MILITARISM AND THE CHINESE COMMUNISTS:
A STUDY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNIST POLITICAL AUTHORITY
IN THE SHANSI-CHAHAR-HOPEI BORDER REGION
AND THE SHANTUNG GUERRILLA AREA, 1937-1940

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Abstract

Political scientists generally recognize two explanations of the extensive peasant support which the Chinese Communist Party acquired in North China during the so-called "Yenan Period" of 1937-1945. One theory posits that the North Chinese peasants gave their allegiance and support to the Chinese Communists at this time because the Communists were the only force resisting the Japanese invasion and occupation of North China; the second theory claims that the peasants supported the Communists because Communist agrarian reforms at this time liberated the peasants from centuries of poverty and class exploitation. Unfortunately, the sharp debate which has taken place between the adherents of these two theories has tended to obscure the search for additional explanations of Communist growth during the Yenan Period. Reliable Communist sources and economic surveys indicate that in two key Communist base areas, the "peasant nationalism" and "agrarian revolution" theories do not explain pre-1940 Communist growth as well as they explain post-1940 Communist growth -- additional research on the growth of Communist political authority prior to 1940 is needed.

This thesis contends that a comparison of the public behaviour of the Communist armies with that of the warlord armies which preceded them in North China helps explain why Communist rule was accepted by so many peasants during the years 1937-1940. Rape, looting, terror, and crushing military taxes were common fare for the millions of North Chinese peasants who lived under warlord rule from the death of Yuan Shih-k'ai in 1916 until the Japanese invasion in
1937. In contrast, the Communist armies were indoctrinated against molestation of the peasantry, and made every effort to help the peasants economically rather than burden them. The peasants were favorably impressed by the virtuous behaviour of the Communist soldiers, and gave their backing to the political movement these soldiers represented.
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Introduction

Political scientists have undertaken many studies seeking to explain the forging of political links between the Chinese Communist movement and the peasants of north China during the "Yenan Period" of 1937-1945. So far, these studies have generally fallen into two categories: those emphasizing the "peasant nationalism" which is supposed to have emerged during the Anti-Japanese War (World War II), and the normative and coercive power which accrued to the Communists because of their leadership during the national struggle; and those dwelling on the supposed poverty and exploitation of China's peasantry, and the primarily remunerative power generated by Communist agrarian reforms.

Both explanations have their merits and their faults, and much stimulating and valuable debate has taken place among the adherents and detractors of these two theories, but the conclusion of most scholars is that neither explanation is in itself fully satisfactory, despite the insistence otherwise of a few scholars. Unfortunately, even most of the dissatisfied scholars assume that the truth lies somewhere in between the two theories, and do not look elsewhere for new explanations. I find it regrettable that the controversy over the Yenan Period has yet to overflow the bounds of these two schools of

1. Amitai Etzioni gives a three-fold classification of "integrating power": coercive power (for example, the use of military force); utilitarian power (for example, economic incentives -- I prefer to call this remunerative power); and identitive power (for example, the appeal to one's values -- again, I prefer to use the term normative power). See Etzioni, Political Unification: A Comparative Study of Leaders and Forces (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965), pp. 37-39.
thought in a search for additional explanatory factors. After examining the available English literature on the Yenan Period, I conclude that while the peasant nationalism and agrarian revolution theories are good explanations of Communist political expansion after 1940, they are less adequate explanations of the initial development of Communist political authority during the years 1937-1939, and should be supplemented by an additional explanatory factor. This factor is the considerable normative and remunerative power generated by the appearance of well-behaved, politically conscious Communist military units in regions that had suffered the ravages of a generation of warlord militarism. Where previous Chinese armies had indiscriminately overtaxed, looted, and raped, the Communist army gave every possible economic cooperation to the people, observed strict moral discipline, restored the civil order upon which economic security is attendant, and treated the peasant masses as fellow humans of real worth. Many Chinese peasants formerly accustomed to military abuse and exploitation gave their allegiance to the Communists because of the respect, compassion, and cooperation given them by Communist soldiers.

This study will examine two crucial areas of Communist expansion in North China -- the Chin-Ch'a-Chi Border Region (Shansi, Chahar, and Hopei provinces) and the Shantung Guerrilla Area -- with the intention of demonstrating the role exemplary military behaviour played in the spread of Communist political authority in these once

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2. Because of my utter lack of information on Chahar, I must confine all observations on the Chin-Ch'a-Chi Border Region to Shansi and Hopei. Fortunately, the bulk of the border region lies in Shansi and Hopei, and the portion left uncovered is fairly small.
warlord-infested areas. The study is divided into four basic parts. In the first two parts I shall marshal evidence against the peasant nationalism and agrarian revolution theories, and in the third and fourth parts I will offer evidence of warlord depredations causing military-civilian tensions, and explain how Communist military behaviour toward the civilians of North China dissolved those tensions and won much peasant support for the Communist movement.
Inadequacies of the Peasant Nationalism Theory

The ablest and best known proponent of the peasant nationalism theory of Chinese Communist success is Chalmers Johnson, and it is his arguments in *Peasant Nationalism and Communist Power* that I will concern myself with. Johnson advanced his peasant nationalism thesis as a refutation of those who see the impoverishment of the Chinese peasantry and the agrarian reforms of the Communists as the primary forces attracting the Communists and peasants to each other during the years 1937 to 1945. The agrarian revolution theorists identify rural poverty and feudal oppression as the causes of peasant rebelliousness, and argue that the remunerative and normative attraction of the Communists' agrarian reforms was the key to peasant acceptance of Communist political authority. Generally speaking, these theorists devote most of their attention to the remunerative aspects -- the rural poverty and the economic reforms -- and not the normative aspects at work during the Yenan Period. Johnson attacks this theory on the grounds that the Communist Party's economic reforms during this period were too diluted in the interest of United Front cohesion to


win peasant support. Their land expropriation and redistribution program was discarded (except in the case of land belonging to traitors), rents and taxes were only mildly reduced, and yet Communist political authority experienced tremendous expansion and peasant support during this same period. Therefore, Johnson reasons that the explanation for this expansion of political authority must lie elsewhere.

Johnson argues that the Chinese Communists derived their political authority in North China from the peasants' normative identification with Communist leadership during the Anti-Japanese War. He claims that "after July 7, 1937, the peasants spontaneously created resistance organizations in many parts of China," and attributes this broad nationalist awakening and immediate peasant mobilization to three factors: the dislocation of local authority caused by the flight of local gentry-officials, in whose absence the "politically illiterate" peasants established their own resistance organizations and welcomed whatever leadership (Communist, KMT remnants, secret societies, etc.) they could find; peasant alienation and suffering at the hands of arrogant, exceedingly brutal Japanese soldiers; and the nationalistic anti-Japanese propaganda the Communists were able to fashion from all the ill-effects of the invasion.


These factors "broke the hold of parochialism on the Chinese peasants" and sensitized them for the first time to their national identity. Peasants formerly wholly absorbed in local affairs and conscious only of whose warlord satrapy they lived in discovered their "Chinese nationality" in the face of Japanese adversity. Johnson argues that the Chinese Communists were able to earn the wartime allegiance of these anti-Japanese peasants by devoting all their energies to the prosecution of the war. The Communists organized and trained the peasants to defend themselves, and then led them in doing so. Ultimately, these war deeds permanently legitimized Communist political authority in the eyes of China's nationally conscious peasant masses.

Generally speaking, Johnson's theory is a necessary, indisputable component of any completely satisfactory explanation of the development of Communist political authority in China during the Yanan Period. It is particularly applicable to Communist expansion after 1941, when Japan's sadistic "three-all" policy ("kill all, burn all, destroy all") in North China drove many previously uncommitted peasants into the Communist camp. However, Johnson also asserts that peasant

5. Ibid., p. 5.
6. Ibid., pp. 10-11.
7. Ibid., p. 59. According to Johnson, "the essence of the sanko-seisaku ["three-all"] was to surround a given area, to kill everyone in it, and to destroy everything possible so that the area would be uninhabitable in the future." Communist guerrillas had been inflicting heavy losses on the Japanese, and the "three-all" policy was intended to destroy cooperation between the Communists and the peasantry (p. 56). Instead, the Communists established governments in 280 new hsien between the initiation of the "three-all" policy in July, 1941, and the end of the war in August, 1945 (see p. 193, note 4).
nationalism accounted for Communist expansion in North China from 1937 to 1940, and bases this claim on the supposition that the North China peasantry, without any Communist instigation or help, mobilized themselves to resist the Japanese invasion in 1937 and caused the Japanese to resort to immediate terrorism:

"...the belief that Japanese terrorism was only a response in kind to a provocative policy first undertaken by the Communists -- one designed to force the hand of the Japanese at the expense of Chinese civilians -- is only partially correct. It is true that the existence of any sustained Chinese resistance at all was due to the cooperation between the local peasantry and the Communist veterans of Kiangsi. However, this cooperation was largely the product of peasant mobilization -- a process that was initiated by the Japanese invasion....The Communists were the beneficiaries and not the main source of this mobilization; their contribution was the organization of the mobilized peasants, the establishment of rear-area bases, and the leadership of effective guerrilla warfare against the Japanese. These guerrilla campaigns did cause the Japanese to step up their reprisals (this was particularly true of the Japanese reaction to the Hundred Regiments Offensive), and this in turn broadened the rural mobilization. But the creation of the original situation that led the Japanese to resort to terrorism in the villages cannot be credited to the Communists."  

However, my study of the Chin-Ch'a-Chi Border Region and the Shantung Guerrilla Area indicates that, prior to 1940, Japanese brutality and self-organized peasant resistance were the exception rather than the rule. I contend that Johnson's peasant nationalism theory does not fully explain the 1937-1939 period of Communist political

8. Communist-controlled hsien governments in North China grew from 18 in January, 1938, to 130 in August, 1939 (ibid., note 4, p. 193). Anna Louise Strong confirms that Communist expansion in North China during 1938 was both extensive and easily accomplished (see "Eighth Route Regions in North China", Pacific Affairs, XIV, No. 2 [June, 1941], p. 155).

9. Ibid., p. 49.
expansion in North China. The Japanese certainly resorted to brutality on occasion prior to 1940, and undoubtedly some peasants resisted the Japanese from the moment they entered North China. However, there is much evidence that in the Chin-Ch'a-Chi Border Region and Shantung Guerrilla Area -- two key areas of pre-1940 Communist expansion -- the Japanese were tactful, resourceful, and seldom brutal in their relations with the peasantry. There is even more evidence that, Communist anti-Japanese propaganda to the contrary, the peasants of Chin-Ch'a-Chi and Shantung were generally devoid of nationalist and patriotic sentiments during the first years of the war.

