

*CHU TEH*

THE BATTLE FRONT OF  
THE LIBERATED AREAS



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LIBERATED AREAS**

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### *PUBLISHER'S NOTE*

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COMRADES! This Seventh Congress of our Party is being held at a time when the great Chinese people have been waging their heroic War of Resistance to Japanese Aggression for nearly eight years. I feel it a great honour to be able at our Party Congress to speak for over nine hundred thousand men belonging to the Eighth Route Army, the New Fourth Army, the South China Anti-Japanese Column and two million and several hundred thousand militiamen—heroes all. There is one thing I ought to say at the start: that during these eight years our splendid Chinese people have formed a national united front against Japanese aggression. The whole people, men and women, young and old, have been waging a tremendous, life-and-death struggle against the invaders on all fronts. No matter how brutal and ruthless the Japanese invaders have been, no matter how mistaken the policies of the Kuomintang government and its high command, the Chinese people have doggedly carried on this great patriotic war. There can be no possible doubt that the Chinese people will achieve final victory. During these eight years our great people's armies—the Eighth Route, the New Fourth and the South China Anti-Japanese Column—have fought shoulder to shoulder with all other anti-Japanese forces in defence of our motherland. And, alongside the rest of the Chinese people, we Communists have shed our blood unsparingly on the battle fronts in the liberated areas

in North, Central and South China. We Chinese Communists can proudly claim to be the best sons and daughters of our nation because we have upheld the cause which the Chinese people have most at heart; and we shall steadfastly continue to do so.

I want to take this opportunity to pay homage to the memory of the men and women of all the armed forces throughout the country who have given their lives in the War of Resistance to Japanese Aggression, to the memory of all members of the Communist Party and all others who made the supreme sacrifice in fighting the Japanese invaders. (All stand bare-headed for three minutes.)

I should also like to extend heartfelt greetings to all our countrymen fighting on anti-Japanese fronts anywhere in China—to the officers and men of the Eighth Route Army, the New Fourth Army, the South China Anti-Japanese Column and the Anti-Japanese Allied Forces in Northeast China.

Comrades! This Congress is meeting to review experience in the War of Resistance, and to prepare ourselves to work, in ever closer co-operation, and in common struggle with the entire Chinese people and all friendly forces fighting the Japanese, to bring this war to final victory. I am in whole-hearted agreement with the political report entitled *On Coalition Government* made by the leader of our Party, Comrade Mao Tse-tung. It is a great historic document, which embodies and sums up the experience gained in the Chinese people's bitter struggle for independence, freedom, democracy, unity and prosperity. It proposes practical measures and pre-



sents a programme for defeating the Japanese invaders, for building a new China. It maps a road which, followed by our Party and the whole Chinese people, will lead to victory in the War of Resistance and shape China's post-war destiny.

Without a correct political policy there can be no correct military policy. The people's war can end in victory only if its course is guided by a correct political policy, pursued by a democratic coalition government enjoying the full support of the people. For eight years now our great people's armies—the Eighth Route Army, the New Fourth Army and the South China Anti-Japanese Column—have waged a war of unparalleled heroism, fought bitter, magnificent and triumphant battles, and become the king-pin of China's War of Resistance. They have done so because the political and military policies of Comrade Mao Tse-tung are the correct ones. The application of Mao Tse-tung's correct political policy in combination with his correct military policy has brought results: the creation of the armed forces of the people; the liberated areas; the democratic coalition government based on the "tripartite system";<sup>1</sup> and a genuine people's war in the liberated areas. All this has enabled us to win one great military victory after another on the battle fronts of the liberated areas.

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<sup>1</sup> During the War of Resistance all anti-Japanese democratic governments in the liberated areas adopted a system of administration to which the Communists (representing the working class and poor peasants), the progressive elements (representing the petty bourgeoisie) and the middle elements (representing the middle bourgeoisie and enlightened gentry) each contributed one third.

Now, as we prepare ourselves for nation-wide victory in the War of Resistance, we must follow the lead given in Comrade Mao Tse-tung's political report and act on the guidance provided by his general political policy.

It would be an obvious mistake to divorce military from political affairs, and to discuss military affairs solely from the military point of view. The military report I am submitting to our Seventh Party Congress is based, in spirit and policy, on the political report of Comrade Mao Tse-tung.

