentioned at all in the March report, had regained control of his former followers within the old Thirty-second Regiment and had reemerged to join Wang as a major actor on the political and military scene. Increasingly, however, the suspicious aloofness of the two men, their stubbornly maintained independence of action, and their influence over the militarized, volatile, and unreliable guest people community of the massif region had come to be seen by party leaders as hindrances to the development of the base.[15]

For the regional party leadership, in fact, Yuan and Wang and the forces under their control were by this time in many respects no longer even part of the revolutionary movement. In his report on the summer's work in the base area, for example, Deng Qianyuan relegated discussion of the Yuan-Wang forces to separate sections on "bandits" (*tufei*), and his comments emphasized the degree to which Yuan, Wang, and their forces were cut off from and unresponsive to the base area party leadership. After a full discussion of various red guard units "under Communist Party leadership, and which are at the disposal of the Special Committee," Deng's separate section on "[units] led by local bandits" noted that because Wang's and Yuan's troops were all their "old blood brothers" (*lao dixiong*), "we can't get a foot in the door" with them. Elsewhere he called "bandits" "the number-one force able to harm the Border Area," adding that "Yuan and Wang now doubt us in all respects; Yuan is only looking for an excuse [*xiangzheng*, literally a "symbol" or "token"] to abandon us, while Wang is under Yuan's influence and his relations with us deteriorate daily."[16]

For their part, Deng and the other regional party leaders were themselves also contemplating strong action to deal with the "bandit problem," including the possibility of carrying out the Sixth Congress injunction to kill their leaders and break up their units. Unfortunately, Deng acknowledged in his report, the number of bandit leaders and the advantageous terrain they inhabited made it impossible to exterminate them all simultaneously, and the survivors would inevitably become bitter enemies whose activities in the heart of the base would seriously undermine ability to resist further enemy attacks. Able to come up with no more suitable alternative for the moment, the base area leaders had to be satisfied with maintaining the tenuous relations that still existed between the two camps while they waited for a better solution to present itself.[17]

How and why had relations deteriorated to such an extent? Although neither contemporary documents nor later reminiscences contain an explicit account of the process, the information already provided at various points in this study suffices to construct at least a general outline of the factors involved. The acute flare-up of the long-simmering early settler–guest people conflict during and after the 1928 August Defeat, the ostentatious domination of local military affairs by the forces of Yuan and Wang at a time when the importance of the "guest people gun" seemed to outweigh that of the "early settler party," the untimely appearance of the Sixth Congress resolution on bandits, the absence of any outside mediating force following the departure of the Fourth Army, the conscious assertion of political authority by local cadres after their relative marginalization during the Fourth Army's stay, the need to shift policies and geographical focus to advance the revolutionary struggle to a new and more sophisticated stage—all of these intertwined situational and structural factors contributed in varying degrees to the polarization in the revolutionary ranks.

So also did personality traits, personal animosities, and a well-remembered cumulative history of specific individual events involving Yuan and Wang. Despite their different personalities, both Yuan and Wang had a shared capacity for exasperating their rivals. Yuan was intelligent and relatively sophisticated, but he was also ambitious, sly, and extremely manipulative. Wang was simple and plain-spoken, but he was also a person of limited perspective, violent temper, and casual cruelty. From their treachery-filled experience as bandits and local power holders, both men had learned the value of what to people of other backgrounds appeared to be obsessive suspiciousness of outsiders, though once they gave their trust and friendship—as Wang did, for example, to He Changgong—they were extremely loyal and protective comrades.

If their friendships were deep, so were their enmities. Over the years, Yuan and Wang had developed bitter and enduring mutual grudges with various rival power holders both inside and outside of the revolutionary movement. Wang's extended feuds with the local elite militia leaders Yin Daoyi and Xiao Jiabi have been mentioned frequently in the pages above, as (more to the immediate point here) have the animosities between Yuan Wencai and

CCP cadres such as Long Chaoqing and Wang Huai, the latter of which also gradually expanded to include Yuan's client Wang Zuo.

Over time, these personal animosities became interwoven with larger issues and reinforced by a series of specific incidents. Party cadres fearful that the ex-bandit leaders' uncooperative independence presaged mutiny and abandonment of the revolutionary cause, for example, pointed to Yuan Wencai's 1927 dalliance with the Peace Committee of Ninggang elites, his desertion from his post in the Fourth Army in early 1929, and to the reluctance of both Yuan and Wang to share any of their weapons with military forces not under their own control. Those upset by the deepening ethnic conflict mentioned the partisan involvement of Yuan and Wang in the rivalries in 1928 over the ethnic background of the Ninggang soviet government leadership, the fact that six of the eight exemplary *tuhao lieshen* singled out for attack during this period were early settlers, and that Yuan's forces had burned to the ground several of Ninggang's most well-known early settler educational academies. And those concerned with expanding and deepening the revolution's socioeconomic policies were upset by Wang Zuo's reluctance to give up the land and wealth that he had acquired in the course of his bandit career; by the prevalence of localism, opium, gambling addiction, and secret society/sworn brotherhood ties in both Yuan's and Wang's forces; and by a variety of other issues, such as both men's involvement in messy romantic relationships and the opium addiction of Wang's brother.[18]

Given the combined weight of these circumstances, it is easy to see how by late 1929 regional party leaders could have become thoroughly exasperated and alarmed by the behavior of Yuan, Wang, and the interests they seemed to represent. By the same token, as the personal animus toward them became more evident and as the concerns of themselves and their constituencies appeared to be increasingly slighted by a regional leadership whose gaze focused on a world much wider than the Jinggangshan massif, it was understandable that Yuan and Wang should respond with an intensified suspicion and parochialism that only deepened their enemies' hostility.

The Wan Xixian and Luo Keshao Affairs

Between November 1929 and January 1930, the shock waves emanating from the capture and subsequent diverse treatment of two well-known personages in the Jinggangshan region brought the growing crisis between the massif leaders and the regional party leadership to a head. The first event involved the arrest and execution by regional party leaders of a high-level party cadre named Wan Xixian; the second involved the capture and subsequent survival in Yuan Wencai's protective custody of a prominent Chaling county militia leader named Luo Keshao.

Wan Xixian was a Hubei native who had joined the CCP while at the Whampoa Academy and participated in the Autumn Harvest Uprising before arriving in the Jinggangshan region as an officer in the Fourth Army. A member of the Border Area Special Committee's standing committee in 1928, Wan had stayed to work in the base when the Fourth Army left in January 1929, and had helped to revive and reorganize the special committee after the base was overrun.

While working in the base area, Wan had become friendly with Yuan Wencai and Wang Zuo. However, his relations with some other high-level cadres, especially those from Yongxin county, were quite cool, due largely to Wan's involvement in two unhappy events that had occurred in the county during and after the August Defeat of 1928. The first of these was the death of Long Jiaheng, a local women's activist married to the prominent Yongxin cadre Liu Zhen. Unfortunately, Long was also the sister of a notorious elite militia leader named Long Qinglou, who was then ravaging revolutionary organizations in rural Yongxin. Suspicion that Long Jiaheng was spying for her brother led to her arrest by troops under Wan Xixian's command, and two days later she died in captivity under uncertain but suspicious circumstances. In early November 1928, Wan was again involved in the death of Yongxin revolutionaries when he conducted the "party cleansing" (*xidang*) purge of the county party. Wan carried out his job thoroughly and ruthlessly, and in the process, a substantial number of cadres were executed, some of them apparently inappropriately.

These events had occurred during the August Defeat and its aftermath, a crisis period when there had indeed been a great deal of treachery and a large number of turncoats whose actions had cost the revolutionary movement dearly. In that context Wan's activities might have been necessary, and actions like them were certainly far from uncommon around the base area. But among members of the Yongxin party organs that had been directly affected, Wan was seen as a brutal killer with a special mistrust of Yongxin people.

In the autumn of 1929, this reputation came back to haunt Wan. In July, regional party leaders had sent Liu Zhen from Yongxin to report to the Jiangxi provincial committee. While leaving Nanchang the following month, Liu was freakishly spotted by his former brother-in-law, the militia leader Long Qinglou, and was promptly arrested and executed. His death revived memories of Wan's role in the death of Liu's wife, so that when Wan responded tardily to a request to come from Chaling (where he was then working) to participate in the attack on the Yongxin county seat in late October, Wang Huai and other county party leaders sent red guards after him. Wan tried to flee to Yuan Wencai and Wang Zuo, but was eventually captured and killed. News of his death alarmed and angered Yuan and Wang,

who doubtless saw in it not only the removal of one of their few remaining high-level supporters but also a worrisome sign of the willingness of their opponents to use force to deal with those who stood against them.[19]

If the killing of Wan Xixian profoundly disturbed Yuan and Wang, however, the case of Luo Keshao had at least as much effect on regional party leaders worried about the loyalty and reliability of the two ex-bandits. Luo was an elite member of a prominent guest people lineage from Chaling county, and a person with whom Yuan Wencai had close contact in pre-revolutionary days when both were involved in fund-raising for the guest people's Longjiang Academy. By 1929, however, Luo had become a major regional anti-Communist militia leader based in the Chaling market town of Jiangkou, where he also managed a small arms manufacturing and repair facility.

After undertaking several unsuccessful efforts during the fall of 1929 to persuade Luo to come over to the revolution and bring his arms facility with him to Ninggang, Yuan Wencai finally decided to mount a raid on Luo's force should the opportunity present itself. In early February 1930, news finally came that an unsuspecting and largely unprotected Luo was presently in residence at his paramour's house in a hamlet near Jiangkou. On 11 February, Yuan and Wang led their combined forces from Ninggang to attack him. After dividing into three groups and traveling by night over separate paths, they attacked at daybreak and seized Luo, the arsenal equipment, and about half of its workers. Soldiers carried the equipment back to the Ninggang county seat, but the arsenal workers came along willingly, without being tied up.

Once back in Xincheng, Yuan unbound Luo, gave him food and drink, and then talked with him while the two played mahjong. This behavior made county party secretary Xie Xi'an and other cadres very dissatisfied, for they wanted to make a public spectacle of killing Luo because of his anti-Communist militia record. Yuan explained to them and to his mystified soldiers that it was necessary to keep Luo alive because of his ability to obtain necessary supplies of steel and gunpowder for gun-making from Changsha. After a few days, Yuan and Wang took Luo back to Yuan's base in Maoping, where he was kept under a loose form of house arrest. Yuan ignored further protests from Long Chaoqing, Wang Huai, and the rest of the cadres on the West Route Action Committee after Xie Xi'an informed them of events.[20]

The Final Showdown with Yuan and Wang

It is unclear just what Yuan Wencai and Wang Zuo sought to achieve through their capture of Luo Keshao. Given the overtures that had been made to Luo during the fall of 1929 and his solicitous post-capture treatment in the midst of a brutal civil war during which prisoners of this sort were routinely and often gruesomely executed, it is obvious that an effort was being made to win Luo's cooperation, but for what purpose is unknown. In light of the increasing military and political isolation of the two massif leaders and of the ominous precedent of Wan Xixian's killing, it is plausible to assume that Yuan and Wang were seeking an alliance with Luo to give them a base of support strong enough to forestall any military moves against them by the base area party leaders. The fact that Luo was an old acquaintance of Yuan's and was also of guest people origin provided a possible basis for alliance.

The base area leaders, however, took the analysis one step farther to conclude that Yuan and Wang were colluding with an acknowledged counter-revolutionary militia leader in preparation for openly turning against the revolution. In addition, for the early settler cadres from Yongxin, Lianhua, and Ninggang who dominated the regional party leadership, the possibility of an agreement among three powerful guest people military leaders which would align hundreds of the region's armed guest people in a common counter-revolutionary alliance must have conjured up nightmares of a base area ravaged by a repetition of the large-scale ethnic strife, which had occurred in the early 1920s and the latter half of 1928.

The capture of Luo Keshao therefore intensified the urgency of efforts already underway to find a comprehensive solution to the Yuan-Wang "bandit problem." From 18 to 21 January, the Border Area and West Jiangxi special committees and the Fifth Army's party committee had held a joint conference at Weitian in Suichuan county. The conference was chaired by the Party Central inspector Pan Xingyuan (Peng Qingquan). In addition to discussing regional topics such as the attack on Ji'an, the amalgamation of the region's special committees, and the formation of the Red Sixth Army, the conference raised the issue of "dealing with" (*chuli*) Yuan and Wang. Although it is not known what if any decisions the conferees made on the question, its very appearance on the agenda of this meeting of the highest-ranking military and political leaders in western Jiangxi is an indication of how seriously the problem was being taken even before the Luo Keshao incident.

