

CHINA COMMUNISTS TRAIN BIG MILITIA

Villagers Now Able to Fight to
Protect Their Crops From
Looting Japanese

PUPPET FORCES WEAKEN

One Unit of 1,000 Invaders
Annihilated by Ambushes
on a Week's Retreat

By Wireless to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

WITH THE COMMUNIST EIGHTH ROUTE ARMY, in Shansi Province, Sept. 7 (Delayed)—For six days correspondents have been with operation units of China's Communist-led army in country that has passed many times from Chinese to Japanese hands and back again.

Instead of the flourishing settlements west of the Yellow River, where the people are reaping the fruits of years of education and are steadily increasing production, here are villages where peasants tell of Japanese atrocities with somber faces that brighten only when they recount how they deceived the enemy or drove him out.

The entrance to every village is guarded by members of the People's Militia in civilian garb with every variety of captured Japanese arms, from tommyguns to hand grenades, and every variety of local arms, from land mines through muzzle loaders to red tasseled spears. When anyone approaches, some villager, often a child or a woman who may be herding sheep or spinning thread, bars the way and demands a pass.

If there is any delay guerrillas immediately appear from a neighboring shack or a clump of trees. There is no nonsense about passes. Everyone must show them, whether in uniform or out.

A brigade commander, who is leading two companies of men through the enemy lines to be crossed tonight, has had to dismount often, show his papers and stand docilely by while some ragged 13-year-old counted the members of the party and satisfied himself that they were covered by the document. Children are entrusted with this duty because they often are the only villagers who can read.

Enemy's Moves Are Reported

If the enemy moves, the people in the nearest village are immediately informed by mounted scouts who are posted almost at the gates of Japanese garrison

points. Alarm bells are rung, the people hide in the grain or retire to the hills and the militia lays mines and booby traps. The news is relayed to other villages by some simple expedients such as signal fires or knocking down a flagpole on a mountain top.

News about enemy forces often is obtained before the actual start from cooks and water carriers and even from puppet Chinese soldiers in strongpoints who work with the Eighth Route Army.

The state of alarm is constant, because this is the harvest season when the Japanese invariably sally forth to loot. Men, women, soldiers, guerrillas and militia members are working in the fields from dawn till after dark to gather, thresh and conceal the crop.

The "labor exchange," which by collective working in fields saved many man-hours when the Communists were around, has different forms here, adapted to front-line troop conditions. One is a labor

exchange between militia troops and civilians. The former work on peasants' fields as well as their own during the quiet season. When they are mobilized for action the people clear their harvests as well as their own so the fighters are not worried when they go out to scout, hold off or harass the enemy.

There also is labor exchange between neighboring villages as well as individual peasants so that a village whose livestock is looted and whose men are killed can still plow, sow, reap and thresh.

The individual farmer once had to cut his crops and thresh them and then store the grain. Now, with peasants and fighters working in a common labor pool, these operations proceed simultaneously, different groups specializing in each. The time for clearing, sowing and storing the harvest has thus been reduced from two months to less than two weeks.

The result is that in the Hsinghsien district the Japanese, who killed 1,384 peasants and stole 6,879 piculs [a picul is 133 1/3 pounds] of grain and 466 cattle in the looting campaign of 1940, got less each succeeding year till last year they killed forty-eight civilians and stole 247 piculs of grain and eighty-three cattle.

During the same period the labor exchange has increased the cultivated area and total crop yield to above the pre-war level so even after campaign losses the people have more to eat than before and a conviction of efficiency for the production struggle has increased the number of peasants participating in the armed engagements in coordination with the Army or independently.

In 1942 about 1,400 persons turned out here to help the Army by carrying food and wounded. In the fall campaign in 1943 more than 26,000 turned out in a district with a population of 95,000. Last year a Japanese unit of more than 1,000 men was annihilated.

The Army and militia allowed the Japanese to come in for some distance and then subjected them to a series of ambushes and temporary encirclements from the sur-

rounding hills. By progressively whittling down the enemy forces for a week on a sixty-mile retreat the survivors were slain only a day's march from their fortified line, where they would have been safe.

Charred Bones Mark Battles

Piles of charred bones mark the entrenched points where the Japanese made stands and burned their dead. Japanese rifles, pistols, trench mortars, machine guns, blankets, overcoats and haversacks are now used by the proud defenders. The Army assists with additional items and ammunition.

Military instruction of militia men is one of the obligations of the commanders of Eighth Route Army garrisons. When militia units are first formed their members go into action with the regulars, one or two being placed in each squad of soldiers. When they gain confidence and knowledge they go into action independently under their own elected commanders.

Eighth Route Army officers say that at first they had to teach the militia but that now they often find themselves learning from the militia's ingenuity and knowledge of local conditions. The militia is only within a radius of twenty miles of its own village but otherwise the distinctions between it and the regular army are rapidly being obliterated and equal tasks are being entrusted.

Two companies of regulars here

are returning to the enemy's rear after two months of duty with a training regiment at the Shansi-Suiyuan border region headquarters under a system by which one company from each sub-region, of which there are eight in this area, undergoes instruction at headquarters semi-annually. The training incorporates recent experience, new enemy tactics and preparation for new tasks. Then the men return to teach the rest of the sub-region.

The companies cross many enemy blockade lines coming and going and bring their own arms. Sixty-four per cent of the rifles, 47 per cent of the trench mortars and all heavy machine guns were captured from the Japanese and puppet Chinese.

The Japanese still fight stubbornly despite the fact that garrisons now consist mostly of underage and overage reserves with inferior equipment, but the puppets are demoralized. The lack of men

compels the Japanese to garrison many blockading forts with puppets and the Eighth Route Army is engaged in an offensive to eliminate these and, by maintaining the initiative through the harvest season, to tie the Japanese down to garrison points.

Yesterday and this morning fighters within a few miles of here captured two strong points with 100 puppets. In the first they captured the puppet captain who commanded both posts and they took the second by ordering him to instruct the men there to come out and surrender because they were surrounded by superior forces.

The fighters made the surrender easier by promising good treatment and offering their own transport to bring the families and personal effects of the capitulating puppets from a village near the highway blockhouse, thus protecting them from reprisals. The puppets are bedraggled, bewildered, dispirited men who were pressed into service by the Japanese. They are as different from the well-informed, happy fighters as though they belonged to a different species.

Each burned-out village here has a blackboard bearing the latest world and Chinese news, supplied by radio men of the nearest Army unit. Here, a few miles from the enemy, scarred walls bear slogans such as "Down with fascism!" at the side of "Combine production with the armed struggle" and "Defend the harvest!" Not one head of cattle, not one ounce of grain for the enemy!"

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