Despite reports to the contrary, the Japanese occupying North China during the years 1937-1939 were not entirely obnoxious. Liu Shao-ch'i twice publicly credited the Japanese with a cunning, well thought-out propaganda campaign that effectively appealed to several strata of Chinese society. On March 31, 1938, Liu told cadre trainees during a K'ang Ta (Anti-Japanese Academy) lecture on the problems of establishing the Chin-Ch'a-Chi Border Region that

"On the contrary, the enemy has written many, many slogan notices to deceive the people,...some comrades should not think that Japanese imperialism has adopted only savage measures in dealing with us, such as slaughtering, raping, etc. Actually, Japanese imperialism has also used many, many deceiving policies,..."11


Liu stated that Japanese propaganda in the Chin-Ch'a-Chi area stressed that both Japanese and Chinese are members of the same race, that the Chinese are the ancestors of the Japanese and the Japanese owe their culture to the Chinese, that they both share Buddhist heritages, and that they are otherwise similar and compatible. When Japanese soldiers entering villages saw children, they would

"hypocritically carry them in their arms and give them candy....give cigarettes to the middle-aged people, [and] sometimes...distribute some food among the people to take home, etc."

This behaviour was certainly a far cry from the brutality which is supposed to have occurred shortly after the invasion.

In another speech on February 5, 1938, Liu noted that the Japanese were also very adept at co-opting the Chinese with honors and material gains, and at exploiting various cleavages to set the Chinese against each other and perhaps enlist them in Japan's cause. The net effect of these appeals was that the Japanese found many North Chinese who were perfectly willing to cooperate with them, or at least to abstain from cooperation with Chinese forces. Peasants, gentry, and officials in Shansi province willingly built Japanese defense-works for wages, denied aid to the hard-pressed anti-Japanese forces of Warlord General Yen Hsi-shan, and carried out espionage and sabotage tasks for the Japanese. In east Hopei, the Japanese

12. Ibid., p. 49.
co-opted local political leaders into establishing an autonomous, pro-Japanese regime in late 1935. This puppet "state", called the East Hopei (Chi Tung) Autonomous Council, was to act as a buffer between Japanese-controlled Manchuria and the rest of China. In 1938, Communist forces entered East Hopei to organize a popular anti-Japanese uprising, but failed miserably. General Lu Cheng-ts'ao claimed that this uprising failed because the people of East Hopei had been "duped by the 'false doctrines' of the Japanese," and had no spirit of resistance. The Japanese co-opted both the peasants and the leaders of East Hopei with material gains and "dishonorable ease," and the Communists lacked sufficient cadres and organization to educate them against the Japanese. Afterwards, Japanese post-mortem propaganda emphasizing the Communists' lack of morale and organization during this effort made the peasants even more uncooperative, and the Communists did not regain a foothold in East Hopei until 1941.

Meanwhile, Lu Cheng-ts'ao's own anti-Japanese stronghold in Central Hopei was so plagued with Chinese traitors and collaborators that he is said to have gone to the October, 1937 Fup'ing Conference with the express purpose of seeking assistance in dealing with them.

17. Lindsay, loc. cit., p. 105.
Liu Shao-ch'i mentions areas of Hopei where, despite considerable burning and killing, Japanese propaganda had convinced the people they had nothing to fear so long as they did not provoke the Japanese. Consequently, these villagers refused to admit Communist military units, whom they blamed for everything they had suffered, into their territory. It was not without reason that Liu Shao-ch'i told his cadre audience at K'ang Ta, "Comrades! We can see from this that the enemy's deceiving propaganda has been quite effective."

Moreover, most of the peasants of Hopei, Shansi, and Shantung failed to demonstrate the anti-Japanese patriotism Chalmers Johnson assigns them. Contrary to political unity and mobilization in the face of invasion, North China remained an area of considerable disparity in national consciousness. Although North China's cities and universities contained many nationally conscious people, the peasants outside city walls were conscious only of local political affairs and, not knowing that Japan existed, sometimes even thought Japanese troops were just another warlord army. For a whole generation the peasantry had been accustomed to sitting fearfully in the middle of wars between the warlords of North China. Still living in a traditional and not a modern society, the peasants saw it as somebody else's war. Although the educated, urban elements who provided the resistance

20. Ibid. (March 31, 1938), p. 50.
movement with most of its organizers and propagandists construed the Anti-Japanese War as an all-out battle for China's survival -- a struggle between "we" and "they" -- most North China peasants saw the war as yet another in a never-ending series of wars between somebody else -- a struggle between "you" and "they" which "we" want no part of.

Many sources indicate that this lack of nationalistic fervor was endemic throughout the rural population of the Chin-Ch'a-Chi Border Region and the Shantung Guerrilla Area. Liu Shao-ch'i mentioned the apathy and poor welcome Communist guerrillas had encountered in certain Hopei locales, and Lu Cheng-ts'ao emphasized the lack of anti-Japanese sentiment among the peasants of East Hopei. Nationalist sentiments were also lacking in many rural areas of Shansi province. Anti-Japanese organizations such as the League for National Salvation through Sacrifice ("Sacrifice League") and Warlord Yen Hsi-shan's "mobilization committees" were extremely successful in the cities of Shansi, but found very little support in the countryside, where political consciousness, nationalism, and imperialism were not part of the peasantry's traditional world view. Indeed, when the Japanese invaded Shansi, the peasants appear to have offered them immediate assistance rather than immediate resistance! Donald Gillin reports that Shansi peasants dug trenches and built defense-works for Japanese wages, and some poor peasants and Buddhists spied and sabotaged for the Japanese. They refused medical aid to warlord soldiers wounded while resisting

23. Ibid., p. 9; Gillin, op. cit., p. 261.
the invasion of Shansi. They even mobbed and beat some retreating Chinese soldiers to death with their bare hands; yet they watched in unobtrusive silence while a Japanese pilot repaired his warplane in a farmer's field and then flew away unmolested. Gillin concludes that the Shansi peasantry, far from spontaneously mobilizing to resist the Japanese invasion, "were unaware of the fundamental difference between Chinese and Japanese and therefore regarded the war with Japan as simply another contest between rival warlords, from which they tried to remain aloof."

Shantung, which had suffered Japanese garrisons in Tsingtao and along the Tsinan-Tsingtao Railroad ever since 1917, experienced "a high degree of irregular militia mobilization," but the Eighth Route (Red) Army never succeeded in establishing a large-scale regular army unit there. Consequently, Shantung never achieved the status of a secure anti-Japanese "base area" like the Chin-Ch'a-Chi or Shen-Kan-Ning (Shensi-Kansu-Ninghsia) Border Regions. Roy Hofheinz charges that in any case where "an effective Communist army should fail to appear in a province which since World War I had been garrisoned steadily by Japanese troops...a simple 'peasant nationalism' thesis must yield to the analysis of more complicated factors." In fact, a Chinese historian who fought as a guerrilla in Shantung asserts that the

peasants there were at first "relieved" when the invading Japanese drove the Chinese warlord armies out of Shantung in 1938.

My conclusion is that although Johnson's thesis is a good explanation of Communist political expansion during the years 1941-1945, it leaves something to be desired when applied to Communist political expansion between 1937 and 1940. There is much evidence that the 1937 Japanese invasion did not arouse peasant national consciousness or stimulate immediate peasant mobilization and resistance in Chin-Ch'a-Chi and Shantung. Indeed, the two scholars who first advocated the peasant nationalism thesis, George Taylor and Michael Lindsay, both admit that little nationalist sentiment existed among the North China peasants during the first two or three years of the war. How does one explain the high rate of Communist growth during this time, then? Donald Gillin strongly asserts that Communist growth during the Yenan Period -- and particularly during the early years, 1937-1939 -- is best explained in terms of the agrarian revolution theory.

27. Taylor, op. cit., pp. 98-99; Lindsay, loc. cit., p. 105.
Inadequacies of the Agrarian Revolution Theory

In the minds of many agrarian revolution theorists, the issue of land tenancy was the cause of most problems in pre-revolutionary China. They believe that many, if not most Chinese peasants were tenants, and that the landlord's share of the harvest was exorbitant while the peasant's lot was poverty and misery. Their explanation of peasant acceptance of Communist political authority hinges around the various Communist agrarian reforms which liberated the peasantry from their oppressed, serf-like status vis-a-vis the gentry and the urban bourgeoisie. They deduce that the Chinese peasantry must have been severely oppressed and impoverished by the feudal elements' high rents and interest rates simply because of the frequent occurrence of acts of class violence during the Communist revolution.

Gillin claims that when the Red Army invaded Shansi from neighboring Shensi province in 1935-1936, 15,000 Shansi peasants volunteered to enlist in the Red Army because the Communists had plundered and often killed the rich and shared their wealth with the poor. Although they did not have time to effect a systematic program of land reform, they did redistribute some land as well as confiscated wealth, and according to a Japanese observer were greeted as "the army of the poor" when they returned to Shansi two years later to fight the Japanese.

Like the peasant nationalism theory, the agrarian revolution theory must be included in any full explanation of the growth of Com-

munist political authority during the Yenan Period. But, like the peasant nationalism theory, the agrarian revolution theory also leaves something to be desired as an explanation of pre-1940 Communist growth in Chin-Ch'a-Ch'i and Shantung. One principal shortcoming of the agrarian revolution theory is the fact that the Communists heavily diluted their agrarian reforms in the interest of United Front cooperation during the years 1937-1940. They stopped taking property away from the landlords and redistributing it among the poor, and rents were only mildly reduced. As one strong supporter of the agrarian revolution theory of Communist success admits,

"...from 1937 to 1940 in Shen-Kan-Ning and the newly-created base areas, no special effort was made to implement rent reductions. Beyond the strong commitment to preserve the revolutionary gains of land redistribution and to guarantee private ownership of land, it might almost be said that at this time there was no land policy. Landlordism and related problems of exploitation were assumed to have been basically eliminated...and problems of land tenure were rarely mentioned. Neither in the laws and documents of the first regional council (1939) nor in the extensive party and government publications of the period 1937 to 1939 is rent reduction discussed."  

