

Hammer And Sickle

Chinese Soviet Coins Intriguing

By Patrick D. Hogan

In 1935 at the Tsunyi conference, an enlarged session of the Chinese Communist politburo was held. It united the nominal and actual leadership of the Communist party of China in the hands of one person, Mao Tze-tung.

This symbolized the final liquidation of the policy of the Twenties, in which the party was concerned with organizing urban industrial labor and with fomenting armed urban uprisings in hopes of capturing major industrial centers. Henceforth, the party was to shift its activity to the rural districts. This policy had been instituted by Mao as early as 1927. Mao recognized that for the time being there could be no victory in the cities where the enemy, Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang party (KMT), was strong.

His policy was to encircle and to seize the cities by means of armed revolutionary rural districts. This policy was implemented along two lines: the development of trained, disciplined Red armies able to withstand the attacks of the KMT troops, and the organization of political power in whatever areas could be brought under Communist control, in the form of soviets, following the model of the Russian Revolution.

The first soviet had been established in 1927 in the Haifeng and Lufeng counties of Kwangtung province. The Hailufeng soviet was short-lived, as was the Canton soviet which followed it in December 1927. But after this the Red army grew in size and power and brought several soviet areas under its control. Mao had retreated from Hunan to Chingkangshan in southern Kiangsi province in September 1927.

Here he organized and strengthened his military units in the secluded mountains of the Hunan-Kiangsi border region. A border region, as defined by Mao, was an area between two or more provinces where the military and administrative control of the provincial authorities was at its weakest. Mao's army was designated the First division of the Chinese Workers' and Peasants' Red army. This officially established what was to be the basis for the Communist drive to final victory over the next two decades.

In April 1928 Mao was joined by Chu Teh; together they had an army of 10,000 troops. Between 1927 and 1931 over 26 Red armies were organized by the Communists in various provinces of China with an enrollment of about 60,000 men, half of which were in Mao's area.

The growth of these soviet areas was not entirely due to Red army conquest. The Communists made a direct appeal to the peasants of war-torn and warlord dominated China through their land reform program. Landlords and rich peasants by the thousands lost their lives in Mao's area alone. Though the soviet areas were more local at the start they grew to include several

counties in one or more provinces. Finally on November 7, 1931, the First National Congress of Soviets was convoked at Juichin, capital of Mao's Kiangsi soviet.

Mao and Chu had been active in eastern Kiangsi and had shifted to this area as a base in 1930. Ching kangshan was later retaken by Red army units from the south and became the Kiangsi-Hunan soviet. At Juichin the establishment of a Chinese Soviet Republic was proclaimed, embracing all the soviet areas of China proper. In this All-China Congress of Soviets the following were the principal areas represented: We Kiangsi (or central) soviet area, the West Fukien soviet area, the Hunan-Hupeh-Kiangsi border soviet area, the Northeast Kiangsi soviet area, the West Hupeh-Hunan soviet area, and the Hupeh-Honan-Anhwei border soviet area.

The territorial bases of these areas comprised about 300 counties scattered through 11 of the 18 provinces of China proper or roughly one-sixth of the area of China proper. According to Communist sources the population was over 60 million. The central soviet area, or Kiangsi, contained a population of 15 million, itself.

The soviet areas were entirely autonomous. The Communists maintained their own police and bureaucracy. Banks were established and issued their own banknotes, and in some instances, their own coins. Post offices were instituted and postage stamps printed. Even after the establishment of the Chinese Soviet Republic the separated areas maintained a great deal of autonomy due to lack of communications.

The West Hupeh-Hunan soviet area included adjacent areas in Szechuan and Kweichow provinces and was controlled by the Second Red army under Ho Lung, Chou Yi-Ch'un and Tuan Tech'ang. Some speculation exists over the rare coins attributed to Hunan province. Some authorities consider them bogus. There were two major varieties of one yuan coins attributed to this area, the "Lenin dollar" and the "Hammer and Sickle in star dollar."

The "Lenin dollar" bears a bust of Lenin facing right within a circle. Above is the inscription, Chung-kuo Su-wei-ai Tsao, literally, "Chinese Soviet Republic Issue". Below Lenin is a wreath. On the reverse at the top is the date in Chinese, I-chiu-san-i Nien, "1931 year." The center bears the value, I-yuan (one), within Chinese Communist symbols. Below is the inscription, Kung-nung Yin-hang, "Public Farmers' Bank."

The "star dollar" contains the legend, Hu-nan Sheng Su-wei-ai Cheng-fu, "Hunan Province Soviet Government". The date at the bottom reads, I-chiu-san-i Nien-chih, "Made in the Year 1931." In the center is the communist emblem within a star. The reverse is dominated by the value, I-yuan (one), within a wreath.

There were three soviet areas partially within the bounds of Hunan province. The West Hupeh-Hunan soviet area was the largest and most important and therefore it is surmised that this is the particular area that issued these coins. Proof of this is lacking.

