



PLA: FROM “MILLET AND RIFLES” TO HI-TECH TROOPS



Written & Compiled by

International Communication Bureau of PLA General Political Department

Domestic News for Overseas Service Department of Xinhua News Agency

Military News Department of Xinhua News Agency

PLA Publishing House

PLA: FROM "MILLET AND RIFLES" TO HI-TECH TROOPS

Written & Compiled by

International Communication Bureau of PLA General Political Department
Domestic News for Overseas Service Department of Xinhua News Agency
Military News Department of Xinhua News Agency



PLA Publishing House

CIP Data

PLA: From "Millet and Rifles" to Hi-tech Troops/ International Communication Bureau of PLA General Political Department, Domestic News for Overseas Service Department of Xinhua News Agency, and Military News Department of Xinhua News Agency— PLA Publishing House, Beijing, 2008.

ISBN 978-7-5065-5706-1

I .PLA II . ①International Communication Bureau ②Domestic News for Overseas Service Department ③Military News Department III. Reportorial Literature—China—Contemporary IV.125

CIP (2008) 157946

Production: International Communication Bureau of PLA General Political
Department et al

Executive Editor: Zhang Ying

Text and Cover design: Xiong Jian

Executive Proofreader: Liu Xiaojing

Publisher: PLA Publishing House

Address: 40 West Street, Di An Men, Beijing, 100035.

Telephone: 66531659

Email: jfjwycbs@public.bta.net.cn

Copyright 2008 by PLA Publishing House

All rights reserved. Printed in China. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews. For information address PLA Publishing House, 40 West Street, Di An Men, Beijing, 100035.



Chapter I. The mordernization of Chinese Army

- From peasant guerrillas to high-tech troops: 80 years
of the PLA / **2**
- Chinese President stresses Party loyalty and modernization
at PLA birthday rally / **10**
- Blue soliders attack Red Army / **15**
- PLA expanding combat capabilities of shipboard air troop / **18**
- China's third-generation tank among world's most
advanced: PLA officer / **21**
- China's anti-chemical soldiers playing greater role / **24**
- Chinese universities train 65,000 reserve military officers / **27**
- China reduces 200,000 troops between 2003-2005:
White Paper / **29**
- China's defense expenditure is low compared with major
powers / **31**

Chapter II. Peaceful Troops Go Transparent

- China's elite troop mounts international public relations
offensive / **36**
- Chinese peacekeepers in Middle East win honor with lives / **39**
- Chinese navy trains marine rescuers for developing countries / **44**

Index

PLA: From "Millet and Rifles" to Hi-Tech Troops

- Chinese military celebrates 50th anniversary of largest
training base with successful exercise / 46
- Foreign military attaches visit PLA's light mechanised infantry
brigade / 49
- SCO members kick off anti-terror drill / 51
- Military drills, a platform for exchanges between China and
other countries / 55
- Chinese army says open to learn from SCO troops / 58
- Military expert says anti-terrorism is an important mission of
Chinese army / 60
- Chinese missile destroyer sets off for first naval visit to Japan / 63
- Chinese naval warship arrives in Tokyo for visit / 67
- A voyage of peace and friendship / 69
- U.S. Pacific Fleet Commander hails "open approach" of
Chinese navy / 72

Chapter III. From guns to greetings: defrosting China's borders

- From guns to greetings: defrosting China's borders / 76
- China clearing landmines on Sino-Vietnamese Border / 86
- China's PLA recruits develop green fingers on remote posting / 92
- Along the border and in the kitchen: Chinese army goes digital / 95



Chinese New Year at world's highest barracks / 98

China's Border Patrol Goes Hi-tech / 101

Chapter IV. True Tales on Military Camp

Buglers return to front line duty in People's Liberation Army / 108

Sergeants with modern professional skills take on bigger role
in Chinese army / 110

Fighting the inner battles in China's military / 112

Ethnic soldiers face challenges and opportunities in Chinese
military / 118

Chinese army bolsters fighting capability by carrying on
traditions / 123

Veteran commander urges PLA to carry forward Chinese army's
fine traditions / 127

The Army can change a man / 130

Private mail stirs up PLA chain of command / 134

Chinese army officers find it easier to get vacations / 139

China's military auditors to scrutinize more top brass / 142

Chapter V. Logistic Modernization

PLA continues long march of logistics reform / 146

- A Food Revolution in Chinese Army / 151
- Chinese army stresses stable food supply for soldiers amid price hike / 160
- China to increase subsidy for war, nuclear veterans / 162
- A tale of two towers—legend of the Lis / 164
- Faith, study and love heal the wounds of war / 170
- China's armed forces go stylish / 177
- China's armed police to keep up with PLA in fashion stakes / 184
- China's PLA to wear "digital camouflage" / 186
- China opens military logistics services to private sector / 189
- China's PLA demonstrates its logistic capabilities / 191
- PLA tests capabilities of military supply station / 193

