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Many Parallels Found in Our

Struggle for Freedom and
Ally's War With Japan

By BROOKS ATKINSON

Constantly astonished by the primitive working conditions and social organization in China, foreigners frequently describe it as a medieval country. Although China is obviously backward, the general culture has advanced beyond medievalism.

To understand the development of our Far Eastern Ally, it is illuminating to compare it in some ways to America 160 and 170 years ago. There are many startling comparisons between the war in China today and the American Revolution. Our Revolution was also a long war; it lasted eight years. The soldiers of the American Revolution were poorly shod and clothed and indifferently fed. Many were sick; thousands deserted.

During the eight years of the American Revolution there were very few American victories. Our poorly equipped, half trained and unequally led farmer-soldiers spent a good deal of their time retreating. The service of supply was wretched. The politics of the Revolution were frequently rancorous and they lacked firmness; there were dissident elements in the Congress that played politics while the ragmuffin armies suffered in the field.

The finances were flimsy and desperate. At no time were all the people in the colonies united. There were Tories who feared democracy as the rule of the mob. After the first exultation of the war had worn off many of the colonists lost interest, returned to their farms and regarded the war as something apart from themselves. Some of them traded with the enemy. Finally, the Revolution was not won until a foreign power, with modern military equipment, had crossed a wide ocean to the assistance of the colonists—not for quixotic reasons, it should be added.

There is also a less striking though perceptible resemblance. The gentry who joined the Revolutionary forces wanted to be colonels or generals and wanted to maintain the same difference in military rank that separated them from the common man in civil life. Democracy had not gotten very far under the skin of most members of the ruling class. Apparently many of them were vain and temperamental. They thought too much about face.

Among the commanders there was considerable jealousy. Commanders did not always obey orders that did not please them, or they obeyed displeasing orders half-heartedly. The military organization was poor partly because commanders were incapable of the sort of objective thinking that efficient, impersonal organizations require.

At the risk of carrying these parallels too far, I should like to suggest a reason why there was jealousy, temperament and inefficiency among some of the Revolutionary commanders. Very few people 170 years ago had had any scientific training, the purpose of which is to find the objective truth, quite apart from its personal implications; and almost no one had learned discipline from the machine. For, it seems to me, the sort of objective, impersonal thinking that has made our huge war organization possible comes largely from the scientific training that modern Americans get inside and outside of school and from years of experience in the highly developed industrial machine civilization.

Many of China's current troubles can be remedied or eradicated. Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek has enough political authority and personal prestige to make decisions that will solve many problems. But many of them cannot be solved in a year or two by a great nation that, by and large, lacks scientific training and machine experience. Modern discipline in workday affairs comes largely from living in a scientific era. If China develops into what we refer to rather smugly as a modern nation, she will some day have this attitude toward national and military affairs.

Russia, which was a backward nation not so long ago, has become modern with astonishing rapidity by undergoing an industrial revolution with machines and learning to work scientifically. In the meantime, China is still basically old-fashioned in her approach to modern affairs and in her pliable resistance to a modern Japanese army. Although we can fairly expect China to fight the war wholeheartedly and make the best possible use of the military techniques that suit her old-fashioned army, we cannot expect her to learn in a year or two how to master organization and fight an efficient modern war. She has not developed as far as that in her general habits of thinking.