Only after a year of KMT blockading and the unprovoked KMT attack on Communist headquarters and hospital units during the "New Fourth Army Incident" in January, 1941, did the Communists reintroduce radical land redistribution and rental reduction policies. Chalmers Johnson concludes that "the Communists' success [during the Yenan Period] cannot be attributed to their carrying out an 'agrarian revolution'."

Although this conclusion is obviously hasty as far as the entire Yenan

5. Ibid., p. 230.
Period is concerned, it does appear that the agrarian revolution theory is better applied to post-1940 Communist growth than to pre-1940 Communist growth.

Also damaging to the agrarian revolution argument is a store of reliable but usually ignored economic data which seriously challenges the validity of two popular suppositions about the economic background of the Chinese Revolution. One is the supposition of widespread peasant tenancy, and the other is the supposition of peasant indebtedness to usurious gentry moneylenders. The peasants of North China were undeniably poor, and the Communists undoubtedly gained much peasant support because of the remunerative appeal of some of their agrarian programs and their campaigns against class exploitation. But much evidence indicates that while tenancy and landlord usury may have been rampant elsewhere in China, they did not contribute significantly to rural poverty in Chin-Ch'a-Ch' and Shantung.

This evidence, unlike the case-study type of evidence found in most studies supporting the agrarian revolution theory, comes from extensive, quantitative empirical studies by economists John Lossing Buck and Ramon Myers. Buck surveyed a total of 1,677 farms in Shansi, 1,433 farms in Hopei, and 1,400 farms in Shantung in the course of producing his *Chinese Farm Economy and Land Utilization in...*  

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7. These suppositions are often treated as though tenancy and usury were universal characteristics in pre-revolutionary China. See, for example, the statements made by several Chinese scholars in Section one of *Agrarian China: Selected Source Materials from Chinese Authors*, comp. and trans. by Research Staff of the Secretariat, Institute of Pacific Relations (Shanghai: Kelly and Walsh, 1938), pp. 1-56.

China, while Ramon Myers' *The Chinese Peasant Economy* presents data from extensive farm surveys in Hopei and Shantung by Buck, the South Manchurian Railway Company, the Chinese National Land Commission, and the Chinese Central Government Agricultural Experimental Station. This data, which is too voluminous to present in detail and will only be summarized here, suggests that tenancy was not a serious problem in most of the locales studied. Only roughly seven per cent of the peasants surveyed in Shansi, Hopei, and Shantung were pure tenants, and only about 17 per cent were owner-tenants — the remaining 76 per cent of the peasants surveyed owned all of the land they farmed.

One of these tenancy surveys has been broken down into district tenancy rates and compared to a map showing the location of hsien under Communist control as of August, 1939. A close look at Map 1 indicates that, with one or two exceptions, high rates of tenancy cannot be found in the Chin-Ch'a-Chi Border Region or the


11. The reader should be cautioned that these percentages are only rough aggregates -- the findings of several surveys lumped together -- and could be in error by as much as two or three percentage points either way. See ibid., p. 303, and Buck, op. cit. (1937), pp. 194-196. For an interesting picture of tenancy rates in 36 Shansi, Hopei, and Shantung districts, see the district-by-district breakdown of Buck's findings in *Land Utilization in China: Statistical Volume* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1937), pp. 57-59.

12. Buck's second and more comprehensive survey (1,200 Shansi farms, 1,000 Hopei farms, and 1,400 Shantung farms). See his statistical volume, pp. 57-59.
Adapted from Buck, *Land Utilization in China: Atlas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1937), pp. 3-5; and Chalmers Johnson, op. cit., p. 119 (Map of Communist expansion in North China as of August, 1939). The dots represent Communist-governed districts (Johnson notes that far too few Communist districts are shown in Shantung), and the numbers represent the percentage of pure tenants found in each district surveyed during Buck's study.
Shantung Guerrilla Area, or anywhere else in Shansi, Hopei, and Shan­
tung. In the Chìn-Ch'cheng-Chi Border Region, only one district shows a
high tenancy rate, while eight other districts sport tenancy rates of
under five per cent. Two moderately high tenancy rates may be found
in the Shantung Guerrilla Area (where there should be more Communist-
controlled hsien than are shown), but six districts with almost no
tenancy can also be found there. Ramon Myers concludes that the degree
of tenancy in Hopei, Shantung, and the rest of North China was the
same in 1937, the year the Communists began expanding into the area,
as it had been in 1880; if tenancy rates changed at all during this
time, they changed for the better.

Nor were Chìn-Ch'cheng-Chi and Shantung peasants in debt to
landlords or other usurious feudal elements, as agrarian theorists are
wont to claim. On the contrary, most peasants in need of credit bor­
rowed from their friends, relatives, or neighbors. Buck's second study
revealed that considerably less than five per cent of all peasants sur­
veyed in Shansi, Hopei, and Shantung borrowed money from landlords,
merchants, or mortgagors when they needed credit, while about 40 per
cent borrowed from their friends, relatives, and neighbors.

However, low tenancy rates and indebtedness to persons of
lower class background do not necessarily indicate peasant prosperity.
It was quite possible for peasants owning their own land to be poor.

13. See Johnson's footnote (op. cit., p. 117) to his map.
15. Buck, op. cit. (1937, statistical volume), p. 404; see also Myers,
op. cit., p. 288. The remaining 55 per cent of the peasants sur­
veyed borrowed from other sources (farmers, neighboring villages,
"wealthy persons", etc.) or never borrowed money.
Their farms may not have been large enough to grow sufficient food and cash crops, or operating costs, heavy taxes, banditry, and floods may have kept them constantly in debt. Land concentration data from Buck's second survey indicates that only 10-15 per cent of all farm land surveyed in Shansi, Hopei, and Shantung was rented; but land concentration rates varied considerably from one district to the next in Chin-Ch'a-Chi, as Map Two indicates, and south Shantung, which is reputed to have had some large landlord holdings, is not adequately surveyed. Yet Buck is satisfied that the average peasant farm was large enough to earn a living from, and says that antiquated Chinese farming methods, rather than size of farm or patterns of land ownership or class exploitation, were chiefly to blame for such rural poverty as existed in China at this time. Consequently, it is difficult to draw conclusions either way about the equitability of the size of land holdings in the Chin-Ch'a-Chi and Shantung areas.

It is equally difficult to draw any conclusions about peasant indebtedness in Chin-Ch'a-Chi and Shantung. Debts meant big trouble for peasants, even if they did borrow from friends and stay clear of grasping landlords and mortgagors. The times were inflationary, and even friends, relatives, and neighbors demanded extremely high interest rates because the real value of the principal (even silver) was forever decreasing. Indeed, sometimes credit could be

16. Ibid., p. 38; see also p. 195 of Buck's text (1937).
MAP 2

PERCENTAGE OF THE TOTAL FARM ACREAGE UNDER RENT

Buck, Land Utilization in China: Atlas, p. 38; superimposed on Johnson's map of Communist districts in August, 1939 (op. cit., p. 119). The numbers represent the percentage of total farm land farmed by tenants rather than owner-operators.
obtained more cheaply from landlords and other "exploiters" than from friends, relatives, and neighbors who could less afford the risk of inflation eating away their principal and interest.

However, both Buck and Myers conclude that the peasant standard of living in North China during the 1920's and 1930's was, except for periods of destructive civil warfare, drought, or flooding, on the upswing. A survey of 39 localities in Shansi, Hopei, and Shantung found 36 localities reporting increases in their standard of living, two localities reporting no change in their standard of living, and only one reporting a decrease. The survey indicated that almost all peasants were eating better food and wearing better clothing than they had previously, and that many were using kerosene instead of oil lamps and had installed tiled roofs in place of thatched roofs on their homes. Peasants in the few districts not reporting a qualitative increase in food intake had opted to sow cash crops in response to high market prices instead of crops for their own consumption.

In Shansi, four districts containing twelve localities were surveyed, and all reported that their standard of living had gone up since 1910. Two of these districts, Pingting and Showyang, are right in the heart of the Chin-Ch'a-Chi Border Region, while a third (Ningwu) is on its periphery. In Hopei, localities in seven districts were surveyed, and all reported increases in the standard of living except two of three localities in Fup'ing which reported no change. Of these seven districts

20. Ibid., pp. 400-401; see also Myers, op. cit., pp. 208-210.
Fup'ing, Chengting, Ting, and Kiaoho are located in the Chin-Ch'a-Chi Border Region. Eight districts in Shantung were surveyed, and increases in prosperity showed in all but one of two localities surveyed in Tangyi district. Only one of these eight districts can be said to be in the Shantung Guerrilla Area for certain, and that is the district of Lich'eng, just outside of Tsinan, which reported a solid increase.

In conclusion, the theory that the Communists were able to expand in North China because of the remunerative attraction of their agrarian reforms to an impoverished peasantry does not fully explain Communist expansion in Chin-Ch'a-Chi and Shantung during the years 1937-1940. Extensive data collected in the years just prior to the establishment of Communist governments in Chin-Ch'a-Chi and Shantung indicates that tenancy and landlord usury were not very common in these two areas, and could not have been responsible for much rural misery. This economic data should not be interpreted to mean that poverty and misery did not exist among the peasants of Chin-Ch'a-Chi and Shantung; on the contrary, indebtedness, backward farming techniques, and a host of other factors such as official corruption and extremely heavy taxation combined to make life very difficult for many North Chinese peasants. But the fact that this data poses a serious challenge to the validity of two suppositions commonly accepted by agrarian revolution theorists does force the scholar to ask himself, "How many North Chinese peasants found life difficult?" This is a question that no study supporting the agrarian revolution theory has

yet answered. How widespread was peasant misery? How many Long Bows and how many Liu Lings were there in Chin-Ch'a-Chi and Shantung?

There also remains the question of how effectively the muted Communist land reforms of 1937-1940 assuaged rural conditions and attracted peasant support. Were half-hearted reform efforts such as these all it took to develop a popular following? The agrarian revolution theory, like the peasant nationalism theory, is best applied after 1940 and leaves something to be desired as a complete explanation of Communist expansion prior to 1940. I hope to complement these two theories by taking a new look at the forces operant behind Communist political expansion in North China.

Ramon Myers hints at this new look when he concludes that the majority of peasants in North China were relatively poverty-free and unoppressed except under two recurring circumstances: widespread devastation by floods, droughts, or other natural disasters; and widespread devastation by civil wars and bandit-like warlord armies. This second circumstance -- peasant misery stemming from warlord ravages -- is central to my thesis, as we shall now see.

