The Yan’an Way

Xinhai Revolution, 1911
First United Front, 1923-1927
May 30th Incident, 1925
Northern Expedition, 1926-1928
Nanjing Decade, 1927-1937
CCP Soviet era, 1928-1934
Long March, October 1934 - October 1935

Guomindang 国民党 (Nationalist Party): founded in 1912; led by Sun Yatsen and then later by Chiang Kai-shek.

Comintern: Communist International; international organization founded in Moscow in 1919; formed to spread the cause of socialist revolution around the world; agents in China by the 1920s; they advocate nationalist revolution in China as a precondition for socialist revolution; supply money, training, and advice to the Guomindang Party, beginning with Sun Yatsen, but continuing into the Chiang years; supportive of the Whampoa Academy; help to forge the alliance of GMD/CCP forces known as the First United Front; help to structure the GMD along Leninist models of democratic centralism; CCP would also inherit this party organizational structure.

Chinese Communist Party (CCP): founded in the French Concessions area in Shanghai in 1921; encouraged to work within the Guomindang party structure during the years of the First United Front; after the purge of the leftists in 1927, the party switches to a rural approach to revolution; CCP decimated in Shanghai by 1931; undertakes in the Long March from 1934-1935, which becomes a formative experience for the Party leadership; enters the Second United Front with the GMD to fight the War against Japan; emerges victorious from the Civil War in 1949.

Chiang Kai-shek (Jiang Jieshi 蔣介石) (1887-1975): Military and political leader of the Guomindang following the death of Sun Yatsen; joined the Tongmenghui as a student in Japan prior to the 1911 Revolution; studies military training in the Soviet Union in 1923; later named leader of the Whampoa academy; launches the Northern Expedition to rid China of warlord control in 1926; by 1928 sets up a new political regime with its capital in Nanjing; following defeat in the civil war with the CCP in 1949, retreats (with his army) to Taiwan; remains leader of the Guomindang on Taiwan until his death in 1975.

Chen Duxiu 陳獨秀 (1879-1942): Founder of New Youth (Xin qingnian 新青年) in 1915; becomes Dean of Letters at Peking University in 1916; together with Hu Shi launches a literary revolution advocating writing in the vernacular; puts these ideas into practice via New Youth; one of the earliest Chinese Marxists; a founding member of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1921; later forced to resign from the CCP in 1927; imprisoned by Guomindang for his radical writings in 1933.

Li Dazhao 李大釗 (1889-1927): studied in Japan; upon returning to China in 1918, he became an important May Fourth intellectual; launched study society for learning about anarchism and Marxism; founding member of the CCP; served as head librarian at Peking University; co-editor of New Youth journal; executed by the police forces of the northern staunchly anti-communist warlord Zhang Zuolin 張作霖 (1875-1928) in 1927.
Mao Zedong 毛泽东 (1893-1976): son of a rich peasant from Hunan; became an early member of the CCP under the influence of Li Daozhao; worked at the Library at Peking University; after 1927, he advocated a peasant line of revolution; rose to leadership in the party in the 1930s during the formative experience of the Long March; established the People’s Republic of China in 1949; the supreme political leader in China until his death in 1976.

Zhou Enlai 周恩来 (1898-1976): Important figure in the CCP; begins his political and military training at the Whampoa Academy; works in the propaganda department of the Guomindang during the years of the First United Front; heads up CCP in intelligence work in Shanghai from 1927-1931; joins the Jiangxi Soviet movement in the 1930s; becomes one of the most respected leaders of the CCP.

White Terror: purge of leftists, communists, and unionists within the Guomindang in April 1927; most vicious in Shanghai, but spreads to other major cities later in 1927; continues into the 1930s.

Jiangxi Soviet: experimental commune base area of the CCP on the Jiangxi-Fujian border from 1928-1934; CCP masters techniques of class struggle and guerilla warfare during these years; CCP builds its own Red Army during these years of over 100,000 strong; key professional military men such as Zhu De 朱德 (1886-1976) and Peng Dehuai 彭德怀 (1898-1974) join the Red Army at this time; forced to flee the base area after the fifth encirclement campaign by the GMD in 1934; the retreating army begins the 370-day trek known as the Long March.

Encirclement campaigns: five annihilation campaigns launched by the Nationalist government between 1930 and 1934 to wipe out the rural communist bases in Jiangxi; the first four campaigns are failures; the fifth successfully routs the CCP and Red Army forces from Jiangxi.

New Culture Movement (1915-1924): term used to describe the revolution in culture launched by leading intellectuals in the 1910s and 1920s; includes the founding of New Youth and other literary journals; iconoclastic in spirit; attacks old culture, old language; old religion, the Confucian family system; embraces Mr. Science and Mr. Democracy; often also talked about at the May Fourth Movement.

May Fourth Movement: Technically refers to the patriotic protests against the outcome of the Versailles Treaty ending World War I, in which old German Concessions areas were ceded to Japanese control; protests against the treaty and against Chinese officials succumbing to Japanese pressure break out on May 4, 1919; the movement lead by students at Peking University and other institutions of higher education; they march to the Tiananmen gate to express their political will; movement spreads to other major cities; helps to disseminate the ideas of the New Culture Movement; sets a precedent for student activism in twentieth-century China.