News of Luo's capture prompted base area leaders to convene an emergency conference with Yuan and Wang at Jiulongshan in hopes that they could obtain a satisfactory explanation of the two massif leaders' recent behavior and somehow reestablish closer relations. The meeting was an utter failure and soon broke up in a mutual display of stubborn suspicion, angry words, and injured pride.

In all likelihood, the Jiulongshan meeting marked the last point at which a peaceful resolution of the situation was possible, and its failure set in motion a series of events whose violent and tragic outcome was to have a far-reaching impact on the history of the base area. In the third week of February, not long after the Jiulongshan meeting, Yuan received orders from the base area leadership that he and Wang were to proceed with their military forces to the Yongxin

county seat, where their troops would be amalgamated with various base area red guard forces to form the Third Column of the Red Sixth Army preparatory to launching a major attack on the city of Ji'an. Wang was hesitant about going—more, it appears, because of preoccupation with settling into a new home with a pregnant wife and a sickly mother than because of fears of violence—but was finally persuaded by family and friends.[21]

On February 22, Yuan's and Wang's forces gathered just north of the Ninggang county seat, and Yuan informed the troops of plans for the attack on Ji'an, noting that if the attack was successful they would surely obtain a fresh supply of good rifles. They then set off for Yongxin, which they reached about five in the afternoon. Upon arrival, they found that billets had already been arranged for them. Yuan was assigned to a house in a small alley with Wang in a nearby lineage hall and their troops in scattered locations some distance away. Also in town were the leading cadres of the various base area counties, who had gathered for a conference, along with the other Yongxin, Chaling, and Lianhua guerrilla units assembled to attack Ji'an.

Either that night or the next day, the Border Area Special Committee convened a meeting of the assembled base area cadres.[22] It is not known what the ostensible reason given for the meeting was or what other topics may have been discussed, but it is clear that the main business at hand was to provide a final opportunity for the airing of the disagreements between the regional party authorities and Yuan and Wang.

Central inspector Pan Xingyuan repeated the main accusations made against the two Jinggangshan men by local party cadres such as Long Chaoqing and Wang Huai: that they had "accepted reorganization but not transfer," had "opposed land distribution in Ninggang," that "Yuan Wencai had gone absent without leave," and that they had "colluded with the Chaling militia leader Luo Keshao to destroy the soviet government and cause turmoil in Yongxin's Red regime." Yuan is said to have responded with a point-by-point refutation of the charges and, according to Peng Dehuai's memoirs, with a counter-demand that he and Wang be given command of all the local armed forces in the base area.[23] These remarks are said to have "rendered Peng Qingquan [Pan Xingyuan] speechless" and led him angrily to drop a pistol on the table and demand that Yuan state once and for all whether he had committed errors. Yuan agreed that he had, but denied their seriousness. The rough and excitable Wang Zuo, not to be intimidated, dropped his own pistol on the table and sharply rebuked Pan. This meeting, like the one on Jiulongshan, broke up in angry confusion.

Almost certainly by this time even a full and unconditional acceptance of the charges against them by Yuan and Wang would not have avoided serious punishment, though it is barely possible that it would have saved their lives. An immediate retreat to Jinggangshan might also have led to a different outcome, and it is reported that Wang, his instincts sharpened by numerous encounters with deception and near-brushes with death during his bandit years, suggested privately to Yuan that they should withdraw from the city, but that Yuan decided not to act on his suggestion.

If this discussion did in fact take place, Yuan's decision must at first have seemed justified, as the angry confrontation at the Yongxin cadres' meeting appeared not to have caused an irremediable breach. On the contrary, on the evening of the 22nd and into the evening of the 23rd friendly wining and dining was the order of the day for the Ninggang troops, and according to the reminiscences of one soldier in Yuan's unit, the men relaxed and wandered freely around the city, watching plays and talking idly with one another.[24]

As the Ninggang troops were whiling away the time, however, other forces were on the move. About thirty kilometers from the city, forces of Peng Dehuai's Red Fifth Army had gathered to prepare for an attack on the Anfu county seat. Late at night, they were reached by Wang Huai and Zhu Changxie (a former tailor from Yongxin now serving as Border Area Special Committee secretary), who informed Peng and his fellow officers that Yuan Wencai and Wang Zuo were on the verge of turning traitor and were an immediate threat to use their troops to arrest the Special Committee.

Under pressure from Wang Huai and Zhu Changxie, the Fifth Army leaders dispatched the army's Fourth Column to move at high speed toward the city. Arriving late at night, they crossed the floating pontoon bridge across the river that flowed by the city—passing close by the bivouac of part of Yuan's unit as they did so—and entered the city. Finding plans already "well arranged" for them, they tied on white armbands and received a new password to ensure proper identification, then moved off, some going to surround the dwellings of Yuan and Wang, and others to capture and disarm their troops.[25]

As the soldiers moved into position, two armed Yongxin cadres also stalked through the streets on their way to kill Yuan and Wang.[26] Zhu Changxie entered the house in which Yuan was staying and shot him to death as he lay in bed. At the sound of the shots, great confusion broke out in the town as Fifth Army troops rushed to disarm potential opposition, while puzzled and frightened members of the Yuan-Wang forces and guerrillas from other counties emerged half-dressed from their billets to see what was going on.

Whether because the cadre assigned to kill him (the Yongxin county soviet government chair Peng Wenxiang) was slow in getting into position or because his own senses were preternaturally heightened by his earlier suspicions, Wang Zuo was able to escape from his quarters in the confusion and flee to the east gate of the city with Diao Huilin and several other of his trusted followers. Once at the gate, however, the fugitives discovered that the pontoon bridge had been cut adrift so that there was now no way to reach relative safety on the far bank except to plunge into the broad river and attempt to swim across.

It was here, after years of miraculous escapes from death and disaster, that Wang Zuo's luck finally ran out. Neither he nor his followers, so swift and agile on their own rugged native ground of ridges and ravines, were able to swim a stroke, and as they plunged desperately into the river amid the shouts and shooting that by this time were echoing all around, the dark, silent waters quickly closed over them and carried them away.

It was some time before the fate of the fugitives was known, and until that time, the base area leaders and their troops kept the soldiers of the Yuan-Wang forces isolated, surrounded, and confused. Some were surprised and disarmed without a fight, but others had time to blockade the doors to their billets and exchange fire with their unidentified attackers. Finally at daybreak, after several casualties had occurred, the Fifth Army troops broke off the engagement, yelling to the besieged Yuan-Wang forces that they had "settled" (*jiejue*) with their leaders.

According to Teng Daiyuan's April 1930 account of these events, the captured Yuan-Wang troops were disarmed and put under guard while many of their senior officers and party cadres were taken away in a separate group and executed. After the troops and low-ranking cadres had been given a long explanation of why Yuan and Wang had been killed, they were polled as to what they wished to do. As Teng related, "twenty percent wished to return home to till their fields, twenty percent wished to come into service with the Red Army, and fifty-sixty percent wanted to continue to serve in the red guards; each person received five *yuan* for incidental expenses, and then was sent off to work as they had requested in light of their own circumstances." Some 60 percent of the captured rifles were left for the Ninggang red guards, and the remainder were given to the newly-formed Third Column of the Sixth Army.[27]

CONCLUSION

Unfortunately for the Fifth Army and base area leaders, it proved impossible to tidy up after the killing of Yuan and Wang as easily as Teng's neat, matter-of-fact description suggested. A small number of Yuan's and a considerably larger number of Wang's troops, including some officers, had been able to escape from Yongxin during the confusion, and they hastened back to the Jinggangshan massif area to spread the news of the killings. Instead of being cowed into submission by what had happened, the population of the area reacted defiantly, and within a short time the entire area turned into a hotbed of anti-Communist activity that became an irritating and costly impediment to the expansion of the base area.

Wang's brother Yunlong and Yuan's subordinate officer Xie Jiaoming, both of whom had been left behind with a few men to handle affairs and maintain the militia leader Luo Keshao under loose house arrest, gathered for an emergency conference after learning of the killings. They were undoubtedly thankful that they had treated Luo well, for under the circumstances he now emerged as a strong potential ally. They quickly negotiated an agreement with Luo in which they would free him and publicly renounce the revolution in exchange for Luo's intercession on their behalf with government officials. Xie then went to Suichuan, where he likewise established a cooperative arrangement with the powerful anti-Communist militia leader Xiao Jiabi.

With the support of powerful elite allies secured, Xie and Wang soon added another layer of formal legitimacy and status from the outside world by accepting government appointments as militia leaders—Xie as commander of all Ninggang militia forces, and Wang first as his assistant and later as a subordinate of Xiao Jiabi in charge of the district of Suichuan encompassing much of the Jinggangshan massif. Operating on familiar mountain turf, surrounded by friends and family and backed by the resources and public accolades of official and unofficial patrons, Xie and Wang and their followers then set out to make life as miserable for their new Communist opponents as the Saber Detachment and Wang Zuo's bandit gang had made it years before for the wealthy elites and early settler communities in the lowlands surrounding the massif.[28]

In this task they were extremely successful. Working sometimes in conjunction with other local militias and sometimes alone, the Jinggangshan militias managed to contest the Communists for control of substantial parts of Ninggang county until well into 1932. Even after Xie Jiaoming was finally killed in battle in November of that year, the anti-Communist forces clung stubbornly to possession of the Ciping–Five Wells area and its approaches in the heart of the massif complex. Although the Communist forces remained active elsewhere in the region until the departure of the Long March in 1934, they were never able to regain control of the Jinggangshan massif, or of the promontory at Huangyangjie where now stands the proud monument to Red Army bravery adorned with the famous words of Mao Zedong.[29]

Disruptive as the events surrounding the deaths of Yuan and Wang were for the cohesion and revolutionary enthusiasm of the Jinggangshan populace, they were merely precursors to even more traumatic and widespread internecine struggles that began to affect the region in the late fall of 1930 and intensified over the following year or more. In the course of what were formally labeled "campaigns to suppress counterrevolutionaries" (*suqing fangeming fenzi yundong*, generally abbreviated to *sufan yundong* or *sufan*), base areas throughout central and southern China were convulsed by massive searches for subversive elements who were alleged to have infiltrated their

party and government organs. What they looked for, they found, and in large numbers; by the time the first wave of large-scale arrests, vicious interrogations and summary executions faded away in early 1932, many, many thousands (no exact figures are available) of long-term, experienced revolutionaries had been killed and the survivors left dispirited and mutually mistrustful.

Throughout southern and southwestern Jiangxi, the main intended targets of this extended purge were putative followers of a shadowy organization known as the "AB Corps" (AB tuan). Almost all of the founders of this group, which had been formed in 1926 as a strongly anti-Communist faction within the Guomindang, were people of Jiangxi origin. Many of them, in fact, were from Yongxin and Anfu counties in the Jinggangshan region, and in the mid- and late 1920s they had had a strong presence among the faculty and students of several schools in Ji'an in which many of the founders of local revolutionary movements in the Jinggangshan region and throughout southwestern Jiangxi had studied.

By 1929, the main leaders of the AB Corps had left Jiangxi for Nationalist government and party jobs elsewhere, and later memoirs assert that by this time the faction had become politically moribund. Nevertheless, numerous detailed references to the group in contemporary documents indicate that CCP cadres at the time remained convinced that representatives of the AB Corps continued to be very active at the local level in counties in central and southwestern Jiangxi, especially in the ten-county region that had formerly been Ji'an prefecture (and that included most of the Jinggangshan region). As suppression efforts by anti-Communist armies and local militias intensified in this region from late 1929 on into 1930, and as struggles over policy and power became more serious and widespread within the revolutionary movement itself during the same period, increasingly serious expressions of concern that "counterrevolutionaries" of the AB Corps and other anti-Communist groups were infiltrating and sabotaging party and government organs also began to appear.

By the late fall of 1930, warnings and exhortations had given way to concrete actions to remove suspected traitors from the revolutionary ranks. Beginning with a major purge within the Red Army, campaigns to "suppress counterrevolutionaries" quickly spread throughout party, government, and military institutions. These were given further impetus by a violent uprising in December 1930 known as the Futian Incident in which a significant group of Jiangxi party cadres, aided by the 20th Red Army, resisted the extension of the purge to their organizations. For several months, the participants in this uprising maintained themselves as a separatist revolutionary entity opposed to the main Communist organizations headed by Mao and his colleagues, until they were enticed back into the presence of their rivals, at which point most of the Futian "rebel" leaders were arrested and executed, and the 20th Red Army broken up.