## I. EIGHT YEARS OF THE WAR OF RESISTANCE

Comrades! As I said earlier, we have carried on the War of Resistance to Japanese Aggression for nearly eight years. During these eight years the military situation has undergone complex changes. But complex as they were, they have still not gone beyond the course of development which Comrade Mao Tse-tung forecast in his *Protracted War*: that the War of Resistance would be marked by three stages: the enemy offensive, stalemate, and our counter-offensive. We have still not passed through all these stages: we are just about to enter the third.

The first stage began with the Lukouchiao Incident<sup>1</sup> of July 7, 1937 and ended with the fall of Wuhan in October 1938. During this stage, the Kuomintang authorities were compelled to turn from non-resistance to Japan to resistance, and adopt certain progressive measures of domestic policy. They were forced to do so as a result of the all-out offensive by Japanese im-

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<sup>1</sup>On July 7, 1937 Japanese imperialist forces in China, fired with the ambition to conquer the whole of China, attacked Chinese troops stationed near Lukouchiao ("Marco Polo Bridge"), southwest of Peking. This marked the beginning of the all-out attack on China by the Japanese warlords, and of the Chinese people's heroic eight-year War of Resistance.

perialism, the growing pressure of demands for resistance from the entire Chinese people, and particularly, because of our Party's insistence on a correct policy on the formation of a national united front against Japanese aggression. During this period quite a number of Kuomintang troops and forces under the provincial authorities put up an active resistance to the invaders at the front, though other Kuomintang units fled in panic the moment they encountered the enemy. The change in policy pursued by the Kuomintang authorities at that time was welcomed and supported by us Communists and by the Chinese people as a whole. Unfortunately the change did not go half far enough. At the very start of the War of Resistance the Central Committee of our Party pointed out that without a people's war, a total war, it was impossible to carry the War of Resistance through to victory. Since, however, the Kuomintang authorities persisted in maintaining their regime and their standpoint against the people, they were incapable of waging such a people's war—a situation of which the attacking Japanese invaders took full advantage. It was, in fact, by taking advantage of this weakness on the battle front in the Kuomintang-held areas that the invaders, in a mere fifteen months, contrived to occupy Canton and Wuhan, and swallow up a large part of North and Central China, besides key points in the South. Of course the Japanese, too, have their points of weakness. The war they are waging is imperialist, aggressive, barbarous and unjust, and therefore theirs is an unpopular cause. Japanese imperialism has inherent weaknesses, and its manpower, military strength, finan-

cial and material resources are all inadequate. The Japanese imperialists' calculations were one-sided. They took into consideration only the strength of the Kuomintang authorities, and overlooked the fighting will and strength of the great Chinese people and their armies—the Eighth Route Army and the New Fourth. This shortsightedness led the Japanese to adopt the method of strategic deployment, using their troops in a dispersed or piecemeal way.

The Japanese aggressors are a powerful enemy but by no means invincible. Their weaknesses should have been exploited to the full. Unfortunately they were not exploited by the Kuomintang. On the contrary, it was the Kuomintang's own great weakness—its one-party dictatorship—that was exploited by the Japanese. The political system which militated against the people, with its attendant defeatist strategy of relying solely on defence, was such that the several million troops under Kuomintang command suffered tremendous losses within the first fifteen months. This stupid strategy made it impossible for those officers and men who did put up an heroic fight at the front to achieve the victories they deserved.

It was, however, in this first stage that our great people's armies—the Eighth Route and New Fourth Armies—penetrated through the lines of the advancing enemy and established themselves in the rear. This move represented our counter-attack during the stage of the enemy's strategic attack. For, while the enemy was attacking and the Kuomintang army was beating a mass retreat, the Eighth Route Army and the New Fourth

started waging a people's war: they launched heroic counter-offensives in the enemy's rear and won victory after victory. They tied the enemy down, established strategic bases, created liberated areas, and raised the fighting morale of the whole Chinese people. Thus facts have proved that the assumption that China will be conquered is fallacious, and that war waged by the people will assuredly triumph in the end. They have also shown, however, that the idea of winning a quick victory is equally fallacious. In present conditions, while the enemy is strong and we are weak, we must go through a people's war in order gradually to turn the tide. That is why the War of Resistance is a protracted war.

