



A look at what's behind the achievements
of the Communist Party of China

WHY AND HOW THE CPC WORKS IN CHINA

Edited by Xie Chuntao





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Preface

SOLVING THE PUZZLES ABOUT THE CPC

The international community now views China and the Communist Party of China (CPC) with increasing respect because of a series of important and symbolic events—from the truly exceptional Beijing Olympic Games and the 2010 Shanghai World Exposition that attracted world attention to the fast economic growth obtained even against the backdrop of the international financial crisis. The “China Model,” “China Road” and “China Experience” have become hot topics of discussion both at home and abroad. Insightful people are pondering how the CPC could score such brilliant achievements, and how such a party can still be full of vigor and vitality 90 years after it was founded and 60 years after it gained power.

I have been frequently asked to answer the above questions over the past few years during my communication with foreign parties in power. The more I mull over these questions, the more and deeper understanding I have of the CPC. I felt it necessary to write a book about the relevant issues and our preliminary conclusions, so as to help readers both in China and other countries further understand the CPC. At a celebration for the publication of *China Through the Ages: From Confucius to Deng*, my suggestion was warmly supported by Mr. Lin Liangqi, the initiator of the above book and former deputy editor-in-chief of China International Publishing Group, Ms. Zhang Hai’ou, editor-in-chief of New World Press, Ms. Li Shujuan, director of the English Editorial Department of New World Press and some of my colleagues. That was the origin of this book.

After thinking over the topics for some time, I drafted an outline for the book, and after many rounds of discussion, we decided to answer the following questions:

1. Why was the CPC capable of establishing a new China?

In modern times, striving to save the Chinese nation when its very existence was at stake, numerous people with lofty ideals worked arduously at considerable sacrifice but did not succeed. Why could the CPC lead the Chinese people to establish a new China and realize the independence and emancipation of the Chinese nation?

2. How was the CPC able to clear up the mess left behind by the KMT?

When the Kuomintang (KMT) fled the mainland of China in 1949, it took with it the country's foreign exchange reserves in gold and silver accumulated over the years, and left behind a national economy severely damaged by the turmoil of war. At that time many people doubted the capacity of the CPC to rule China. However, in just three years the CPC rebuilt China's national economy to the highest level before 1949. How could it do this?

3. How did the CPC keep the people's support despite its mistakes?

After the CPC became the national power holder, it scored a series of achievements. However, it also committed mistakes such as the Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution. How could it win the people's support and continue in power even with those serious mistakes?

4. How did the CPC maintain power when the Eastern Bloc Communist Parties fell?

At the end of the 1980s and in the early 1990s, the communist parties in the former Soviet Union and Eastern European countries lost their status as ruling parties one after another. Some Western political celebrities believed that the CPC would follow suit, but they were soon disappointed to find that the status of the CPC as a ruling party is as stable as Mount Tai. Why was the situation so different in China? What's the difference between the CPC and the communist parties of the former Soviet Union and the Eastern European countries?

5. How could the CPC solve the problem of feeding 1.3 billion people?

A renowned scholar in the West once asked who could feed the Chinese people, a question having no small impact on the world. However, in just a few years facts proved that the scholar was over-anxious. China not only feeds its own people but also contributes greatly to solving the problem of grain supply worldwide. How could the CPC score such an achievement?

6. How could the CPC develop China into the world's second-largest economy?

China's economy was almost on the brink of collapse before the implementation of the reform and opening-up policy. However, in a little more than 30 years China has developed into the world's second-largest economy. What method did the CPC adopt to create such a wonder in the history of the world economy?

7. How could the CPC integrate socialism with the market economy?

The planned economy is a basic characteristic of socialism, while the market

economy is a patent of capitalism. How could the CPC establish a socialist market economy system and bring vitality to China's development?

8. How could a system of multi-party cooperation under the CPC's leadership be implemented?

The political party system China has adopted is marked by multi-party cooperation under the leadership of the CPC. Such a system is unique in the world. How could the CPC establish and practice such a system, and why can other parties accept the leadership of the CPC?

9. Why could prosperity and stability be maintained in Hong Kong and Macao?

It was predicted that Hong Kong would collapse after China resumed sovereignty over it. However, Hong Kong's capitalist economy is even more prosperous than ever since its return over a decade ago. After China resumed its sovereignty over Macao, the gambling industry in Macao continued to boom, and Macao began the successful transformation of its economic pattern. How could the CPC achieve success in implementing its policy of "one country, two systems"?

10. Why does the relationship across the Taiwan Straits keep making progress?

Due to historical reasons, the mainland and Taiwan were antagonistic towards each other for decades. However, in recent years, with more and more communication between the Chinese on both sides of the Taiwan Straits, there have been fewer and fewer misunderstandings, and the mainland and Taiwan are increasingly inseparable. How could the CPC's policy toward Taiwan increasingly win the understanding and recognition of the people in Taiwan?