Warlord Destruction and Peasant Alienation

in Chin-Ch'a-Chi and Shantung

From the origin of Republican China in 1911 until the Japanese invasion in 1937, rapacious Chinese warlords and their ill-disciplined armies repeatedly subjected the peasants of North China to extreme physical terror and economic catastrophe. Military strongmen such as Yen Hsi-shan, Feng Yu-hsiang, and Wu P'e-i-fu ensconced themselves in various North China provinces and ran them as autonomous kingdoms, taxing the inhabitants heavily to support huge personal armies used to defend their power niches and compete for supreme power in China. These military taxes, together with accompanying graft, were an extreme burden on the peasantry, and warlord soldiers, seldom better disciplined than thieves, commonly raped, looted, and otherwise terrorized the peasants. Consequently, the peasants came to look upon the warlord armies "as a plague of locusts," and always fled their villages with all their possessions at the first word of approaching troops. "No other phenomenon between 1911 and 1937", writes Ramon Myers, "caused such upheaval and misery in the countryside as that of dissident military units wandering about pillaging and warring with one another."

How and why did this warlord exploitation of the peasantry develop? Military regionalism and warlordism can be traced back to the regional armies of Tseng Kuo-fan, Li Hung-chang, and Tso Tsung-t'ang in the second half of the nineteenth century. By the latter stages of the Ch'ing (Manchu) Dynasty the Manchu army had become utterly corrupt and useless as a military force. When the T'aoping Rebellion broke out in 1850, the Manchu army was unable to quell it, and the Manchu throne commissioned Tseng Kuo-fan -- and later Li Hung-chang and Tso Tsung-t'ang -- to raise a local army in the threatened region (south-central China) and suppress the rebellion. The Manchu throne did not give Tseng, Li, or Tso any funds to raise these armies; instead, most of their support came from taxes levied in the region they operated in. Gradually, as the Ch'ing Dynasty continued to decline and rebellions and foreign incursions occurred in other parts of China, these regional armies were ordered into

3. The following discussion is largely based on a number of biographical studies of key military figures during the warlord period, such as Gillin's study of Yen Hsi-shan (op. cit.), James E. Sheridan's study of Feng Yu-hsiang (Chinese Warlord: The Career of Feng Yu-hsiang [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1966]), and others.

4. William James Hail, Tseng Kuo-fan and the Taiping Rebellion (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1927), pp. 5-7. Hail mentions Manchu garrisons surrendering walled cities without resistance to the Taipings and begging for mercy, only to be slaughtered to a man (pp. 5-7).

territories. Local gentry and officials, accustomed to dipping their fingers into the local tax coffers, were never willing to finance these armies however badly they needed their protection; consequently, Tseng, Li, and Tso would replace existing government and financial organs and officials with their own, leaving trusted lieutenants in charge whenever they moved to another trouble spot. In this fashion the regional military leaders -- especially Tseng and Li, who worked together almost hand-in-glove -- came to control local government and financial institutions in most of China proper by the 1870's.

The Manchu throne tried to counter the increasing power of Tseng and Li by backing Tso Tsung-t'ang and his army. The competition which then took place between these regional military leaders over territory they could tax to support their armies culminated decades later in the proliferation of provincial-based warlord armies such as those commanded in Shansi, Shantung, and Hopei (then called Chihli) by Yen Hsi-shan, Chang Tsung-ch'ang, and Wu P'e-i-fu, respectively. This division of China into "mutually antagonistic warlord states" prevented the warlords from acquiring outside financial support for their armies. Consequently, the people of each of these provinces had to bear the cost of these huge, unwanted armies by them-

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7. See Michael's description of the relationship between Tseng and Li, ibid., p. xxi.
8. Michael describes the Manchu's tendency to play powerful interests against each other in ibid., pp. xxix-xxxii.
9. See, for example, Gillin's description of Yen's financial dilemma in Shansi and his inability to find outside capital (op. cit., pp. 296-297).
selves. The following data on military taxes and abuses in the Chin-Ch'a-Chi and Shantung areas indicates this burden was frequently impoverishing and terrifying beyond belief.

Much of the peasant poverty existing in Chin-Ch'a-Chi and Shantung prior to Communist expansion into these areas was undoubtedly caused by astonishingly high warlord military taxes. How high were these taxes? An Academia Sinica study of military taxation's effect upon the peasantry indicates that military requisitions during the heyday of Li Hung-chang and Tso Tsung-t'ang were not even in the same league with the warlord military taxes of the late 1920's and early 1930's. For example, the total amount of taxes -- military and civilian -- collected in Sing district, Shansi province in 1879 was equivalent to 150 catties of millet. But in the five months from November, 1929, to March, 1930, Sing district's military taxes alone amounted to 10,072 catties of millet. Military requisitions in nineteenth-century China were usually based on the land tax. This remained true in twentieth-century China, but on an outrageously high scale. The military requisitions levied in four districts of southern Shansi, when Yen Hsi-shan and Feng Yu-heiang wintered portions of their armies there for five months in 1930-1931, were 2,216 per cent of the main land tax usually paid in those four districts. Absolutely no fighting or mobilization took place at this time, yet those four districts had to furnish an average $670,000 apiece -- twenty-two times the total value of the land tax -- just for the ordinary upkeep of

11. Ibid., p. 105. The term "main land tax" means that the land tax without the surtax is taken as the base.
portions of two armies. During this same year, Yen Hsi-shan began collecting military taxes three years in advance in Shansi, and imprisoning anyone who could not afford to pay. But if Yen's military taxes were stupendously high when his army was engarrisoned, they were even worse when his army was afield doing battle. Yen financed his army's November, 1927, to May, 1928, campaign across northern Shansi, southern Chahar, and northern Hopei by levying military requisitions worth $29,632,000 — a total value 225 times as high as the main land tax — in 15 north Shansi districts. The people of Kwaihsien district in north Shansi had complained of a military tax burden of "several thousand dollars" in military taxes in 1922, yet in 1927 had to raise $29,632,000 along with fourteen sister districts in just five months. The passage of two years' time found the people of Kwaihsien still staggering under the burden of Yen's military requisitions — in 1929, Kwaihsien paid $152,804 in military taxes during the month of December alone. Ultimately, Yen Hsi-shan's exorbitant military taxation undermined his military strength, for the North China Herald reports that the Communist invasion of Shansi in 1936 owed much of its military success to the popular support it received from Shansi peasants angered by Yen's heavy taxes.

13. Wong Yin-seng, loc. cit., p. 105. Ninety-nine per cent of this levy was collected in kind, one per cent in cash.
15. "Shansi Missions Not Endangered," North China Herald (Shanghai), April 1, 1936, p. 8; see also North China Herald, May 6, 1936, p. 226.
When Chang Tsung-ch'ang -- who was known as "the most not-
oriously rapacious of all his kind" -- became warlord of Shantung
in April, 1925, land taxes immediately increased five or six times
16
to support his "undisciplined 'army' of riffraff and bandits."

Several special taxes were also levied, including a "rich harvest tax"
whenever crops were slightly better than usual. Japanese Army sources
report that during the 1925-1927 fighting between the Chihli and Manchur-
ian coalitions around Tsining, approximately 213,000 head of cattle,
120,000 mules, and 440,000 donkeys were taken from the peasants in
the Tsining area. The Academia Sinica study paints a tragic picture
of the desperate measures peasants took to prevent the requisition of
their few, much-prized head of livestock:

Almost any kind of animal suitable for transportation and
field work is snatched away from the peasants even though
they may first try to keep them through money payments.
Finally the peasants maim the animals -- blinding them
or ripping their mouths, or both -- in the hope of being
able to keep them, not for field work, of course, but for
milling or meat.19

During the fighting between the Northern Coalition and the
KMT in the first six months of 1928, General Sun Ch'uan-fang, who had
replaced Chang Tsung-ch'ang as warlord of Shantung, taxed many of the
107 districts in the province to finance his struggle against KMT forces
under warlord-turned-nationalist Feng Yu-hsiang. The minimum collected

Atheneum, 1968), p. 131. See also Sheridan, op. cit., pp. 236,
255, and Paul M.A. Linebarger, Government in Republican China
in any district was $11,445, and the maximum collected was $107,879.

After Sun's defeat, western Shantung spent the second half of 1928 under Feng Yu-hsiang, eastern Shantung remained under the control of organized remnants of Sun's and Chang's warlord armies, and a huge area between these two zones of control was a no-man's land full of roving, pillaging warlord units turned bandits. However, despite the fact that no fighting or mobilization took place in Shantung during the second half of 1928, official military requisitions skyrocketed. Whereas the index number for military taxes based on the main land tax was 81 in the first half of 1928, it shot up to 141 in the second half of 1928. Thus, in the same districts in which military requisitions had ranged from $11,445 to $107,879 in the first half of 1928, requisitions in the second half ranged from $24,773 to $219,833. The source does not specify whose control these districts were under, but since Feng's was the only orderly administration controlling more than a few districts, one suspects he was responsible for doubling the military requisitions in these districts. Indeed, the American consul in Tsinan at this time reported that Feng's taxation of western Shantung was "unbearable." Before the Communists and the unusually politically-conscious 69th KMT Army entered Shantung to fight the Japanese, all of the armies in the pro-

20. Ibid., p. 104.
21. See the military map of Shantung in 1929 in Sheridan, op. cit., p. 256. The Japanese also had a piece of Shantung; they kept garrisons along the Tsinan-Tsingtao Railroad running from west to east.
vince habitually lied about the number of troops the people were supposed to support. Consequently, the warlord soldiers would have more supplies than they needed, and would "either waste them, send them to their homes, sell them, or just give them away." 24

Military requisitions were unbearable in Hopei, also. For example, at the start of the Second Chih-Feng War in 1924, Chihli warlord Wu P'ei-fu requisitioned 4,000 carts, each with two donkeys and a peasant driver, from several Hopei districts. 25 And in 1929, military requisitions in southern Hopei amounted to 432 per cent of the main land tax, even though no fighting took place all year. Adding to the peasant's woes was the fact that the military tax provided an excellent vehicle for Hopei bureaucrats to exploit the peasantry. The responsibility for assessing and collecting official military requisitions was delegated to local gentry-officials, who created a military tax office "in every town, village or market town in Hopei." These gentry-officials padded the army's requisitions and pocketed the extra revenue. If two catties of wheat were required, they collected two and a half; they raised a requisition for four carts to 16 carts; and when sixty coolies were required they requisitioned another thirty for themselves. They collected requisition orders in several installments, which enabled them to tack on a small

extra demand each time. They paid grain requisitions for peasants who could not meet the demands and then conspired with grain merchants to raise grain prices 100 per cent or more before the peasants could pay them back, pocketing the difference between fixed and market price after the process of requisition. They bribed military commanders for documents which enabled them to collect military taxes long after the troops had collected theirs and gone. They made the poor bear a heavier tax burden than the rich by assessing people on the basis of the amount of land owned, and not on the basis of the productivity of the land owned. For example, in one Hopei village a farmer owning 8.9 mou of land was assessed $1.67 and a rich man owning 83.4 mou of land was assessed $15.60, which on the surface seems fair since the same percentage was taken in both cases. However, this method of assessment actually favored the rich because the annual income of the man who was taxed $1.67 was only $25.61 while the income of the man who was taxed $15.60 was $327.95. Yet some landlords tried to avoid paying the land tax even when the tax system was weighted in their favor: in another Hopei village, a landlord evaded his taxes by forcing 19 of his 20 tenants to pay for him.