Jinggangshan region revolutionaries were deeply involved in and affected by these disruptive developments. Armed forces raised in the region had been among the local units that had been cobbled together to form the 20th Red Army; several cadres from the region had been direct participants in the Futian Incident and its subsequent "rebel" regime; and that regime had both been headquartered on the western side of the Gan River not far from Jinggangshan and had maintained close and cooperative connections with the region's party and military leaders. When these facts were considered in light of the known geographical and educational connections between Jinggangshan region revolutionaries and the AB Corps, it is not surprising that the *sufan* purges soon scythed their way through the ranks of the region's party cadres.

Long Chaoqing (from Ninggang) was one of the first to be affected; his arrest in December 1930 and his "confession" of AB Corps membership and naming of other alleged confederates under torture was a key immediate precursor of the Futian Incident. Others soon followed: Wang Huai (Yongxin), Li Baifang (Yongxin), and Xie Hanchang (Ninggang) in the spring of 1931, Chen Dongri (from Yizhang in Hunan) in July; Ma Ming (Yongxin) in August, Liu Wanqing (Suichuan) in October. Zhu Changxie, who had once worked as a tailor's apprentice in the Yongxin county seat and who had personally shot Yuan Wencai in his sleep there when the latter ventured away from the safety of his massif base, reversed that course and fled from the county seat to the mountains when he was accused of AB Corps membership in the fall of 1931, but he also was soon hunted down and executed. By the end of 1931, virtually all of the county- and regional-level party cadres who had collectively been involved in accusing Yuan Wencai and Wang Zuo of being counterrevolutionaries, and in killing them, had themselves suffered the same fate.

NOTES

1. See discussion of these events in Stephen Averill, "The Origins of the Futian Incident," in *New Perspectives on the Chinese Communist Revolution*, ed. Tony Saich and Hans van de Ven (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1995).
2. Averill, "Origins of the Futian Incident."
3. "Deng Qianyuan guanyu Xiang-Gan bianjie wuyue zhi bayue gongzuo dui zhongyang de baogao" [Report to Party Central by Deng Qianyuan on work in the Hunan-Jiangxi Border Area between May and August] (August 1929), in *JGG*, vol. 1, 338–45.
4. *XGGDS*, 14–16; *JGDS*, 238–40; Zhonggong Yongxin xianwei dangshi bangongshi, *Yongxin renmin geming shi* [The revolutionary history of the people of Yongxin] (Jinggangshan: n.p., 1989), 72–75.
5. By this point in its history most PRC historians prefer to refer to the base as the Hunan-Jiangxi (Xiang-Gan) Border Base Area, which is the term most often used in

contemporary CCP documents of the period. This appellation is also arguably more appropriate in view of the diminished role of the Jinggangshan massif and its population in the affairs of the base during this period. Nevertheless, in the interests of brevity and consistency I will continue to refer to the "Jinggangshan base."

6. The following account of the circumstances surrounding the launching of the "Storm Ji'an" campaign is a synthesis of information from various sources. For a lengthier account of many of these developments, see Averill, "Origins of the Futian Incident." For a summary account in Chinese, see *XGGDS*, 16–18, 29, and passim. The most detailed information available on the subject is to be found in *Jiangxi dangshi ziliao,* no. 7 (1988), which is entirely devoted to the "attack Ji'an" campaign.

7. Peng Dehuai. *Memoirs of a Chinese Marshal—The Autobiographical Notes of Peng Dehuai (1898–1974)*, tr. Zheng Longpu (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1984), 265–66; Jin Shengcheng, "Peng Dehuai tongzhi shi Xiang-E-Gan geming genjudi de zhuyao chuangjian zhe" [Comrade Peng Dehuai was an important founder of the Hunan-Hubei-Jiangxi Revolutionary Base Area], in *Yu hong san juntuan youguan de lishi wenti ji wenxian* [Historical problems and materials related to the Red Third Army Group], ed. Jiangxi xiandai shi xuehui (Nanchang: Jiangxi renmin chubanshe, 1980), 55–56.

8. *XGGDS*, 18–19, 23; Peng, *Memoirs*, 267–69, 279; *JGDS*, 240–43.

9. For information on Jiang Hanbo's activities, see Jiangxi sheng dang'an guan and Zhonggong Jiangxi shengwei dangxiao dangshi jiaoyan shi, eds., *Zhongyang geming genjudi shiliao xuanbian* [A selection of historical materials on the Central Revolutionary Base Area] (Nanchang: Jiangxi renmin chubanshe, 1982), vol. 1, 571–76; vol. 2, 176–77; *Jiangxi dangshi ziliao*, no. 7 (1988): 49–54.

10. *XGGDS*, 23–24; Averill, "Origins of the Futian Incident."

11. *XGGDS*, 23–26; Averill, "Origins of the Futian Incident," and sources cited therein.

12. See Averill, "Origins of the Futian Incident," which draws heavily on various documents from the period collected in the three volumes of Jiangxi sheng dang'an guan and Zhonggong Jiangxi shengwei dangxiao dangshi jiaoyan shi, eds., *Zhongyang geming genjudi shiliao xuanbian.*

13. *XGGDS*, 26–35; Zhonggong Yongxin xianwei dangshi bangongshi, *Yongxin renmin geming shi*, 75–81.

14. "Zhonggong Xiang-Gan bianjie linshi tewei xin" [Letter of the CCP's Hunan-Jiangxi Border Area Provisional Special Committee] (17 March 1929), in *JGG*, vol. 1, 288.

15. Evidence of frustration on the part of party leaders toward the perceived attitudinal shortcomings of Yuan and Wang was already evident as early as the February 1929 report of Yang Kemin. See "Yang Kemin guanyu Xiang-Gan bian suqu qingkuang de zonghe baogao" [A comprehensive report by Yang Kemin regarding conditions in the Hunan-Jiangxi border soviet area] (25 February 1929), in *JGG*, vol. 1, 278–79. Yang characterizes both men as cunning, intolerant of criticisms, and resistant to change, and suggests that conflict with them is "inevitable."

16. "Deng Qianyuan . . . baogao," 338–41.

17. "Deng Qianyuan . . . baogao," 338–39, 346.

18. Among the numerous sources that mention one or more of these various issues, see Su Lanchun, "Yuan Wencai yu 'Heping weiyuanhui'" [Yuan Wencai and the "Peace Committee"], *Jiangxi wenshi ziliao* 20 (1986): 31–36; Su Lanchun, "Huigu Ninggang de geming douzheng," in *JGG*, vol. 2, 103–4; Su Lanchun, untitled reminiscences in *Yuan Wencai shimo cailiao* [Materials on the whole story of Yuan Wencai], a typed volume of materials, dated October 1981, held in the Jinggangshan Huishi Museum, Ninggang; Xu Chunhua et al., "Yuan Wencai, Wang Zuo beisha shi cuosha" [The killing of Yuan Wencai and Wang Zuo was mistaken], *Jiangxi dangshi tongxun* (1981–1984): 461, 465, and passim; Liu Xiaonong, "Guanyu Yuan Wencai, Wang Zuo beisha de zeren wenti" [The problem of the blame for the killing of Yuan Wencai and Wang Zuo], in *Yu hong san juntuan youguan de lishi wenti ji wenxian* [Historical problems and materials related to the Red Third Army Group], ed. Jiangxi xiandai shi xuehui (Nanchang: Jiangxi renmin chubanshe, 1980), 43–45; *WZ*, 463–69.

19. Although accounts of the Wan Xixian affair agree on most main points, they vary considerably on the chronology and details. Some accounts, for example, state that Long Jiaheng was killed in 1928, whereas others say 1929. I have followed the chronology used by the biography of Liu Zhen contained in Zhonggong Yongxin xianwei dangshi bangongshi, *Yongxin renmin geming shi*, 232, which also agrees with accounts by Liu Xiaonong in "Wan Xixian zhi si" [The death of Wan Xixian], *Jiangxi dangshi tongxun* (1981–1984): 834–38; and in Liu Xiaonong, *Jinggang yanyi* [The romance of Jinggang] (Beijing: Nongcun dushu chubanshe, 1989), 535–42. For accounts based on the 1929 date, see *WZ*, 470–74; Xu Chunhua et al., "Yuan Wencai, Wang Zuo beisha shi cuosha," 461.

20. Liu Xiaonong interview; Liu Xiaonong, "Guanyu Yuan Wencai, Wang Zuo beisha de zeren wenti," 45–46; Zheng Shanzhi, "Huozhuo Luo Keshao he Yuan, Wang beisha jingguo" [The capture of Luo Keshao and the process of the killing of Yuan and Wang], in *JGG*, vol. 2, 656–59; *WZ*, 475–80; Zhonggong Jiangxi sheng Ninggang xianwei dangshi ziliao zhengji lingdao xiaozu bangongshi, "Guanyu cuosha Yuan Wencai, Wang Zuo de diaocha baogao" [Report of an investigation into the mistaken killing of Yuan Wencai and Wang Zuo], in *Zhonggong dangshi ziliao zhuanti yanjiu ji: Dierci guonei geming zhanzheng shiqi(er)* [A collection of research on specialized topics using materials on CCP history: The Second Revolutionary Civil War period (part two)], ed. Zhonggong zhongyang dangshi ziliao zhengji weiyuanhui zhengji yanjiu shi (Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi ziliao chubanshe, 1988), 222, 227–28.

21. Unless otherwise cited, the following account of the killing of Yuan and Wang is based on a synthesis of material from a variety of different sources, prominent among which are Zheng Shanzhi, "Huozhuo Luo Keshao"; Zhonggong Jiangxi shengwei, "Guanyu cuosha Yuan Wencai, Wang Zuo"; Su Lanchun, "Huigu Ninggang"; and *WZ*, 481–97.

22. Sources differ on which organ convened the meeting; some say it was the West Route Action Committee, which was formed after the Border Area Special Committee was merged with other special committees during the party reorganization at the Pitou Conference of 7 February 1930. Although the reorganization was announced at the 7 February conference, however, many of the changes appear not actually to have gone into effect until the meeting of the Southwest Jiangxi Special Committee in March. Because it is not clear precisely when during this transitional period the Border Area Special Committee actually stopped functioning, I have chosen to follow those sources that assert that it was still in existence at this time.

23. For Peng Dehuai's brief and not entirely accurate account of the affair, see his *Memoirs*, 274–76.

24. Su Lanchun, "Huigu Ninggang," 103; Zheng Shanzhi, "Huozhuo Luo Keshao," 658; Zhonggong Jiangxi sheng, "Guanyu cuosha Yuan Wencai, Wang Zuo," 223.

25. Peng Dehuai's account says that the troops had been sent simply to guard the pontoon bridge across the river until the next day, when "we would negotiate with Yuan and Wang to clear things up before making a final decision." This plan failed, he says, when Yuan's and Wang's forces immediately attacked them when they reached the bridge. Peng was not present on the scene, and his version varies greatly from other available eyewitness accounts. It remains unclear, however, whether the actions of Fifth Army forces after reaching Yongxin were implementing specific prior orders from Peng or whether they were simply dispatched as a contingency force and were then drawn into participating in an assassination set up by local party leaders. Peng, *Memoirs*, 276.

26. One source says that local party leaders had originally planned to get Yuan and Wang drunk at a banquet and kill them then, but that the two men were extremely vigilant and were carefully attended by several bodyguards, so that the plan had to be abandoned and the new plan of killing them in their sleep was then formulated. See reminiscences of Li Li, dated 26 August 1981, in Su Lanchun reminiscences in *Yuan Wencai shimo cailiao*.

27. "Wu jun junwei Teng Daiyuan baogao" (27 April 1930) [The report of Teng Daiyuan of the Fifth Army military committee], in *Yu hong san juntuan youguan de lishi wenti ji wenxian* [Historical problems and materials related to the Red Third Army Group], ed. Jiangxi xiandai shi xuehui (Nanchang: Jiangxi renmin chubanshe, 1980), 364–65.

