REVOLUTIONARY WARFARE

VOLUME III – CHINA
AND “THE PEOPLE’S WAR”

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VOLUME III
CHINA AND "THE PEOPLE'S WAR"

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION TO A STUDY OF CHINESE MILITARY HISTORY

by Major J. W. Woodmansee, Jr.
Chapter One: INTRODUCTION TO A STUDY OF CHINESE MILITARY HISTORY

by Major J. W. Woodmansee, Jr.

"The Sleeping Giant"

Napoleon is reported to have warned: "Let China sleep; when she wakes up the world will be sorry." ¹ During the long history of China when Confucian philosophy guided the minds and influenced the values of its civilization, both "war" and the "soldier" were generally looked on with scorn. A common saying was, "Good iron is not wrought into nails; good men do not become soldiers." ² War was an admission of bad government and "inferior virtue." ³ The Chinese soldier himself was ridiculed by Westerners as a curious mixture of both incompetent and brute. As an American military attache in Peking wrote in 1931:

... the Chinese have no military history worthy of scientific study. The only military traditions which have grown up are those which surrounded legendary characters whose glory lay in miraculous performance rather than human martial accomplishment. ⁴ Peasants hated the soldier; society branded him as inferior, and foreign military experts felt him unworthy of study. Yet, from the raw factors of space and population alone, the potential military threat of China could not go unnoticed, even in Napoleon's day.

Today, the situation in Communist China is radically different from the pacific Confucian environment of the past. The ruling personalities of Communist China are proven military commanders and theorists. The People's Liberation Army has demonstrated a zealous, professional competence. And a nation which once held in highest esteem the qualities of tranquility and serenity is now noted for its frenzied ideological extremes and its belligerent bravado. Since the end of World War II, the awakened Chinese Communist Giant has accomplished the following feats:

1. In 1949 he defeated a Nationalist Army of some 2 million men and seized control of mainland China.

2. He then trained and supplied the Viet Minh in the Indochina war against the
3. In Korea, he called the bluff of the United States' nuclear-based strategy and fought the conventionally-supported forces of the United Nations to a draw.

4. In the face of tremendous economic adversity, he has developed an atomic weapons system and has, at this writing, committed the U.S. to the initial steps of a costly system of anti-missile defense.

5. He has produced a "tactical" doctrine of revolutionary warfare that has become a bible to revolutionaries throughout the world.

6. He has proposed a "strategic" blueprint for the revolutionary struggle of the rural communities of the world against the urban "imperialists." (See Appendix II, "Long Live the Victory of the People's War.")

Because of the significance of these accomplishments, the following study of Chinese revolutionary doctrine and experience is treated in more depth than any other subject in the course on Revolutionary Warfare.

There are several important objectives to be gained in the next few lessons. First, it is important to understand how the Communist Party of China began, survived, and eventually developed a prestigious national power. Second, it is necessary to digest the important revolutionary concepts of the Communist leader and theoretician--Mao Tse-tung. The "glorious thought of Comrade Mao" is certainly one of the most powerful religions of the day. His doctrine was espoused by the Viet Minh in their defeat of the French. It is the theoretical basis underlying the North Vietnamese struggle against the American-South Vietnamese coalition. Mao is reportedly read by more people and in more languages than the Holy Bible. A future Army officer can expect to devote a portion of his career to the problem of countering the brand of revolutionary violence which China, and Mao Tse-tung, espouse. Finally, there should be a conscious effort to gain an insight into the Chinese way of warring. As one of the largest nations in the world, and as the only foreign power to mention the United States in its constitution as an "aggressor," China, particularly Chinese military history, warrants the scrutiny of professional soldiers of the U.S. Army.
Chinese Military Doctrine

The Chinese Army does not have a long tradition in the same sense as our own American army, western European armies, or even the Russian army. The Chinese military tradition is a short, modern one. The men who built that tradition are still in power. Mao Tse-tung, Lin Piao, Chu Teh, and Nieh Jung-chen, to name a few, took part in the Long March in 1935-36. They rose to great fame in the subsequent military struggle for the mainland. Lin Piao later commanded the Chinese armies that descended on MacArthur's United Nations' forces in North Korea in 1952. All are alive at the beginning of 1968 and are key officials in China. Although their history is relatively brief, it offers some valuable insights for the western soldier, insights that must be appreciated if a study of Chinese military history is to be worthwhile.

Emphasis on Land Power

The Chinese military establishment of today is a reflection of both its national resource limitations and its recent military experiences. The strength of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) approximates 2.3 million people. The overwhelming proportion of this force (about 1.3 million) consists of land forces, primarily infantry divisions. The People's Liberation Army shows great potential for fighting a defensive battle within the vast reaches of China where it can rely on its greatest resource--some 600,000,000 Chinese. The tactical mobility of the Red infantryman was, and is, excellent--especially when he is employed in rugged terrain where his vigorous training, political indoctrination, and physical endurance make him a respected foe. There is also a tremendous priority placed on organizing and arming a militia throughout the country. In 1959 China claimed that 225 million militiamen were organized and armed. General Fu Ch'iu-tao, the director of the mobilization department, boasted that "should the imperialist brigands dare to invade our country, the whole nation will be mobilized to wipe out the enemy resolutely and completely." Despite the tactical excellence of the Chinese soldier and the sheer quantity of the militia, there is a significant shortage of heavy armored equipment.
equipment and motor transport, and a very limited railway system. The PLA therefore lacks strategic mobility and would indeed be hard pressed to maneuver and support large armies outside its borders.

In 1967 China had a total of 2,500 combat aircraft and a modest naval fleet, consisting primarily of fast coastal defense torpedo boats and landing craft. (In the same year the U.S. Army alone had over 2,500 helicopters in South Vietnam.) The important major ships consisted of eight destroyers and destroyer-escorts, one or two trans-oceanic submarines capable of launching missiles, plus 20-30 lesser quality submarines capable of firing short range missiles from the surface. The military establishment is, then, primarily a land power, organized, equipped, and psychologically prepared for employment in the defense of the homeland.

Political Orientation of the People's Liberation Army (PLA)

Unlike the United States, wherein the military is relegated to a "non-political" brand of loyalty to the nation, Chinese officials stress the political role of the PLA. Mao Tsetung has based his whole concept of "People's War" around the requirement of making the army the primary political tool for organizing and converting the political affiliations of the masses. Mao stressed:

When the Red Army fights, it fights not merely for the sake of fighting, but to agitate the masses, to organize them, to arm them, and to help them establish revolutionary political powers. Apart from such objectives, fighting loses its meaning and the Red Army the reason for its existence.

Adjusting his strategy to suit this concept, Mao preached that "[we] disperse our forces to arouse the masses [we] concentrate to deal with the enemy." Mao feels that this close relationship between the soldier and the people is fundamental to successful guerrilla warfare. He referred to the guerrilla as the "fish" and the people as "the sea." The guerrilla receives his sustenance, protection, food, and intelligence from the people. If the relationship changes, that is, if the sea dries up, the "fish" will obviously die.
Concept of Time

America's approach to war has been the same in many respects as our approach to other problems. We have a penchant for facing the situation directly, making a rational analysis of the problem, and seeking a quick, logical solution--"once and for all." The Chinese concept of time is not so restrictive. As one authority explains: "Although the Chinese is diligent and economical in the attainment of an objective, he is not economical with respect to the commodity of time, which is considered as valueless because of its abundance." Thus, the Chinese concept of a "protracted war" takes on a greater significance. Eventual success can come to a military force which merely denies the enemy a victory within the enemy's restricted time resources. Or, in a slightly different form, "given even a feeble but sustained effort over a long enough period of time, success in realizing any goal, no matter how remote, is certain."11

Concept of Space

United States military doctrine is built on the spirit of the offensive, and relies on preponderant fire support and aggressive movement to seize a decisive objective. A past reluctance to give up "an inch of ground" has led to some valiant heroics, and occasionally some unnecessary casualties. Still, it is the outgrowth of the competitive, athletic experience of American youth and is corollary to the American concepts of time and the image of success.