This manner of graft and tax chicanery was not restricted to Hopei, but was common to Shantung, Shansi, and the rest of North China. Ku Meng charges that a definite collusion to exploit the peasantry

29. Ibid., p. 106.
30. One mou is equal to one-sixth of an acre.
32. Ibid., p. 107.
33. Ibid., pp. 105-109; see also Wang Yu-chuan, loc. cit., p. 118.
existed between the militarists and the gentry-officials. The Academia Sinica study of military taxation agrees with this charge, and notes that the peasants perceived this collusion and were very angered by it. This suggests that perhaps much of the class violence that occurred during the Chinese Revolution stemmed from the peasants' identification of the gentry class with the warlords and military taxation.

But this is only the official side of military taxation. The Academia Sinica study concludes that the peasantry suffered most of all from the "direct unauthorized military requisitions" levied at gunpoint by common soldiers. Most warlord soldiers were ill-disciplined, poorly trained ruffians who became soldiers merely to earn a living. The difficulty lay in the fact that too many of their commanders became soldiers for the same reason and were loath to pay the troops their wages; hence the troops took whatever nutrition and material comforts they desired from the peasants. Soldiers sta-

34. Ku Meng, Chung-kuo Ching-chi, I, No. 4 (August, 1933), quoted in Hanwell, loc. cit., p. 57. Hanwell does not cite the title of Ku Meng's article in his reference note to it.

35. See Hanwell, loc. cit., p. 58. Hanwell quotes a section of the Academia Sinica monograph by Wong Yin-seng, et al., that is not included in the IPR's Agrarian China volume. Agrarian China contains only an extract from the original monograph, and this particular claim regarding peasant anger cannot be found in it.


37. Chu Teh, On the Battlefronts of the Liberated Areas (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1952), p. 43. This was originally a military report to the Seventh Congress of the Chinese Communist Party, April 25, 1945. See also Epstein, op. cit. (1939), p. 254 on the subject of warlord officers withholding their troops' wages.
tioned in an area would force the local peasants to run so many errands for them that they had no time to work in their fields; peasant women would be kept busy mending their uniforms and preparing them meals. They would demand that the community supply them with women and heroin, and they would take livestock and grain from the peasants at will. A song the soldiers liked to sing tells the story of their parasitic relationship with the peasantry far more eloquently than any words of my own:

My property is nothing but a gun
And these few pieces of wartime equipment.
By these I become master of all;
By these I plant, I sow, I reap.

I shall eat meat and drink wine wherever I please.
What do I care to whom they belong?
Wherever I go,
They shall ask my pity and my favor.
Because the people fear my gun
And my wartime equipment,
Trembling they kneel before my feet
And offer all they have to me.
And because of my gun they hold their breath
And call me Sire; my gun and my equipment
What endless treasure they are.39

Unfortunately, it is difficult to document the true extent of harm done to the peasants of the Shantung and Chin-Ch'a-Ch'i areas by looting warlord soldiers. The soldiers took what they wanted on the spur of the moment, and did not leave behind any records. Besides, looting was only one of the things they did to earn the hatred of the peasantry -- rape and malicious brutality were also part of their reper-

toire. After 1930, Yen Hsi-shan's soldiers in Shansi Province displayed marked arrogance and disregard for the public. Yen's troops had suffered such losses in the civil wars that he had to begin using bandits and poorly-trained militia in his once fairly well-behaved army. Unfortunately, Yen had already milked the Shansi peasants so dry of resources that he had nothing left to pay these troops with; consequently, the troops fed themselves by looting the people of Shansi, who were already reduced by famine to eating grass and bark. A shattering defeat at the hands of Chiang Kai-shek's army that same year lowered the morale and discipline of Yen's troops still further. They were so detested by the public that Yen's recruiting officers had to obtain recruits through subterfuge, such as conscripting peasants whom district magistrates had lured into the cities "by promising to stage free theatrical performances."

Yen was very disturbed by military-civilian tensions and repeatedly chastised his officers and troops about the need for good relations with the people. He tried to shame his troops into better behaviour by telling them how Japanese officers reproached their soldiers for public misconduct by citing China as an example of what happens to a country when the army does not get along with the people. He ordered his officers to "preoccupy themselves" with improving the character of their troops, and composed the following song for his men to learn:

40. Gillin, op. cit., pp. 115-116, 244.
41. Ibid., p. 244.
Good soldiers cooperate with the people. Then, because they have the help of the masses they triumph easily. Do not behave properly only when your officers are near. Acquire the spirit of self-discipline.  

But Yen's campaign to reform his bandit-troopers evidently did not meet with lasting success, for in 1937 they extensively abused Shansi peasants while retreating before the Japanese invasion. Donald Gillin writes that Yen's troops robbed and raped so much while fleeing south to T'aiyuan and thereabouts that the peasants feared them more than they did the Japanese. Israel Epstein reports that "the Shansi peasantry evacuated their villages at the approach of their own troops just as they did when they heard the Japanese were coming." James Bertram witnessed nothing but wholly deserted villages in the Third (Shansi) Brigade's path of retreat south from T'aiyuan. The peasants, who had had previous experience with the passage of Shansi troops, had taken everything they owned and disappeared. (Indeed, as we saw earlier, some North Shansi peasants refused to aid and even attacked Shansi provincial troops.) By contrast, the Communist Eighth Route Army troops with whom Bertram was moving north to the front had only to shout their identity -- "Ti Pa lu chun!" [Eighth Route Army] -- to receive warm welcomes and willing hospitality.

In Hopei, warlord fighting between 1925 and 1927 reduced rail traffic along the Tientsin-Pukow Railroad by as much as 25 per

42. See ibid., pp. 245,247.
43. Ibid., pp. 260-264.
cent, slowed the shipment of rural raw materials to the cities, and forced industrial cutbacks that put many part-time wage laborers in surrounding rural areas out of work. In 1936, a Japanese army official referred to Sung Cheh-yuan, who was then the warlord of Hopei, as a crude, militaristic "bumpkin" whose troops (the now famous 29th KMT Army) were rowdy and not well-disciplined "like other troops," and in 1937 a Japanese soldier riding a train through Hopei observed:

"In every station, I saw some Chinese come to welcome our train with Japanese flags. The first time I saw this I thought how oppressed they must have been by the Chinese warlords." 48

But the problem of military banditry and rowdyism was worst in Shantung, where it continued unabated for years. During the early 1920's, for example, Chang Tsung-ch'ang's warlord troops often levied "unofficial requisitions" in Shantung's En district and caused "great loss of livestock and farm capital" to the inhabitants. This foraging reached its peak in 1926 and 1927, when the peasants of En district were hit so hard by warlord troops raiding the villages for food and carts that they decided to organize "Red Spear Societies" for self-defense. Several villages in Lich'eng district near Tsinan banded together in 1928 for similar reasons. In 1930, the Japanese South Manchurian Railway Company estimated that Shantung contained 192,000 warlord troops stationed in 21 locales, 290,000 ex-warlord troops

46. Myers, op. cit., p. 277.
49. Myers refers to Chang Tsung-ch'ang as "Chang Tso-chang" (op.cit.,p.118).
50. Ibid., pp. 118-119.
51. Ibid., p. 101.
without formal leadership or attachment to any military organization in 54 locales, and almost 20,000 bandits scattered over 46 districts. All 502,000 of them lived on the sweat of the people of Shantung province, demanding "[bread], oil, salt, vegetables, meat, utensils, dishes, anything they could lay their hands on." Even the Shantung gentry had their own armed forces, ostensibly raised in the mid-1930's to resist the Japanese but actually used to serve the gentry whenever their interests occasioned the use of force. However, when Han Fu-chu, Shantung's latest warlord, evacuated the province in 1937 "without firing a single shot" in its defense, the gentry and their armed forces fled also. Together these armed bullies and Han Fu-chu's "crack troops" looted, raped, and burned a path of retreat southward before the invading Japanese.

Interestingly enough, the peasants of Shantung did not react to the coming of the Japanese in a similar fashion. They had been fleeing Shantung and its myriad warlord bands for years, but when the Japanese invaded Shantung, the peasants remained. Millions of peasants from Shantung, Hopei, and other parts of North China migrated permanently to Manchuria during the 1920's and early 1930's. There

52. Ibid., p. 278.
54. Ibid., pp. 89-91. Han Fu-chu was subsequently court-martialed by the central government and shot. Besides desertion, Han was found guilty of using force to collect "extortionate taxes," misappropriating public funds for his own use, imposing the sale of opium upon the people of Shantung, and illegally confiscating weapons from the people (Epstein, op. cit., [1939], pp. 139-140.)
were many reasons for this exodus, but among the most prominent were the savage destructiveness of the many civil wars and the heavy burden of military taxes. As one writer observes:

"Peasants could cope with poor harvests and floods by fleeing with their belongings to other areas, waiting until the disaster passed, and then return. But the ravages of these troops was something else. It usually meant both loss of property and life, and so one of the largest internal migrations of this century took place during the 1920's."  

In 1923 alone almost 340,000 North China peasants migrated to Manchuria through North China ports; by 1927, the number of emigrants had climbed to over one million a year. In 1935 it was reported that more than 50 per cent of all families native to southern Shantung had either migrated or had had some member migrate. But when the Japanese entered Shantung, the peasants did not flee like the warlord troops and the rich gentry. Instead, their first reaction was one of relief, for although they feared and disliked the Japanese (who had maintained garrisons in Shantung for the past 20 years), they had "bitterly hated Han Fu-chu's regime, under which, for them, hunger, beating, flogging, blackmailing, and imprisonment were the order of the day." They felt as if "a big stone had suddenly been removed from their shoulders."