28. Zheng Shanzhi, "Huozhuo Luo Keshao," 659; Li Chunxiang, "Wang Yunlong qiren" [That fellow Wang Yunlong], *Jinggangshan wenshi ziliao*, no. 2 (1987): 50–53, which relies heavily on interviews with Wang Zuo's wife Luo Yueying; Xu Chunhua, "Xiang-Gan hongjun shitu huifu Jinggangshan de junshi xingdong" [The Hunan-Jiangxi Red Army's military operations attempting to recover Jinggangshan], in *Xiang-Gan geming genjudi shi yanjiu* [Research on the history of the Hunan-Jiangxi revolutionary base area], ed. Zhonggong Jiangxi shengwei dangshi ziliao zhengji weiyuanhui et al. (Ji'an: n.p., 1991), 475–79.

29. Xu Chunhua, "Xiang-Gan hongjun shitu huifu Jinggangshan."

Conclusion

There is a terrible ironic symmetry in the history of the Jinggangshan revolutionary movement, embodied in the matched set of disasters that rent the movement first with the killing of Yuan and Wang by the regional party leadership and then with the extermination of almost all of these leaders in the deadly *sufan* purge. Speaking more generally, there is an equally apparent ironic contrast between Jinggangshan as a shining symbol of the heroic Maoist revolutionary myth and the darker and more ambiguous image of the region's revolutionary heritage presented in this study.

Yet, appreciation of these ironies, sad and sobering as they may be, is certainly not all that is to be gained from a detailed examination of the context and the history of the Communist-led revolutionary struggle in the Jinggangshan region. Though it may not have been a model in quite the way it has often been presented in party historiography and propaganda, the experience of the Jinggangshan base is nonetheless instructive in a number of areas relevant to China's larger revolutionary history.

One of these concerns the role played by socioeconomic factors—and in particular by Hakka-speaking guest people ethnicity—in revolutionary mobilization in the Jinggangshan region. As noted in the introduction to part I, scholars such as Mary Erbaugh and James Polachek have asserted the importance of one or more aspects of Hakka ethnicity—attributed group characteristics such as pugnacity, persecution of Hakkas by other inhabitants, and/or contrasting and competing patterns of socioeconomic organization between Hakka-speaking highlanders and neighboring non-Hakka lowlanders—in the expansion of the revolution in southern China.[1]

Though fragmentary comments have been made along the way, it is now time to address the validity of these arguments in more detail. As the outcome

of the Yuan-Wang affair indicates, the Hakka-speaking guest people population of the Jinggangshan region acted in ways that were sometimes far less supportive of the Communist cause than the uniformly positive picture of energetic Hakka revolutionaries presented by Erbaugh. In this area, the revolution began and remained far more than purely or even primarily a Hakka-centered phenomenon: the bulk of the region's earliest party members were early settler students, not Hakka peasants; the distinction between the "early settler party" and "guest people gun" became a staple of local political mythology; and the movement's mobilizational policies and organs were at least as effective and numerous in early settler–dominated lowlands as in guest people–filled highlands. For a number of regional party cadres of both local and outside origin, in fact, the character of "Hakka hill society," particularly as manifested in personalized form by representatives such as Yuan and Wang, seemed to be actually harmful rather than helpful to the expansion of the revolution beyond the region's isolated mountain fastnesses.

By contrast, Polachek's general picture of a schizophrenic revolutionary movement reflecting an ethnically polarized society in some respects fits the Jinggangshan case quite well. As much as any region Polachek examines and more than some, this was a region in which early settler–guest people conflicts helped develop and reinforce a fault line within the revolutionary camp that set the movement's relatively sophisticated and well-educated local founders against more parochial sworn-brother/bandit gang leaders who had been recruited later. Moreover, as Polachek's general analysis suggests, after their arrival, the Red Fourth Army and its leaders were indeed pulled and tugged by participants in these disputes and in the end were widely perceived to have come down on the side of the guest people gangs.

At the same time, however, examination of the Jinggangshan case suggests areas in which Polachek's analysis remains overly simple, incomplete, or misleading. One of these problems, evident in Erbaugh's work as well, is an overly facile conflation of socioeconomic status with ethnic identity. To be sure, evidence from Jinggangshan and other areas of mixed ethnic composition does reveal significant correlations among geographic distribution, lifestyle, wealth, and ethnic background that generally conform to Polachek's distinction between a predominantly non-Hakka "lowland clan society" and a predominantly Hakka "hill society." However, the fact that similar lowland-highland distinctions in relative wealth, nature of kinship organizations, and so forth prevail even in areas elsewhere in Jiangxi, Fujian, and Guangdong that are populated entirely by Hakkas indicates that these are primarily situational and structural conditions, not inherent ethnic attributes.

A related problem is the tendency to assume that boundaries between and behaviors of ethnic communities were more rigidly set and thoroughly dichotomous than in fact they were. In this region, even where ethnic conflict was most acute there were still intergroup marriages and sworn-brother relations, and cases of "hill society Hakkas" who exhibited "clan society" behaviors such as guest people families participating in Ninggang's Liu and Xie clan organizations and prominent guest people such as Xiao Jiabi and Luo Keshao leading militia forces to suppress Jinggangshan's guest people bandits. Likewise, Wang Zuo was himself of mixed guest people–early settler descent and participated actively in the affairs of the loose association of small early settler lineages that coexisted with the guest people majority on the Jinggangshan massif; members of these early settler groups joined Wang's bandit gang, and there is no evidence to suggest that they were viewed as anything other than "guest people" by their lowland neighbors. Finally, whatever rivalries may eventually have emerged in the regional revolutionary movement, in its initial stages its membership was ethnically mixed and cooperative.

Failure to acknowledge the existence of some social and behavioral overlap between early settler and guest people communities gives Polachek's analysis a static, schematic quality which does not accord well with current scholarly ideas of ethnicity. Rather than seeing ethnic identities as constellations of primordial, essential qualities, many scholars now stress their shifting, relational, "constructed" qualities. The notion that the meanings of early settler and guest people in the Jinggangshan region were defined at least in part by their shifting mutual interaction over time helps explain the observed fluctuation in salience and role of ethnicity in the emerging revolutionary movement. The ongoing, contested processes of ethnic identity construction affected regional conceptions of the revolution: first encouraging, for example, many people to associate "revolution" with "guest people predation" and later leading a group of mostly early settler cadres to try to reorient and redefine "revolution" to downplay or eliminate its narrowly guest people connections. It is also likely—though impossible to demonstrate—that the processes of revolution and attendant contestation over its meaning, content, and leadership likewise affected local understandings of ethnic identity and relations, that, for example, being guest people on the Jinggangshan massif in mid-1930 meant something different from what it had meant five years earlier.

In contrast to this conception of complex, relational interaction between revolutionaries and their ethnic environment, Polachek's account depicts the effects of competing demands by more or less monolithic ethnic blocs on measures adopted by a small number of high party leaders—most notably Mao Zedong. Thus, he argues that when Mao articulated specific policies on land reform, he was making a conscious, targeted political appeal to the Hakka population subset at the expense of their non-Hakka "clan society" rivals.

This argument seems inadequate on several grounds. For one thing, it imputes an inordinate importance to Mao's individual thinking and decision

making in what was in fact a much more multi-faceted and extended policy-making process on socioeconomic issues. Land policies in particular were a matter for intense and prolonged intra-party dispute, and through much of the late 1920s and early 1930s, Mao's policies were contentious and sometimes rejected by both local and national party leaders. Party land policies of the period were also of broad scope, not specially tailored to the interests of Hakka peasants.[2]

More specifically, although conditions in the Jinggangshan base did lead the Red Army to act in ways that favored the interests of many guest people, there is little evidence to support Polachek's assertion that these actions represented a conscious decision by Mao or other party leaders "to annihilate all political ties with clan society in order to speed up the confiscation and redistribution of old-settler [i.e., early settler] landholdings." Red Army leaders continued to work with early settler elites such as Long Chaoqing and attempt to damp down tension between the two groups, and land distribution was not confined to a single ethnic community. Even in Ninggang, guest people were only one third of the population while land reform was carried out throughout the county, indicating that many early settler as well as guest people peasants were mobilized to attack their landlords. If anything, judging from the complaints that boiled up in Ninggang over what size area to use as the unit for distribution, guest people peasants felt disadvantaged rather than specially favored by the process. Nor were guest people landlords—even powerful sworn-brother fraternity leaders and party members such as Wang Zuo—allowed to retain their land. And, of course, it was the hill village guest people bandit leaders Yuan and Wang who were physically annihilated in 1930, and the early settler intellectuals who remained in control of the revolutionary movement.

Instead of "enlarging on an old millenarian dream" of guest people society by aiming simply at early settler privilege, it is perfectly consistent with the facts to see CCP leaders as striving, with mixed success, to work out a program which would attack all privilege in the base area. Communist attacks upon market-town merchants and upon the "intermediate class" of lower elites, as well as upon large landlords and major lineage leaders, indicate that their aim was to strike at all parts of the ramified local economic and social power structure, regardless of ethnic identity, rather than an attempt to coopt "'the just society' vision of one particular (and marginal) group within the rural society of the base area," as Polachek suggests.

Finally, Polachek's argument skews attention so much toward the economic policy–ethnic relations nexus that it is easy to overlook the fact that such issues were only a subset rather than the totality of the relevant factors in regional politics. Counties and communities of the Jinggangshan area had active local political arenas long before the emergence of the radical politics of the late 1920s, and these did not vanish with the arrival of the Red

Army. The role played by ethnicity in local political dynamics almost certainly varied from arena to arena, and issues of individual power and personality also played important roles in shaping local political alignments. Need for organized armed force could impel early settler elites to seek support from guest people bandit gangs (as when Ninggang Communists allied with the Saber Detachment); the changing trajectory of personal ambition could transform a self-proclaimed champion of guest people rights into an implacable opponent of guest people bandit gangs (as illustrated by the career of the Suichuan satrap Xiao Jiabi); and romantic rivalries, personal peccadilloes, and perceived slights could add their not-insignificant energy to more "serious" disagreements over strategy and policy (as in the case of the multi-faceted animosity between Long Chaoqing and Yuan Wencai).

In sum, ethnicity played complex and contradictory roles in the revolutionary history of the Jinggangshan region and almost certainly in localities elsewhere in southern China as well. In this context, ethnicity is not usefully conceived as a static bundle of ascribed characteristics—such as Hakkas' perceived pugnacity, rebelliousness, and love of education—that in some indefinable way "explains" why people participated in the revolution or why it succeeded. Nor is it profitably thought of as a well-defined political tool about whose use party leaders could make effective policy choices. Ethnicity was a potent mobilizational force, but one that was not easily harnessed for a specific purpose, deployed in a single arena, or manifested in a predictable form. Rather, it was an interactive, relational expression of a changeable social environment, capable of both powerfully stimulating and destructively polarizing the nascent revolutionary movements that established themselves amid the rugged South China hills.

As suggested immediately above and earlier in part I, the close covariation among ethnic community, topographical elevation, livelihood patterns, and economic relationships in the Jinggangshan case makes it easy to misattribute to ethnic character *per se* what are in fact at least partially expressions of situational and structural circumstances. Once this essential analytical distinction is made, however, it remains important to recognize that these situational and structural circumstances *did* affect the revolutionary struggle. In this regard, the Jinggangshan region provides a particularly well documented example of a situation that prevailed also in many parts of southern Jiangxi and western Fujian where, as in Jinggangshan, enduring patterns of socioeconomic tension between relatively deprived mountain dwellers and the more prosperous lowland neighbors who habitually took advantage of them—regardless of the ethnic composition of the respective groups—clearly facilitated revolutionary mobilization of the disadvantaged groups.

So also did the pre-revolutionary political cultures of these peripheral regions, particularly those of the classic "border areas" such as Jinggangshan. Constructed from the mutually reinforcing interaction between bureaucratic

perceptions of recalcitrant lawlessness, moral failure, and unstable individual mobility and popular conceptions of local strongmen, heroic knights-errant, and loyal-to-the-death sworn brothers, border area political cultures were violent and volatile but certainly not amoral and far from disorganized. As scholars long ago recognized, the armed groups—bandit gangs, sworn brotherhoods, and militias—that were omnipresent and provided political "muscle" in such border areas often overlapped significantly with one another in membership and behavior and slid freely across the blurred, politically and culturally negotiable boundary between "orthodox" and "heterodox" status in the eyes of both local populace and government officials.[3] Readily apparent as well, both in the Jinggangshan region and elsewhere in the Jiangxi-Fujian base areas is the usefulness—and the limitations—of already existing armed groups such as the gangs of Yuan and Wang for young revolutionaries who sought local power but lacked their own reliable armed followings.