The Chinese military doctrine reflects another approach to space. Mao states that the prime objective of warfare is "to preserve oneself and destroy the enemy." Mao encouraged his army not to consider any terrain objective worthy of heavy casualties. By giving up space, Mao could prevent decisive engagements and so buy "time" for his protracted war. With virtually limitless "space" in the interior of China, Mao was able to avoid the Japanese and the Nationalist forces. Eventually, those forces attempted to occupy greater amounts of space than they were capable of doing, and they became vulnerable to Mao's patient, politically oriented army.
Another concept of space, one professed by Dr. Howard Boorman, is that the Chinese have no sense of spatial continuity. This is reflected by the invariable attempt of the Chinese to move on an enemy from all sides rather than to advance against him on a continuous front. As you study the following lessons, note the almost complete tactical and strategic reliance on the encirclement. A quick reference to the Huai-Hai campaign in Chapter Five will show the large scale application of the encirclement. In another war, the 1st Marine Division in November 1950 around the Changjin Reservoir in North Korea, and the 2d U. S. Division at Kunu-ri Pass are tragic testimony to the effective Chinese Communist Forces (CCF) envelopments. This same tactical preference for the encirclement exists today in South Vietnam. From S. L. A. Marshall's account of an action involving Captain William Carpenter's "C" Company, 2/502 Infantry, it is apparent that the surprised North Vietnamese force reacted to the initial contact with Carpenter's company by attempting, fairly successfully, to encircle the American unit. The similarity of these tactics is more than coincidental. It is a product not only of tactical doctrine but of national psychology.

**Concept of Strategy**

Modern Chinese concepts of strategy probably stem from the fact that in the Japanese, the Chinese Nationalists, and the Americans, the Communists found themselves facing a technologically superior army. Therefore, victory was not to be gained by the direct approach, but rather by the indirect approach. Through the careful analysis of the resources available to the Chinese Communists (time, space, political organization, and people) and the shortcomings of their army (industry and firepower), the resulting emphasis was on avoiding battle except when victory was sure. Mao's concept was cleverly shown in a four-line poem, each line having four characters:

"Enemy advances, we retreat. Enemy halts, we harass. Enemy tires, we attack. Enemy retreats, we pursue."
Another strategic manifestation is China's reliance on the politically motivated man to
overcome any technical superiority. The U.S., with its atomic weapons, is derided as a
"paper tiger." As Liu Shao-ch'i retorted, "We have the spiritual atomic bomb." One
official analyzed, in 1961, the possibilities of war in the next few years and concluded:

... In the last analysis, it is men upon whom we are relying. We are
relying upon men and we are emphasizing the importance of political
factors. We want to raise men's political awareness and to display
men's power. 14

Well-suited to this strategy of the indirect approach is the Chinese regard for the
subtle, bloodless stratagem. Generalship to the western armies may involve the deter-
mination of a clear, decisive objective and the management of men, material, and
resources to achieve this objective. But to the Chinese, generalship is directly related
to destroying the enemy's will to fight without having to destroy the enemy. If western
strategy is to attack the body, "Chinese strategy is the black art of attacking the enemy's
mind." 15 Ruse, stratagem, secret agent, even the call for military negotiations when the
desired objective may be "time" for political development--all of these factors are more
highly regarded by the Chinese than by the western military professional. Mao's cry for
a "united front" against the Japanese in 1935 was merely an excuse to divert Chiang
Kai-shek's legions from finishing off the Communist quarry. The truce negotiations,
begun in the Korean War in July 1951, did not result in a cease-fire until July 1953. It
is interesting to note that Kaesong, the site selected for the meeting, was chosen by the
North Koreans. It was one of the few places in North Korean hands below the 38th
Parallel, and it forced U.N. negotiators to arrive at the talks flying white flags on their
jeeps. To the communist world, the implications of photographs showing U.N. forces
flying white flags was clear--the U.N. had surrendered. No detail of the initial meeting
was overlooked. Vice Admiral Turner Joy, the chief U.N. delegate, sat in a chair whose
legs had been cut down so that the Admiral looked up to General Nam II, the tiny Korean
chief delegate. 16 The United States was in a hurry to negotiate in 1951 and the Vietnam
was creating the same propensity. In late 1967 one of the key issues in the American
political debate over Vietnam centered around disagreement over the estimation of North Vietnamese intentions to negotiate. While one group felt sincerely that peace talks could have no rational foundation unless the U.S. first stopped bombing the North, the Administration pressed cautiously for more convincing evidence. The general feeling of U.S. military officials in South Vietnam was that the Hanoi government would only sit down at the conference table to gain a desperately needed breathing spell. Meanwhile, Communist instructions in June 1967 to their political cadre in Saigon bore out the true view of the communist outlook on negotiations:

... If there are negotiations, these will serve to create military and political conditions which favor our subsequent general offensive and uprising. If there are negotiations, our political attacks will be targeted at the United States and the puppet government. 17

Conclusion

China is no longer asleep; it is very much awake. It is a curious combination of cultural antiquity and national infancy. It is a contrast between international bellicosity and an incapacity of sustaining its military establishment far from its homeland. The influence of the Chinese Communist victory in 1949 is still reverberating throughout the "rural" areas of the world. Mao's concept of the revolutionary war has risen to prominence over Lenin's experience and Khrushchev's famous declaration supporting "wars of national liberation." Chinese leaders seem eager to explain to the world how China got to its imminent position and where China is headed. It is an offer that professional soldiers cannot afford to turn down.
NOTES


11 Ibid.


Chapter Two

CHINA (1927-1937)

by Michael Lindsay

This chapter is condensed from "China (1927-1937)" and "China (1927-1949)" by Michael Lindsay. Mr. Lindsay's two studies are part of a three-volume series, Challenge and Response in Internal Conflict which is compiled by the Center for Research in Social Systems (CRESS) of the American University, under contract to the Department of the Army.
The Communist movement, decimated by Chiang Kai-shek in 1927 was regenerated as a peasant-based insurgency, reaching a high point during 1932-1933. However, by 1934 Kuomintang operations were successful in defeating and dispersing the Communist forces. The Communists retreated in the famous "Long March" and were saved by increasing Japanese pressure which led to a Nationalist-Communist "United Front" agreement in 1937.

BACKGROUND

The total area of China (including Tibet) is larger than that of the continental United States, 3.79 million as against 2.98 million square miles. The range from north to south is also greater: northern Manchuria is in the same latitude as Labrador; Hainan, as Cuba. However, a large proportion of China's total area is mountain or desert, and over half the total area--the west and northwest--supports only 3 percent of the population. In these areas the population is largely non-Chinese, including Tibetans, Mongols, and Central Asian groups.

Most of this area lies between 25 and 30 degrees north latitude, the same as Florida. Annual rainfall is between 40 and 60 inches, with the heaviest rains in a summer rainy season. The summer climate is hot and humid and winter temperatures rarely fall below freezing at low altitudes though snow and freezing temperatures occur
in the mountains. The Communist area on the Shensi-Kansu border has a different climatic zone: the rainfall is much lower and almost entirely concentrated in a summer rainy season, while winter temperatures fall below 0°Fahrenheit. The main crop is not rice but millet or wheat.

To make a comparison with the United States, the main theater of operations covered an area equal to the States of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, and Tennessee. In relation to this area, the Shensi-Kansu base to which the Communist forces retreated in the Long March of 1936 would be in South Dakota.

North of the Yangtze, western Hupeh and western Honan are mountainous, but farther east the country is mostly plains except for some 5000-foot mountains on the Hupeh-Honan-Anhui border. Much of China south of the Yangtze River is mountainous, with altitudes reaching between 5,000 and 6,000 feet and with some peaks just over 7,000 feet in southern Hunan. There is a fairly wide coastal belt of relatively level country in Kuangtung; also, two strips of rather level country about 100 miles wide run 150 to 200 miles southward from the Yangtze.