The fifteen months of the first stage witnessed great changes in China. Changes also occurred on the side of the Japanese invaders. From the standpoint of resisting Japan, the Kuomintang authorities had no good reason to be unhappy at the fact that the Eighth Route and New Fourth Armies had successfully opened new fronts and recovered a vast amount of lost territory in the rear of the enemy. However, they did not like it. In fact they were most annoyed. Immediately after the fall of Wuhan the Kuomintang authorities changed their policy. They ceased to fight the Japanese invaders save in a half-hearted way, and began to go all out on the home front against the people and the Communists. As for the Japanese, they had succeeded in occupying such large areas in our country that the last thing they expected was to encounter such powerful opponents as the Eighth Route and New Fourth Armies in North and Central China. Our recovery of so many of the places they oc-

cupied was like thrusting a dagger into their heart. The result was that the Japanese, too, changed their policy. They stopped attacking on the battle fronts in Kuomintang-held areas, contenting themselves with inducing the Kuomintang authorities to surrender, and instead devoted all their energies to "mopping-up campaigns" against our armies. Thus the stage of strategic stalemate came about. One thing at any rate is certain: with the enemy advancing and the Kuomintang defeated and retreating, this stage could never have been reached but for the counter-attacks launched against the enemy by our Eighth Route and New Fourth Armies.

The second stage—strategic stalemate—began, as I have said, after the fall of Wuhan. Characteristic of this phase are the recurring waves of furious attacks and counter-attacks by the enemy and the liberated areas. What we mean by stalemate is that both we and the enemy fought to a virtual standstill. The truth is that the main forces of the Japanese invaders were tied up, fighting against the liberated areas, for the whole of the five-and-a-half years from the fall of Wuhan in October 1938 till 1944, when they once more launched a strategic offensive against the Kuomintang battle front. Until 1943 sixty-four per cent of all the aggressive forces of Japan in China, and ninety-five per cent of the puppet troops, were pinned down in the liberated areas. During the whole of this long period not a single major battle was fought on the front in the Kuomintang-held areas. These are the facts about the stalemate stage.

The war launched from the liberated areas is total people's war with a vengeance. The incomparable

heroism and doggedness displayed by the people of the liberated areas during this stage of the war will remain for ever a glorious chapter in the history of the Chinese nation. If there had been no liberated areas front; if the fighting on that front had not reached a position of stalemate; and if the war on that front had not been carried on over a long period under the most difficult conditions, the enemy would have continued to advance into Southwest and Northwest China. And in that case the Kuomintang, with its whole political structure and armies directed *against* the people, would have been utterly incapable of halting the enemy's advance. There could have been no question of stalemate, and the carrying on of the War of Resistance would long since have become unthinkable. After the fall of Wuhan, particularly, the Kuomintang authorities took the wrong step of shifting the emphasis from external to internal problems. Their conduct of the war lapsed into passivity, their oppression of the people and the Communists became active. They launched three campaigns specifically against the Communists. Their most dastardly breach of faith was the cowardly attack on the New Fourth Army in southern Anhwei.<sup>1</sup>

If the Chinese people had failed to stem the tide of

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<sup>1</sup>In January 1941, while the Chinese people were fighting the Japanese aggressors, Chiang Kai-shek launched a second campaign against the Communists. For no valid reason he ordered the New Fourth Army, led by the Communist Party, then fighting the Japanese in southern Anhwei, to move north of the Yangtse. It obeyed. While on the move with its headquarters and over ten thousand men, it was encircled and attacked by over eighty thousand Chiang troops lying in ambush, sustaining heavy casualties. Yeh Ting, com-



reaction and hold this onslaught in check, there would have been no liberated areas; no protracted fighting ending in stalemate between them and the enemy; and, what is more, it would have been utterly impossible to sustain the War of Resistance. The sweeping victories won by the Japanese in the course of their renewed attacks on the Kuomintang-held areas in 1944 prove this beyond a shadow of doubt. Moreover, had the strength of the liberated areas not been an intensely formidable obstacle to the capitulation and compromise to which the Kuomintang was prone, the ever-present danger of such capitulation would not have been overcome. Then the War of Resistance would have petered out prematurely. Facts, experience and captured enemy documents prove this, too, up to the hilt, though the censorship imposed by the Kuomintang has prevented its becoming known to many people outside the liberated areas.

During the long period of five-and-a-half years there was ample opportunity for the Kuomintang government to try to push ahead and prepare counter-offensives. Instead of doing so, it launched the three campaigns against the Communists. Instead of strengthening the forces engaged in the War of Resistance, it weakened them. Instead of taking a bold line in the conduct of the war, it put forward the watchword: "Save the country by indirect means"<sup>1</sup> and flirted with the enemy. As a con-

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mander of the New Fourth Army, was captured, and his deputy, Hsiang Ying, killed in action. After this cowardly attack, now known as the South Anhwei Incident, Chiang gave orders that the New Fourth Army disband, and all units belonging to it attacked.

<sup>1</sup> During the War of Resistance, Chiang Kai-shek ordered some