Chapter VI. New Role in Market Economy

- Sophisticated equipment helps PLA to fight floods / 196
- China adopts war wounds treatment to save civilian lives / 199
- Armed police help drug dealers' children get schooling in southwest China / 202
- Police help rehabilitate village addicts / 206
- Precarious life of a bomb disposal expert in Gansu / 211
- A Tale of Two Cities / 214
- 256,000 demobilized Chinese officers offered civilian jobs / 219



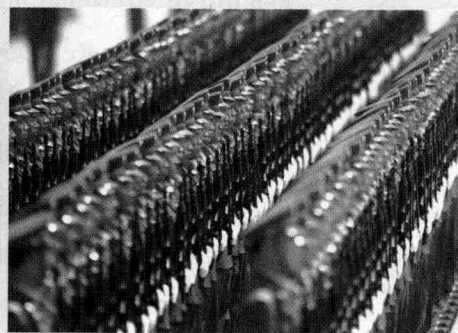
- Chinese military stages Olympic safeguard exercise / **221**
- Chinese marine police stage anti-terrorist drill for Olympics / **223**
- 28,000 more people to be resettled on former shooting range in
NW China / **226**

Chapter VII. To the Last Frontiers

- China prepares to select new taikonauts / **230**
- "I will accept the space flight mission again": Chinese first
spaceman / **234**
- Chinese astronauts begin training for spacewalk / **236**
- China's space food set to land in supermarkets / **238**
- China trains rescue teams for third manned space program / **241**
- China capable of using space technology for weather forecasting,
pollution control / **243**
- Chinese astronauts test traditional Chinese medicines in space / **245**
- A nutritionist for Chinese astronauts / **247**

Chapter I

The mordernization of Chinese Army



From peasant guerrillas to high-tech troops: 80 years of the PLA

By Xinhua Writer Chang Ai ling

When Li Shuiqing joined the Red Army at just 13 years of age in 1930, he was disgruntled with his company commander. The company, which had more than 100 soldiers, had to share a handful of rifles and dozens of spears and broadswords. Li was told, as a "Little Red Devil" –a tag given to all teenage recruits–he was too young to hold any weapon.

"Stop grumbling. As long as we follow the Red Army, the whole of China will be ours!" the company commander told Li, in a futile attempt to shake the pessimism out of the teenager.

The Communist Party–led army was only three years old at that time. Li was typical of its soldiers–mostly uneducated peasants or laborers who had no logistics or weapon supplies.

THE PEASANT GUERRILLAS

Over the next three years, Li and his fellow soldiers followed the Red Army in fighting against the troops led by the Kuomintang, then the ruling party of China. The Red Army managed to withstand four large-scale offensives by the Kuomintang troops,



expanding rapidly to a force of more than 100,000 soldiers.

But in 1934, the Kuomintang launched a fifth round of attacks and captured the Red Army's revolutionary base, which triggered the beginning of the Communist's two-year "strategic retreat", now universally known as the Long March.

"The 12,500-km trek was full of hardships, bloodshed and do-or-die battles," said Li, then a company political instructor, charged with educating his troops in Communist ideology.

When Li and his soldiers were crossing the wetlands in north Sichuan Province in August 1935, food was scarce to the extreme. Li gave each soldier five broad beans over the first two days. On the third day, they frantically sliced up one cowhide belt and

boiled it to eat.

"Hunger, disease and swamps killed thousands of my comrades, including my first company commander," Li said. Of the 86,000 men and women who joined the Long March, just over 7,000 survived. Li was one of them.

MILLET AND RIFLES AGAINST JAPANESE INVASION

Under pressure to defend China against invasion from Japan, the Kuomintang was forced to collaborate with the Communists. The Communist military forces were integrated into the National Revolutionary Army led by the Kuomintang, forming the Eighth Route Army in the north and the New Fourth Army in the south. Li was a battalion officer in the Eighth Route Army.

Though better equipped, "xiaomi jia buqiang" or "millet and rifles", were the basic equipment of the military forces. The two military groups used primarily guerrilla tactics but also managed to fight a number of conventional battles with the Japanese.

"We have no food and uniforms, but enemies will deliver them to us, we have no guns and cannons, but enemies will make them for us."

This became a famous couplet from the "Song of the Guerilla", written in 1938, and sung by Li and his fellow soldiers during the war. It is still sung today.

Following the victory over Japan in 1945, the Kuomintang-Communist collaboration collapsed and the two armies were once again embroiled in civil war.

Armed with more advanced weapons imported from the United States, the Kuomintang troops were superior to the Communist army, which now fought under a new name, the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA), in every aspect from weaponry and manpower to logistics.

