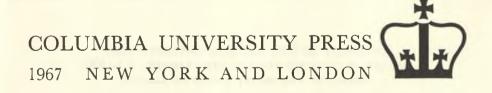
BIOGRAPHICAL DICTIONARY OF REPUBLICAN CHINA

HOWARD L. BOORMAN, Editor RICHARD C. HOWARD, Associate Editor

VOLUME I: AI-CH'Ü



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Ai Ch'ing: see CHIANG HAI-CH'ENG.

Ai Ssu-ch'i 艾思奇

Ai Ssu-ch'i (1905–22 March 1966), ideologue, became prominent in the Chinese Communist movement as a popularizer of Marxist-Leninist theories in such works as his *Ta-chung che-hsueh* [philosophy for the masses] and in his articles in the Communist party magazine *Hsueh-hsi* [study].

Virtually nothing is known of Ai Ssu-ch'i's family background or his childhood other than that he was born in T'engch'ung on the Burma border of Yunnan and that his ancestral home reportedly was in Chekiang province. It may be surmised that the family must have been in reasonably comfortable circumstances and that as a boy Ai received a formal education, for it is known that he went to Japan and studied

philosophy there.

On his return to China, probably in the early 1930's, Ai Ssu-ch'i made his debut in the world of letters as one of the editors of *Tu-shu sheng-huo* [intellectual life], a leftist publication which was founded at Shanghai in 1933 and which became very popular among young students throughout China. Ai Ssu-ch'i's associates at that time included Chang Han-fu, later to be a vice minister of foreign affairs at Peking; Liu Shih, who figured prominently in the National Salvation Association organized at Shanghai early in 1935; and Li Kung-p'u, a leader of the same association who was among the so-called seven gentlemen of the group imprisoned by the National Government.

In 1934 Ai Ssu-ch'i attracted attention with a series of articles in *Tu-shu sheng-huo* in which he defended orthodox Marxism against the polemics of Yeh Ch'ing (Jen Cho-hsuan, q.v.), whom the leaders of the Chinese Communist party labeled a Trotskyist. The controversy revolved around the claim that dialectical materialism is an absolute and fixed truth beyond scientific proof, a belief to which Yeh

Ch'ing did not subscribe. Ai held that Marxism is superior to science and that it alone is the theory of society and the law of social change. Unlike other philosophies, it cannot perish, Ai asserted.

Ai became a member of the Chinese Communist party in 1935. He then began writing on Marxism-Leninism in the vernacular for the benefit of the less intellectual, and during the next few years he produced some of the works which brought him popularity. In 1936 he published Ssu-hsiang fang-fa lun [on methods of thinking], which elucidated the theory that dialectical materialism is the only scientific method of thought, and Che-hsueh chiang-hua [philosophical talks], which formed the conceptual basis of much of his later work. He was also cotranslator with Cheng I-li of a popular manual on Marxism called Hsin che-hsueh ta-kang [outline of the new philosophy], published in June 1936.

In the same year Ai Ssu-ch'i wrote what is perhaps his most widely read treatise, Ta-chung che-hsueh [philosophy for the masses]. Over the years this book went through more than 30 printings, became one of the most popular volumes on Marxism in China, and was endorsed by the Chinese Communist party as a suitable introduction to the study of Marxism-Leninism. In this book Ai Ssu-ch'i demonstrated his ability to make abstract concepts palatable by utilizing vocabulary drawn from proverbs and traditional Chinese literature. This technique proved very useful in introducing impressionable young students to Marxism-Leninism.

After the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese war in 1937, Ai Ssu-ch'i was among the first group of literary-intellectual figures to migrate to Yenan, where the Chinese Communists had consolidated their forces. Arriving with Ai or at about the same time were other intellectuals who afterwards established themselves in the Chinese Communist movement, notably Ch'en Po-ta, Chou Yang, and Hu Ch'iao-mu. Mao Tse-tung was then striving to consolidate control over the Chinese Communist party. Yet, Mao's efforts to establish his position as a Marxist

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VOLUME V: A PERSONAL NAME INDEX BY JANET KROMPART

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