Less often remarked upon, however, is the influence that the cognitive frameworks presented by the existing practice of back-country political and military competition had on early conceptions of base areas and the tactics used in their construction. Lacking well developed theoretical or practical models of "revolutionary base areas," party cadres at all levels had perforce to invent and give meaning to the concept through their own actions. In this process, such analytically separable but related conceptions as strongman "turfs," bandit "lairs" or "nests," and warlord "separatist regimes" were important starting points. Although references to "bandit mentality" and "mountaintop-ism" in party documents of the late 1920s are almost always pejorative, the very frequency of their appearance is itself testament to the persistent practical influence of underlying conceptions drawn from familiar rural practice.

The same is the case with base-building tactics. Centuries of cat-and-mouse warfare between bandit gangs, militias, and government armies, for example, had built up a repertoire of guerrilla tactics—exemplified in the Jinggangshan region by Zhu Kongyang's idea of "going in circles" and the raid-and-ransom style behavior practiced by the massif's guest people bandits in the 1920s—that were widely available to rurally based martial organizations of all sorts. Mao and the Red Army drew freely upon this common repertoire during their creation and defense of the Jinggangshan base, but so also did the militia forces of Xiao Jiabi and others whose constant attacks plagued the base. Similarly, though the Red Army's politico-military processions through the region's county seats and other base-building activities had a number of innovative features, at root they were derived from the tried-and-true politics of reputation and bandwagon effects used in the internecine struggles among generations of local strongmen.

Study of events in the Jinggangshan region also illustrates the breadth and extent of elite involvement in what by this stage in its history is conventionally labeled a "peasant revolution." In part, this involvement was a general consequence of long-term sociological and cultural trends. It is commonplace to acknowledge that the state of China's twentieth-century peasant economy and society had at least some impact on the Chinese revolution—if not by "causing" it, then at least by helping to shape the way it unfolded. It is equally valid, though far less common, to point out that what is true for peasant is true for elite life as well. Issues of elite definition, status, and career that developed through the end of the dynastic system all affected the early stages of the Chinese revolution.

In the Jinggangshan region as elsewhere, these general processes were most notably and concretely manifested in the radicalization of young scions of elite families such as Long Chaoqing in the new school systems of urban centers such as Nanchang and Ji'an and their return to the region to compete for local power with established elites and their organizations. Neither the social nor the political identities of young revolutionaries were wholly congruent with their status as CCP members. By educational achievement and often by family connections as well, the vast majority of them also had identities as probationary members of local elite establishments, identities that colored and helped shape their approach to the expansion of the revolutionary movement into a semi-rural milieu rather different from the urban setting in which it originated.

Once established in the region's market towns and educational circles, the party cadres embarked on the much more extended transition from market town to village. In the process, their roles changed from that of young intellectuals engaged in school-centered intra-elite cultural politics to that of would-be local elite strongmen interacting with a less literate, more parochial subset of local society. Though initial steps in this transition began almost as soon as the cadres returned from their urban educational sojourns, through such actions as establishing friendly relations with the armed forces of Yuan Wencai and Wang Zuo the bulk of the process occurred following the collapse of the United Front in 1927, when the emphasis of surviving rural party members shifted of necessity to developing ways in which to defend themselves and to expand by force.

In the Jinggangshan region, local cadres had a level of support from the Fourth Red Army that was unusually high and sustained by comparison to the military assistance available to most cadres who were seeking to establish rural bases in southern Jiangxi and adjacent regions of other provinces. While the presence of this force and its strong-willed leaders of course gave the Jinggangshan cadres significant advantages in their base-building efforts, it also imposed constraints on their political and military autonomy that led

to various tensions. Similar tensions between the centralizing, homogenizing emphasis of the growing party and military apparatus controlled by Mao and his associates, on the one hand, and the independent, individualizing mindset of rural cadres of elite origin who had built embryonic local bases on their own using local-strongman–style tactics, on the other, became even more widespread and serious when the Fourth Army moved into southern Jiangxi after leaving Jinggangshan. The relatively rich documentary materials available on the Jinggangshan region—before and especially after Mao's departure—provide valuable insights into the thinking and concerns of such local cadres, which are in general only ambiguously and sporadically visible in the historical record.

At the same time, study of the Jinggangshan case emphasizes that some non-revolutionary elites as well as peasants were objects of potential mobilization by revolutionaries. As pointed out in part I, neither "peasants" nor "elites" were homogeneous sociological categories in rural China, and there was considerable fluidity of motion on the part of individuals and families both within and between these groups. It is both a scholarly and a political commonplace that differently situated peasants were approached by and reacted variably to the revolution, with "poor" peasants being generally more revolutionary than "rich" peasants. Again, however, the analogous analysis is rarely extended to the relationships between elites and the revolution; the common assumption remains that, leaving aside the young, well-educated products of elite families who became radical party members, virtually all other elites were implacable opponents of the revolution and were treated as such by the revolutionaries themselves.

As the situation in the Jinggangshan area shows, in reality the situation was considerably more complex than this. Especially for individuals and families in the "intermediate class," whose circumstances placed them near the blurred boundary between elite and peasant, there was a variety of plausible possible attitudes to take regarding the revolution. The evidence suggests that in a significant number of cases these included willing participation in the movement and the assumption of responsible roles within it, though probably motivated more often by opportunistic expediency than by enthusiastic belief in the cause. For their part, revolutionaries quickly came to recognize that both their interest in building the broadest possible social coalition of supporters and the impossibility of completely demolishing the web of local socioeconomic power relations without alternatives to the resources and services it provided mandated at least some flexibility in their dealings with local elites. The resulting relationships were often mutually manipulative and contentious, and they tended to become more so over time as the revolutionary struggle grew more intense, but they remained more variegated and sociologically complex than the common, starkly dichotomous conception of peasant/party versus elite/government struggle would suggest.

If examination of the history of the Jinggangshan region thus contributes to our understanding of the social ecology of this stage of the Chinese revolution, so also does it add to our knowledge of and help contextualize the issues involved in the fierce intra-party debates over the strategy and tactics of base building that helped to define Mao Zedong's reputation and role in the revolution. Indeed, for Western and Chinese scholars alike the role played by party debates and their associated factional struggles in Mao's rise to power has been the central topic of study in this whole period of the Chinese revolution. In this scholarship, the core dynamic is one of high level party leaders arguing over grand strategy, with Mao pictured as in some sense "representing" the interests and views of rurally oriented, dynamic guerrilla warriors and local cadres against the stodgy urban-oriented members of the party's central leadership.

However, as this study of Jinggangshan and evidence from elsewhere in Jiangxi reveals, the situation was considerably more complex than this image suggests. For one thing, local and regional cadres as well as high party leaders participated—through both written opinion and practical activity—in the evolving discussion of revolutionary strategy. Among the clearest examples of this are the various Jinggangshan reports of Deng Qianyuan cited in chapters 10 and 11, which in one form or another raised from a local perspective many of the base-building issues that figured in the national debate, but similar commentaries were produced by cadres elsewhere in Jiangxi and Fujian as well.

Moreover, it is inaccurate to view Mao as completely aligned with or representative of local interests such as those of the Jinggangshan cadres. During their stay in the Jinggangshan region and subsequently in southern Jiangxi, Mao and his colleagues were working in the midst of groups of local cadres, mobilized peasants, and bandit/brotherhood gangs that were then in the throes of creating the rural base areas. In the process of looking "down" toward rural society as well as "up" toward the party's higher authorities, Mao's position vis-à-vis local party cadres was analogous in significant ways to that of the central authorities in relation to him. As Mao strove to resist the centralizing efforts of national party leaders so did lower-level cadres who had painfully struggled to create nodes of revolutionary power in their own home regions invoke *their* hard-won knowledge and experience, and strive to avoid being assimilated by a centralizing regional party hierarchy headed by Mao. In other words, if Mao was engaged in power struggles, and trying to concentrate power into his own hands, there were *two* such struggles, not one: the struggle with central leaders and the struggle to control the base areas and their local elite party cadre founders.

Although questions of personal and factional power have been given priority by many scholars, the intra-party debates were of course also centrally

concerned with issues of revolutionary strategy and of party policies. A wide range of topics were raised along the way, but many of them—including those for which the Jinggangshan revolutionary experience is most relevant—may be subsumed under two broad and intimately interrelated headings: the roles and priorities of the Red Army and the proper conceptualization and purpose of rural base areas.

As is clearly evident both in Jinggangshan and elsewhere, the Red Army was the main tool for efforts to promote the simultaneous growth and centralization of rural base areas. The Red Army presence most obviously helped expansion by protecting nascent bases during the crucial stage when local leaders were trying to convince the populace of the security and permanency of their movement, as a precondition for popular support of soviet government organs and radical socioeconomic reforms such as land redistribution. To win this support from populations accustomed to the constant ebb and flow of local factional conflicts and the short-lived and violent careers of many bandit chieftains and local strongmen, construction of a local regime that seemed likely to deliver on its promises was a vital but difficult task. The ostentatious deployment of a Red Army unit in a given area could provide cadres and populace with a valuable aura of security against the well equipped elite-sponsored militia forces that threatened many bases; the impact was correspondingly heightened when the unit actually attacked and dispersed the militia or frightened a warlord garrison force into remaining bottled up in a county seat rather than risk being caught in a Red Army ambush.

Besides protection, the Red Army provided local military forces with training, advice, and new officers and cadres seconded from its own ranks. As part of this service, Red Army units devoted considerable effort to retraining or (more often) weeding out many of the bandit leaders who were important early sources of military support for the local revolutionaries. Both the initial integration of Yuan Wencai and Wang Zuo into the Fourth Red Army and their eventual demise at the hands of local cadres assisted by the Fifth Red Army of course provide good examples of both the positive and negative sides of this process. When the Fourth Red Army marched circuitously through southern Jiangxi and western Fujian after leaving Jinggangshan, it likewise enhanced the effect of its attacks on landlord militias by simultaneously seeding local guerrilla bands and independent Red Army units—many of which were also built on bandit or sectarian foundations—with experienced Red Army cadres.[4]

In addition to more purely military activities, Red Army units also helped integrate disconnected base areas by moving back and forth among them, spreading information on and helping to implement programs and policies. The exasperating difficulties that CCP leaders had in maintaining a timely flow of communications between Party Central in Shanghai and even large, well-established base areas and Red Army units are well known; the dissemination of information to Party and army organs in more isolated areas was even more difficult. Exchange of information via visiting Red Army units—such as the Fifth Red Army during its expedition to Guangdong and the Fourth Army's southern Jiangxi tour in 1929—thus helped overcome the parochialism that commonly characterized the early bases, while Red Army demonstration projects and local proselytization efforts instructed and energized local populations and Party cadres alike.

Activities of this sort helped base area organizations but at the same time increased the Red Army's de facto influence over them. More explicit efforts to centralize and integrate the bases came in the wake of a growth in the scale and intensity of the confrontations between the Red Army and the Nationalist government's military suppression efforts. During 1930 and 1931, as the Red Army mounted major assaults on Yangzi valley cities and as the Nationalist government responded by beginning a series of massive government "encirclement and suppression" (*jiaowei*) campaigns against the growing base areas, Communist leaders embarked on a crash campaign to expand the Red Army and on a series of military and political centralization efforts aimed at improving the efficiency and cohesion of the bases' defense efforts. During the same period, CCP and Red Army leaders at all levels intensely discussed the overall strategy and specific practical measures needed to cope with these evolving circumstances.

In these arguments there were two main issues, each with various subsidiary components. One issue was the most appropriate level of "concentration" and "centralization" suitable for the armies. "Concentration" (*jizhong*) and its contrasting term "dispersion" (*fensan*) were shorthand expressions often used in discussions over whether the best posture for Red Army forces was to operate as dense clusters of highly coordinated, closely aligned units or as loose swarms of semi-independent forces. Implied in this question were issues of control and jurisdiction (dense formations were more amenable to high-level direction and to deployment against heavily-defended point targets, such as cities), of "regular" as opposed to "guerrilla" style combat (loose swarms were more guerrilla-like), and of enemy capabilities (could dense formations survive the enemy attacks that their high visibility would attract). Adding further complexity to the matter (and ambiguity to the documentary record) was the fact that "concentration" and "dispersion" were relational and situational terms, so that whether one advocated one or the other (and to what degree) might depend on a temporary concatenation of local circumstances.