The Communist base areas were all in mountainous regions where, at this period, communications were extremely primitive. Some motor roads were built in the course of the anti-Communist campaigns, but there were very large areas where the only means of transport were pack animals or porters. Although there was some coal and iron ore mining in Hunan and some industry in the major cities, most of the area was agricultural, with rice as the main food crop. Because of population pressure, cultivation often extended even into the wilder mountain areas; however, in some regions a fair amount of forest remained on the hills.
The Failure of the Traditional System of Government

China of the 1920's was a country in which a long-established social order had broken down, leaving political chaos. It is worth saying a little about this traditional order because it is often described as feudal, a term which in this connection is highly misleading. Before the 20th century, China was a country in which power and wealth depended on official status far more than on property ownership. The ruling group, often described as the "gentry," consisted of the holders of degrees from the Imperial civil service examination system. In the 19th century, this group had formed about 2 percent of the population and received about 25 percent of the national income. Official positions in the Imperial Government were held by relatively few--only some tens of thousands--and the rewards of office were extremely high. The regular government system extended down to the hsien (roughly equivalent to a county), of which there were about 2,000 in China proper, excluding the largely non-Chinese west and northwest. The official in charge of a fairly prosperous hsien could expect an income of about US$40,000 a year, and far larger fortunes could be made at the provincial and central government levels. By contrast, a laborer would earn only US$10-15 a year. Below the hsien level, government was run by the local gentry. Property without the protection of gentry status gave very little power and was not very secure, though a rich merchant or landowner might be able to acquire a degree without examination through some combination of bribery and public service.

Under this system, well-to-do families had an advantage in that they could give their children the long education needed for success in the examinations, but it was still possible for an intelligent poor boy to reach a high position if his relatives joined together to invest in his education.

A major weakness of the system was its emphasis on conformity. The only road to advancement was through the single bureaucratic hierarchy, and the examinations
tested only literary skill and knowledge of the Confucian classics. After China's defeat in the Opium War of 1842, some of the more able high officials recognized the need to introduce Western technology, but this effort came to naught. Any effective modernization would have threatened the position of the ruling group whose status and prestige were entirely bound up with Chinese classical learning. Furthermore, it was very difficult for any official to overcome conservative opposition, because the whole system was so organized as to prevent independent action or the buildup of any local power that might threaten the central Imperial authority. The power of conservatism is illustrated by the fact that, some years after the Japanese Government had completed its first railroad in Japan, the Chinese Government bought the first railroad in China, the Shanghai-Woosung line built by a British firm, only to demolish it.

The final blow to the prestige of the traditional system came in 1895, when China was decisively defeated by Japan, a far smaller Asian country. A start was then made in organizing a Western-style army. There was a final outburst of blind anti-foreignism in 1900, when the Chinese Government declared war on all the major foreign powers—though local officials in Central and South China promptly made agreements to keep their areas neutral. The first decade of the 20th century saw a belated attempt at reform. The traditional civil service examinations were abolished in 1905 and plans were started for constitutional government.

The Revolution of 1911

By this time, however, a revolutionary republican movement led by Sun Yat-sen was gaining strength. In 1911, an army revolt at Wuhan led to the downfall of the Manchu dynasty and the establishment of a Republic. But the revolution succeeded only by winning the support of Yuan Shih-k'ai, the Imperial official who had organized the new-style army which was the most powerful military force in China. Yuan
Shih-k'ai's price was the presidency of the Republic. Once installed, he proceeded to make himself independent of the parliament in which Sun Yat-sen's party, the Kuomintang, had a majority. Yuan suppressed a military rising against him, and planned to become a new emperor with the dynastic title "glorious constitution."

Yuan Shih-k'ai had consolidated his power by appointing his followers as concurrent military and civil provincial governors, and his death in 1916 left all effective power in the hands of these local military commanders, the warlords, who engaged in continual civil wars. By the 1920's, most educated Chinese opinion had rejected the traditional Chinese system, was disillusioned by the failure of the attempts to establish parliamentary democracy after 1911, and was looking for some new social order.

The Soviet Union, established in Russia in 1917 after the success of a Communist revolution, made a powerful appeal by promising to renounce all Russian imperialist privileges in China, and Chinese intellectuals became interested in communism as a possible system for China. It is important for an understanding of Chinese communism to realize that its leaders were influenced by the Russian Lenin rather than by the German Karl Marx.

Birth of the Chinese Communist Party

The Chinese Communist Party (known as Kun-chang-tang or KCT) was organized with the assistance of the U.S.S.R.'s Comintern advisers, dating its official foundation from a congress held in July 1921. It began as a very small group, intellectuals comprising most of its membership. Its leader until August 1927 was Ch'en Tu-hsiu, a well-known scholar who had been Dean of the College of Arts and

*It later backed out of some of these promises over the Chinese Eastern Railway in Manchuria.
Letters at Peking University. An important source of recruitment for the Party was among Chinese students in Europe. Among the Communist leaders, Chou En-lai (now Prime Minister), Chen Yi (now Minister of Foreign Affairs), and Nieh Jung-chen (now Chairman of the Scientific and Technological Commission) became Communists while students in France; and Chu Te* (now Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress), while a student in Germany.

Another of the Party’s early members was Mao Tse-tung, though he did not play a particularly prominent part in the Party leadership until after 1927 and became its recognized leader only in 1935. Mao’s family background would now be categorized as "rich peasant"; his father had a fair amount of land and also ran a rice trading business. Born in 1893, Mao started with some traditional classical schooling and then became interested in modern learning and revolutionary politics. He joined the army for a short period during the 1911 revolution and was later graduated from the Hunan Provincial Normal College. Although he was in Peking for a short time as an assistant in the Peking University library, Mao’s main activities until 1923 were in his home province of Hunan.

Growth of the Kuomintang

Meanwhile, the Communists reached out to extend their political influence within the Kuomintang party. Sun Yat-sen, the leader of the forces behind the 1911 revolution, had been squeezed out by Yuan Shih-k'ai but had managed in 1917 to set up a rival Chinese government in Canton in alliance with local warlords. His sympathies were with Western democracy rather than communism, but the Western powers rejected his appeals for assistance. At a low point in his fortunes, when he had lost power even at

*Often spelled "Chu Teh." (Editor)
Canton, Sun accepted a Communist alliance in January 1923, arranged by the Comintern agent A.A. Joffe. Individual Communist Party members were then allowed to join Sun's Kuomintang and the Soviet Union agreed to supply arms and political and military advisers. The Soviet leaders were more farsighted than the Western powers in realizing that Sun Yat-sen's Kuomintang was the largest political organization in China and potentially more powerful than the warlord regimes, despite the immediate weakness of Sun's position.

The Sun-Joffe agreement brought about a number of changes in the Kuomintang. After the agreement, Sun Yat-sen sent his chief military adviser, Chiang Kai-shek, to the Soviet Union, where he remained for several months, returning to China in December 1923. Chiang Kai-shek, born in 1887 into a middle-class family in Chekiang Province, had gone to the Paoting Officers' School, which had formed part of the program for modernizing the Chinese Army, and had also been among those students chosen for further officer training in Japan. He had in fact probably joined Sun Yat-sen's organization while in Japan in 1907. In the reorganized Kuomintang regime at Canton, Chiang became commandant of the Whampoa Officers' School, with General Vassily Blucher (alias General Galen) as the Soviet adviser and Chou En-lai as a political commissar. The mission of this school was to produce a new model of revolutionary officer, indoctrinated in political values and able to impart these new ideas to the fighting forces. When the test came, troops with some idea of what they were fighting for proved far more effective than the purely mercenary forces of the warlords.

Other changes in the Kuomintang included a new constitution based on the Leninist model. This was prepared by the chief Soviet adviser, Michael Borodin (a Russian Communist of Jewish origin originally named Mikhail Grusenberg). A mass organization among workers and peasants was also developed. In all this, the Communists played a very active part and Party membership expanded from a few hundred in 1922 to
about 60,000 by 1926. But Chinese Communist policy was closely controlled from Moscow and Comintern representatives often overruled the judgment of the Chinese Communist leaders.

