afterwards in his identification with the CCP, the scientific revolutionary party of the modern proletariat. However, during his long stay in the countryside in 1925, he became aware of the tremendous revolutionary potential of the peasantry which was being ignored because of the great gulf between rural conditions and the interests of the urban revolutionaries. Thereupon one of Mao's major tasks became that of convincing the Party intelligentsia to investigate rural conditions and to form their policies on the basis of the real, rather than presumed, needs of the masses. This attitude differs significantly from his earlier one, and I would call it "populist empiricism."31 This attitude runs strong in Mao's works from his 1926 articles on the peasant question to his contributions to the rectification campaigns of 1942 and 1943. Mao showed tendencies toward yet another attitude, that of populist anti-intellectualism, from his days in Yenan onwards. The distinction I would draw between populist empiricism and populist anti-intellectualism is that the first strives to maintain the correct direction for China's modernizing movement, whereas the second tends to view intellectuals as a class alien from the people whose skills are useful for the revolution and mass progress. In the first, the intellectuals and the masses should co-determine a popular but modern revolution; in the second, the intellectuals are an instrument of a popular revolution. To some extent, these tendencies correspond to the production/distribution dilemma of revolutionary political economy.

The experience of the Russian revolution was important for
Mao, although considerably less so than it was for many of his Party colleagues. The first and most basic contribution of the Russian revolution to Mao's thought was its proof that a popular revolution could be successful. This allowed a double optimism in Mao's early writings: China could also be successful in her revolutionary endeavors, and her success would occur within a worldwide movement of popular revolution. After the failure of the May Fourth Movement, Marxism-Leninism helped provide an organizational and conceptual guide to the revolutionary struggle. Party work replaced spontaneous and occasional activities, and class analysis replaced the general appeal for a "great union of the popular masses." But the goal of Mao's politics remained mass revolution, and Marxism-Leninism was adopted as an orienting framework toward that end.

Mao's commitment to Marxism-Leninism after his initial preference for Kropotkin's anarchism was a result of the failure of the May Fourth Movement to produce a transformation of Chinese politics. This was the first of a series of disappointments which induced major changes in Mao's political thinking. Although Mao's disappointments and CCP failures usually occurred simultaneously, the official reaction and Mao's personal lesson were usually different. For instance, the 1927 disaster eventually taught the CCP to value its peasant support highly and to take land policy seriously. But Mao had already reached this conclusion in 1925. His thesis of the centrality of the peasant question to a meaningful national revolution was proven by the problems with the
Northern Expedition in 1927. The lesson for Mao in the catastrophe was that the importance of the peasantry for the substance and legitimacy of the revolution did not immediately translate into political power; political power, as he later put it, "grows out of the barrel of a gun." \(^{33}\) The peasant movement of 1926–1927 which Mao described in the Hunan Report as "a mighty storm, a hurricane, a force so swift and violent that no power, however great, will be able to hold it back," \(^{34}\) was not armed and hence was easily crushed. Starting at Chingkangshan, Mao developed the base areas as the military-political foundation for a rural-centered Communist revolution.

The fall of the Kiangsi Soviet in 1934 and the hardships imposed by the Japanese and the KMT in 1941 resulted in personal triumphs for Mao, but they also posed great challenges for Mao's political paradigm. In 1935 Mao assumed a comprehensive leadership role in the CCP because of the failures of the 28 Bolsheviks and his own reputation for success. But the circumstances of the Long March and the struggle against Japan were a new experience for the CCP, and Mao's previously successful policies had to be reexamined from this vantage point. This required a significant paradigm extension in two directions, first, the general analysis of the new situation, and second, the abstraction and codification of paradigmatic principles. From 1935 to 1940, Mao produced numerous analyses of the new situation, concentrating on strategy for the Anti-Japanese War and the principles of cooperation in the Second United Front with the KMT. \(^{35}\) But in order to apply his
earlier successes to the new situation, Mao had to reflect on their inherent principles. This led to his concern with philosophy in 1937, and his two lectures "On Practice" and "On Contradiction" illustrate this theoretical effort.

In 1941, the KMT attack on the Communist New Fourth Army destroyed the last remaining base of Comintern power in the CCP and together with increased Japanese pressure ushered in a period of isolation and hardship for Yenan. Mao responded to the political opportunity and economic challenge by implementing a fundamental reconstitution of the CCP. This involved, in the ideological rectification campaigns of 1942 and 1943, the intensive struggle against subjectivism, sectarianism, and stereotyped writing, with positive emphasis on the study of concrete conditions. In the political economy of the base area, it led to what Mark Selden calls "the Yenan Way," a leadership style of integration with the masses and popular mobilization campaigns. This fleshing out of Mao's political paradigm by self-conscious, authoritative application made the uniqueness of Mao's politics within both the Chinese and the Marxist traditions quite striking.