"Centralization" (another meaning of *jizhong*) referred to a number of overlapping issues, including the questions of how unified and hierarchical the Red Army command structure should be, what relationships different Red Armies should have to one another and to the Party's central and local

leaderships, and what relationships should exist between "regular" Red Armies and local guerrilla and red guard units. Down through 1929, "Red Army" units had been pretty much self-generated and self-designated, formed around kernels of ex-warlord soldiers and local "peasant armies" (as in the case of Zhu De's and Mao Zedong's Fourth Army) or from amalgamations of more or less experienced local guerrilla detachments (as in the case of the Twentieth Red Army and several others in southern Jiangxi). Not surprisingly, the result was a jumble of forces with a confusing (and sometimes duplicating) array of unit titles and often with localistic affinities. One aspect of "centralization" involved bringing order out of this confusion by asserting Party Central's prerogative to redesignate units and require central approval for the creation of new Red Army units.

Questions of control and hierarchy within the military command structure were quite sensitive—as evident in the relationships between Mao and Zhu De and their forces in Jinggangshan and the ongoing tension over the role of the party within the army then and after—and tended to become more so as base areas and their associated armed forces expanded and came into more intimate contact with one another. While it often proved possible for Red Army units of separate origin to negotiate cooperative relationships or consensual mergers as Zhu and Mao did, the process was not always so smooth or enduring. The apparent difficulties encountered in integrating the forces of Peng Dehuai with those of Zhu and Mao first in Jinggangshan and then for more than a year afterward are a case in point. Similar issues at a higher level of aggregation were involved in the well-known tensions between the Zhu-Mao Fourth Army and Party Central.

Relations between Red Army units and both the civilian political organizations and the other local armed forces of the base areas among which they operated were also matters of concern and controversy. Even though the large regular Red Army units played vital roles in protecting, linking, and energizing the emerging base areas, they also had their disadvantages when looked at through the eyes of local cadres. For one thing, as was very much evident in the Jinggangshan region, the very capability and visibility of Red Army units made them high priority targets for government troops. They acted as magnets attracting government troops to wherever they were located, including the heart of emerging base areas. Although the Red Army was adept at dodging the enemy's clumsy blows, the newly constructed political institutions and the human and material resources of the base areas were much less mobile and more vulnerable targets.[5]

Cadres also had to deal with the more general question of the appropriate balance between military and civilian in the building of the base areas. It seemed evident to many that in the short run priority in resources and energy must be given to the military realm. But the drawbacks of this were evident as well.

One of these was the diminution of the authority and prestige of party and soviet government institutions and officials in the eyes of local inhabitants. In theory, Party, government, and army organs were all supposed to grow in tandem as the base areas developed; but traditions of coercive local strongman turf-building were so ingrained among base area populations, and the delicate political authority of the new Communist-led regimes were so intertwined with and dependent upon military security, that people naturally tended to invest army units and leaders with more authority and prestige than their civilian counterparts. By the late 1920s, some frustrated local and regional Party/government cadres complained that local people thought of the army as synonymous with the government and slighted Party cadres.

Moreover, as illustrated by the peregrinations of Peng Dehuai's Fifth Army in and out of the Jinggangshan region and by the complete abandonment of the base by the Fourth Army in early 1929, regular Red Army units could not always be relied upon to stick around to defend the bases they had fought to create. Local cadres' worries on this score became even greater after the government's "encirclement campaigns" began, when both national and regional party and army leaders began actively to discuss the possibility of flight to other provinces or of dispersing entire Red Armies as methods for avoiding the dangerous enemy threats. When the Red Army's sporadic "roving bandit" tendencies were combined with the conflation of political and military authority, local party leaders became concerned with the problem of how to promote more unambiguous distinctions in the popular conception between their base areas and the "turfs" of warlord regimes.[6]

Similarly troubling and contentious issues arose over the relationship between regular Red Army units and other types of local armed forces (*difang wuzhuang*) in the base areas, such as guerrilla detachments and red guards. As in Jinggangshan, Red Army units in various other bases had actively promoted and assisted in the expansion of such local forces, both to enhance local security against militia attacks and to provide reservoirs of mobilized manpower to replenish army casualties or form new Red Army units. As the intensity and scale of combat operations grew from late 1929 on through 1930 and beyond, however, the demand for replacements and the rate at which new army units were formed increased rapidly, even as the militia threat to local security grew significantly as well. The result was growing competition for access to and control over local armed forces and their weapons and bitter complaints from local cadres that overzealous centralization of military force often left them bereft of any means of local defense.

Many of these questions were directly or indirectly related to the second main issue of intra-party debate, which was whether the best strategic use of Red Army troops was as massed forces employed in coordinated assaults on one or more large cities or as more dispersed, semi-autonomous forces protecting and expanding specific rural base areas. It was this question of

overall strategy, in which were embedded or implicated various other issues of abstract ideology, relationships between the Chinese and international Communist movements, and considerations of personal and factional power rivalries within the CCP, that became the most salient and easily-understandable topic of debate among national party leaders and consequentially the issue that is still most well-remembered by historians.[7]

The crux of this strategic debate and the abortive attacks on Changsha and Nanchang that were practical manifestations of it took place at the height of the so-called "Li Lisan Line" in 1930. However, the issues involved had antecedents that reached back to 1928, as illustrated by the exchange of opinions between the Hunan Provincial Committee and the Jinggangshan party organs led by Mao over whether the Fourth Army should remain in the Jinggangshan region to consolidate the base or instead be employed as an attack force roving across a large section of southern Hunan.

This and subsequent discourse over the use of the Red Army featured divergent opinions about what kind of military instrument the army was and for what tasks it was most suitable, but it also at a more fundamental level involved differing conceptions of the purpose of rural base areas. Contrary to the impression sometimes conveyed by accounts that focus on the factional politics of the period, this was not a simple debate between one group of party leaders who opposed base areas and another group who favored them; the vast majority of party leaders realized that rural bases were both necessary and useful at this point in the revolutionary struggle and favored policies with a rural orientation such as aggressive promotion of the land revolution.

There were, however, differences in conception and emphasis. At one pole was a conception of bases as short-term refuges and staging areas whose main purpose was to assemble the military and political resources needed for attacks on key urban population centers. In this conception, which resembled the warlord base model in its focus on resource accumulation in support of "contending for the country," the Red Army would be configured to function primarily as an offensive-minded force engaging in "conventional" warfare. With bases thought of primarily as places to rest and re-supply, they were basically interchangeable pieces of territory; Red Army units likewise could be massed and maneuvered freely as military needs dictated, without being tied intimately to a single specific base.

At the other pole was a conception of bases as exemplary miniature states, embodying an ideological and programmatic alternative to the Guomindang's national state and its policies. In this view, which implied a relatively long-term existence and broad sociopolitical role for the bases, the Red Army's collective forces would have significant responsibilities for base area preservation and expansion. Since existing bases were scattered across large expanses of the southern and central Chinese countryside and in many cases

were separated by areas of government-held territory, this meant in practice the more or less close association of specific Red Army units with individual base areas.

Although the available documentary evidence is insufficiently detailed to allow us to say with absolute certainty, it seems highly likely that these analytically distinct conceptions in fact blended and coexisted to varying degrees in the minds of most participants in the discourse on base areas and military strategy. Nevertheless, differences in emphasis were still significant and consequential.

Among those who ultimately felt the consequences of the strategic decision making most acutely and personally, of course, were local cadres, who also had their own perspectives on base areas and the strategic issues associated with them. As noted in chapters 10 and 11, cadres in the Jinggangshan region went through their own process of strategic and policy reevaluation when they rebuilt the base following the Fourth Army's departure. The problems they identified during this process, such as the questions of where the core of the base should be located and in which direction it should expand, the ideal size of the base and the most effective degree of openness or secrecy for its political infrastructure, and the appropriate balance between the military and political apparatus, all had their own local resonances and particularities, but they were fundamentally similar to the problems with which cadres in other base areas were wrestling at the same time.

At the regional and local level, within the rural bases themselves, one of the main points of controversy—and one in which Mao himself was directly implicated—involved the relative priority that should be assigned to defending territory and preserving Red Army strength. Many military leaders, notably including Mao, counted mobility and rapidity of movement among the greatest assets of the Red Army and stressed the need to avoid combat with the larger and better equipped enemy armies unless favorable terrain, the element of surprise, or other conditions worked to their advantage. By late 1930, Mao had also formulated a more generalized strategic vision of how to employ guerrilla principles on a large scale for the defense of the base areas. This approach, known as the strategy of "luring deep," essentially sought to make a virtue out of the fact that Red Army units were high-priority targets for enemy troops by ostentatiously concentrating Red Army forces in difficult terrain deep in the interior of a base area. When government forces moved in after them, their individual units generally advanced in uncoordinated fashion, along different access routes through unfamiliar territory. This provided the lurking Red Army troops with attractive opportunities to mass their full forces successively against one isolated enemy unit after another.[8]

Both at the tactical level of red guard and guerrilla units deployed around a few villages and at the strategic level of regular Red Army forces ranging across large portions of one or more provinces, this kind of "guerrilla thinking" called

for maneuvering and fighting to be done on familiar terrain and among supportive populations—that is, within the base areas themselves. Yet there was significant opposition to this "guerrilla" approach at the time from regional and local cadres concerned about the vulnerability of the base areas even when mobile warfare was successful. As evident from "bandit suppression" campaigns in Jinggangshan, government armies knew full well that base areas provided the Red Army with recruits, supplies, and information. In addition, in well-established bases the extent of party and governmental infrastructures increased dramatically as did reform programs such as land redistribution. Finally, "living off the land" via requisition of food, money, and labor from people in areas in which they campaigned was standard practice for armies throughout China during this period.

The combination of these factors meant that government army incursions significantly damaged local societies and economies and threatened the carefully nurtured sense of security without which base area institutions and programs could not function effectively. It is unsurprising that many local cadres focused more on the costs incurred when enemy forces ranged through the bases than on the benefits in survivability that might accrue to Red Army units that were being pursued. Opposition appears to have been particularly strong among cadres of local origin whose communities and personal base-building achievements were directly threatened.

In the minds of these cadres it was far preferable for the fighting to take place outside or on the borders of the base areas, where the inevitable collateral damage caused by the maneuvering armies would have less impact. They felt the Red Army forces should demonstrate that they were a reliable presence, committed to the long-term defense of base area territory, unlike a typical "roving bandit" force that might be here today and gone tomorrow.

It is thus clear that many experienced local cadres were more ambivalent about the prospects for long-term viability of the base areas and about some strategies for their defense than the confident, preordained tone taken by later party history narratives would suggest. This was clearly evident in the case of the Jinggangshan base. The Jinggangshan period is usually presented in unequivocally positive terms, as an experience that demonstrated the validity of the rural base-building strategy. In reality, it conveyed a considerably more ambiguous message. Jinggangshan was too small, poor, and isolated to be a successful base. Moreover, difficulties in defending this base against heavy enemy attacks and blockade foreshadowed some of the tensions and contradictions that would emerge later in defending other base areas: the unpleasant choices were defending territory and losing your forces by attrition or fighting guerrilla-style and exposing a fragilely mobilized population to destructive and confidence-shaking enemy attacks.

Regional and local controversy over base-building issues and defense strategies became particularly bitter in 1930 amidst the growing general crisis, particularly in the southern Jiangxi bases during that period. A number of policies and approaches favored by Mao—including the "luring deep" strategy—came in for sharp criticism from some Jiangxi base area cadres at this time, and although these critiques were influenced in part by the "Li Lisan line" and by opposition to Mao-led military and political centralization activities, they were also prompted by doubts and uncertainties about the outcome of the policies themselves. In turn, the intensity of this opposition was clearly one factor stimulating Mao and his allies to launch the purge of "counterrevolutionaries" that ravaged the party and government apparatus of Jinggangshan and the other southern Jiangxi base areas from late 1930 on.