It is now quite clear that the Chinese military establishment of the 1920's and 1930's was an unmitigated burden on the peasants of Chin-Ch'a-Chi and Shantung. Warlord armies did incalculable economic and social harm to the people. The authors of the Academia
Sinica study assert that military requisitions of animals, food, and implements have had drastic effects upon China's agrarian economy and "have no doubt been responsible for turning fertile areas into barren famine regions." This conclusion is strongly supported by the American Red Cross Commission to China's official report on the famine of 1928-1929. This report unequivocally blamed the warlords and their armies for the terrible famine which struck the provinces of Kansu, Shensi, Shansi, Chahar, Hopei, Shantung, Hupeh, and Hunan:

"...the destitution which prevails in the famine areas is the cumulative result of the chronic conditions of disorder, the crushing exactions of the warlords, the depredations of bandits, the enforced payment of confiscatory taxation, and...the crippling and consequent inability of the railroads to function...to these was added a severe drought which brought the whole to a tragic climax...."

"This commission has heard no expression of doubt that enough food existed in China to have prevented starvation in 1928 and 1929....The fact is that the operations of contending rival generals with their independent moving armies, said to have numbered more than 2,000,000 men, swept the normal stocks of food from many provinces and destroyed or paralyzed the only facilities for bringing in food from those areas where food is abundant." 62

In the eyes of many Chinese, the Kuomintang government and armies which "succeeded" warlord rule in the late 1920's behaved no better. Ch'ien Tuan-sheng accuses the KMT of never having spent less than 50 per cent of its annual budget for military expenses, to the detriment of more useful government services. Furthermore, the KMT's

61. Wong Yin-seng, loc. cit., p. 109. Paul Linebarger (op. cit., p. 118) agrees that "militarism had a direct effect on the deterioration of the land economy."
own troops in North China behaved no better than warlord troops; in- 
deed, most of the KMT armies in North China were former warlord armies 
that had defected to the KMT when they realized they could not defeat 
it. Inevitably, the KMT Army itself began to embody various warlord 
qualities. For example, in 1930 General Sun's Fifth KMT Column in 
Shantung recruited brigands for guerrilla warfare against the Japan-
ese, but these new KMT elements actually fought with the peasant Red 
Spear Societies in Taian district and Laiwu district more than they 
fought the invaders.

The North Chinese peasantry's reaction to this development 
was a natural one. They no longer trusted anyone wearing a military 
uniform: warlord soldiers were generally brutes. KMT soldiers were 
generally ex-warlord soldiers but usually not ex-brutes, and the newly 
arrived Japanese soldiers were not above robbing peasants, either. 
Under these circumstances, the peasants of Shantung and Chin-Ch'a-
Chi were usually quite impressed when soldiers trained to practice 
the virtues of thrift, morality, respect, and compassion first en-
tered their localities. These soldiers were members of the Communist

64. Ibid., p. 248. Han Fu-chu's army in Shantung, Yen Hsi-shan's 
army in Shansi, and Feng Yu-hsiang's army in Kansu and Shensi 
are some of the more important warlord armies that became nomi-
nally KMT forces after the Northern Expedition in 1927.
65. Wang Yu-chuan, loc. cit., p. 102. See Mao Tse-tung's comments 
on the 'warlord style of work' prevalent in the KMT army in "Let 
Us Get Organized" (November 29, 1943), Economic and Financial 
Problems during the Anti-Japanese War and Other Articles (Peking: 
66. See Epstein, op. cit. (1939), pp. 268-270. The diary of a Japanese 
soldier published in Bertram (op. cit., pp. 179,182,184) indi-
cates that Japanese troops sometimes raided peasant orchards and 
chicken yards.
Eighth Route Army, and their break with the warlord tradition was evident from the outset. From the very moment these Communist soldiers came into contact with the people, they began generating significant amounts of normative power that compelled peasant identification with the Communist army, and concurrent acceptance of Communist political authority. I turn now to a discussion of the Communist military's exemplary behaviour toward the peasants and the role this behaviour played in the successful spread of Communist political authority during the years 1937-1939.

Communist Military Behaviour in Chin-Ch'a-Chi and Shantung

To the Chinese Communists, the peasants of China were at once both the means to and the beneficiaries of revolutionary success. Because of the strong Japanese military presence in Shansi, Chahar, Hopei, and Shantung, Communist political expansion in these provinces during the years 1937-1939 required military strength above all else. But the Communist military forces were inferior to the Japanese army both in manpower and firepower; consequently, the Communists were forced to employ guerrilla war tactics which could succeed only if the people were willing to give them -- and withhold from the Japanese -- information, supplies, recruits, and other forms of assistance. To paraphrase Chu Teh, the communists had to depend on the Chinese masses to shield their small, poorly-equipped forces from the Japanese as walls shield a city from an attacker.

The difficulty in this strategy lay in convincing the warlord-weary North China peasants, who hated and distrusted anyone in military uniforms and preferred to remain aloof from wars, to give the Communist soldiers their assistance and protection. To overcome this peasant distrust of all things military, the Communist Eighth Route Army had

to prove itself different from the warlord armies. It could not ex-
pect peasant support if it caused chaos and burdened the peasants as
the warlord armies had done. Therefore, the Communist military es-
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establishment took special care to adhere to the "principle of non-
violation of the interests of the people." The army helped reduce
the onerous burden of military taxation in Chin-Ch'a-Chi and Shantung
by practising strict economy, helping the peasants with their farm-
work, and by raising its own food and manufacturing its own supplies
whenever possible. A progressive land tax system which taxed people
according to their ability to pay was introduced, and corruption in
local government was virtually erased. The Communists instituted a
military supply system which safeguarded against military-civilian
clashes over the requisition of supplies, and an extensive political
control system ensured that Communist troops did not loot, rape, or
otherwise abuse the peasantry. Finally, the Eighth Route Army endea-
vored to give the peasants the vital sense of safety, order, and secur-
ity without which all the good will in the world could not induce the
peasants to risk their lives by helping and protecting the Communists.

The Communist Eighth Route Army and its warlord predecessors
in Chin-Ch'a-Chi and Shantung differed fundamentally in their approach
to military taxation. The Communists' military survival depended on
the good will of the people; hence, they did not squeeze every available
tax dollar out of the peasants. They recognized that "if the people's
life becomes hard, the army's life will become hard, too," and they

5. Chu Teh, op. cit., p. 49.
taxed accordingly. Many steps were taken to reduce the military tax burden on the peasants. First of all, many specialty taxes formerly used to extort additional dollars out of the peasants (pork tax, pig tax, pig-slaughter tax, pig-selling tax, pig-inspecting tax, "surtax on pork for educational expenses," and narcissus bulb tax) were eliminated. Only four taxes were retained: the land tax, a tax on all incomes over one hundred dollars a year, a duty on imports and exports, and a tax on cigarettes and wine. The main land tax, of course, remained the primary source of military revenue, but it was assessed on a progressive scale which placed the burden of supporting the army on those who could most afford to pay. In Liu Shao-ch'i's words, the rich were made to "bear a little more responsibility to allow the poor to lighten their burden." During the years 1937-1940, this progressive land tax varied somewhat in that it was based on the size of land-holdings in some areas, and based on the productivity of holdings in others. For example, in 1938, south Shantung peasants

6. For a list of 70 specialty taxes bordering on the ridiculous, see Sheridan, op. cit., p. 24.
8. Evans F. Carlson, Twin Stars of China (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1940), p. 221. Since Carlson published both this book and The Chinese Army (op. cit.) in 1940, further references to Carlson will include the book title.
owning less than ten mou of land were exempt from the land tax, while those with more than ten mou were taxed progressively higher proportionate to their holdings. But in an unnamed Chin-Ch'a-Chi district visited by George Taylor, the land tax in 1937-1938 was based on productivity instead of property. Under this system, peasants harvesting less than ten tan (1,350 lb.) of grain annually were exempt, peasants earning 10 to 30 tan paid five per cent of it in taxes, and those earning more were taxed progressively higher.

The Communists further lightened the peasant's military tax burden by cleaning up corruption and waste in the local governments which assessed and collected the taxes. The officials collecting military revenues for the Communists were new, fewer, and mostly incorruptible. The Communists admitted that "it happens from time to time that some fellow steals from public funds the equivalent of a few packages of cigarettes or a pair of shoes." These small offenders were allowed to go unpunished except for strong criticism at 'struggle meetings', but officials stealing anything more than this were imprisoned, and those guilty of 'squeeze' or embezzlement of

12. Taylor, op. cit., p. 112. This tax system could be found with a different twist in other Communist areas. In the Taihang Mountains region (along the Shansi-Hopei border), peasants were taxed according to their average productivity in recent years, and were allowed to keep any earnings exceeding that average production figure. See Teng Hsiao-p'ing, "Economic Reconstruction in the Taihang Region," in Gelder, op. cit., p. 201. (Teng does not specify whether the peasants still had to pay a set tax sum if their harvests were poor and below average.)
more than $500.00 were shot. Gunther Stein relates, however, that the overwhelming consensus of the "scores" of Communists, non-Communists, and foreigners he interviewed in the Red areas was that corruption no longer existed there.

The Eighth Route Army also followed a policy of strict economy in its use of supplies, in stark contrast to its warlord predecessors, who were notorious for their conspicuous, extravagant consumption and waste of material. In fact, the Communist army once had pretty extravagant tastes itself. During the Kiangsi Soviet Period of 1928-1934, Red Army soldiers had received free houses, free land, free boat rides, free postal service, free burial, tax exemptions, and retirement pensions at the age of 45. However, the years 1937-1940 saw concern for the soldiers' welfare replaced by concern for the material comfort of the peasants. A 1938 visitor to the central Hopei sector of the Chin-Ch'a-Chi Border Region reported that the interests of the peasants now came before the interests of the Communist soldiers, who wore cheaper clothing and ate poorer food than the peasants. Traditional unit banquets were abolished, and soldiers and commanders alike ate poorly in order to avoid taxing more grain away from the

16. Ibid., p. 209; see also Lindsay, loc. cit. (part II), p. 124.
17. Liu Shao-ch'i, "The Armed Forces Persisting in the War of Resistance in North China" (July 1, 1938), in Collected Works of Liu Shao-ch'i, Before 1944, op. cit., p. 77; see also Bobrow, op. cit., p. 337.
peasants. Instead of receiving the regulation two summer uniforms and one winter uniform a year, the soldiers got only one summer uniform annually and one winter uniform every two years. These issues were to be patched and re-patched, and could not be replaced unless lost. When uniforms finally were turned in, the Eighth Route Army's own uniform factories salvaged everything that could be re-used. Intact pieces of cloth, when they could be found, were re-used for padded soft shoes, and torn rags were plaited into rope soles for shoes and sandals. Cotton wadding from the padded winter uniforms was refluffed, dis-infected, and re-used. To save precious metal, uniform buttons were made of wood and insignia were made of glazed pottery.