The parameter of protracted revolutionary experience is most significant for the development of Mao's policies through the processes of investigation, trial and error, and re-application. These time-consuming processes allowed specific but relatively cumulative innovations. The richest period of Mao's policy development through experience was from the beginning of the Chingkangshan base area in late 1927 to the Second Congress of the Kiangsi Soviet in early 1934. In Mao's later, more theoretical writings,
he not only reaffirmed the basic policy innovations which resulted from his experience but he emphasized the primary importance to correct leadership of investigation, flexibility, and a grasp of the significant particularities of one's situation.

Investigation was the chief tool of Mao's policy development. As early as 1926, he suggested that cadres needed a personal interchange with the masses in order to formulate and implement effective policy.

Go to a village you are familiar with or to a strange village, in summer dry out in the hot sun, in winter face the severe cold of the wind and snow, and holding the peasants' hands ask them what they want. From their misery and needs lead them to organize; lead them to struggle with the local tyrants and bad gentry; lead them to cooperate with the workers, students, and middle and small merchants in the cities and set up a united front; lead them to participate in the anti-imperialist and anti-warlord national revolutionary movement.39

It is evident from this quotation (Mao's earliest "mass line" passage) and from Mao's rural investigations that the object of investigation is not simply to acquire an accurate picture of the present situation, but just as importantly, to unite with the masses and to determine for a particular place and time how to elicit maximum active popular support. Nevertheless, investigation was not simply a public relations ploy for the Party. As Mao pursued it, investigation was a relatively open-ended gathering of information about practically all aspects of village society. Although particularly sensitive to Marxist categories such as exploitation and class struggle, the richness and variety of information presented indicates a serious desire to learn a particular situation rather
than simply prove an already formed, abstract analysis. The importance of such information-gathering is that it enables leadership to be objective. Instead of relying on orders, or on what seems plausible, or on reports of subordinates, the leader who knows his area knows the object of his policy and can adjust it to secure maximum success. Therefore Mao at one time adopted the policy of "no investigation, no right to speak," reasoning that "when you have not probed into a problem, into the present facts and into its past history, and know nothing of its essentials, whatever you say about it will undoubtedly be nonsense." Investigation is not only essential for the formulation of appropriate policy, it is a continuing source of information about policy failures, inadequacies, and new environmental developments. It provides the stream of information which enables policy development by trial and error to occur. Of course, in extreme cases where success means survival, the confirmation of results isn't the problem. In one fast-moving sequence in 1928 which almost amounted to a controlled experiment, Mao built up the Chingkangshan base area, an outside emissary took over and it was decimated; Mao built it up again, another emissary took over and it was decimated again. More often, however, the defects of policy and of official personnel were not readily apparent. The effect of unsatisfactory policy and inapt leadership was not to cause protest from the masses but to cause alienation and apathy. The resulting "estrangement from the masses" (t'o-li ch'un-chung) let slip the regime's most important resource, its
capacity for popular mobilization.

Mao's personal lessons from trial and error were of a somewhat different sort, since he ordinarily dealt with subordinates rather than directly with the masses. One of the most interesting and significant sequences in the development of his policy by trial and error occurred in his administration of the Kiangsi Soviet from 1932 to 1934. When the Kiangsi Soviet was re-christened the Central Soviet Area of the Chinese Soviet Republic in late 1931 it was blessed with an imposing set of organic laws, and Mao, as its new chairman, tried to implement them. First he used the hierarchical authority system at his disposal to command that cadres implement the law according to concrete circumstances and avoid estrangement from the masses. Six months later when these commands were evidently ineffective, Mao ordered extensive local elections in order to replace bad officials and to bring in new activists. This was in effect asking incompetent officials to implement an election whose effectiveness would be judged by their own removal, and not surprisingly, it was a total failure. He then tried to stimulate a variety of local campaigns, with mixed results. Finally, in the summer of 1933, Mao initiated the Land Investigation Movement. This was done very carefully. He selected eight counties for special attention and called a large, three-day meeting of their cadres, during which his proposal for the movement was discussed and amended. Simple standards were promulgated for analysing class membership, the most important technical aspect of the movement. The progress of the eight counties received much publicity during the summer,
and difficult cases were publically analysed and decided. Finally, at the end of the summer the experience of the eight counties was summarized and the movement became general. By this process, Mao incorporated the initiative of his subordinates into the campaign and avoided his earlier self-defeating "commandism."

