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INSIDE RED CHINA

From remote, inaccessible Yen-an comes an account of Communist resistance against merciless Japanese

by TEDDY WHITE

Time and LIFE's Far East Correspondent Teddy White recently flew from Chungking to Yen-an, the mountain-shrouded capital of Communist North China. There he talked with the Party leaders, peasants and guerrillas who for seven years have been waging their own independent war against the Japanese. In this article Mr. White tells of their long struggle and recounts some of the atrocities committed against them (as against all Chinese) by the Japs.

In the current crisis of the Asiatic war the Chinese Communists hold a crucial position. In recent months the Japs have scored a great land victory, splitting Free China in two and threatening to knock it out of the war. To meet this threat the U. S. government has been urging Generalissimo Chiang K'ai-shek to accept the Communists' help in a united campaign to stop the Jap invaders. Last week the news hinted that some such political truce might be in the making. Chiang appointed the able and modern-minded T. V. Soong as premier of the Chungking government. A high Communist leader, Chou En-lai, flew to Chungking from Yen-an in a U. S. Army plane. There was hope that the dire adversity might at least temporarily solve the deep-rooted ideological differences.

You come down on Yen-an from the air, over the wastelands of North China and over loess hills with their tops sliced off. You feel that you are going into a bandits' lair—remote, inaccessible, awe-inspiring, surmounted with an incongruously lovely T'ang pagoda yellow against the China-blue sky.

But once on the ground and with dust swirling over you, whipped by a cold and brazen wind, the familiar smells and sounds are those of old North China. There are mules and horsemen, yellow loess and foot-deep dust, tufted camels from the deserts, the people themselves in shaggy woollens and thick yellow paddings.

This is as it always has been, except that now there is something else—a gloss, a bustle, a driving, vigorous energy that is new. The people are younger, sturdier; bugles shrill and echo and rebound from hill to hill in fine silver tones at dawn. There is an undercurrent of movement, confusion and excitement.

Soon, however, this impression resolves itself into a feeling that this is not a capital and not an experimental Shangri-La—but that this is a camp, an active field headquarters, or a provisional command post that has been pitched at a particular moment in history and that the camp itself can be struck and dissolved and moved on tomorrow if it need be.

There are 40,000-odd citizens in the township. Twelve thousand of them are natives of north Shensi Province—here since before the records of history began. The rest are the brains and heart, the everlasting core of the Chinese Communist Party with its arteries of bureaus and other organs of operation.

Everything revolves about two separate clusters of buildings which house the headquarters of the army and the headquarters of the Party. Army headquarters are tucked away beneath hills in a compound of mud and gray brick buildings in a garden of limpid loveliness. Party headquarters are three miles up the river in two large buildings of brick.

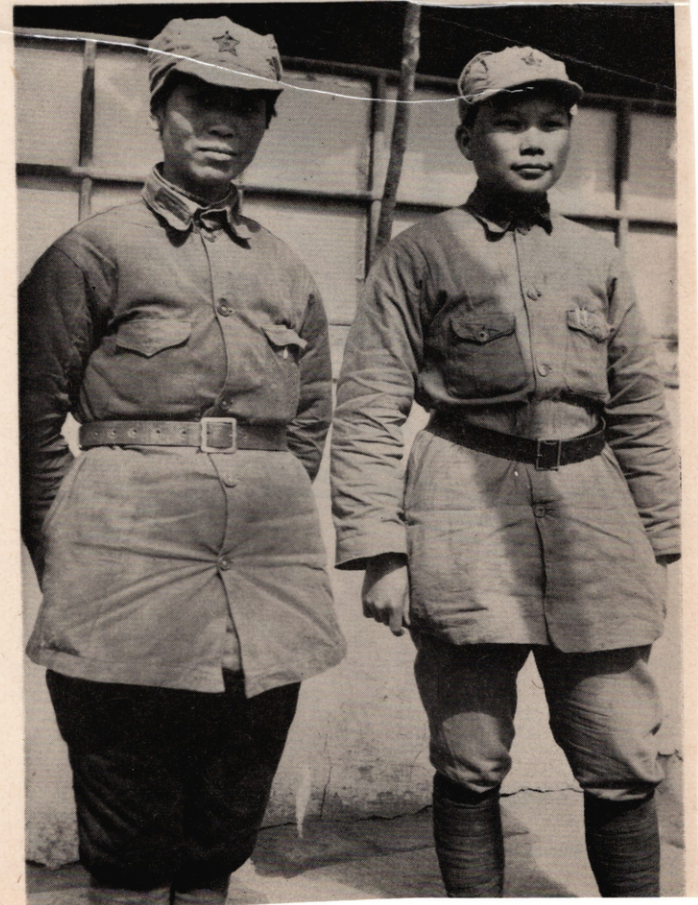
Out of these two separate headquarters go the orders and directives to all agents and units of Communist movements throughout the length and breadth of the land—to the guerrillas in the hills, to the underground in Japanese-occupied cities and to the radio network that links the Party together.

