



**FIFTY YEARS OF
THE CHINESE PEOPLE'S
LIBERATION ARMY**

FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS PEKING

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光辉的战斗历程

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

The Chinese People's Liberation Army is the people's own army — an armed force of workers and peasants created and built up by Chairman Mao Tsetung and the Chinese Communist Party. August 1, 1977 marked this army's 50th birthday. Commemorating this glorious anniversary, the Party, the army and China's multi-nationality people celebrated with various festivities. Many recollections appeared in the press. Here we present in translation some of the main articles, including the full text of a speech by Yeh Chien-ying, Vice-Chairman of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, Vice-Chairman of the Military Commission of the C.P.C. Central Committee and Minister of National Defence, at a Peking rally to observe the occasion.

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SPEECH AT THE RALLY CELEBRATING THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDING OF THE CHINESE PEOPLE'S LIBERATION ARMY

by Yeh Chien-ying

Comrades:

It is now 50 years since the birth of the Chinese People's Liberation Army, founded and nurtured by our great leader and teacher Chairman Mao Tsetung. We are overjoyed today as we celebrate the 50th anniversary of our army's founding at a time when we are cheering the great victory of our Party's 11th two-line struggle.

With the spread of Marxism-Leninism in China in 1919, the founding of the Communist Party of China in 1921 and the birth of the people's army under Communist Party leadership in 1927, the Chinese people took their destiny into their own hands. The Chinese nation's centuries-long history of untold suffering was nearing its end; a new China was dawning, a China of which countless people with lofty ideas had long dreamed and for whose sake they laid down their lives.

The Nanchang Uprising of August 1, 1927 signalled the beginning of armed revolution led independently by the Chinese Communist Party. It fired the first shot against the Kuomintang reactionaries and raised the bright banner of armed struggle for the whole Party and the people throughout the country. However, it was the

Autumn Harvest Uprising and the march to the Ching-kang Mountains under the personal charge of Chairman Mao that brought this uprising to fruition and marked the great beginning of victory in the people's armed revolution. Chairman Mao founded the first contingent of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army and established the first rural revolutionary base area. This new path blazed by him, the encirclement of the cities from the countryside and the seizure of political power by armed force, was a great innovation in the history of proletarian revolution.

Vivid yet those crowded months and years.* The young people of 50 years ago are now grey-haired. And many who led the revolution at that time have passed away. But the revolutionary cause for which they fought all their lives has yielded rich results.

We infinitely cherish the memory of our great leader and teacher Chairman Mao Tsetung, the founder of our Party, our army and our People's Republic!

We infinitely cherish the memory of our esteemed and beloved Premier Chou En-lai, Chairman Chu Teh of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, and Vice-Chairman Kang Sheng of the Party Central Committee, who dedicated their lives to the Chinese people's revolutionary cause; our esteemed and beloved Vice-Chairman of the N.P.C. Standing Committee, Tung Pi-wu, who together with Chairman Mao was a founder of our Party; and Comrades Ho Lung, Chen Yi, Lo Jung-huan

*From Chairman Mao's poem, "Changsha — to the tune of *Chin Yuan Chun*."

All words appearing in boldface type in this book are quotations from Chairman Mao unless noted otherwise.

and Yeh Ting,* and Fang Chih-min,** Liu Chih-tan*** and other proletarian revolutionaries of the older generation who made outstanding contributions to founding and expanding our army!

Eternal glory to the comrades who laid down their lives in the Nanchang Uprising, the Autumn Harvest Uprising, the Canton† Uprising and the uprisings in many other areas, to the martyrs who died heroically in the Chinese people's war of liberation and the people's revolution! Eternal glory to Comrade Norman Bethune and many other internationalist fighters who laid down their lives for the Chinese people's revolutionary cause.

Comrades:

The history of the Chinese People's Liberation Army in its 50 years has been a magnificent epic of victories won under the great banner of Chairman Mao over powerful enemies both at home and abroad; it is also a history of the victory of Chairman Mao's correct political and military line over "Left" and Right opportunist lines. A fundamental issue in our Party's struggles — from those against Chen Tu-hsiu, Wang Ming and Chang Kuo-tao to those against Peng Teh-huai, Liu Shao-chi, Lin Piao and the Wang-Chang-Chiang-Yao "gang of four" — has been whether to wage armed struggle and whether to have an army placed under the absolute leadership of the Party, an army which always maintains its proletarian character.

* See article on pp. 151-61.

** See article on pp. 162-69.

*** See article on pp. 170-75.

† Now generally transliterated as Kwangchow.