Policy development through reapplication involves the generalization of previous experience, the analysis of the present situation, and a corresponding adaptation of policy. Examples of this within Mao's policy abound. The technique of the Land Investigation Movement of 1933 was reapplied and developed in various Yenan campaigns in the 1940's. When the CCP returned to a more radical land policy in 1946-1947, Mao's class analyses of 1933 were republished with commentary and amendments. An easily overlooked instance of reapplication was the origin of many Yenan policies in the innovations of other anti-Japanese base areas. In general, as a variety of policy experience accumulated, it became useful to reach back to analogs in Party history in developing new campaigns.

The basic principle of policy development which underlies investigation, trial and error, and reapplication is that of the mass line:

Take the ideas of the masses and concentrate them, then go to the masses, persevere in the ideas and carry them through, so as to form correct ideas of leadership—such is the basic method of leadership.

What is described here is not a proprietary right to be the vanguard of the masses, but a painful leadership process in which integration with the masses makes them the origin and test
of policy. Investigation establishes a commonality of perspective, and it is retained through a willingness to correct errors and avoid estrangement from the masses. In the crooked path of revolutionary development, the possibility of using proven policy is a welcome one, but reapplication is not a mere transfer of policy. Mao's chief epistemological conviction, the primacy of practice and the difficulty and transcience of correct conceptual understanding, underscores the importance of the continual dialectic between leaders and masses. Finally, Mao's basic political conviction of the invincible power of the mobilized masses guaranteed success to correct leadership.

**Conclusion: Mao's Revolutionary Paradigm**

At this point it is worthwhile to formulate a systematic statement of the essentials of Mao's political paradigm, to juxta- pose it to the paradigm which it replaced, and finally to evaluate the significance of Mao's contribution within the context of the parameters already described. Because the paradigm was present in practice before it was generalized in theory, it would have been misleading to have begun with a concise statement of principle.

The focus of Mao's politics was to effect revolutionary change by providing correct leadership to the masses. Several aspects of this focus are noteworthy, the primary one being its action orientation. Mao's political thinking centered on practical decision points and attempted to supply the theoretical prerequisites of correct leadership: an accurate analysis of the
situation and an advocacy of the most practical alternative. Only
the new demands of the 1935-1949 period, namely, to supply comprehen-
sive guidance to the CCP and to adapt his experience to new
situations, required a more abstract statement of his political
thinking. The "Thought of Mao Tse-tung" emerged from the thinking
of Mao Tse-tung because of the paradigmatic functions which the
latter assumed.

A second important aspect of this focus is Mao's conviction
that popular mobilization is the ultimate political power. This
is Mao's oldest and strongest political conviction. 47 Mao's
exhortation to "serve the people" does not stem from a Kantian
sense of duty for duty's sake; here morality and political prag-
metics are inseparable. Revolutionary change depends on the ac-
tive participation of the masses for its likelihood of success
and for the permanence of its accomplishments.

A third aspect is Mao's emphasis on correctness of leader-
ship rather than the truth of universal principles or the fidelity
of leadership. This is not simply a re-reversal of Sun Yat-sen's
slogan "Action is easy but knowledge is difficult" back to its
classical form. Mao contends that knowledge and action are
inseparable—meaning however that correct (useful) knowledge
and correct (appropriate) action are inseparable. The problem
of both revolutionary theory and revolutionary praxis is that of
uniting situational particulars with ideological universals.
The epistemological and ontological underpinning of this assertion
of the problematic unity of theory and practice is made clear in
Mao's essays "On Practice" and "On Contradiction." Mao maintains that theory emerges from practice and has its justification in its application to practice. The interaction of theory and practice is a constant process because not only does the complexity of the objective world make a satisfactory theory difficult to attain, but environmental changes constantly invalidate previously successful understandings. Mao's epistemological position is not the relativistic one of "there is no universal truth;" it is the practical one of "correctness is difficult to achieve and never final." His position does imply that there is no universal correctness, and he supports this view with an ontology which differs significantly from the Engels-Stalin one based on the universality of contradiction. Mao also assumes the dialectical materialist thesis of the universality of contradiction, but he emphasizes (with a hint of his own originality) the particularity of contradiction. This principle, like his epistemological one, stresses the need to make a concrete analysis of each situation in order to determine the principal contradiction, and of each contradiction in order to determine the principal aspect. The flux of categorial identities which is implied by dialectics allows no particular contradictions to be derived without concrete investigations from more universal ones. Mao states that sometimes relations of production are more important than productive forces, theory more important than practice, and superstructure more important than the economic base. The decisive factor is the actual opportunity for revolutionary action
in a particular situation. Mao's approach to dialectical materialism leads him to a small nesting of analytical tools (situation, principal contradiction, process, principal aspect) and one "outsider"--the distinction between antagonistic and non-antagonistic contradictions. It does not allow him to build an ontology out of dialectics, neither a methodological strenge Wissenschaft in the Hegelian-Marxist sense nor an empirical Dialektik der Natur as with Engels and Stalin.

