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The Chinese Soviet Republic

The Chinese Soviet Republic is a collection of bulletins, letters, telegrams, and other documents originating from the Chinese Soviet Republic, a short-lived communist state founded by Mao Zedong and Zhu De on November 7, 1931, the fourteenth anniversary of Russia's October Revolution.

Originally encompassing a narrow strip of land in the mountainous border region between Jiangxi and Hunan Provinces, the Chinese Soviet Republic (known in China as the Jiangxi-Fujian Soviet or, more officially, as the "Central Revolutionary Base") rapidly expanded, eventually controlling an area of 27,000 square miles—roughly the size of South Carolina. Because the CSR had its own national bank, printed its own money, and collected its own taxes, this is considered the beginning of the Two Chinas.

The Chinese Soviet Republic was the largest portion of Republican China territory to operate under communist control until the 1949 establishment of the People's Republic of China. As such, it was very much a "prototype" of what was to come. Led and inspired by Mao Zedong from 1931 to 1934, the Chinese Soviet Republic developed into a miniature model of fully functioning Communist society. This meant complete Communist Party control of the government, a Red Amy, a Party-led judiciary and educational system, and an economy that sustained this mini-state for years until it could no longer withstand its primary adversary, Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist Army.

The sudden success of the CSR prompted Chiang Kai-shek to launch a series of military operations in the region with the goal of encircling and destroying it. These encirclement campaigns, known in official Chinese communist historiography as the Agrarian Revolutionary War. Facing annihilation, Mao was forced to end the experiment of the CSR and begin in late 1934 what became known as his Long March, a strategic retreat to sanctuary and survival in the north of China. But the lessons of running China's first Communist State, and indeed in the establishment of "Two Chinas," served Mao and his comrades well when their time came again in 1949.

Key Stats

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Even now, in the 21st-Century People's Republic of China, the history of the development of Communist China is closely guarded and controlled, and many areas remain completely off limits for social scientists. In the decades immediately following the establishment of the People's Republic, the dearth of information about the early history of Communist China was nearly absolute. The first systematic acquisition of key source materials in this respect was managed by curators of the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace at Stanford University. These source materials were acquired in in the early 1960s in Taiwan by Hoover personnel working with the Hon. Chen Cheng, who was then the Vice President and Premier of the Republic of China. In earlier years, Chen Cheng had amassed these materials as one of the top generals in the Nationalist Army. Chen personally led Nationalist forces against Mao's Chinese Soviet Republic, and it was precisely Chen's actions that forced Mao to undertake his Long March.

The many thousands of pages of documents gathered by Hoover Institution archivists were microfilmed to preserve them and make them available to scholars worldwide. Nothing of their kind had ever before been available outside China. Because of the tremendous significance of the collection, later known as the Chen Cheng Collection at Hoover, a detailed finding aid was created by Tien-Wei Wu at Harvard University's Harvard-Yenching Library. Mr. Wu's finding aid (completed in 1981) has provided the key organizational structure to the present, digital edition of

the Chen Cheng Collection, the first of its kind.

With ***Chinese Soviet Republic***, the history of the Chinese Communist Party and its first significant concrete incarnation, the Chinese Soviet Republic, are now accessible as never before. Each document in this collection is richly tagged, full-text searchable, and dynamically discoverable. Users can browse by people, places, and topics (as identified by the collection's editors), as well as document types (e.g., despatch, map, telegram, letter, etc.). Each object is also georeferenced in a map view, both by geographic origin of the document and by locations associated with items in the collection.

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