Yen-an itself is unimportant. It is a window, a great, open peephole into the vast areas that the Japanese have conquered. The people within this tiny goblet of loess are the eyes, ears, nerves and tentacles of the Communist war against Japan. Through them the Party decides what shall be done for the guerrillas ceaselessly fighting the armies of Japan and her puppets, for the Communist army and for the armed militia. When you listen to the people talk it is as if someone had thrown open the grate of a furnace and inside you could see the terrible cruelty of the flames.

Here, behind and flanking the advance lines of Japanese conquest, war



The two top Communist leaders have ruled for almost 17 years, are grim, hardheaded, tough. At left (above) is Mao Tse-tung, Party chairman, at right is Chu Teh, army commander. Their wives, bold, ardent Party workers, are shown below, Madame Mao, at left, Madame Chu, right.



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Anti-Japanese university in Yen-an caves trains young Chinese, helps indoctrinate Japanese not considered incorrigible. This is Soviet-starred entrance to president's office.

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has gone on without letup since 1937. The Communist armies can marshal as many as 20,000 to 30,000 trained fighters for a single operation in one area. And beneath this striking power there is a base of peasant popular support spreading out behind and around the routes of Japanese circulation throughout all of North Central China. There are some areas measuring 200 by 100 miles in which no enemy dares set foot.

The organization is not like that of an armed conspiracy of raiding huntsmen nor is it led by a band of Chinese Robin Hoods. It is a vital, integrated military and political movement that has, provisionally at least, solved the most vexing problems of Chinese peasant society. Eight years ago North China was a backward, unhappy political vacuum. The new nationhood of China was confined to cities and railway zones. The peasants in hill villages and roadless plains were still boxed in semifeudal ignorance, superstitious slaves to never-ending labor, captives of the land and of the landlords.

The Communists, wise and shrewd with 15 years of merciless class warfare, knew how great were the social tensions in the villages and how much power was locked up in the immobile struggle between the landlords and landless, between the rich and poor. As their army expanded it carried with it as a packaged unit its political organizers. These were to reorganize the social structure. The peasants were told to elect their own governments and officials. They were urged to cut rents and reduce interest rates from 40% a year to 20%. The landlords were given guarantees that rent would be paid and interest accounted for. Patriotic intellectuals and students who left routine careers at the start of war were called in to staff the government and act as administrators. They have succeeded in resolving these tremendous internal tensions into an all-consuming, external war against the enemy: the Jap.

It is their war against the Japs that has made the Communists popular among the people. The Communists offered the peasants protection. And they offered resistance, the only possible outlet for the terrible, quenchless hatred of the Chinese peasant for the Japanese soldier.

"Kill all! Burn all! Loot all!"

What the Japanese have done to occupied China is one of the most monstrous historic crimes ever perpetrated against one people by another. In a sense it is so great that the Japanese themselves have been trapped, for as each succeeding barbarity failed of success it called forth some new device and doctrine of savagery. In seven years the baffled Japanese have arrived at a total political bankruptcy in North China that is summed up in a new Japanese army slogan: "Kill all, burn all, loot all."

From one end of North China to another the hills and valleys are dotted with the blackened, empty shells of villages which the Japanese have razed. But because of the relentless opposition to them, the invaders have had to dig protective trenches and ditches parallel with their railway lines for hundreds of miles. Blockhouses are strung out along the highways and the hillcrests are crowned with strongpoints. Every bridge is guarded by blockhouses. Telephone poles are sometimes set in concrete to protect them against guerrilla destruction. Yet none of these Japanese devices has been able to halt the organization of popular peasant resistance.



Military training for students, who are shown here on the Yen-an university parade ground, is part of the Communist program to indoctrinate vigorous young leadership.