Viewing the overall intra-party discourse on base areas in the context and from the perspective of cadres in the Jinggangshan and other nearby bases, therefore, suggests a number of points about Mao's role during this period. The base-building strategy associated with Mao's name did not emerge all at once as a full-blown, consciously articulated master plan but rather developed over time as the product of difficult ad hoc balancing acts among complex alternatives. Opposition to Mao's ideas and policies came not only from members of the party's central leadership in Shanghai—people who, it could be argued, were distant and out of touch with rural realities—but also from regional and local cadres who possessed concrete base-building experience. Though the opposition of the rural cadres stemmed in part from concern for their own personal interests, it also grew out of a recognition of the very real costs and trade-offs involved in Mao's tactics—particularly the "luring deep" concept. The party's practices did not so much oscillate between following completely Maoist and completely non-Maoist "lines" as they did develop out of a dialectical interaction among the thinking of Mao and many others. Although the rural base-building approach has been retrospectively enshrined as the "only correct" strategy for bringing the party to power, the evidence suggests that in this, as in so many other aspects of Mao's legacy, a considerably more nuanced and critical assessment is in order.

But what of Jinggangshan's symbolic role as revolutionary icon, the site of heroic deeds done and vital lessons learned by larger-than-life figures destined for future greatness? As Theodore White and Annalee Jacoby wrote after World War II apropos of another prominent symbol of China's tumultuous twentieth century history, "Chungking, China's wartime capital, is marked on no man's map. . . . The Chungking of history was a point in time, a temporal bivouac with an extrageographical meaning. . . ."[9] So, too, was the Jinggangshan of Maoist memory, a collective experience whose mythologized essence of courage, sacrifice, and endurance helped define an era and an ethos as well as an ideology. As this study has shown, such qualities were

abundantly on display among participants in the bitter conflicts that raged along the Hunan-Jiangxi border in the 1920s, as were the personal magnetism, political acumen, and ruthless determination that contributed to Mao's hard-won reputation as revolutionary leader.

The salience of most such "points in time" is temporary and circumstantial. As White and Jacoby realized as early as 1946, that of Chungking "was a function of war alone . . . it is dead, and the great hopes and lofty promises with which it once kindled all China are dead with it."[10] That the vitality of Jinggangshan as a symbolic shorthand representation of an important stage in China's revolutionary experience lasted far longer is of course due in large measure to its constant reinforcement and reaffirmation by the Mao-era party apparatus. Now that the "great hopes and lofty promises" of the Maoist era have died in their turn, and the last invalid Red Army survivors have shuffled quietly out of the empty rest homes and revolutionary museums atop the massif, does any significance still inhere to this moment in Jinggangshan's past?

This study argues that it does. Careful reexamination of the region's revolutionary history certainly suggests much more nuanced interpretations and less laudatory judgments about what happened there. It leads us to reconsider in various ways the formative role ascribed to the "Struggle in the Jinggang Mountains" in the partly self-constructed narrative myth of Mao's rise to power. It reminds us that revolutions often begin not by totally smashing old habits and institutions but by manipulating them in new ways, and toward new ends and makes abundantly clear that we must focus upon the interplay between the equally vital forces of established social patterns and new revolutionary impulses, rather than on the nature of either one alone, if we are to understand the tempest that buffeted the people of this region and elsewhere in China during the first half of the twentieth century. These things also contribute to Jinggangshan's evolving "extrageographical meaning" and help explain why it remains a meaningful symbol of the significant "point in time" when the Chinese revolution became rural and an exemplary illustration of the complex but powerful forces that energized and shaped this transition.

NOTES

1. Mary S. Erbaugh, "The Secret History of the Hakkas: The Chinese Revolution as a Hakka Enterprise," *The China Quarterly*, no. 132 (December 1992): 937–68; Mary S. Erbaugh, "The Hakka Paradox in the People's Republic of China: Exile, Eminence and Public Silence," in *Guest People: Hakka Identity in China and Abroad*, ed. Nicole Constable (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1996), 196–231; James M. Polachek, "The Moral Economy of the Kiangsi Soviet (1928–1934)," *Journal of Asian Studies* 42, no. 4 (August 1983): 805–29.

2. Tso-liang Hsiao, *The Land Revolution in China, 1930–1934: A Study of Documents* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1969); a somewhat more recent study is King-yi Hsu, *Political Mobilization and Economic Extraction: Chinese Communist Agrarian Policies during the Kiangsi Period* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1980).

3. Philip Kuhn, *Rebellion and its Enemies in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980).

4. Jiangxi renmin chubanshe, *Guanshan zhenzhen cang—zhongyang geming genjudi de douzheng* [The pass and the lines of hills are green—the struggle for the Central Revolutionary Base Area] (Nanchang: Jiangxi renmin chubanshe, 3 vols., 1978), vol. 1. Mao discussed such Red Army activities frequently in his contemporary writings; for examples from 1929–1930, see *Mao's Road to Power: Revolutionary Writings, 1912–1949*, ed. Stuart Schram (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1995), vol. 3, 154–56, 273–79.

5. Contemporary documents generated by party organs at all levels frequently discussed the relationship between local and Red Army forces. They noted that red guards and guerrillas were poorly trained and localistic, but constituted essential resources both for local defense and for replenishing and expanding the Red Army; at the same time, they stressed the obligation of regular Red Army forces to train and arm local forces and to be on hand to respond to local cadres' requests for aid, even as they worried about the presence of the Red Army making local areas enemy targets. For examples of these references at the provincial level and below, see *JGG*, vol. 1, 321; Zhongyang dang'an guan and Fujian sheng dang'an guan, *Fujian geming lishi wenjian huiji* [Compilation of historical materials on the revolution in Fujian) (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 1987), vol. 5, 108; vol. 8, 175–77, 187, 206–7; Jiangxi sheng dang'an guan and Zhonggong Jiangxi shengwei dangxiao dangshi jiaoyan shi, eds., *Zhongyang geming genjudi shiliao xuanbian* [A selection of historical materials on the Central Revolutionary Base Area] (Nanchang: Jiangxi renmin chubanshe, 1982), vol. 1, 418–19; vol. 2, 205; vol. 3, 94. The Central Committee's 7 February 1929 letter to Mao and Zhu De referred explicitly to the danger that concentrated Red Army forces, especially those headed by well-known leaders such as Mao and Zhu, would become "targets" that would "draw the enemy's attention." See *The Rise to Power of the Chinese Communist Party: Documents and Analysis*, ed. Tony Saich (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1996), 473. That Red Army forces would become targets was, in fact, an intrinsic assumption of Mao's strategy of "luring deep" (discussed below).

For examples of tension over these sorts of issues, see *JGG*, vol. 1, 338; Zhongyang dang'an guan and Fujian sheng dang'an guan, *Fujian geming lishi wenjian huiji*, vol. 8, 132.

6. Older discussions in the Western literature focus primarily upon the ideological and personal power factors and pay little attention to the other substantive practical issues mentioned above. See John E. Rue, *Mao Tse-tung in Opposition, 1927–1935* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1966); Benjamin Schwartz, *Chinese Communism and the Rise of Mao* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Unviersity Press, 1951), and Richard C. Thornton, *The Comintern and the Chinese Communists, 1928–1931* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1969). For a few of the many references to all of these issues that appear in contemporary CCP documents, see *Mao's Road to Power*, ed. Schram, vol. 3, 100, 154–55, 177–89, 205–6, 242–43, 273–79, 574–89; *The*

Rise to Power, ed. Saich, 395, 437–38, 472–73; Zhongyang dang'an guan, *Zhonggong zhongyang wenjian xuanji* [Selected central documents of the Chinese Communist Party] (Beijing: Zhonggong zhongyang dangxiao chubanshe, 1989–1992), vol. 5 (1929), 477–90; vol. 6 (1930), 31–32, 59, 138–39, 428–64.

7. For discussion of the concept of "luring deep," see Stephen Averill and Stuart Schram, "Introduction," in *Mao's Road to Power: Revolutionary Writings, 1912–1949*, ed. Stuart Schram (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1997), vol. 4, xxx-xxxi.

8. Theodore H. White and Annalee Jacoby, *Thunder Out of China* (New York: William Sloane, 1946), 3.

9. White and Jacoby, *Thunder Out of China*, 3.

10. White and Jacoby, *Thunder Out of China*, 3.

Appendix: Abbreviations Used in the Notes

JF	*Jinggang fenghuo* [Beacon fire on Jinggang]. By Yan Guanglin and Sheng Zusheng. Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1980.
JGDS	*Jinggangshan geming douzheng shi* [History of the Jinggangshan revolutionary struggle]. By Gui Yulin. Beijing: Jiefangjun chubanshe, 1986.
JGG	*Jinggangshan geming genjudi* [The Jinggangshan revolutionary base area]. Compiled by Jinggangshan geming genjudi dangshi ziliao zhengji bianyan xiezuo xiaozu and Jinggangshan geming bowuguan. Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi ziliao chubanshe, 1987. 2 vols.
JGGSX	*Jinggangshan geming genjudi shiliao xuanbian* [Selection of historical materials on the Jianggangshan base area]. Compiled by Jiangxi sheng dang'an guan. Nanchang: Jiangxi renmin chubanshe, 1986.
JGGY	*Jinggangshan geming genjudi yanjiu* [Research on the Jinggangshan revolutionary base area]. By Yu Boliu and Xia Daohan. Nanchang: Jiangxi renmin chubanshe, 1987.
WZ	*Wang Zuo jiangjun zhuan* [A biography of general Wang Zuo]. By Huang Zhongfang and Li Chunxiang. Beijing: Jiefangjun chubanshe, 1990.
XGGDS	*Xiang-Gan geming genjudi de douzheng shi* [History of the struggle for the Hunan-Jiangxi revolutionary base area]. By "Xiang-Gan geming douzheng shi" bianxiezu. Nanchang: Jiangxi renmin chubanshe, 1982.

