

Red China's boss is far from a Tito



Mao Tse-tung. *America is the enemy—
Russia the friend.*

Few men in history have risen to power so fast as Mao Tse-tung, Communist ruler of 450 million Chinese. Three years ago he was directing his ragged followers from a cave in Yen-an. Today, if he wished, he could hurl into battle the largest army ever put together.

To leaders in both Eastern and Western capitals, Mao is a question mark. Few Westerners have met Red China's boss. One who did, Robert Payne—biographer, teacher, student and traveler in the Far East—recently brought out the first full-length biography of the Red leader (*Mao Tse-tung* Henry Schuman, New York: \$3.50). It will disturb those who think Mao is an agrarian reformer or a Chinese Tito.

Bookworm. Mao Tse-tung was born in the village of Shao Shan in 1893. His father was a "hard-bitten peasant with a taste for the Confucian classics." He put Mao to work in the rice fields at the age of 7. Mao hated the work, wanted only to read. He studied continually and at 14 he went off to school in near-by Hsiang-hsiang, carrying all he owned in two crumpled bags. The other students hated the "dirty little peasant from Shao Shan."

To Mao the peasants were the most important people because they had energy. Soon he came to demand "energy" in everything. He and a friend took to wandering the countryside dressed only in shorts. When the peasants laughed at them, Mao said: "The sun is the source of health. Isn't it the sun which makes the rice grow? Then why wear too many clothes?"

In October 1911, when the fourth Kuomintang revolution broke out, Mao was at Changsha Junior College. With other students he joined the revolutionary army, wound up doing garrison duty.

The next year, restless and undecided on a vocation, he entered the Changsha Teachers College. He stayed six years, began reading books on Communism and finally became a "pure" Marxist.

OldMagazineArticles.com

Poetry and Marxism. In 1918, he got a job in the University of Peking library and became interested in poetry. He found that he was becoming more and more the faithful Communist party-liner. In 1921 he organized a demonstration on the anniversary of the Russian Revolution. When the Chinese Communists gathered for their first Party Congress in Shanghai in 1921, Mao was among them.

The Communists adopted a policy of co-operation with the Kuomintang. The strategy was to bore from within and seize control of the party of Sun Yat-Sen, father of the Chinese Republic. But Chiang Kai-shek outfoxed the Reds. When his Nationalist revolution was successful in 1927 he anticipated the Red revolt and ordered the Communists crushed.

Civil war broke out between Mao, who had taken over leadership of the Chinese Reds, and the Kuomintang. Chiang won the first round which ended in Mao's retreat in 1934—the famous 6,000-mile march north to Yen-an. Japan's invasion brought a truce in the civil war in 1937, but after World War II the Communists renewed their feud with Chiang, and eventually won all of China.

Marxist Mao. By 1948 Mao sounded more like a party hack than a dedicated student: "The particular task," he said, "of the Chinese Communists . . . is to drive out American imperialism, overthrow the reactionary rule of the Kuomintang and establish a unified democratic people's republic in alliance with the Soviet Union." America was now the enemy—even more than the Kuomintang. The USSR was the great and good friend, although even then the Russians were stripping Manchuria of food and industries.

Payne insists that Mao is no Tito, that wherever possible he will work hand in hand with the Kremlin for the world revolution. Although steeped in knowledge of the Chinese classics and culture he is almost completely ignorant of the outside world. For one so learned, Mao is dangerous—because of this ignorance.

"It is possible," writes Payne, "that the complexities of the international scene may in the end confound him. He knows well only the peasants."

Pathfinder

NOVEMBER 15, 1950

p . 15

OldMagazineArticles.com