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The motive and impulse of war comes from hate. The atrocity lists here in Yen-an couldn't even be published in America. Rape in every ingenious variation is commonplace. Murder is a low form of crime. Massacres follow one another with degraded monotony. There were a series of massacres at Pingyang on Oct. 18 last year which became famous. The Japanese gathered the villagers together and cut the head off one girl. Then they impaled it on a chair and forced the people to kneel and contemplate it. This was part of a softening-up process to make them talk. They made the girl's mother fondle the head, then beheaded the mother too. They picked out five pretty women for their pleasure, then herded the rest of the villagers into a cave and burned them to death. They moved on to neighboring villages, burning 16 peasants alive in one spot, eight alive elsewhere. They got tired of simple burning and at the next spot, Shantsuitou, they blindfolded 15 villagers and kicked them alive from the mountaintops.

Up and down the Pingyang area the Japanese roved. Rarely did they waste bullets. In one village the Japanese took a pregnant young woman and summoned 20 other village women to watch as they placed the woman in a coffin and cut her at her breasts. A Japanese soldier inserted his hand and tore the tissue away till he reached her heart. She had died before he reached her heart, but he ripped it out. All this was done as a public demonstration to strengthen army authority. The unit was commanded by a Colonel Arai. The Chinese have recorded many such cases.

So deep is the hatred of the peasantry that it often cuts directly across the Communist Party's efforts to capture Japanese soldiers alive. When Japanese are captured alive they are brought usually to Yen-an or some other center for classification. The most radical elements are normally turned over to a Japanese-personnel school for instruction under the direction of a Japanese Communist leader. Incorrigible elements are usually turned over to the central government. The politically advanced elements form the nucleus of the "Japanese People's Emancipation League," which now numbers more than 300 active members engaged in anti-Japanese propaganda and intelligence work.

Three conditions that cause a fight

The regular army of the Communists operates usually in companies and detachments of little more than 400 men. Their basic arms come from supplies captured from the Japs and the troops fight only under special circumstances. They go into action, first, when there is a good opportunity to capture enough rifles and ammunition to make up for what they expend; second, to protect the countryside during the period of the grain harvest when stores are being concentrated; and third, when a major Japanese offensive against one of their own primary administrative centers must be stopped.

The peasants themselves have raised mine warfare to a high level. The Communists began to teach mine warfare to the peasants two years ago. Now local newspapers report the exploits of "mine heroes" the way American sports pages report home-run kings. Old temple bells or scrap are brought to the army arsenal department which gives the peasants the equivalent in mine shells. These the

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peasants fill with black native powder or smokeless powder produced by the guerrilla governments. There are also mines made of porcelain, logs and rocks. Bridges are mined. Stepstones in brooks are mined. Mines are ringed around Jap blockhouses so that an unwary Jap garrison will blow itself up when it moves about. Some of the villagers mine all approaches to their residences, leaving a different approach clear each night. When Jap raids are threatened, mines can be scattered everywhere—in village squares, by the gate, by hitching posts.

The peasants love hand grenades, too, which they make themselves out of black powder and native fuses. You can go into a country home and see a housewife doing her wash or cooking a meal and on a shelf over her head she has two "potato masher" hand grenades ready for use. It is all a part of the peasantry's preoccupation with war and resistance which also makes it the most perfect intelligence net ever conceived. No Jap moves, no truck passes but what the peasants watch and report. On the hills are long poles, tufted at the top so that from far off they look like brooms. These are alarm signals. When the hilltop sentries see Japs moving on the paths below the tufts are knocked down. Each village is mobilized so that every citizen knows what to do the moment the alarm is given. Women and children disappear into tunnels in the hills.

On the plains, where there is no hill cover, the war has gone underground in the literal sense. The peasants began by building tunnels under the individual villages for hiding, then village was linked up to village. Now there are places where the underground network runs for miles, complete with ventilation chambers to thwart the use of poison gas. The Jap who crawls into such a rabbit warren with a rifle is at the mercy of the peasants.

The Party schools and conferences at Yen-an exist as a laboratory and symposium where the experiences and experiments of outlying areas are discussed, analyzed, debated and raised to the theoretical status of Party policy. The Party and the army are constantly sucking in the alert, energetic elite of mass organizations in the forward areas, training them in schools and pumping them out again. One of the leaders of the Party estimated that between 30,000 and 40,000 such cadres have already been indoctrinated in Yen-an.