Chiang Kai-shek betrayed the revolution in 1927 and plunged the workers and peasants in a bloodbath. Was there hope for the Chinese revolution? And whither should it go? These were grave questions facing the Communist Party of China and the Chinese people. Chairman Mao set forth the famous thesis that **“political power grows out of the barrel of a gun.”** The enemy resorted to White terror in their determination to annihilate us. Why shouldn't we resolve to annihilate them? The enemy could kill us because they had swords and guns in their hands. Why couldn't we seize arms from the enemy or make them ourselves? Guided by Mao Tsetung Thought, the Communists and revolutionary masses took up arms and went to the mountains or lakes, using armed revolution against armed counter-revolution. As Chairman Mao pointed out: **“Having learned a bitter lesson from the failure of the revolution, the Party organized the Nanchang Uprising, the Autumn Harvest Uprising and the Canton Uprising, and entered on a new period, the founding of the Red Army. That was the crucial period in which our Party arrived at a thorough understanding of the importance of the army.”**

Making a scientific, Marxist analysis of the balance of forces between the enemy and ourselves, the contradictions between the imperialist powers and between the various cliques of warlords in China and the uneven political and economic development of contemporary Chinese society, Chairman Mao foresaw the protracted nature of the Chinese revolution. He took full account of the peasants' enthusiasm for the struggle against imperialism and feudalism, and charted the course of building strength and using armed force to establish workers' and peasants' independent regimes in the countryside,

where reactionary rule was weak, and encircling the cities from the rural areas, and finally taking the cities and seizing political power throughout the country.

This brilliant concept of Chairman Mao was decisive for the victory of the Chinese revolution. It opposed both Chen Tu-hsiu's Right capitulationism and "Left" adventurism. The lines of Chu Chiu-pai, Li Li-san and Wang Ming all proved impractical and ended in defeat. The way indicated by Chairman Mao proved the only correct one leading to victory.

A single spark can start a prairie fire. With the proletarian vanguard, the Communist Party, as the leader, the vast expanse of the countryside as base and the peasants as the main force, an agrarian revolution was carried out, an army was formed, cadres were trained and political power was established. These conditions made it possible for revolutionary base areas to grow in both size and numbers by advancing wave upon wave. The prolonged revolutionary wars were thus sustained, the people's army developed and grew in strength while the enemy was gradually weakened and finally annihilated.

It was precisely by following this course charted by Chairman Mao that the Chinese people created the People's Republic of China out of the barrel of a gun after 22 years of revolutionary war. The victory of the revolution in a large country of several hundred million people changed the situation in the East and the world as a whole. It was a momentous event of world significance following the victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution led by Lenin.

Chairman Mao pointed out: **"Without a people's army the people have nothing."** **"Without armed struggle neither the proletariat, nor the people, nor the Commu-**

nist Party would have any standing at all in China and it would be impossible for the revolution to triumph."

It is clear that without a powerful People's Liberation Army led by the Party and armed with Mao Tsetung Thought, the old China could not have been destroyed and the new China established, and even if it had been, it could not have been consolidated. The presence of such a People's Liberation Army is also a vital reason why in the 28 years since the liberation we have been able to succeed in the socialist revolution and socialist construction, the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution and the struggle which smashed the "gang of four," and to ensure stability across the land.

The victory of the Chinese people should be attributed to our great leader and teacher Chairman Mao. His banner is the banner of unity and victory. It is thanks to him that our Party has become a great, glorious and correct Party. Thanks to him, too, our army has become a great and invincible people's army. Just as Engels said in eulogizing Marx: **If it had not been for him, we should all still be groping in a maze of confusion.** The immense contributions of Chairman Mao are immortal.

Chairman Mao was the greatest Marxist of our time. Integrating the universal truth of Marxism-Leninism with the concrete practice of the Chinese revolution, he inherited, defended and developed Marxism-Leninism in all respects. His military thinking has tremendously enriched the treasure-house of Marxist-Leninist military theory; it is a never failing source of victory for us. It is a powerful ideological weapon for the oppressed people and nations to defeat the enemy and win liberation.

Important in Chairman Mao's military thinking is his concept of the people's army. The resolution of the Ku-

tien Congress, a programmatic document drafted by Chairman Mao, made Marxism-Leninism the sole basis for building our army into a new-type people's army different from every old-type army. Chairman Mao continuously developed his concept of the people's army in the practice of protracted revolutionary struggle.

Our army is under the absolute leadership of the Communist Party of China. It has political commissars and political organizations, with the Party branch organized on a company basis, and applies the system of division of labour among the leading cadres working under the collective leadership of the Party committee. This is something that never happened nor could have happened before in China's history. By relying on the leadership of the Party and following its correct line, our army has been able to maintain its character as a proletarian people's army and avoid becoming an instrument of bourgeois careerists and conspirators. **It is easier to rock a mountain than the Liberation Army.** This is why no one, from Chang Kuo-tao to Lin Piao and the "gang of four," has ever been able to destroy it.

Our army is an armed body for carrying out the political tasks of the revolution. Apart from the main task of fighting, it also shoulders other tasks as a political work force and a production corps. **"Every man . . . becomes able not only to fight and do mass work but also to produce."** In his "May 7 Directive" of 1966 which gives the orientation for building our army during the period of socialism, Chairman Mao stated that our army should be a great school. Apart from fighting, it should do various kinds of work and always be ready to participate in the struggle to criticize and repudiate the bourgeoisie in the cultural revolution. Even when fight-

ing, it should not just conduct military struggle. It should serve political struggles, and in many cases fighting is itself a form of political struggle.