After the death of Sun Yat-sen in 1925, increasing rivalry developed between the Communist and the nationalist wings of the alliance. Each side needed the other as an ally against their common enemies, the warlord regimes; but each was looking forward to eliminating the other when these common enemies had been defeated. Within the Kuomintang party organization, Wang Ching-wei, politically leftwing, and Hu Han-min, politically rightwing, had equally good claims to be Sun Yat-sen's successor. But Chiang Kai-shek's control of military power was decisive. Largely because Communist policy was directed by remote control from Moscow, Chiang was able to outmaneuver the Communists and to emerge as the dominant Kuomintang leader.

Kuomintang Conquers Eastern China in Expeditions of 1926 and 1927

During this period, the Kuomintang was establishing its military dominance over the warlords in the south; and by mid-1926 it launched the Northern Expedition against those of the north. By 1927 the Kuomintang had conquered Central China; and in June 1928, it had captured Peking, thus gaining control of all North China south of the Great Wall.

The break between the Nationalists and the Communists in the Kuomintang meanwhile came after Central China had been conquered in the North Expedition. In April 1927, Chiang Kai-shek crushed the Communist organization in Shanghai and set up at Nanking a government that rivaled the Kuomintang's Central Executive Committee controlled by the leftwing at Hankow. In July 1927, this leftwing Kuomintang regime under Wang Ching-wei broke with the Communists and expelled the Soviet advisers. By the fall of 1927, the end of this first period, the Communists had been decisively defeated in their attempts to take over the Kuomintang organization by boring from within.
INSURGENCY

Communist insurgency therefore started in 1927, but its initial efforts were marked by a series of failures. The first was at Nanchang. On August 1, army units which had come under Communist control revolted—an event now celebrated by the Chinese Communists as the beginning of the Red Army. The main leaders were Chou En-lai and Li Li-san on the Party side and Yeh T'ing and Ho Lung on the military side. They were joined by Chu Te, whose troops were nearby, but they failed to win over the important Gen. Chang Fa-kuei and evacuated Nanchang on August 5. They then retreated towards Kuangtung* Province, whence the Northern Expedition had started in 1926, and managed to capture Swatow, a port in Eastern Kuangtung, but were defeated and dispersed in engagements in September and October.¹

Meanwhile, on September 12, 1927, Mao Tse-tung, assisted by some troops which had taken the Communist side, led a peasant rising in Hunan, known as the Autumn Harvest Rising. It was quickly suppressed and Mao retreated to Ching-kang-shan, a mountain area on the Hunan-Kiangsi border. According to Mao's own account, his forces in October 1927 consisted of only two units, each with 60 rifles in bad repair.²

In November 1927, Mao was censured by the Central Committee for his "purely military viewpoint" in this unsuccessful rising. His main fault seems to have been to advocate a revolutionary movement in the countryside under purely Communist leadership a few months before this became official policy. It may, however, be argued that he was, and remained, to some extent unorthodox in his emphasis on the purely military aspects of the revolution.

It is quite widely believed that Mao Tse-tung was both original and unorthodox in basing a Communist revolution on peasant insurgency and his "Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan," published in the spring of 1927, has been

*Often spelled Kwangtung. (Editor)
termed "a revolutionary classic." In fact, however, as early as 1923, Comintern directives to the Chinese Communist Party had stressed the importance of the peasants to the Chinese revolution and called for a radical agrarian program including confiscation of landlords' holdings without compensation. A directive of November 1926 explicitly termed the peasantry the main force behind the Chinese revolution.*

Even before the alliance with the Kuomintang in 1923, some Chinese Communists had started to organize the peasants, and the development of Communist-led peasant organization proceeded actively during the period of alliance.

A number of other peasant risings in Hunan, Hupeh, and Kiangsi Provinces produced similar results, failing to spread or to capture any places of importance but leaving small Communist units in mountain areas. Finally on December 11, 1927, the Communists staged a rising in Canton, the Canton Commune. This was very quickly suppressed by the Kuomintang Gen. Li Chi-shen, who then proceeded to a general massacre of Communists in the city. A Communist source states that seven or eight thousand persons were killed. 4

Thus, at the beginning of 1928, the fortunes of the Chinese Communist Party were at their lowest point. Some underground organization remained in the cities but losses had been very heavy. Open insurgency was confined to a number of small and scattered guerrilla units in mountainous areas. Even when Mao Tse-tung had been joined in April 1928 by the remnants of Chu Te's troops from the Nanchang revolt, their total force amounted to only about 10,000 men and 2,000 rifles. 5

*Marx himself had envisaged a Communist revolution as the final stage of capitalist development and it could well be argued that a peasant-based Communist revolution, or even a Communist revolution in a non-industrialized, largely pre-capitalist society, was unorthodox Marxism. But the break with Marxism orthodoxy originated with Lenin and the Comintern leadership and not with Mao Tse-tung. If Comintern pronouncements are taken as defining Communist orthodoxy, then Mao's Report..." of which a translation was published in the Soviet Union, was not unorthodox. In fact, the long section on class analysis could be considered as rather uncritical Communist orthodoxy, merely fitting Chinese agrarian society into categories already drawn up by Lenin to describe Russian agrarian society.
Communists Rebuild Their Forces

The next eight years were to see another complete cycle in the fortunes of the Chinese Communist Party. Although by the end of 1933 Communist forces had expanded to some 300,000 and claimed control over areas with a population of about ten million, they were forced to abandon their main base areas by 1936, leaving only scattered guerrilla units, while their regular armies, reduced to "a few tens of thousands," controlled only a rather remote base area with a population under one and a half million.

Discussing the composition of his forces in 1928, Mao Tse-tung made clear that he considered "the backbone of the Fourth Red Army" to be the regular Kuomintang troops who had taken the Communist side at the time of the Nanchang Revolt and the workers and peasants who had joined the 1927 risings. However, he explained that these regular troops had lost about two-thirds of their original numbers and that the early worker and peasant recruits had also sustained heavy losses, so that these categories were in 1928 far outnumbered by prisoners from the anti-Communist forces and local peasant recruits. Other sources report that Mao had also incorporated a number of local bandit units. Mao admitted that a considerable part of the army would have to be classified as lumpenproletariat* by class origin, but he argued that, with proper political education and enough political organization in the army, even former warlord soldiers could become politically reliable and good fighters. In the Communist forces, the former warlord soldiers were treated with a degree of personal respect which they had seldom received from their former officers and were given education which they had never received from non-Communist society. Most recruits, whether former warlord soldiers, children, or local peasants, were illiterate, but

*The criminal or semi-criminal portion of the proletariat as opposed to the class-conscious workers.
learned to read and write in the army.

Mao Tse-tung laid great stress on the importance of political education and the system of political commissars in the army. The men were taught that they were fighting for a noble cause and the salvation of their country. The great efforts devoted to this produced an army with good discipline and generally high morale.

For equipment and ammunition, the Red Army depended almost entirely on captured supplies. There was no way in which supplies could be sent from the Soviet Union except by smuggling them across long stretches of territory held by the National Government, and there is no evidence that this occurred. The Communist base areas were very backward economically—with virtually no industry beyond the handicraft level and with very few skilled workers or technicians—so that local manufacture of arms never reached the scale which it did in the anti-Japanese base areas of a later period, though there may have been some production of hand grenades charged with black powder.

As a result, most Red Army units had considerably more men than rifles. Perhaps between one-half and two-thirds of the men were armed, with considerable variations between different units. In May 1931, for example, the National Government estimated that there were a total of 117,400 men with 57,750 rifles, 768 machineguns, 74 mortars and 29 cannon in Mao's forces.