Indeed, the Communists imposed limits on the size of their armed forces, and in times of famine even reduced them to ease the peasants' burden. In 1938, Anna Louise Strong reported having seen Chu Teh's staff turn down thousands of Shansi peasants wanting to enlist because the Communists had no more money and would not ask the people to bear the burden of a larger army. Similarly, the

22. Ibid., p. 289.
24. Strong, loc. cit., p. 156. Later, in 1941, the Communists actually reduced irregular forces by 20 per cent in some areas, demobilized at least 1,500 Eighth Route Army regulars, and ordered several units to devote their full attention to strictly production work (see Selden, op. cit., pp. 212-214; Stein, op. cit., pp. 141, 337; and Epstein, op. cit. 1947 , p. 163).
Eighth Route Army actually had to restrict itself in the amount of ammunition it used and the number of battles fought. The Eighth Route Army may have been the only army that counted (and collected for reloading) the cartridges it had expended during a battle, to be included in its report along with the number of casualties and enemy dead. For example, during one battle in which they killed 960 Japanese, the Communists used only 900 cartridges, but over 2,000 cheap home-made hand grenades. On other occasions Japanese detachments were surrounded but could not be destroyed "because the Chinese could not afford the expenditure of ammunition necessary to delay the arrival of reinforcements."

The Eighth Route Army also helped peasants with their farm work whenever possible, hoping thereby to both increase production and demonstrate to the people that Red soldiers were not of the old warlord-mercenary mold, but were willing to work for their keep. In 1939, after the Japanese flooded Central Hopei by breaking the dikes and levies on the Yellow River in 185 places, units of the Eighth Route Army assisted the civilian populace in closing 105 dam openings, twelve of which were "emergency repairs," and in reclaiming flooded crop-lands. The flood had inundated 147,495 mou of alluvial crop-lands, but with army help, 139,495 mou were restored to their original state so that in 1940 these crop-lands produced a rich harvest.

25. Lindsay, loc. cit., pp. 101, 104.
Communist troops also helped peasants in the tri-border area of the Chin-Ch'a-Chi Border Region to reclaim 10,000 previously uncultivated acres by 1940, and helped organize 559 functioning industrial cooperatives in Chin-Ch'a-Chi by the end of 1939. Special efforts were made to help the peasants at crucial times of the year, such as the plowing, planting and harvesting seasons. In the spring, for example, Communist cavalry horses were used to help Chin-Ch'a-Chi peasants plow their fields. The Eighth Route Army commander in the Chin-Ch'a-Chi Border Region, Nieh Jung-chen, dismounted a cavalry regiment of one thousand men to allow the peasants to use the horses for plowing, and high-ranking commanders also turned their mounts over to be used in the fields. In fact, commander-in-chief Chu Teh's favorite mount was said to have been ruined by fieldwork. Communist infantry men, their weapons stacked nearby and their sentry posts manned by old men and children, helped the peasants sow their crops.

All of this labor help and concern would come to no good, however, if the peasants were not protected against Japanese raids at harvest-time. The Japanese often timed major invasions to coincide with the harvest in the hopes of forcing the Communist troops to have

31. Strong, loc. cit., p. 163.
to requisition food from the peasants when they were poor. The Eighth Route Army dealt with this threat by organizing peasant Labor Exchange Groups which reduced the time needed to bring in the crops from six weeks to a fortnight, and by deploying its troops to protect the peasants from Japanese attack. At times the Eighth Route Army itself mounted harvest-time offensives into Japanese-occupied territory to pre-empt apparent Japanese invasions of Communist areas. In sectors which the Japanese showed no signs of attacking, the Communist troops joined the peasants in the fields to get the harvest in faster, and then moved to sectors where they were more needed. Ultimately, Communist precautions such as these earned the peasants' full support and trust. They were convinced that it was possible to support the Communists and still live normal, productive lives without fear of Japanese reprisals -- that they could "live better, more fully, and more freely by fighting than they could by submission." The Eighth Route Army kept the Japanese out of their villages for the most part, and when the Japanese did succeed in penetrating Communist defenses, the civilians and their possessions were evacuated and hidden with time to spare. Peasants who lost their food and belongings were fed by the troops until government relief organizations provided the evacuees with enough food to last until the next harvest. After the 1938 Japanese spring offensive, more than 40,000 central Hopei peasants were cared for in this fashion; in fact, an American missionary stationed in this region told a visiting journalist that "the guerrillas

in her area had organized more philanthropic enterprises in the past year than the Christian missions had developed in the past decade.

The final Communist military policy designed to reduce the peasant's military tax burden was the Eighth Route Army's "self-production" campaign, during which the soldiers were to produce a substantial quantity of their own food, clothing, and military supplies. Little information is available about military-production work in the Chin-Ch'a-Chi Border Region and Shantung Guerrilla Area during the years 1937-1940, because this policy was not instituted on a wide scale until 1942. There is some evidence, however, that various army units in Chin-Ch'a-Chi and Shantung were involved in experimental "self-production" campaigns in 1938 and 1939. General Yeh Chien-ying states that in 1939, Communist troops in Chin-Ch'a-Chi and Shantung were producing their own "ammunition, arms, and daily essentials," and were paying "much attention" to the improvement of people's living conditions. Unfortunately, Yen does not state anything more specific than this; however, other sources do give concrete examples. Wang Yu-chuan reports that in 1938, Communist guerrillas formed production regiments of 500 men each in most districts

34. Hanson, loc. cit., pp. 294-295.
35. See Forman, op. cit., p. 74. The primary experiment in military production at this time was conducted in the Nanniwan district of the Shen-Kan-Ning Border Region, where Wang Chen's tough 359th Brigade achieved astounding success. Forman offers much data on the Nanniwan experiment, as do Isieh Kuang-chih, "Nanniwan Reclamation," in Saga of Resistance to Japanese Invasion, op. cit., pp. 157-167; and Hsu Yung-ying's A Survey of the Shensi-Kansu-Ningshia Border Region, part II (New York: International Secretariat, Institute of Pacific Relations, 1945).
of the Shantung Guerrilla Area. These "Independent Regiments" were given few fighting tasks, their main function being agricultural production. Farther north, General Lu Cheng- tsao's forces were taught to spin, weave, and sew their own clothing in their spare time.

The army's cost to the peasants of Chin-Ch'a-Chi and Shantung began to drop as these "self-production'' campaigns escalated after 1940. The Communists were unable to buy weapons from any outside sources, so the peasant's only burden was the necessity of feeding and clothing the army. Consequently, when large brigade-size units began manufacturing almost all their daily necessities and achieving 50-75 per cent self-sufficiency in meat, vegetables, wheat, and millet, military taxation eased considerably. By 1943, for example, Communist troops in Shantung were supplying their own needs to the value of (Chinese) $56,156,000, or about $1,000 for each regular soldier. This made it possible to lighten the tax load of the people of the Shantung Guerrilla Area, in some cases by as much as nineteen dollars per inhabitant. In the central Hopei sector of Chin-Ch'a-Chi, every soldier was required to cultivate one mou of land annually, and in other Communist-controlled North China regions, army detachments were expected to produce enough food to feed themselves two months out of the year.

38. See Forman, op. cit.; p. 207.
41. Ibid., pp. 278-279. Chu Teh estimated that army units could, in the absence of fighting, become wholly self-sufficient in three years, while units in front areas could possibly achieve as much as 50 per cent self-sufficiency (op. cit., p. 50).
If anything, however, the peasants of North China had detested the warlord armies more for the destructive, arrogant behaviour of their troops than for economic reasons, and the Eighth Route Army strove mightily to avoid similar alienation by making its soldiers conform to strict rules of public behaviour. These rules were enforced primarily by means of indoctrination and political control rather than by punishments, for the Communists were more interested in preventing crimes than in punishing them. The main structure of the Eighth Route Army's behaviour code consisted of two sets of simple rules formulated by Mao Tse-tung -- the "Three Main Rules of Discipline" and the Eight Points for Attention:

The Three Main Rules of Discipline

1. Obey orders in all your actions.
2. Do not take a single needle or piece of thread from the masses.
3. Turn in everything captured.

The Eight Points for Attention

1. Speak politely.
3. Return everything you borrow.
4. Pay for anything you damage.
5. Do not hit or swear at people.
6. Do not damage crops.
7. Do not take liberties with women.
8. Do not ill-treat captives.

42. Mao Tse-tung, "On the Reissue of the Three Main Rules of Discipline and the Eight Points for Attention -- Instruction of the General Headquarters of the Chinese People's Liberation Army" (October 10, 1947), Selected Military Writings of Mao Tse-tung (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1966), p. 343. These rules differ in several instances from those actually espoused during the Anti-Japanese War. According to Evans Carlson (op. cit. [The Chinese Army], pp. 36-37), the Communists' original rules were adapted to the circumstances of the Anti-Japanese War, and read as follows, in 1939: 1) Execute the Anti-Japanese patriotic principles; 2) Execute the instructions of higher leaders; 3) Do not take the smallest thing from the people; -- 1) Ask permission before entering a house; Before leaving thank the occupants for their courtesy, and ask them if they are satisfied with the condition of the house; 2) Keep the house clean; 3) Speak kindly to the people; Continued . . . .
These rules were taught to the soldiers as the "Three-point-eight Working-style" every Eighth Route Army soldier must live by. They were obviously designed to earn peasant appreciation by preventing the looting, arrogance, billeting by force, wanton destruction, and rape so characteristic of warlord troops. To quote Israel Epstein, they "were a veritable bill of rights for the people who had previously had no rights at all where soldiers were concerned." Closer examination of these rules shows how well the people's interests were respected by the Eighth Route Army.