Hupeh-Honan-Anhwei border soviet area was controlled by the First Red army under Chang Kuo-t'ao and Hsu Hsiang-ch'ien. They arrived from Hailufeng soviet in 1928 and remained until

the KMT troops drove them west in 1932. Coins issued by this soviet were also in dollar sizes and of two main varieties.

One of the coins has a garbled Russian script which is probably an attempt to state "Soviet Republic area." Above this pseudo-Russian legend is the date in Chinese, I-chiu-san-erh Nien Tsao, "1932 Year Issued." In the center is the value, I-yuan (one). On the reverse around a globe, on which is a map of China with a hammer and sickle superimposed, is the legend, Ch'uan Shih-chieh Wu-ch'an Chieh-chi Lien-ho Ch'i-lai, a Chinese translation of the Communist slogan "Workers of the World, Unite!."

The second dollar has a reverse similar to the preceding only the characters are inscribed from left to right. The obverse of this coin is also read from left to right, O-Yu-Wan Sheng Su-wei-ai Cheng-fu, "Hupeh-Honan-Anhwei provinces Soviet Government." The characters O, Yu and Wan are the literary names for these provinces. At the bottom is the bank inscription as on the "Lenin dollar" and the year in Chinese, Kungnung Yin-bang I-chiu-san-erh Nien Tsao.

In October 1932, Chiang Kai-shek and Ho Ying-ch'ing drove the Red armies out of Hupeh-Honan-Anhwei and the nearby Hunghu soviet area in southern Hupeh. These forces entered Szechwan from the north in 1933. Here they set up the Eastern Szechwan soviet area.

The Eastern Szechwan soviet area, or simply Chuan-shen, the new habitat of the First Red army, also comprised much of southern Shensi province. Here the leaders of O-Yu-Wan built a new base. Coins were issued here in three denominations. Copper Coins were issued in 1933 and 1934.

The first Chuan-shen coin of the value of 200 wen, bears the "Workers of the World, Unite!" inscription, and a Russian monogram at the bottom. In the center is the Communist emblem and three stars. The obverse bears the inscription, Chuan-shan Sheng Su-wei-ai, Chuan for Ssu-chuan and Shan for Shan-hsi (Shensi). The legend is from left to right. In the center of the reverse is the value, 200. At the bottom is the date in Chinese, 1933.

A smaller, not-so-crude, 200 wen was struck with the Latin date 1934, but with an inverted 4. Separated by a five-pointed star is the legend, Ch'uan Ch'uan Hua Ch'ih, which probably means "Szechwan will be completely changed to Red." On the obverse is a legend similar to the preceding coin, "Szechwan-Shensi Soviet." At the sides are two characters, T'ung-pi, denoting "copper money". Below is the value in Chinese Erh-tang-wen, "200 Wen." The numeral, 200, dominates the center.

The obverse of the 500 wen coin is similar but with the following differences: the character, wu, replaces erh to denote the higher value; the 200 is replaced by a 500, and two stars replace the characters, T'ung-pi. The reverse has the "Workers. . ." slogan at the top and the date, I-chiu-san-ssu Nien, "1934 Year" at the bottom. The communist emblem is super-imposed on a star over a wreath.

The silver yuan, of which there are several minor varieties concerning the design, is inscribed on the obverse, Chung-hua Su-wei-ai Kung-ho-kuo, "Chinese Soviet Republic." Below the central value, which is similar to the O-Yu-Wan dollar, is the legend, Ch'uan-shan Sheng

Tsao-pi Ch'ang-tso, literally "Szechuan-Shensi Provinces currency issue, long issue". I-yuan (one) is in the center.

The reverse is also similar to the 0-Yu-Wan issue, the central design being the same and the "Workers. . ." slogan at the top. At the bottom, however, is the legend, I-chiu-san-ssu Men "1934 Year."

The Kiangsi provincial soviet had been set up on February 7, 1930 in T'ungku. This brought the several Kiangsi Communist-controlled areas together into one soviet. The soviet grew due to the KMT preoccupation with the Japanese invasion of Manchuria. Then in November the Congress of Soviets was held at Juichin and proclaimed the Chinese Soviet Republic.

Coins issued by this republic are ascribed to Kiangsi, alone, and it is doubtful that few of the republic's coins were received in areas not adjacent to the central soviet, but the issues were probably meant to circulate freely in all the soviets. Three values were struck by the republic. The one fen coin is inscribed, Chung-hua Su-wei-ai, Kung-ho-kuo, "Chinese Soviet Republic." The numeral 1, super-imposed over the hammer-and-sickle emblem composes the central design. On the reverse, within a cereal wreath and below a star, is the value, I-fen (one). This coin is undated, but is assumed to be issued in 1932. The five fen coin has a similar reverse with the value stated, Fen-wu.

The obverse bears the CSR legend and at the bottom is an additional value indicator, Mei-erh-shih Mei Tang Kuo Pi I-yuan. This roughly means, "Twenty of these equal one yuan." Within a beaded circle is map of China with the Chinese Communist emblems.

A two chiao coin was struck in several minor varieties bearing the dates 1932 and 1933. At the top is the CSR legend, the value erh-chiao takes up the center and at the bottom is the date, "Universal Year 1932, or 1933". On the reverse is the globe-map symbols emblem within a wreath. The legend, Mei-wu Mei Tang I-yuan, "Five of these are equal to one yuan", is at the top.