At the end of 1929, Mao Tse-tung still complained about the influence of Utopian ideas—demands for absolute equality within the army and ultra-democracy ("let the lower levels discuss all problems first, and then let the higher levels decide")—and about the lack of discipline in some units. But these defects were becoming less serious. The strong points of the Red Army were its high morale based on political indoctrination, its superior intelligence work based on organization of the population in its base areas, and its very high mobility based on its capacity to make rapid marches through mountain country.
Communists Attempt Land Reform Measures

The Communist policy of this period was to confiscate the land of class enemies and to distribute it among class allies. Collectivization of agriculture remained an ultimate objective but it was considered to be a "left deviation" to foreshadow this in current land regulations. This policy brought some real benefits to those who had been at the bottom of the old society; those who had received land and had participated in the liquidation of landlord families had a strong interest in the survival of the Communist regime. Also, in a system where traditional government had been largely exploitative and recent government even more so, any new regime which made some effort to govern in the interests of the people and offered some popular participation in government could win some general support.

However, although the Communists won very strong support from part of the population, they were hampered by doctrinaire policies. Only the larger landlords at one extreme and the landless laborers and poor peasants at the other really fitted the Communist doctrine of class war in the countryside. In between, there was a continuous range which was hard to classify. For example, a tenant farmer who hired some labor was, in his role as a tenant, "exploited"; but, as an employer, he was himself an "exploiter." Different groups in the Party leadership disagreed about the exact criteria by which people should be classified as class allies or class enemies. The result of all this was to alienate important sections of the population whose support could have been won by more moderate and less doctrinaire policies.

Growing Communist Organization Has Bureaucratic Problems

According to Mao, the basic principles of Communist strategy had been worked out by May 1928 and, before 1930, the Central Committee had accepted the basic formula, expressed in 16 Chinese characters: "Enemy advances, we retreat; enemy
camps, we harass; enemy tires, we attack; enemy retreats, we pursue." Beyond this formula, the Communists divided their forces into the Red Army and the Red Guards. The former was a well-trained and highly mobile force, equipped with the best of the available arms; and it could be concentrated for serious battles. The Red Guards were local partisans used for police duty and intelligence work or as guides for the Red Army; but they lacked the training or equipment to do more than harass any regular enemy force. Even this division was a subject of internal controversy: Li Li-san apparently advocated a concentration of all arms under the Red Army while, at the other extreme, other Communists advocated general guerrilla warfare by small dispersed units.

Up to 1930, there was a fairly steady expansion of Communist insurgency. Mao Tsetung and Chu Te, starting from Ching-kang-shan on the Hunan-Kiangsi border, moved their main force into southern and eastern Kiangsi. On February 10, 1929, they destroyed an enemy division in a battle near Juichin and expanded operations into Fukien and toward the Fukien-Kuangtung border. The Ching-kan-shan area was temporarily lost and then reoccupied by Communist forces later in the year. This area in southeastern Kiangsi became the main Communist base and Juichin the Communist capital, where on December 11, 1931, a Chinese Soviet Republic was proclaimed.

During the same period, other Communist military leaders, such as Ho Lung in Western Hunan and Hsu Hsiang-ch'ien on the Hupeh-Honan-Anhui border were expanding their forces and extending the "soviet" areas they controlled. At one time, they were stronger than the Communist forces under Mao and Chu in Kiangsi. By 1930, the Communists had become a fairly formidable military force.

Developments in 1930 illustrate a serious weakness of the Chinese Communist organization. The relationship between political doctrine and strategic doctrine was so close that shifts in the balance of power in the Party leadership or a new directive from the Comintern could produce changes in military strategy for which there was no
In his account of the first year of operations in the Ching-Kang-shan area, Mao Tse-tung complained of unreasonable and rapidly changing directives from the Hunan Provincial Committee and argued that these had caused military setbacks. Certainly, the Central Committee, operating at that time underground in Shanghai, * must have been rather out of touch with military operations in the countryside.

**Failure of the Li Li-san Strategy**

The clearest example of the confusion caused in military strategy by political doctrine was exemplified by the so-called "Li Li-san line" in 1930. Li Li-san had become the leader of the Party in June 1929, a position which he retained until November 1930. The two political judgments behind the Li Li-san line were, first, that China had entered a situation of "revolutionary rising tide" and, second, that the Communist Party should try to acquire a proletarian base as opposed to a purely peasant base. ** The conclusion that logically followed these two judgments was that the time had come for the Chinese Communist Party to use its military force to conquer major cities with an industrial proletariat.

The only major industrial center within striking distance of the Red Armies was Wuhan, and in April 1930 an offensive was launched against Wuhan from bases both

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*Different sources, and even the same source on different occasions, disagree about when the Central Committee moved to the Kiangsi base area. It seems quite possible that there was no definite single date but a piecemeal transfer of bits of the Central Committee organization from 1931 on.

**While there was disagreement about how far a Communist revolution could be based on the peasants, all Communists agreed on using the peasants for the revolution, as opposed to making the revolution for the peasants. After Mao came to power in 1949 he announced a shift of emphasis from the countryside to the city proletariat and the elections for the People's Congress gave urban votes eight times the weighting of rural votes.
north and south of the Yangtze River. On July 29, 1930, the Third Red Army managed
to capture Changsha, the capital of Hunan Province; but, instead of advancing north-
ward toward Wuhan, the main force of the Red Army then moved south on August 1; and
the city was recaptured by the National Government aided by foreign gunboats on
August 9. An attack on Nanchang by the First Red Army on August 1 was also a failure.
Unwilling to admit that its strategy was mistaken, the Central Committee called for
a renewed attack on Changsha despite the lack of heavy artillery. The attack was
staged at the beginning of September, but the defenses of the city had meanwhile been
strengthened and the second attack was a complete failure. Mao Tse-tung and Chu Te,
as commanders of the main forces involved and initially against the entire operation,
insisted on a withdrawal. Finally, in November 1930, Li Li-san was attacked in a
letter from the Comintern and ordered to Moscow.* By any sensible appraisal of
the situation in 1930, the Communists had had no prospect of capturing and holding
major cities.

The Li Li-san strategy, which had proved a complete failure, resulted from the
desire to force reality into conformity with Communist theory. Industrial workers in
China were not ready to revolt to support a Red Army attack from the countryside. On
the contrary, they had become disillusioned with the attempts of Communist-led trade
unions to call strikes for political reasons and had been turning to Kuomintang-spon-
sored trade unions which called strikes only for better wages or working conditions.
Though there was an increasing number of strikes, this was no evidence of Communist
strength in the cities.

*Li Li-san went to the Soviet Union after his fall from power whence he
returned in 1945 with the Soviet Army to Manchuria. He now holds a quite minor
position in the Chinese Communist organization.
SUMMARY:

FIRST FRONT marched 6,000-8,000 miles in 365 days, crossing 18 mountain ranges, 24 rivers, and opposing the forces of 12 warlords.
Failure of "Returned Students" Strategy

When offensives against the Communist areas increased in scale from 1930 on, the Communists became occupied with the problems of defensive warfare. Mao argued that, while the Red Army could properly divide its forces for expansion when the enemy was quiescent, the proper reaction to an enemy offensive was concentration. Mao felt it was necessary to make careful preparations for an enemy offensive by collecting supplies, strengthening the political organization, and preparing the people for the suffering that might be necessary for victory. In preparing for an active defense, Mao laid great stress on the importance of winning the initial battle, since this would upset the enemy's plans for encirclement and give the Red Army fresh opportunities. Therefore, he stipulated that the Red Army should be extremely careful to choose the weaker units of the enemy, wait if necessary to secure favorable terrain, and make forced marches to secure concentration at the right point. Also, since the Red Army depended on capture for its arms and ammunition, it should aim, said Mao, at winning the type of battle in which an enemy force could be captured or wiped out. A battle from which the enemy could retreat in fairly good order might be a victory by ordinary standards, but it was not, in Mao's eyes, very useful to the Red Army. \[12\] Despite Mao's prescription for a strategic victory, the period from the middle of 1933 to the end of 1934 saw the defeat of Communist forces in South China.