The conflict between Mao's revolutionary paradigm and the one represented by the 28 Bolsheviks fits Kuhn's description of a paradigm clash. The 28 Bolsheviks insisted (seconded in the 1960's and 1970's by the Russians)\(^5\) that they were the faithful Communist leaders who had been replaced by a petty bourgeois peasant. On the other hand, correctness, understood as aptness for survival and popular mobilization, was the standard by which the Stalinist leadership was tried and found wanting. The stepchild of borrowed Marxist-Leninist theory, practical work among the peasantry, eventually provided the base, the paradigm, and the leadership of the CCP. It appeared that faithfulness in ideological transfer yielded to the pragmatism of successful revolutionary experience.

But the dichotomy of faithful internationalists and experienced pragmatists, and the description of the development as "the decay of ideology," can easily be overemphasized. Although Franz Schurmann's distinction\(^5\) between the "pure ideology" of Marxism and the "practical ideology" of the thought of Mao Tse-tung is too simplistic, it is undoubtedly correct in its presumption of
a continuing, important role for Marxist-Leninist theory in China. The Chinese formula that Mao creatively applied Marxism-Leninism to Chinese conditions is least inaccurate, but the word "creatively" bears far too heavy a burden of meaning. The chief problem with any of these formulations is not that they are mistaken, but that they fail to grasp the peculiar significance of Mao Tsetung's political paradigm for China and for contemporary political theory. Mao not only provided successful leadership for the Chinese revolution, he focussed the attention of revolutionaries in China on the practical problems of mass leadership, and provided the judgements of significance, the concepts, and the authoritative directives which shaped the CCP's popular mobilization. In doing this Mao's political paradigm did not replace Marxism in China, although it did mediate its effects on policy. Mao's paradigm did replace the vital but theoretically insignificant Leninist concept of tactics with a populist revolutionary pragmatism. Not surprisingly, this new dimension of revolutionary thinking in China did not emerge through ideological debates but through the lessons of dogmatic failure and practical policy successes. The parameters of the Chinese revolution set Mao's intellectual milieu and some aspects of his style, and allowed the germination and growth of his paradigm through protracted struggle. Because of this context, Mao's thought is peculiarly Chinese: appropriate for Chinese conditions, and deferring to the universal truths of Marxism-Leninism. But with the understanding of its context, Mao's thought lends itself to an especially benign
form of cross-cultural political stimulation, as well as being central to the understanding of the ideological development of contemporary China. Unlike the thesis of the universality of a particular scheme of concepts or contradictions, Mao's stress on the universality of their particularity conveys an attitude of flexible attention toward problems rather than a predisposition about solutions. The thesis of the unity of theory and practice emphasizes the responsibility of correct leadership rather than its dogmatic or hierarchical prerogatives. And the mass line emphasizes policy making through the people rather than on behalf of the people. It might plausibly be argued that to abstract such meta-political principles from Mao's thought is an emasculation of his Marxist revolutionary commitment. However, it seems to me that such an objection rests on a notion of ideological transfer which Mao found too simplistic for his own needs.
FOOTNOTES


4 Li Tse-hou, K'ang Yu-wei T'an Ssu-t'ung ssu-hsiang yen-chiu (A Study of the Thought of K'ang Yu-wei and T'an Ssu-t'ung) Shanghai: Jen-min Ch'u-pan she, 1958, p. 104-105.

5 Liang Ch'i-ch'ao's attempt to locate the Chinese Renaissance in the development of Ch'ing thought appears anomalous. See Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, Intellectual Trends in the Ch'ing Period, tr. C. Y. Hsu (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959). However, the attempt to summarize Ch'ing intellectual developments nine years after the dynasty's collapse already indicates Liang's consciousness of a gulf between the present and the recent past which has already relegated the latter to history.