Glossary of Chinese Terms

AB *tuan* AB 团

Anfu 安福

Anren 安仁

Anyuan (city) 安源

Anyuan (county) 安远

Aobei 坳背

Bamianshan 八面山

Ban'gangshan 半岗山

Banling 半岭

baohu gongshangye 保护工商业

baoshou guannian 保守观念

Bei xiang 北乡

Bizhou 碧州

Bolu (Bailu) (township) 柏露

Bolu (Bailu) (village) 柏路

bu shiyi 不适宜

canyi hui 参议会

Caolin 草林

Chaling 茶陵

Changting 长汀

Chen Hao 陈皓

Chen Meiqing 陈梅卿

Chen Muping 陈慕平

Chen Yi 陈毅

Chen Zanxian 陈赞贤

Chen Zhengren 陈正人

Chengkou 城口

Chenzhou 郴州

chi dahu 吃大户

Chi dong tuan 赤动团

chi 尺

chise jieyan 赤色戒严

Chongyi 崇义

chou duo bu shao 抽多补少

chuli 处理

Ciping 茨坪

cun 村

da dui 大队

da quanzi 打圈子

Dabai (Dabo) 大柏

Dacang 大苍

Dachuan 大船

Dafen 大汾

Dajing 大井

Dakeng 大坑

Dalong 大陇

dan 石

Daxiao wujing 大小五井

Dayu 大余

Deng Qianyuan 邓乾元

Deng Yanda 邓演达

Disan dang 第三党

Diao Huilin 刁辉林

diaoyang 吊羊

difang wuzhuang 地方武装

dipan geju 地盘割据

Dong er qu 东二区

Donggu 东固

Du Xiujing 杜修经

Duan Xipeng 段锡朋

Fan Ayi 范阿义

Fan Chenmei 范辰妹

Fan Shanyang 范山阳

fang 房

fanshui 反水

fensan 分散

fenqing 分清

Gaizupai 改组派

Gan 赣

Ganzhou 赣州

Gaolong 高陇

geju 割据

genjudi 根据地

Gong Chu 龚楚

gongtian 公田

gongda Ji'an 攻打吉安

gongqu Ji'an 攻取吉安

Guanbei 关背

Gucheng 古城

guding de 固定的

gufei 股匪

Guidong 桂东

Guo 郭

Gutian 古田

Hakka 客家

hao bu youyu 好不犹豫

He Changgong 何长工

He Jian 何健

He Minxue 贺敏学

He Qilan 贺其兰

He Yi 贺怡

He Zizhen 贺子珍

He 贺

Hechuan 禾川

Hengyang 衡阳

Hong Futian 洪甫田

Hongjiang hui 洪江会

hongse xuchang 红色虚场

Hu Kaijia 胡开甲

Hu Lifeng 胡利锋

Hu Shaohai 胡少海

Hu Yachun 胡亚春

Huanan 华南

Huang Gonglüe 黄公略

Huang Lirui 黄礼瑞

Huang Sanxiang 黄三详

Huang 黄

Huang'ao 黄凹

Huangyangjie 黄洋界

huifei 会匪

hui 会

huigui 会规

huizhang 会长

Ji'an 吉安

jian 间

Jiang Hanbo 江汉波

Jiangkou 江口

jiaowei 剿围

jiaoyu jie 教育界

jibing 集兵

jiejue 解决

jin 斤

Jinggangshan huishi 井冈山会师

Jinggangshan 井冈山

Jingzhushan 荆竹山

Jinshimian 金狮面

Jiulongshan 九陇山

Jiupi 九陂

jizhong 集中

Junjie xiexing she 军界谐行社

juren 举人

Kang Keqing 康克清

keji 客籍

Kuangjiu hui 匡救会

lafu shi 拉夫式

Lai Guoliang 赖国梁

lao dixiong 老弟兄

Li Can 李灿

Li Guisheng 李桂盛

Li Kaichang 李开昌

Li Lisan 李立三

Li Shilian 李世连

Li Yunfei 李云飞

Li 李

li 里

Lianhua 莲花

Liming 黎明

Lin Biao 林彪

linghun 灵魂

Lingxian 酃县

Liu Guoquan 刘国权

Liu Huixiao 刘辉霄

Liu Keyou 刘克猷

Liu Shiyi 刘士毅

Liu Zhen 刘真

Liu Zuoshu 刘作述

Liu 刘

Liujiaping 刘家坪

liumang 流氓

Long Chaoqing 龙超清

Long Jiaheng 龙家衡

Long Qinglou 龙庆楼

Long Qinhai 龙钦海

Long Yaozhai 龙瑶斋

Longquan 龙泉

Longjiang 龙江

Longshi 龙市

Lu Diping 鲁涤平

lu 路

Luo Binghui 罗炳辉

Luo Dongsheng 罗冬生

Luo Keshao 罗克绍

Luo Puquan 罗普权

Luo Ronghuan 罗荣桓

Luo 罗

Luofu 罗浮

Luotangwan 罗塘湾

Luoxiao 罗霄

Ma Jiangbao 马江保

Ma Wenlin 马文林

Mao Kewen 毛科文

Mao Zetan 毛泽覃

Maoping 茅坪

minzheng ke 民政科

mu 亩

Nankang 南康

Nanling 南岭

Nanmuping 南木坪

Nanxiong 南雄

Nashan 拿山

Ninggang 宁冈

Niu Wentian 牛文田

nongcun diaocha 农村调查

nongmin fentian, dizhu gegu 农民分田，地主割谷

nongmin 农民

Ouyang Luo 欧阳洛

Peng Dehuai 彭德怀

Peng Qingquan (Pan Xinyuan) 彭清泉 (潘心源)

Peng Wenxiang 彭文祥

Pingjiang 平江

Ping-Liu-Li 萍浏醴

Pingxiang 萍乡

Pitou 陂头

Qianlong 乾隆

qianzhuang 钱庄

Qiaolin 桥林

qingdang 清党

Qingming hui 清明会

qingxiang ju 清乡局

qingxiang 清乡

Qiuxi 秋溪

Qixiling 七溪岭

qu 区

Ruijin 瑞金

san da jilu 三大纪律

Sanshiliu xing 三十六姓

Sanwan 三湾

sha chu yitiao xuelu 杀出一条血路

shan 杉

shangtuan 商团

Shangyou 上犹

Shangzhai 上寨

shanzhu 山主

Shaoguan 韶关

Shatian 沙田

She 畲

shehui diaocha 社会调查

Shen Bao 申报

Shen Hongying 沈鸿英

Shen Qingyuan 沈清源

shengyuan 生员

Shi 石

Shimen 石门

Shisan tang 十三堂

Shiweizi 石围子

shouji binglì 收集兵力

Shuihu zhuan 水浒传

Shuikou 水口

Song Qiaosheng 宋乔生

Su Lanchun 苏兰春

Su Yu 粟裕

Suichuan 遂川

Sun Chuanfang 孙传芳

suozi bing 梭子兵

suweiai 苏维埃

Taihe 泰和

Tan Sicong 谭思聪

Tan Zhenlin 谭震林

Tang Guangyao 唐光耀

Tangbian 塘边

tanpai 摊派

Teng Daiyuan 藤代远

tepai yuan 特派员

tewu 特务

tonggao 通告

Tonggu 铜鼓

Tonghui tang 同会堂

Tongmenghui 同盟会

tongnian 同年

tongxue 同学

tudi weiyuanhui 土地委员会

tufei 土匪

tuhao lieshen 土豪劣绅

tuji 土籍

Tuling 土岭

Tushan 土山

Wan Xixian 宛希先

Wan'an 万安

Wang Dongwen 王冬文

Wang Erzhuo 王尔琢

Wang Huai 王怀

Wang Xinya 王新亚

Wang Yunlong 王云龙

Wang Zuo 王佐

Wanzai 万载

Wenming she 文明社

Wenming xiaoxue 文明小学

Wu Peifu 吴佩孚

Wuxian lianfang zongzhihui 五县联防总指挥

xi dang 洗党

xian 县

Xiang 湘

xiang 乡

Xiang-E-Gan 湘鄂赣

Xiangnan tebie weiyuanhui 湘南特别委员会

Xiangshan'an 象山庵

Xiangtan 湘潭

xiangzheng 象征

Xiao Bowang 肖伯望

Xiao Guohua 肖国花

Xiao Jiabi 肖家碧

Xiao Ke 肖克

xiao xing 小姓

Xiao 萧

Xiaojing 小井

xiaomie 消灭

Xiaoxijiang 小西江

Xiazhuang 下庄

Xie Guannan 谢冠南

Xie Jiaoming 谢角明

Xie Xi'an 谢希安

Xie 谢

Xincheng (in Ninggang, Dayu) 新城

Xunfeng 巽峰

xinfu 信服

xingdong weiyuanhui 行动委员会

Xingning 兴宁

Xinmin she 新民社

xiucai 秀才

Xu Yan'gang 徐彦刚

xuehui 学会

yamen 衙门

Yanfu 延福

Yang Kaiming (Kemin) 杨开明 (克敏)

Yang Zuoshan 杨佐山

Yang 杨

yang 羊

Yao 瑶

yezhu 业主

Yin Daoyi 尹道一

Yin Haomin 尹豪民

Yin Qizhong 尹其中

Yizhang 宜章

Yongxin lianxi huiyi 永新联席会议

Yongxin 永新

youji dui 游击队

Youxi 右溪

Youxian 攸县

Yuan Chongquan 袁崇全

Yuan Desheng 袁德生

Yuan Wencai 袁文才

yuan 元

Yuantou 源头

Yudu 于都

Zhangshu 樟树

Zhao Xingnong 赵醒侬

zhishi 执事

Zhongcun 中村

zhongxin douzheng kouhao 中心斗争口号

Zhou Jiyi 周继颐

Zhou Lu 周鲁

Zhu Changxie 朱昌偕

Zhu Chiliu 朱持柳

Zhu De 朱德

Zhu Kongyang 朱孔阳

Zhu *longzi* 朱聋子

Zhu Peide 朱培德

Zhu *siling* 朱司令

zonghui 纵队

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About the Author

Stephen Carl Averill devoted his scholarly career to the study of the social origins of the Chinese revolution in Jiangxi province. The genesis of this project can be traced back as far as a 1968 thesis proposal at Cornell University, and in the intervening years Averill tirelessly sought out new sources, traveled repeatedly to China, Taiwan, and Japan, and published a number of seminal articles. He was a devoted teacher at both Kenyon College, Gambier, Ohio, and Michigan State University and an exceptionally scrupulous and dedicated editor of the journal *Twentieth-Century China*, overseeing its evolution from *Republican China* mid-way through his tenure.

Averill was born on April 1, 1945, in Savannah, Georgia, the first of five sons of Dorothy and Carl Averill. His father was a career Air Force NCO, and Steve spent much of his childhood moving from base to base. From 1955 to 1958, Carl was stationed in Japan, where the family lived off base and Steve developed a lifelong fascination with East Asian culture and society. Returning to the United States for his high school years in Rome, New York, Steve then attended Colgate University, where he graduated in 1967 with a B.A. in history. He started graduate work at Cornell in the fall of that year and began the systematic study of Chinese language and history. In course work with Knight Biggerstaff, he showed a particular interest in the military history of republican China, especially the guerrilla warfare of the Chinese Communists. In 1970, just as he was preparing for his qualifying exams, Averill was faced with imminent conscription to military service. He elected to enlist in the U.S. Army under an arrangement that sent him to Monterey, California, for Japanese language training.

Averill spent four years in the army in the early 1970s, most of them in Okinawa. There he received further training—never used in combat—as a

green beret and an interrogator for military intelligence. Much of his time in the army was spent as an instructor in the University of Maryland program, offering college-level courses for military personnel abroad. When he left the army in 1974, Steve moved quickly and easily back into academia. At Cornell, Sherman Cochran succeeded Biggerstaff as his dissertation adviser, and always eager for new ideas, Steve took more courses with Cochran even though he had long since completed his course requirements for the degree. He also spent time at Stanford University, using the rich collection of the Hoover Institution and auditing courses with G. William Skinner and others. Those were tumultuous days on American campuses, and Steve—like others of his generation in the modern China field—debated the contributions and costs of the Chinese revolution with an eye toward their contemporary political implications.

In 1976, Averill returned to Taiwan and Japan under a Fulbright-Hayes Doctoral Research Fellowship, and he began research in earnest for his dissertation on "Revolution in the Highlands: the Rise of the Communist Movement in Jiangxi Province." His years in the army brought an end to his youthful fascination with military matters, and his focus shifted decisively to the social history of the revolution. His dissertation was completed and filed in 1982.

Stephen Averill's teaching career began while he was still a graduate student at Cornell when he taught for a year at SUNY, Oneonta. From 1980–1988, he taught at Kenyon College, holding a chair in Asian history there before moving on to Michigan State University, where he was a tenured associate professor until illness forced early retirement in 2003. Steve always put his students first, spending countless hours correcting papers, suggesting new sources, and stimulating new ways of thinking. He was particularly devoted to nurturing the talents of students from Asia, giving generously of his time and experience to correct their English prose, familiarize them with Western historiography, and initiate them into the mysteries of American academia.

From 1991 to 2004, Averill served as editor of *Republican China* and its successor, *Twentieth-Century China*. Under his stewardship, the journal developed an international network of editors, reviewers, and contributors whom Averill assiduously cultivated at conferences and scholarly gatherings around the world. His rigorous standards and reputation for fairness did much to enhance the quality of the journal—and indeed of scholarship as a whole in this lively and often contentious field. A graceful stylist himself, Steve was known for spending long days copyediting essays that fell short of his exacting expectations. He kept abreast of new intellectual trends in the history discipline and the China field and regularly patrolled bookstores and libraries seeking obscure and newly available sources. Steve was an exceptional colleague—curious and attentive to what others were doing and unfailingly generous in offering bibliographic advice.

Despite years of research on the revolution in Jiangxi, Averill did not visit the province and the areas he was studying until 1984, while conducting research in China under a postdoctoral research grant from the Committee on Scholarly Communications with the People's Republic of China. An avid hiker, climber, and lover of the outdoors—he once completed a several-week trek across the Arctic Ocean from Baffin Island—Averill was thrilled when he finally had a chance to see and explore the Jinggangshan highlands, and he returned to Jiangxi many times in later years. While his initial visit in the early post-Mao period was greeted with some suspicion and resistance on the part of his hosts, he gradually gained the trust and respect of local historians of the revolution, a respect that was graciously returned. Over the years, he published a number of seminal articles on the shed people of the highlands, local elites, and the revolution, the Futian incident of 1930–1931, and the transition from urban to rural in the Chinese revolution. At one point, he planned two volumes on the establishment of the Jiangxi Soviet and yet a third book on rural education in republican China. Regrettably he was able to complete only the present volume.

Steve Averill spent the final years of his life in the company of his wife, Lisa Morrisette, professor of art history at Denison University, in Granville, Ohio. Although he had never smoked, Steve was diagnosed with lung cancer in 2002. He fought the disease bravely for several years, continuing to teach and working until his last days to complete *Revolution in the Highlands*. On September 17, 2004, in Granville, Stephen C. Averill died of a heart attack. His many friends and colleagues will always remember his understated manner and wry wit, his boundless curiosity, and generosity of spirit, and his unflagging devotion to the very end. May this book be the means through which later generations come to know and appreciate his impeccable scholarship and elegant narrative style.

—JWE and EJP