According to Mao Tse-tung and his followers, the Moscow-trained Chinese Communists, the "Returned Students," who took over control of the Party after the fall of Li Li-san in late 1930 were responsible for equally serious errors in strategy. Mao criticized the policies adopted in 1932 as based on unrealistic estimates of the strength of the Red Army relative to its enemies. He ridiculed slogans such as "Attack on all fronts," "Seize key cities," and "Don't give up an inch of territory" and denigrated a
current Red theory that the Kuomintang armies had become merely an "auxiliary force" of foreign imperialism. Such ideas, Mao felt, had led to Communist failure in the Hupeh-Honan-Anhui area. These over-adventurous strategies, Mao claimed, were followed by an overcautious one which in turn led to the loss of the South China base areas. Mao claimed that the Red Army could have defeated the Kuomintang by an offensive northward into Chekiang and the lower Yangtze Valley at the end of 1933 while the National Government was occupied with hostilities elsewhere.

The Long March

From the middle of 1934, the Communist armies were in increasingly desperate straits as a result of the success of the Kuomintang blockade-line strategy. As the southern base areas became untenable, the Communists organized a series of withdrawals westward and northward, operations that became collectively known as the "Long March." In July 1934 the Chinese Communists and the Red Army announced a "Northwards Anti-Japanese Expedition" ostensibly against the Japanese forces in North China. This probably indicated the decision to withdraw, although the main Communist force did not start its move until the middle of October. It managed to break through the first blockade line on October 21 and moved into northern Kuangtung. It broke through a second blockade line on November 5 and crossed the Hankow-Canton railway on November 15. During the same period, the Sixth and Second Red Armies moved from their base areas farther west and managed to join up in eastern Kueichou* Province on October 22. Some Communist units were left in the South China bases to fight a rearguard action, but they were soon reduced to small and scattered guerrilla groups. By January 1935, the main Communist forces from all the South China base areas had temporarily joined up in Kueichou Province.

*Often spelled Kweichow. (Editor)
Meanwhile, at a conference held at Tsun-yi, Mao Tse-tung now became the leader of the Chinese Communist Party. Before the evacuation of the South China base areas, Mao's position in the Party had apparently been weakening. * He had lost his position as political commissar to Chu Te's forces in 1932 and his position in the Chinese Soviet Government had also been hurt. But the failure in South China had in turn weakened the position of the "Returned Student" group which had been in control of the Party and strengthened that of Mao, who had criticized their strategy.

This retreat on the Long March—marked by great hardship and heavy casualties—took the Communists through Kueichou, Yunnan, Szechuan, and Kansu, all areas where the influence of the National Government was weak and where, therefore, Communist movements were opposed mainly by poor-quality warlord troops, though they were also pursued by some Central Government forces. Even so, the survival of Mao's forces was partly a matter of luck. On several occasions a few hours' delay or slightly stronger local garrisons would have left the Red forces locked between uncrossable rivers and pursuing Central Government troops.

The retreating forces, numbering considerably fewer than the 100,000 troops who started from Kiangsi, finally joined up in 1936 in a small base area which had been earlier developed in 1931 on the Shensi-Kansu border. This Communist base area expanded during late 1936 and a Communist offensive was launched into Shansi Province, east of the Yellow River, but was repulsed. On January 1, 1937, Mao announced the formation of a new Communist government, the Chinese People's Soviet Republic. Yenan was now officially declared the Red capital. Meanwhile, late in 1936, new events were occurring which would produce an official truce in operations between the

*For example, new land regulations in 1934 had eliminated a number of points which Mao had specially favored. Mao's position also seems to have been challenged at a later period of the Long March by Chang Kuo-t'ao, who came from a base area in Szechuan and whose forces had suffered smaller losses, but the events of this period are still obscure.
Communists and the Kuomintang.

COUNTERINSURGENCY

After the fairly rapid defeat of the initial Communist risings in 1927, counter-insurgency operations fell into four main periods. Up to the middle of 1930, counter-insurgency was mainly in the hands of local provincial forces. Then followed a period in which the National Government organized a series of large-scale campaigns against the main Communist areas with very limited results. In 1933-34 a new counterinsurgency strategy finally proved successful and compelled the Communists to abandon their main base areas. Finally, in 1935 and 1936, the National Government attempted to destroy the Communist forces during their retreat and started operations against the new, much smaller main base area, but this period ended inconclusively with a truce.

According to Mao Tse-tung, the ability of the Communists to develop insurgency depended on the failure of the anti-Communist forces to make effective use of their resources. One factor in this failure was a reluctance to admit the potential danger of insurgency or the importance of acting against it before the insurgents had had time to build up their organization. National Government publicity always tried to describe the Red Armies as merely bandits and it is likely that many people in responsible positions initially believed that the problem was no more than banditry.

Kuomintang Faces Numerous Opponents

A more important factor, however, was that any effort against the Communists was continually distracted by other conflicts. Although the Kuomintang National Government, which was established at Nanking in 1927, obtained more control over China than any previous republican regime, it never managed to eliminate warlordism completely. A war with Chang Tso-lin for control of North China continued until the
summer of 1928. In 1929, there was fighting between the National Government and the Kuangsi warlords, Li Tsung-jen and Pai Chung-hsi, who had been allies at the beginning of the Northern Expedition.

In 1930, two other warlords, Yen Hsi-shan and Feng Yu-hsiang, with the support of Chiang's chief rival, Wang Ch'ing-wei, tried to set up a rival government in North China, with a resulting civil war that continued for several months. Largely because forces normally defending Changsha had been withdrawn for operations against Yen-Hsi-shan and Feng Yu-hsiang, the Communists were able to capture Changsha in 1930.

In 1931, the Japanese started their conquest of Manchuria. In January 1932, heavy fighting with Japanese forces broke out in Shanghai and intermittent fighting with the Japanese in North China and Inner Mongolia continued until the Tangku Truce in May 1933. This truce in turn led to disagreements between the National Government and local leaders in South China. In November 1933, the Kuomintang's Nineteenth Route Army, which had borne the brunt of the fighting in Shanghai in 1932, joined with South China leaders to proclaim a rival government in Fukien. This government, which actually signed a truce agreements with the Communists on November 21, 1933, was not defeated until January 1934. These were only some of the major conflicts involving the National Government and precluding any concentration of its effort against Communist insurgency.

Many provincial governments were equally distracted by conflicts among local leaders, and in many cases these conflicts directly influenced counterinsurgency operations. For instance, Mao Tse-tung reported that an offensive by Kiangsi troops against the insurgent Ching-kang-shan area was broken off in July 1928 because of a battle between two Kiangsi generals. Of course, Communist operations were also hampered by factional struggles, and there were some instances of fighting between different Communist forces; but such troubles on the Communist side were never so serious as
those on the Kuomintang side.

The insecure position of the National Government had an even more serious effect on the quality of the troops used against the Communists. The victory of the Kuomintang's Northern Expedition in 1926-27 had depended on the new style of the politically-indoctrinated army built up in Kuangtung since 1923. But even before the conquest of the Yangtze Valley, this army had been considerably diluted. From the beginning of the Northern Expedition it had some warlord allies, and it followed the normal practice of the warlord period by incorporating defeated forces and giving new positions to opposing generals who would defect and join the Kuomintang side. The dilution was increased after the break with the Communists in the summer of 1927.

As a result, the National Government laid great stress between 1928 and 1937, on building up a strong and well-trained Central Government Army. In this it benefited greatly from German assistance. A group of German military advisers acting in a private professional capacity included men such as Gen. Hans von Seeckt, who had held important positions in the German Army during World War I. The Germans remained in China until 1938, when the Japanese made strong requests to the German Government to insist on their return to Germany. Great progress was made in developing a well-trained Nationalist Army, and in July 1933 the National Government set up a special training school at Lushan, Kiangsi Province, for officers taking part in anti-Communist operations; but its best troops were needed to maintain the superiority of the Central Government over possible rivals; if they had been committed to counterinsurgency operations, the Central Government would have been less able to cope with the various non-Communist attempts to set up rival regimes. It was only in July 1931, in the third major campaign against the main Communist base areas, that troops directly commanded by Chiang Kai-shek were used, and even then they were only one-third of the total force. Consequently, many of the troops used against the Communists were second-rate units or forces which the National
Government did not trust.