6 This is a double allusion to Hegel. First, there is a significant parallel between Hegel's view of Germany between the French Revolution and the Restoration and the situation of China at the turn of the century. As Schlomo Avineri points out in Hegel and the Modern State (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1972), Hegel rejoiced in the prospect of an irrational, superannuated Germany being reborn in the spirit of French rationalism. Secondly, Heinrich Heine related that Hegel explained his famous statement that "what is real, is reasonable," by saying that "all that is reasonable, must be." H. Heine, Zur Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland, ed. Wolfgang Harich (Frankfurt: Insel, 1965), p. 210.

7 This is Li Tse-hou's evaluation in his excellent article, "Lun Yen Fu" (On Yen Fu) in Li-shih Yen-chiu (Historical Studies) no. 2, 1977, p. 67-80.

8 Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, Intellectual Trends, p. 113.

9 Ibid., p. 106.
"Spätkapitalismus." A term originated by Werner Sombart to describe capitalism since 1914. See his Der moderne Kapitalismus (Berlin: Duncker und Humbolt, 1927), vol. 5, p. xi-xii.

This notion was used by Veblen to explain the rapid rise of Imperial Germany to industrial prominence from 1870 to 1914. The idea is that the borrower takes only what is useful and at its latest stage of development, whereas the innovator not only bears the innovation costs, but also bears the encumbrance of earlier and increasingly inappropriate social forms and capital investments. See The Portable Veblen (New York: Viking, 1961), p. 349-378.


The situation is well described in Pa Chin's novel, Family (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1964).


Laurence Schneider, Ku Chieh-kang, p. 13.

To apply Imre Lakatos's typology of falsifications to political paradigms, "dogmatic" and "methodological" falsifications are not easily proven, although his "sophisticated methodological falsification," in which abandonment of an approach requires the presence of a more inclusive alternative, might have some application. See Imre Lakatos, "Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programs," in Lakatos and Musgrave, ed., Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970) p. 91-196.


For instance, in the early 1930's KMT ideology had the tendency to declare itself operative through the adoption of model legislation which was ignored in practice.

This example is taken from Tang Tsou, "Mao Tse-tung's Thought, the Last Struggle for Succession, and the Post-Mao Era," China Quarterly no. 71 (Sept. 1977).
Some apparently successful policies might be "opportunist," sacrificing the possibility of revolutionary advance for the satisfaction of present wants.


Snow, Red Star, p. 143-144.


See Stuart Schram's translation and analysis of this work in China Quarterly, no. 49 (Jan-Mar 1972), p. 76-106.


For instance, in a 1920 article Mao refers to the necessity of having a party out of power to balance the party in power, but gives no indication of the source for this unoriginal but non-Chinese thesis. See Angus McDonald's translations in China Quarterly, no. 68 (Dec 1976), p. 768-777, especially "More on the 'Promotion Movement'," p. 772.


By empiricism I mean an orientation toward investigation and fact, not the subjectivist error of empiricism condemned by Mao.

This is most evident in the 1920 articles translated by McDonald.

34 Selected Works, I, 23.
35 See Selected Works I, II.
36 Selected Works I, 295-346.
37 Selected Works III.
39 Collected Works I, 175.
40 Mao conducted many extensive rural investigations, particularly in Kiangsi. For an indication of how he went about it, see "Preface and Postscript to Rural Surveys," Selected Works III, 11-16.
41 I have in mind particularly his "Hsingkuo Tiao-ch' a" (Investigation of Hsingkuo), Collected Works II, 185-253.
43 See "Struggle in the Chingkang Mountains," in Selected Works I, 74-78.
44 This is described in greater detail in Brantly Womack, "The Practical Roots of Mao Tse-tung's Political Thought, 1919-1935," presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Asian Studies in 1976.
46 Selected Works III, 120.
47 For age, see "Great Union of the Popular Masses" (1917). For strength, an example from 1946: "Speaking of U.S. imperialism people seem to feel that it is terrifically strong. Chinese reactionaries are using the 'strength' of the United States to frighten the Chinese people. But it will be proved that the U.S. reactionaries like all the reactionaries in history do not have much strength. In the United States there are others who are really strong—the American people." From "Talk with Anna Louise Strong," Selected Works IV, 101.

50 Selected Works I, 335-336.

51 See, for example, Critique of Mao Tse-tung's Theoretical Conceptions (Moscow: Progress, 1972).