Hardheaded pragmatists run the Party

The Party leadership remains in the hands of the same body of men who have directed the movement since it was driven underground almost 17 years ago. They are men in their late 30s or middle 40s, recruited mostly from the ranks of youthful intellectuals who were set ablaze by the great revolution in China in the 1920s. The long, tough years have weeded out the frail in body, the vacillating in conviction, the sterile in ideas. The leaders thus developed into a group of grim, hardheaded pragmatists who cast away tenet after tenet of early Marxist theory. They are hard men and can be rough. So many of their families have been butchered in civil wars that almost all of them live now for their Party and convictions alone. They are proud of their achievements, have an assurance in their work and above all they have the patience and trust in one another that come only from common suffering jointly endured and jointly surmounted.

The top leaders of the Political Council are divorced from actual administration and have leisure for long discussions and extended theoretical reflection. An interview with any member of the council can last five or six hours. Their knowledge of the outside world is primitive, sometimes wrong—but it is combined with an amazing sophistication as to the motives that impel states and masses to action. They preach and revere Marxist shibboleths; and as they abandon one after another they justify each abandonment by historical dialectics. Their policies are now based on an empirical wisdom that comes after years of civil war and war against the Japanese. Within themselves they are trying to weed out the sins of intellectual dogmatism that their younger cadres learn from classics based on Western revolutionary experience and theory. Party leadership is trying to turn the younger theorists back to the study of Chinese society and history for a new program of action.

Said Mao Tse-tung, Communist Party Chairman, stressing the new Party line: "No one has begun in a really serious manner to study political, economic, military and cultural history during the past century, the period of real significance . . . Many of our comrades regard this ignorance or partial knowledge of our own history not as a shame but, on the contrary, as something to be proud of. . . . Since they know nothing about their own country they turn to foreign lands. . . . During recent decades many foreign-returned students have made this mistake. They have merely been phonographs, forgetting that their duty is to make something useful to China out

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of the imported stuff they have learned. The Communist Party has not escaped this infection."

At present the basic foreign policy of the Party is directed at the U. S. in recognition of the fact that we will be the strongest power in the Pacific and that we are a great ally now against the hated Japanese. In pursuing that policy the Party in all its declarations is now trying to sell three ideas to the U. S. The first is that their party disposes terrific power in the battle against Japan, a power that can be coordinated directly with the U. S. efforts. The second is that the Party itself, its government and its armies, is based upon a functioning, democratic system. The third is that the Party is willing to go to any length to be friends with the U. S.

There is no question about the military power that the Communist Party disposes. Its extent is reflected in the disposition of Jap and satellite troops.

There can be just as little question at present about democratic methods. The Communist Party is for democracy currently because democracy pays. You take a peasant who has been kicked, swindled and beaten and whose fathers have transmitted to him the memory of oppression reaching back for centuries; then you treat him like a man, ask his opinion, let him vote for his local government and police, let him vote himself a reduction in rents, let him vote himself an army and militia—if you do all that you have given him a stake in society and he will be willing to fight both for society and the Party that has given him this stake. Behind the Japanese lines the peasant follows the Party because the Party has given him a stake in his society. To follow or vote for anyone else or any other party would seem ridiculous to him.

Whether or not such blanket Communist leadership in democracy can be maintained after the war in large cities where political corruption is possible and where the urban middle class fears and hates Communism—and where there is a well-organized, well-moneyed, eloquent opposition party—remains for the future to decide. The Communists feel that if all adults of all classes are given a vote the Party can retain control of the masses and that, therefore, democracy is precisely the best medium for the three-fold development of China itself, of the Communist Party and of the masses.

In proclaiming their friendship with the U. S. the Communists at present are sincere and if their friendship is reciprocated it can become a lasting thing. The war against Japan has been so bitter and soul-consuming that the Communists have become out-and-out nationalist while at the same time any enemy of the Japanese becomes a sworn friend of theirs. The U. S., as the chief enemy of Japan, is their friend and they feel, in addition, that the U.S. can be the greatest aid in producing peace and the future orderly development of China. They say that China has had too much war, and it is true that since 1911 the country has run with blood, destruction and pestilence. The people are surfeited.

The Chinese Communist Party, deriving its theory out of experience, has come a long way since its early policies of land confiscation and indiscriminate hostility toward all Western powers. Presently it wants American friendship more than any other single conditioning force for the future China. It wants this friendship, however, not as a beggar seeks charity but as a friend seeks aid in furthering a joint cause. With or without this friendship, however, their war against Japan will go on till victory or death. In victory they will remember who were friends and who stood coldly aloof.



Students work hard, study hard, live hard under portraits of Russia's Joseph Stalin and F. D. R. This picture is from newly released March of Time film, *Inside China Today*.