11. How could China win the support of so many developing countries?

China experiences setbacks from time to time in its communication with some developed Western countries due to the differences between them in terms of ideology and social systems. However, China maintains close relations with most developing countries. How could the CPC and Chinese government win the understanding and support of most developing countries?

12. How could the CPC conduct the earthquake relief work effectively and host the Beijing Olympic Games successfully?

In 2008 two events in China amazed the whole world: One was the highly efficient earthquake relief work and the other the truly exceptional Beijing Olympic Games. How could the CPC achieve such successes, and what advantages in terms of

its system does China enjoy?

13. How can the CPC properly manage a party with 80 million members?

The CPC has 80 million members, more than the population of a small- or medium-sized country. With what method does the CPC manage such a big party, and enable it to maintain cohesion and executive power, and go from strength to strength?

Concluding remarks: Can the CPC cope with the challenges successfully?

The CPC has achieved much success in the past, yet it is faced with formidable challenges at present and in the future. Is the CPC soberly aware of these challenges, and does it have the ability to cope with them?

In the writing of this book we tried to answer the above questions through outlining the history of the CPC, or, in the words of Mr. Lin Liangqi, “to convey the idea through telling the stories” and “let others make comments on the CPC.” It is in this way that our book can become readable and convincing. Therefore, the book is not a theoretical work in the traditional sense, nor an ordinary book on the history of the CPC, but an attempt to combine both. It is hoped that this book will increase the readers’ understanding of the CPC through reviewing the history, achievements and experience of the Party in revolution and ruling the country.

The difficulty in writing this book was beyond our imagination. Although most of the authors are professional research fellows specializing in the history of the CPC, there existed quite a lot of difficulties when they tried to explain the reasons for the success of the CPC in a clear way. Despite our hard work, insufficiencies and problems might still exist in our book. Readers’ criticisms and comments are sincerely welcome.

In the writing of the book, Mr. Lin Liangqi gave his instructions, and polished and finalized the manuscript. Ms. Zhang Hai’ou and Ms. Li Shujuan gave warm support and organized special seminars. They also leveraged their resources to solicit suggestions and advice from experts both at home and abroad. My colleagues Liu Baodong (who wrote the first and second chapters), Li Qinggang (who wrote the third, fourth and eighth chapters), Shen Chuanliang (who wrote the fifth, sixth, seventh, twelfth and thirteenth chapters, and the concluding remarks), Wang Qifeng (who wrote the ninth and tenth chapters) and doctoral candidate Yuan Jing (who wrote the eleventh chapter) undertook the writing tasks. Their efforts are sincerely appreciated.

Xie Chuntao
January 2011

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Chapter 1

**WHY WAS THE CPC CAPABLE
OF ESTABLISHING A NEW CHINA?**

On October 1, 1949 the People's Republic of China was founded. It was only three years and three months after the Chinese Civil War (1946-1949) between the KMT and the CPC broke out. When the war began, none of the CPC, the KMT, the United States, the Soviet Union and other countries expected that the end would come so fast, because the CPC was much weaker than the KMT. Various parties were looking for a convincing answer, but from different perspectives of analysis they made different interpretations. It could be said that the benevolent saw benevolence and the wise saw wisdom, but the parties had a common understanding that the popular support of the people finally decided the outcome of the war. As Dean Acheson, US Secretary of State, wrote in a letter to President Truman on July 30, 1949, "their [Kuomintang] seeming strength was illusory and their victories were built on sand... The reasons for the failures of the Chinese National Government appear in some detail in the attached record. They do not stem from any inadequacy of American aid... the Nationalist armies did not lose a single battle during the crucial year of 1948 through lack of arms or ammunition. The fact was that the decay which our observers had detected in Chungking early in the war had fatally sapped the powers of resistance of the Kuomintang... The Nationalist armies did not have to be defeated; they disintegrated. History has proved again and again that a regime without faith in itself and an army without morale cannot survive the test of battle... the heart of China is in Communist hands"¹

The China White Paper originally issued by the United States Department of State in August 1949 under the title *United States Relations with China, with Special Reference to the Period 1944-1949*, Stanford University Press, 1967, pp xi, xiv, xvi

The “two worlds” of a country

The Anti-Japanese War (1937-1945) was a national liberation war in which China gained complete victory during its struggle against foreign aggressors for the first time in over 100 years. When the news of the victory came, people celebrated all over the country with great joy. Victory was gained, and the war ended, but the problems that had accumulated during the war in China, such as destitution, the broken economy and others, did not go with the end of the war. At that time, various parties could not help but focus their attention on China's two largest political parties, the Kuomintang and the Communist Party.

When the Anti-Japanese War ended, what was the situation in the KMT-controlled areas? What was the slightly mysterious Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia Border Region under the leadership of the CPC like?