This use of poor quality troops caused the failure of many of the anti-Communist campaigns. Most of the successful Communist operations described by Mao Tse-tung depended on concentrating Communist forces against Nationalist units known to be of poor quality. And these inferior troops were not merely ineffective but strongly countereffective. National Government units which abandoned their weapons or surrendered became the main source of weapons and ammunition for the Red Armies and an important source of their manpower.

By 1930, the National Government assumed an increasingly important role in counter-insurgent activities. One of the most important of its operations was against the Communist underground apparatus. In 1930, Mr. U. T. Hsu was put in charge of a special section of the Central Headquarters of the Kuomintang to deal with the Communist underground operating in National Government areas. At the time of the break with the Kuomintang in 1927, the Communist organization had been very strong in the cities, controlling the trade unions and workers' organizations and supported by many of the intellectuals. Though they had suffered severe losses in 1927, they had remained strong enough to build a very effective organization with elaborate arrangements for cover. Mr. Hsu therefore insisted that the workers in his organization know their enemy, and he ordered them to study "the history of Russian Communism, Communist theory, Communist party structure, and the tactics and principles of their activities." Viewing the struggle largely as a battle of ideologies, Hsu was convinced that Sun Yat-sen's principles were superior to communism, that most Communists had become followers of Marx and Lenin through dissatisfaction with existing conditions, and that they could in fact be converted to more reasonable views.

His efforts were therefore aimed at the conversion of captured Communists. He insisted that converts demonstrate the genuineness of their conversion by giving all possible information and help against the Communist organization. Although he found
that it was possible to apply the necessary psychological pressure to obtain conversion only if the alternative were death, Hsu also insisted that threats without conversion could not secure cooperation from a captured Communist. Through the work of Hsu, the Kuomintang was able to penetrate the Communist organization. When the Communists reacted by building up a new terrorist organization which concentrated on the assassination of Communist defectors and Mr. Hsu's agents, Hsu's organization was eventually able to infiltrate and eliminate the new Communist underground. Unfortunately for the counterinsurgency efforts, not all anti-Communist activity showed this level of sophistication--other National Government organizations were inclined to suppress any criticism of the Kuomintang as evidence of Communist sympathies, a policy which tended to boomerang.

Nationalists Launch Five Campaigns of "Encirclement and Suppression"

Meanwhile, by the latter part of 1930, the National Government started a series of large-scale military campaigns against the Communist areas. An Anti-Communist Headquarters for the provinces of Hupeh, Hunan, and Kiangsi was set up at Hankow on October 23, 1930, and the first "encirclement and suppression" campaign, using about 100,000 men, started on November 2. Kuomintang forces were, however, completely defeated by the end of the year and in one battle the Communists captured an entire force of about 9,000 men including the divisional commander. 21

The second "encirclement and suppression" campaign started on February 10, 1931, under the command of Gen. Ho Ying-ch'in (who later became Minister of War) with headquarters at Nanchang. Still more troops were used--200,000 according to Mao Tsetung and 300,000 to 400,000 according to T'ien Chia-ying--and the strategy was described in the words "consolidating every step." This second offensive was also completely defeated by the end of May, and in the final battles the Government lost over
20,000 rifles to the Communists.

The third "encirclement and suppression" campaign started in July 1931 under the command of Chiang Kai-shek, who used still more troops--300,000 according to Mao Tse-tung and 600,000 to 700,000 according to T'ien Chia-ying. For the first time these included some of the regular National Government divisions. The strategy this time was to "drive straight in" in an attempt to corner the main Communist forces against the Kan River. At one time Kuomintang forces penetrated a large part of the Communist base area, but they did not succeed in surrounding the main Communist army and had to withdraw with considerable losses after about three months' fighting.

**Japanese Threat Provides Respite To Communists**

Counterinsurgency operations were then distracted by hostilities with Japan which started in Manchuria in September 1931 and spread to Shanghai at the beginning of 1932. This not only gave the Communists a respite for consolidation and expansion, but also provided them with a powerful means of appealing to Chinese public opinion, by calling for an end to the civil war in order to present a united front to Japanese aggression. The Communist base on the Shensi-Kansu border was set up in October 1931 by scattered forces which organized themselves into an "Allied Anti-Imperialist Army." And on December 11, 1931, 20,000 men of the Government's forces surrounding the Communist Ching-kang-shan base area mutinied and joined the Communists. The Nationalists lost a major propaganda point when the Chinese Soviet Republic declared war on Japan on April 25, 1932. This was purely a propaganda gesture as there was no point of possible contact between Communist and Japanese forces, but it succeeded in recording an anti-Japanese line on the Communist side in apparent contrast with the reluctance of the National Government to risk all-out resistance to Japanese aggression.
Large-scale National Government operations against the Communists were not resumed until the summer of 1932. The main effort of the National Government's fourth offensive, which started in June 1932, was directed against the outlying Communist bases in West Hunan and on the Hupeh-Honan-Anhui border. Against the latter base area the operation was largely successful. On July 10, the main Communist forces from the Hupeh-Honan-Anhui base area were compelled to abandon their base and start a retreat into Northwest Kiangsi. The campaign against the main Communist base areas in Kiangsi, however, did not start until February 7, 1933, and was defeated by the beginning of March. It did not seriously interrupt a steady expansion of this main Communist base.

**Nationalists Attempt Reforms and Population Control Measures**

The strategy of the third period (1933-1934) was based on slower methods and more careful preparations than those of the previous period. There had already been some recognition that the Communist insurgency was based on a revolutionary situation in the countryside that might be removed or mitigated only by a program of reform. In June 1930, the National Government had issued a land reform law restricting rent to 37.5 percent of the main crop and guaranteeing security of tenure for long-term tenant farmers.*

When applied, the reform won both peasant support and increased production—the farmer with secure tenure and limited rent had real incentives. If the National

*The figure of 37.5 percent results from applying an old Kuomintang reform slogan—25 percent reduction in rents—to an assumed average rent of 50 percent. This land law ironically formed the basis for later Communist agrarian policy, from 1937 to 1945 during the war against Japan—which explains why the Chinese Communists were often called "agrarian reformers." It was also applied still later in the first stages of land reform in Taiwan, and Japanese land reform after 1945 followed rather similar principles.
Government had given a high priority in the 1930's and 1940's to implementing its own land law against the vested interests which opposed it, the result might have changed the whole history of China. In fact, it was applied seriously only in those areas recovered from the Communists where the original landlords had already been liquidated. There is some evidence that land reform did eliminate the revolutionary situation in these areas. When the civil war was resumed in 1946 one might have expected that the Communists would have tried to revive insurgency in their old South China base areas but in fact there was almost no Communist activity south of the Yangtze before the victory of the regular Communist armies in 1949. Elsewhere in China the 1930 law remained a dead letter. In Chekiang Province, for example, the land reform program was dropped after an official who tried to enforce it had been assassinated, and in most areas there was not even an attempt to enforce it.

Other measures were more effectively enforced to secure control of the population and to hinder Communist activities in areas surrounding their bases. A conference on anti-Communist operations in June 1932 ended in a decision to strengthen the Government organization in areas adjoining the Communist bases by recruiting local militia and by organizing the people in the pao-chia system, a traditional Chinese organization under which the people in an area were formed into groups in which each member was held responsible for the others' conduct. Organization on these lines was started in August 1932. The pao-chia system was sometimes countereffective: people compromised by a Communist relative or friend might find that their safest course of action was to move into the Communist areas and join them. On balance, however, the system was effective in hindering Communist activities.

In November 1932, conferees at Hankow had decided on a program of road building in South China to facilitate the movement of National Government armies, and in May 1933, plans were worked out for a strict blockade of the Communist base areas.
These were almost purely agricultural and depended on outside trade for everything beyond the products of simple handicraft industry. In particular, they had no supplies of salt, important for health in places with a very hot summer climate. When it became effective through the building of fortified lines, this blockade played an important part in the Communist defeat.