At the time of the First Congress of Soviets the KMT troops had concluded the third "annihilation campaign" against the central (Kiangsi) soviet. This campaign had been conducted in July, 1931, with 300,000 troops under Chiang Kai-shek. The fourth campaign started in June 1932, with 500,000 troops and was conducted against other soviet areas as well, resulting in the evacuation of Hupeh-Honan-Anhwei by the First Red army.

Chiang's fifth campaign, in October 1933, was comprised of a million troops and 200 airplanes. A tight blockade was placed around the five principal soviet areas. In March 1934, the KMT campaign was intensified and Moscow radioed instructions to evacuate the Red units and seek safety elsewhere. Thus, in October 1934, 130,000 Red army troops broke out of the blockade and began the famous Long March.

Other soviet areas followed suit and tried to fight their way to join the main force, whose destination was still unknown. The main body pursued a route along which a similarly besieged revolutionary leader, Shih Ta-k'ai, a Tai-ping general of the 1850's, had traveled. The KMT drove the Red armies south towards Kweichow province, where they captured Tsunyi.

Here the Politburo decided that Northern Shensi, held by Kao Kang and Liu Chih-tan would be their final destination. The decision to go north was prompted by three main thoughts. It was remote from the KMT center of power, near the Mongolian, and therefore Soviet Union, border and near the Japanese invaders where popular support for themselves could be gained by resisting the Japanese.

The KMT policy in annihilating the remnants of the Kiangsi forces was to drive them into areas controlled by southwestern warlords. Here the Red armies would be confronted by the warlord forces and either, or both, would be weakened by such encounters. Thus, Chiang was not unhappy to see the Red army turn towards Szechwan province, a heavily populated area controlled by warlords. However, the Red army headed west into remote, mountainous Sikang province and then penetrated the equally remote northwestern part of Szechwan.

In July they reached Maoerhkai near the Szechwan-Sikang border and were joined by Hsu Hsiang-ch'ien and Chang Kuo-t'ao, who had been moving in this direction from Eastern Szechwan. On October 22, 1935, Mao's forces reached their destination after a full year of an 8,000 mile trek. Soon they seized Yen-an and made this their capital city in December 1936.

Had Chiang Kai-shek followed up against the Red armies in Shensi the Communists might well have been annihilated after a protracted civil war. Mao was well aware of this and was very thankful that renewed pressure from the Japanese prevented this. At Maoerhkai the Communists had decided upon a new policy, known as the anti-Japanese National United Front. To Chiang they made a special appeal, promising co-operation with him against the Japanese and within a National Defense government. In 1937 the Chinese Soviet Republic was thus disbanded and the former soviet area government was organized into special governments within the Republic of China.

Northern Shensi became the Shen Kan-Ning special border government and the Red army became the Eighth Route Army of the Nationalist government. However, both the Red units and the KMT units spent as much time fighting each other as they did the Japanese during the Sino-Japanese War, 1937-1945. At the end of this war the Chinese Communists had well over eight million troops under arms and quickly replaced the evacuating Japanese in North China and Manchuria.

In 1947 the final confrontation with the Nationalists began which eventually led to the capture of mainland China and the expelling of the Nationalists to Formosa. On October 1, 1949, the People's Republic of China was proclaimed, which in Chinese is called Chung-hua Jen-min Kung-ho-kuo.

Bibliography

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Tang, Peter S. H., "Communist China Today. Vol. 1, Domestic and Foreign Policies," Washington, 1961. Acknowledgements

Acknowledgements

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Sources and Notes:

Article was an insert (in Coin News (?) magazine called WORLD COINS, Sidney Ohio, March 1969; pp 216 - 220 +p. 224.

The article contained the following photos and captions:

p. 216 - Y 513.2 "Communist Dollar, 1934"

p. 217 - Soviet Areas Map

p.218 - Y 513.1 (Szechuan-Shensi Soviet): "Several varieties exist of the Communist silver dollar of Szechuan and Shensi provinces, issued in 1934 (Kann 808). Coin measures 38 millimeters; it is illustrated above in actual size and earlier (p. 216) with an enlarged obverse, each different varieties."

p. 219 - KM# 1 (Min-Che-Kan Soviet): "Fantasy silver dollar size piece portrays Lenin facing right, dated 1934, and read in Chinese: FUKIEN, CHEKIANG, KIANGSI. This piece is from a collection formed by W. von Halle, sold by Glendining and Co. of London, England on November 24, 1966, for \$129. Genuine 1931 Lenin dollars issued by Chinese Communists do exist, according to the late Eduard Kann."

p. 220 - Y 508 (Chinese Soviet Republic): "Bringing \$67 in the November 1966 Glendining sale was a silver 20 cent piece issued in Kiangsi by Chinese Communist army forces in 1932. Coin is 1 ¼ millimeters thick, weighs 5.5 grams. Eduard Kann recorded that he possessed 18 varieties of this coin, though many more are known to exist."