Few people anticipated that the PLA, with its simple "millet and rifle" approach, could overwhelm the Kuomintang troops in just a few years and drive them to Taiwan. Its sweeping victory led to the founding of the People's Republic of China in October 1949.

NEW CHINA

Shortly after the founding of New China, Li and his troops, under the name of the People's Volunteer Army, crossed the Yalu River to join the Korean War as international forces led by the United States neared the Chinese border.

With virtually no air defenses, the Chinese troops suffered hugely from air attacks led by the U.S. forces. Thousands of soldiers were killed and the army's logistic supply was seriously damaged.

Li, then a deputy commander of the 67th army corps, said the fiercest battle occurred at Jinchengchuan in October 1951, which lasted 10 days and left nearly 15,000 Chinese soldiers killed. "But we also killed more than 23,000 enemy troops," Li said.

The 1950–1953 Korean War, which ended in a ceasefire, served as a catalyst for the rapid modernization of the PLA.

Mao Zedong, the late Chinese leader and one of the founders



of the PLA, set to work on strengthening its navy and air force, which were set up in late 1949, using technological and financial aid from the Soviet Union.

In 1956, China unveiled its first jet fighter and developed its own atom bomb in the late 1950s and a hydrogen bomb in the late 1960s.

Establishing a professional military force equipped with modern weapons and doctrines was one of the "Four Modernizations" announced by the Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai in 1964.

In 1966, the PLA set up its strategic missile troops, the Second Artillery Force. Li, who entered a military academy after returning from Korea, continued his career in the Army. In 1977, Li, now a major general, was appointed commander of the Second Artillery

Force.

MODERNIZATION

Achievements of the army's reform and modernization were displayed at the grand military parade marking the 50th founding anniversary of the People's Republic on October 1, 1999. Li, along with other retired generals, watched the parade from the Tian'anmen Gate Tower.

Demonstrating for the first time was a squadron of 25 helicopters, the youngest branch of the PLA service, which showed that China's ground forces had incorporated an air defense system.

The performance of aerial tankers during the parade was designed to demonstrate the modernization of the PLA Air Force and its capability in long-range combat.

There were also four strategic missile formations from the Second Artillery Force, including earth-to-earth missiles, campaign and tactical missiles, earth-to-earth nuclear missiles of intermediate-range, and strategic, long-range nuclear missiles. It was the first time that China's homemade strategic missiles had been displayed to the public.

"The 1999 military parade compared with the one in 1949 was like the difference between heaven and earth," said Li, who, a division commander in 1949, led 1,800 infantrymen marching across Tian'anmen Square for the eyes of Mao Zedong.

"The weapons displayed in 1949 were omnifarious. Nearly 95 percent of them were seized from enemies. They were made by

the United States, Britain, Japan..." Li said. "But 95 percent of the weapons displayed in 1999 were produced by China."

"The grand finale of the 1949 parade was the mounted troops. Their majestic appearance made everyone else envious," the 90-year old Li said. "But in the 1999 parade, the highlight was the strategic missile troops."

The cavalry, once the major fighting force, was abolished from the PLA in the mid 1980s.

With the rapid development of information technology, the PLA speeded up its modernization with an increased focus on mechanization and informatization. The PLA has announced that it will reach its goal of building "informationized" armed forces and be capable of winning informationized wars by the mid-21st century.

Experts say China's modernization of its national defense has been based on very limited resources. Despite the 17.8-percent rise in military spending this year, China's defense budget of 350.9 billion yuan (46.2 billion U.S. dollars) is only ten percent of the United States' military spending of 448 billion U.S. dollars.

"Given the fact China has 1.3 billion people, 9.6 million square kilometers of territory, 22,000 kilometers of borders and 18,000 kilometers of oceanic boundaries, China's military spending, either in absolute value or proportion, still lags behind many countries in the world," Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao said in March during the annual parliamentary session.

The money to be added to this year's defense budget will

mainly be used for three purposes: to raise the salaries of military servicemen, to improve their living and training conditions – not to mention the new range of uniforms that cost more than six billion yuan – and to "appropriately increase" the spending on arms to improve the military's defense capacity.

In keeping with the modernization process, the PLA has demobilized millions of men and women since 1978. The number of its personnel declined from a peak figure of 6.27 million in 1951, during the Korean War, to 2.3 million in 2005.

Over the past 15 years, the PLA has recruited more than 30,000 doctorate and master degree holders and more than 90 percent of regiment officers in PLA's combat troops have received university education.

Ninety-year-old Li is now working on a book of his experiences during the war years from his hospital bed, dictating his memories to his secretary.

"From a Little Red Devil to an infantry division commander and then to the chief of China's strategic missile troops, I'm proud to have witnessed and experienced the changes of China's armed forces," Li said.