John S. Service, who was born in Chengdu, China, in 1909, was a diplomat at the US embassy to China. He was fluent in Chinese and an authentic “China Hand.” He had gone deep down to China's rural and remote areas for a wide range of social investigations and experiences of the living environment and conditions of China's ordinary people. He had a deep understanding of China's political, economic and social conditions. On June 20, 1944, Service sent to the US State Department a copy of “The Situation in China and Suggestions Regarding American Policy.” On China's situation, he wrote:

China faces economic collapse. This is causing disintegration of the army and the government's administrative apparatus...

1) Morale is low and discouragement widespread. There is a general feeling of hopelessness.

2) The authority of the Central Government is weakening in the areas away from the larger cities. Government mandates and measures of control cannot be enforced and remain ineffective. It is becoming difficult for the Government to collect enough food for its huge army and bureaucracy.

3) The governmental and military structure is being permeated and demoralized from top to bottom by corruption, unprecedented in scale and openness.

4) The intellectual and salaried classes, who have suffered the most heavily from inflation, are in danger of liquidation...

5) Peasant resentment of the abuses of conscription, tax collection and

Why and how the CPC works in China

other arbitrary impositions has been widespread and is growing...

...

7) Unrest within the Kuomintang armies is increasing...

8) The break between the Kuomintang and the Communists not only shows no signs of being closed, but grows more critical with the passage of time; the inevitability of civil war is now generally accepted.

9) The Kuomintang is losing the respect and support of the people by its selfish policies and its refusal to heed progressive criticism... To combat the dissensions and cliquism within the Party, which grow more rather than less acute, the leadership is turning toward the reactionary and unpopular Ch'en brothers clique.

10) His [the Generalissimo] growing megalomania and his unfortunate attempts to be "sage" as well as leader... have forfeited the respect of many intellectuals, who enjoy in China a position of unique influence. Criticism of his dictatorship is becoming more outspoken.²

John S. Service thought that the KMT was facing its most serious crisis ever, but it was unable to change that situation; what's more, the KMT was making it worse. The KMT had lost its qualification for the leadership of the whole of China.

More than a month after he sent the report as a government official of the US State Department and political adviser to the US military commander of the China-Burma-India Theater, Service participated in the "U.S. Army Observer Section," and went to Yan'an. There, "with a conscious determination not to be swept off one's feet," Service and the other group members "had the same feeling—that we have come into a different country and are meeting a different people." There were great differences in the ethos and atmosphere compared with those in the KMT-controlled areas, and he gave the following account:

There is undeniably a change in the spirit and atmosphere... There is an absence of show and formality, both in speech and action. Relations of the officials and people toward us, and of the Chinese among themselves, are open, direct and friendly. Mao Tse-tung [Mao Zedong] and other leaders are universally spoken of with respect (amounting in the case of Mao to a sort of veneration), but these men are approachable and subservience toward them is completely lacking. They mingle freely in groups.

Bodyguards, gendarmes and the claptrap of Chungking officialdom are also completely lacking. To the casual eye there are no police in Yenan [Yan'an]. And

² Joseph W. Esherick, *Lost Chance in China: The World War II Despatches of John S. Service* edited by Joseph W. Esherick, Random House, New York, 1974, pp.138-140.

Establishing a new China

very few soldiers are seen.

There are also no beggars, nor signs of desperate poverty.

Clothing and living are very simple. Almost everyone except the peasants wears the same plain Chungshan-type uniform of native cotton cloth. We have seen no signs of ostentation in dress, living or entertaining.

Morale is very high. The war seems close and real. There is no defeatism, but rather confidence. There is no war-weariness.

One gets a feeling that everyone has a job. The program to make every person a producer has a real meaning.

There is everywhere an emphasis on democracy and intimate relations with the common people.

There is a surprising political consciousness... There is no criticism of Party leaders and no political talk.

At the same time there is no feeling of restraint or suppression... The leaders make excellent personal impressions... The general feeling is of calm self-confidence—self-respect.³

After enumerating the above-mentioned phenomena, Service analyzed as follows:

I think now that further study and observation will confirm that what is seen at Yen-an is a well-integrated movement, with a political and economic program, which it is successfully carrying out under competent leaders.

And that while the Kuomintang has lost its early revolutionary character and with that loss disintegrated, the Communist Party, because of the struggle it has had to continue, has kept its revolutionary character, but has grown to a healthy and moderate maturity.

One cannot help coming to feel that this movement is strong and successful, and that it has such drive behind it and has tied itself so closely to the people that it will not easily be killed.⁴

The two entirely different worlds that Service saw were both in China: One was the Kuomintang and the regions it dominated; the other was the CPC and the border areas under its jurisdiction. These were the two parties of the Chinese Civil War after the victory of the Anti-Japanese War. Their numerous differences were what decided the result of the Chinese Civil War.

³ Joseph W. Esherick, *Lost Chance in China: The World War II Despatches of John S. Service* edited by Joseph W. Esherick, Random House, New York, 1974, pp.177-181.

⁴ Joseph W. Esherick, *Lost Chance in China: The World War II Despatches of John S. Service* edited by Joseph W. Esherick, Random House, New York, 1974, p.182.