**Barriers Assist Encirclement Operations**

The main military strategy of fort building was started in July 1933. Under this strategy, which may have been suggested by German military advisers, the Communist base areas were surrounded by a line of forts, connected where possibly by a blockade ditch or other obstacle to prevent the movement of small groups at night. Efforts would then be made to organize the area outside the blockade line, and, when it was judged that Communist activity had been eliminated, a new line of forts would be built reducing the Communist base area still further. Since the Communists had almost no artillery and only a few mortars, a fairly small garrison in a well-built fort could hold out for some time against attack by a much larger number of Communist troops. By January 1934, 2,900 forts had been built in Kiangsi and the number must have become very much larger in later stages of the campaign.

Attacks into the Communist base areas were continued and increasing use was made of aircraft to bomb Communist positions. Although the Red Army was able to score some local successes in 1934, its general position steadily deteriorated. The main body of the Red Army was forced to evacuate its main base area and begin the Long March in October 1934, as were other main units from other base areas in South and Central China.
OUTCOME AND CONCLUSIONS

Thus, Kuomintang operations of 1933 and 1934 may be considered as an example of successful counterinsurgency. Although Communist forces remaining in South and Central China were not completely destroyed, they were reduced to small and scattered groups in the wilder mountain areas—a level of operations that could properly be described as little more than banditry, especially since genuine, nonpolitical banditry was endemic. And the former Communist base areas were brought so effectively under National Government control that there was no revival of insurgency even when the Communists might have been expected to try to revive it and the general authority of the National Government had been seriously weakened.

However, the successes of 1933-34 were not followed up in 1935-36. Counterinsurgency operations of 1935 against the retreating Communist forces were not a success, and the Red Army was able to re-establish itself in the Shensi-Kansu base area in 1936. On the other hand, Government operations were not an unqualified failure because Communist losses during the Long March were extremely heavy, and the Red Army of 1936 was only a small fraction of its 1934 strength. The National Government was only partly responsible for the failure to cut off the Communist retreat. The Long March went through provinces where local warlord influence remained powerful and where the National Government had very little control. Thus, the moves of the Red Armies were opposed almost entirely by local provincial forces which were mostly of very poor quality. Only the Muslim warlords in the northwest had troops good enough to fight some serious battles against the Communists. It is possible that the pursuing National Government troops did not make full use of their opportunities. Several writers have suggested that the National Government found the retreat of the Red Armies a convenient excuse for sending troops into areas which had, until then, been almost completely under local warlord control. 22
If the National Government had at once attacked the much reduced Red Army in its smaller and poorer new base area with the same vigor as in the campaigns of 1933-34, the Chinese Communists would most probably have been eliminated as an organized military force. In fact, the Nationalists did not use the effective but very expensive fort-and-blockade-line strategy and entrusted the main effort of anti-Communist operations to the Manchurian troops of Gen. Chang Hsueh-liang, who had been driven out of Manchuria by the Japanese in 1931. The Manchurian army had been one of the better warlord armies but, in 1936, Manchurian troops were completely unreliable politically for operations against the Communists. Having been driven from their homes in Manchuria by the Japanese, they were especially susceptible to the Communist appeals to end the civil war and form a united front against Japanese imperialism.

The Chinese Communists had been calling for a united front against Japan ever since 1931 but this was initially a "united front from below," i.e., ruling out the National Government leaders who were denounced as allies of Japanese imperialism. In 1935 the Comintern line changed to "united front from above," i.e., an alliance of all those willing to oppose the Axis powers. In the Far East, the Soviet leaders saw the Chinese National Government as potentially helpful in preventing a Japanese attack on Siberia, which was being advocated by elements in the Japanese Army.

"The Sian Incident"

During 1936, the Manchurian forces were increasingly influenced by Communist appeals. Military operations against the Communists slowed down and there was actually a secret meeting between the Manchurian Gen. Chang Hsueh-liang and the Communist Chou En-lai. Increasing tension developed in Sian between the Manchurian organizations and National Government organizations still committed to the anti-Communist line. In December, Chiang Kai-shek went to Sian to try to straighten out the situation and was seized by Gen. Chang Hseuh-liang and Yang Hu-ch'eng. The
Communists came in as mediators, almost certainly on instructions from the Comintern, and secured Chiang Kai-shek's release. No formal agreement was recorded at the time but the result of this Sian Incident was to produce an informal truce between the Kuomintang and the Communists, who now formed a new united front alliance in September 1937 after the start of the Sino-Japanese War.

The alliance provided that the Communists would accept Sun Yat-sen's principles as defining the basic policy needed for China, cease their insurrection against the National Government, abandon their policy of land confiscation, abolish the Soviet government, and allow the Red Army to be incorporated into the National Army. In turn, the National Government recognized three Communist divisions as the Eight Route Army (later the Eighteenth Group Army) and allotted them a garrison area in North Shensi. In addition, the Communist regime was allowed to function as a Special Area Government in the area which it controlled, * to have some local offices in the National Government areas, and to publish a newspaper in the capital.

The Japanese army may be considered inadvertently responsible for the failure of Kuomintang counterinsurgency in China. If the National Government had been able to continue counterinsurgency operations and to apply the measures which had been successful in South China, they would almost certainly have been successful against the much smaller Red Army and much smaller Communist base area in Northwest China. But the Japanese Army was not content with its conquest of Manchuria and tried to bring the whole of North China under Japanese control through increasingly high-handed, provocative, and actually criminal policies. **

While its strength was steadily being increased with the buildup of the new Central Government army, the National Government wished to postpone a showdown with

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* In 1938 another area, Shansi-Chahar-Hopei was recognized by the National Government as a wartime regional government with status similar to that of a provincial government.

** E.g., Japanese agents protected by the Japanese Army in North China engaged in drug peddling and large-scale smuggling operations.
Japan. Nonetheless, it became steadily harder to resist the pressure of a public opinion growing ever more sympathetic to Communist appeals for a united front against Japanese aggression. Chiang Kai-shek's apparent failure to move vigorously against the invaders produced dissension within Nationalist ranks. The revolt of the Nineteenth Group Army in Fukien in 1934 had come largely from dissatisfaction with the National Government's failure to resist Japan and the same was true for an attempt to set up a rival government in Canton in June 1936. Japanese intervention in China set the stage for the Sian Incident, which produced the end of counterinsurgency operations. The ensuing truce gave the Chinese Communists the opportunity for the expansion that led to their final postwar victory in China. The Japanese army leaders always claimed that one of their major objectives was to prevent the growth of communism in China and, on this particular point, there is no reason to doubt the sincerity of their claim. But the actual results of their actions were the direct contrary of their intentions; they saved the Red Army in 1936 and, in 1937, gave the Communists the opportunity to win control of China.

Summary

In 1928 and 1929, the National Government made the common mistake of underestimating the potential danger from insurgency. Because the Communist forces were dismissed as mere bandits and opposed only by inferior local forces, they were able to expand and to consolidate their base areas.

From 1930 to 1932, the National Government made serious efforts against Communist insurgency but tried to handle it by the methods of conventional warfare. The series of offensives against the Communist base areas were planned in terms of bringing the Communist armies to battle and winning an essentially military victory in a matter of months. These tactics failed.
In 1933, the National Government shifted to a really effective strategy. The foundation of this was the consolidation of National Government control in the areas adjoining the Communist bases. The Communist underground organization was infiltrated and seriously weakened. Registration and control of the population under the pao-chia system and the organization of local militia units restricted insurgent movement outside the base areas and helped to enforce an effective blockade of the Communist bases. And the agrarian reform program, even though rather half-heartedly applied, enabled the National Government to consolidate its control of areas recovered from the insurgents. On the purely military side, the fort-and-blockade-line strategy was expensive and tied down many troops but it enabled the Nationalists steadily and gradually to reduce the insurgent area. An important aspect of this strategy was that the continued attacks into the insurgent base areas and the use of air power against insurgent positions were not seen as measures to secure a rapid victory but only as measures to weaken the insurgents and to accelerate the gradual tightening of the fort-and-blockade-line system. By the end of 1934, Communist forces were trying desperately to escape to some new base area.

If Japanese pressure had not halted counterinsurgency operations, it appears almost certain that Chiang's 1933-34 strategy would have completely succeeded.