A very important and outstanding characteristic of our army is its revolutionary political work. This is its life-blood, a fact which has given our army a completely new look. Chairman Mao proposed to educate the troops in the Party's correct line, to carry out the Three Main Rules of Discipline and the Eight Points for Attention* as well as the principles of unity between officers and men and between the army and the people, and of disintegrating the enemy forces, and to practise democracy in the three main fields — political, economic and military. This would completely eliminate the antagonism between officers and men, between higher and lower ranks and between the army and the people which is characteristic of old-type armies; it would create a political situation in which there would exist both centralism and democracy, both discipline and freedom, both unity of will and personal ease of mind and liveliness. Such a political situation is highly important not only for the army but also for the Party and state. It enables the whole Party, the whole army and the people of the whole country to unite as one, surmount all difficulties and withstand any storm.

In the final analysis, the general principle of our army is to stand firmly with the people and serve them wholeheartedly. **The people are the best judges.** It is not up to the army but to the people to judge whether ours is a people's army. An army regarded by the people as their own is invincible.

* See note on p. 50.

Also important in Chairman Mao's military thinking is his concept of people's war. There is nothing mysterious about our victory over Chiang Kai-shek, Japanese imperialism and other powerful and ferocious enemies at home and abroad during the decades of revolutionary war. Our victories were due to our reliance on the people. We turned the entire people into soldiers, adopted a system which combined field armies, regional troops and militia, and integrated the armed populace with the unarmed. Reliance on the people, the first essential for our army, compensated for our lack of weapons and equipment, changed our army's inferior position into a superior one and created a vast ocean in which to drown the enemy. We have grown strong and won victory by means of people's war, our magic weapon, past, present and future.

Through his great, long-time experience in building the people's army and directing revolutionary wars, Chairman Mao did much to develop and perfect the strategy and tactics of people's war. With his great revolutionary mettle and superb military art, he commanded large armies, directed many campaigns, led the arduous Long March and won many major victories the like of which are rare in the history of war. Chairman Mao deployed troops with great skill and formulated splendid plans which won victory in distant battles. He kept the entire situation under control in commanding our millions of troops and compelled the enemy to move according to his will. He was able to seize the initiative in all circumstances and turn danger into safety at every crisis. From those years in the Ching Kang Mountains — when Chairman Mao evolved the formula, **“the enemy advances, we retreat; the enemy camps, we harass; the enemy tires,**

we attack; the enemy retreats, we pursue" — to the years when he enunciated the ten major principles of operation,* he was never rigid in directing battles. **You fight in your way and we fight in ours.** He applied materialist dialectics to war in a masterful way.

In summing up the historical experience of the Paris Commune, Marx pointed out that to eliminate class rule and class oppression and bring about the fundamental transformation of society, it is necessary first of all to exercise the dictatorship of the proletariat, and **the first condition of that is a proletarian army.** Chairman Mao's concepts of the people's army, people's war and its strategy and tactics have enriched and developed the Marxist theory of proletarian revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat. Every great creation of Chairman Mao is based on Marxist-Leninist principles and revolutionary practice. Chairman Mao's Marxist creativity is a fine example for us to learn from.

Chairman Mao's military thinking is an ever-fresh, universally applicable truth of Marxism. It is our ever-victorious weapon as long as there are classes and class struggle, imperialism and social-imperialism, and as long as the monster of war is not eliminated from human society. A fundamental task before us today is to conscientiously study and grasp Chairman Mao's military thinking and to comprehend and implement Mao Tsetung Thought and Chairman Mao's revolutionary line accurately and entirely. Veteran comrades should study all their lives and successfully pass on their experience to younger comrades and give them help and guidance.

* See "The Present Situation and Our Tasks," *Selected Works of Mao Tsetung*, F.L.P., Peking, 1969, Vol. IV, pp. 161-62.

Young comrades should resolve to inherit this invaluable legacy and hand it down from generation to generation. Lin Piao deliberately distorted Mao Tsetung Thought and tried to separate it from Marxism-Leninism. The Wang-Chang-Chiang-Yao “gang of four” said Mao Tsetung Thought and the fine traditions of our Party and our army were “things of the period of the democratic revolution” and strummed the old revisionist tune that they were “outdated.” Fundamentally negating the theoretical basis that guides our Party’s thinking, they attempted to restore capitalism. But they were mere ants trying to shake a giant tree. How they overrated themselves!

Lin Piao and the “gang of four” bitterly hated our great army. They frantically opposed it and tried to disrupt it. They ruthlessly attacked and persecuted its leading cadres loyal to the Party and to Chairman Mao’s revolutionary line. Their aim was to destroy our Great Wall.* We must cherish our army as our eyesight. A summing-up of our experience, especially our experience in the struggle against Lin Piao and the “gang of four,” shows that we must revive and carry on the fine traditions and style of work of our Party and our army if we are to do still better in building our army according to Chairman Mao’s thinking and line.

We must see to it that the gun remains firmly in the hands of the Party and the people, and must never let big or small careerists like the “gang of four” and Lin Piao usurp the leadership at any level in our army.

We must practise Marxism, unite and be open and above-board; we must never practise revisionism, create

* I.e., the People’s Liberation Army.