As several of the rules concerning taking or borrowing things from the people indicate, the Communists forbade their troops to requisition supplies on their own authority from the peasants as the warlord troops had formerly done. On February 5, 1938, Liu Shao-ch'i ordered that "food and fodder for the anti-Japanese forces should be obtained through existing local governments; armed units should not assess them directly from the people." A convenient military supply system designed to prevent military-civilian tensions was established at the local level throughout Chin-Ch' a-Chi, Shantung, and other Communist-governed zones in North China. Under this system, the army simply bought supplies ahead of time and stockpiled them for the troops to use whenever they were in the area:

"Good relations between army and people are protected by an excellent supply system, based on the principle that the army

42. (Continued. . . .) 4) Pay for everything that you use, at the market price; 5) Return all borrowed articles; 6) Pay for all articles which the army has broken or destroyed; 7) Do not commit a nuisance (dig latrines); 8) Do not kill or rob the captives (enemy prisoners).
44. Liu Shao-ch'i, loc. cit. (February 5, 1938), p. 58.
never gets supplies directly from the people. The Government buys grain and stores it on the spot; the supply officer of any army unit in the district applies to the civil authorities from whom he receives provisions. Four receipts are made out: for the civil authorities, the supply office, military headquarters, and the government.  

According to George Taylor, any military supply officer or civil authority guilty of even the slightest peculation was subject to the death penalty.  

Even when Communist forces were operating behind enemy lines and needed supplies, they still could not requisition them from the people. Instead, they were supposed to seize goods from the enemy, seize goods from traitors (Japanese sympathizers and collaborating officials), or ask for and if necessary requisition supplies from the rich; they must never ask for supplies from the poor. Even the contributions from the rich had to be solicited or assessed with care lest the peasants be inadvertently taxed and alienated:

"The guerrilla units must never assess or solicit contributions from the rich through the heads of villages...contributions should be solicited or assessed directly from the rich households...If this is done through the medium of a village head, he will naturally solicit them from the poor as well with the result that the great majority of people will harbour discontent toward the guerrilla forces."  

Wang Yu-chuan says that the guerrillas of the Communist Fourth Brigade in warlord-ridden Shantung won much popular support because of their

46. Ibid., p. 105. It will be noted that this report contradicts the word of three other sources (Stein, Carlson, and Teng Hsiao-p'ing) who say only crimes involving more than $500.00 were punished by death (see supra, p. 49).
adherence to these rules. They never took anything from those who could not afford it, they never took more than they needed from the rich, and before they moved on they distributed anything left over among the poor.

Sometimes, however, the Communist guerrillas had no choice but to obtain supplies from the peasantry because all the rich people had fled when the Japanese came to the area. Whenever this situation occurred, the soldiers had to propagate and try to persuade the peasants to give supplies voluntarily. If this ploy failed, the soldiers could then requisition what they needed, but in return had to pay the peasants in currency or in grain coupons redeemable for the full value of what they had taken. In fact, Communist troops in Shansi were reported to have often paid double the ordinary price for any food or drink they took from the poorer peasants. Troops would pay a few coppers for the use of a cookstove for a few minutes, and one Eighth Route Army unit even paid some peasants for food that had been stolen by a group of Shansi partisans. The Eighth Route Army's troops, on the other hand, were said to never steal. One reporter observed that the troops with whom she marched through long, hot, dusty valleys never once turned their heads as they passed melon patches and pear orchards — they could not afford to buy anything.

50. Liu Shao-chi, loc. cit. (July 1, 1938), p. 76.
and they would not steal. Another reporter observed a hungry Communist soldier marching through a town pick up a stale roll from a deserted bread stand, only to quickly put it back when the soldier behind him remarked into the air: "Not a needle or piece of thread from the people." Another time a soldier took a handful of peanuts from a peasant's field without paying. That evening the unit's political instructor assembled the troops and chided them: "Shall we sell our reputation for a handful of peanuts?...'One little theft of peanuts spreads right through a village and destroys the good name our army has earned by the discipline of years. You can not hide anything from the people.'"

The Eighth Route Army's respect for private property was also reflected in its billeting policy. The soldiers were instructed to quarter themselves in public buildings such as temples or schools whenever possible, and not to enter private homes without the permission of the inhabitants. When they left a billeting, they were to leave their quarters clean, undamaged, and in perfect order; if any damage was inflicted, it must be paid for promptly. For example, Shantung guerrilla units always billeted themselves in temples, local military headquarters, the lodges of local societies such as the Red Spears, or vacant merchant storehouses. During their spare time they cleaned the local streets or helped the peasants in their fields.

54. Wales, op. cit., p. 291.
56. Ibid., p. 199.
57. Epstein, op. cit. (1939), p. 217. In fact, the Communist troops were not even to enter the villages unless the villagers gave their permission.
In Shansi, the troops rented rooms or houses with the consent of the owners, and paid for them in national currency. Then, as soon as these arrangements had been made, the soldiers swept out the rooms, cooked the evening meal, and performed other chores even though they had been marching all day. In the evening, the soldiers entertained the dozens of villagers who invariably came to mingle with them, smoking and talking. Then, in the morning, the troops again swept out the dwelling and courtyard before they left.

The Communists also worked very hard and very successfully at preventing sexual attacks on peasant women by their soldiers. Foreigners living in Communist areas never found prostitutes or heard of sexual offenses involving Communist soldiers, and peasant women were not afraid to work or socialize near the "Eighth Routers". Rape could not be permitted in an army that depended so heavily upon the people's good will. How could the peasants be expected to continue helping the Eighth Routers and taking them into their homes, asked a Communist official, if the soldiers repaid these kindnesses by raping their wives and daughters? Consequently, the Communists sentenced all sexual offenders to death:

"Since the regular Red Army was organized in about 1950, rape has not been a problem. Discipline on this question is 100 per cent good. In the early days in the past, however, it was necessary to court-martial such offenders, and all guilty soldiers were shot."

Undoubtedly, the use of the death penalty was partly responsible for the Eight Route Army's "100 per cent" successful campaign against sex crimes; however, much of this success was also due to the extreme activity Eighth Route Soldiers daily underwent. Soldiers trying to resist an external aggressor and at the same time conduct a revolution against an internal oppressor are left with little time, energy, or even desire for dalliance. When the Eighth Route Army's peasant-soldiers were not fighting, marching, or practising military skills, they were busy mending their own uniforms, raising their own food, learning how to read, and -- inevitably -- receiving political training. The Eighth Route Army was easily the busiest army in the world; it is not difficult to understand why foreigners visiting the Communist areas declared it to be the most continent army in the world.

However, most of the Eighth Route Army's success in preventing rape -- and most of its success in preventing unauthorized requisitioning, theft, and other abuses of the people -- was due to its political control system. As stated previously, the Communists were more interested in preventing abuse of the people than in punishing culprits. The best way to prevent abuse was to educate the soldiers and develop their political consciousness. This task was the raison d'être for the Political Departments and political officers the Communist Party installed at every level of the army hierarchy, from army headquarters down to the company and sometimes the platoon level. The

company level was the basic level of all political work in the Eighth Route Army, and the Political Department was represented at this level in the person of a single political officer who also happened to represent the Communist Party's "watch-dog" apparatus, the party committee system.

The political officer's duties were to instruct the soldiers in how to behave properly, and to watch them and if necessary discipline them. He taught them the "Three-point-eight Working-style," instructed them in rudimentary socialist thought, lectured on the history of the Chinese Revolution and the history of imperialist aggression in China, trained them to do mass work among the peasants, and led them in the singing of revolutionary songs and other recreational activities. He was to "endeavor to eliminate all immoral conduct in the company (such as drinking, gambling, opium-smoking, rape, fighting, quarreling, theft, etc.)." In Chu Teh's words, the Political Department and its officers were "the lifeline of the army" which prevented it from falling into the evil ways of the warlords.

Without such political instruction and leadership, the soldiers would be more a liability than an asset to the Chinese Communist


68. General Political Department of the Eighteenth Group Army, loc. cit., p. 149.

movement. Even the political officer's "watchdog" duties leaned more toward instruction than punishment. Most crimes were punished by criticism; extreme cases by expulsion from the army. The political officer who called his troops together for a critical discussion of "peanut theft" (supra p. 60), rather than confront the hungry soldier with his crime, is an example of such punishment through criticism and instruction. Bertram tells of how a veteran soldier who shot up a Shansi town after getting drunk on New Year's Eve -- the first and only case of drunkenness he saw in the Eighth Route Army -- was remanded to the Political Department for "discipline". Soldiers who did not respond well to instruction and criticism -- particularly the KMT and warlord soldiers who had defected to the Communists -- were "discouraged" from re-enlisting in the Eighth Route Army when their hitch was up; the worst-behaved among them were purged immediately.

The political instruction dispensed by the Political Department must have had some effect, for the peasants of Chin-Ch'a-Chi and Shantung identified very closely with the Eighth Route Army, and every foreign visitor that observed the army at length praised its excellent rapport with the people. In the Shantung Guerrilla Area, peasants who had formerly avoided soldiers were said to be very friendly and helpful to the Communist soldiers stationed among them. In the Chin-Ch'a-Chi Border Region, peasants who used to evacuate

their villages at the approach of warlord soldiers would "bring out tea and food" to refresh Eighth Route Army men passing through their villages. The people of Shansi were especially receptive. In November, 1937, the people of North Shansi, who had fled their homes when Shansi provincial troops passed through while fleeing the Japanese, returned to their homes in droves when the Eighth Route Army entered the area to resist the Japanese. As soon as they finished settling down in their homes, they sent a delegation to the new local headquarters of the Eighth Route Army to thank the Communists for coming. Women brought brown beans, brown rolls, and chickens for the soldiers, who insisted on paying for the food but had their money pressed back into their palms. Later, the women formed National Salvation Associations with Communist help and made cloth shoes for the Eighth Route Army men. In one district alone, 17,000 shoes were given to the army. The north Shansi men volunteered to guide the soldiers through the surrounding countryside, and cut railroads and telephone lines to disrupt Japanese communications and provide the Eighth Route Army with iron and cable. In 1938, south Shansi peasants, who had been helped with their harvest the year before by Communist soldiers on their way to the front, lined the roads and gave the soldiers presents when the same unit passed through again. These Shansi peasants gave their whole-hearted support to the Red Army "because they

75.  Smedley, op. cit. (1938), pp. 92-94.
78.  Bertram, op. cit., p. 203.
found its conduct a welcome relief from the rapacity and brutality of other armies fighting in Shansi." Thus, one old Shansi peasant woman's words of greeting to Communist soldiers entering her village were: "You are...the good army that doesn't harm people or do evil things....You are the Red Army!"

This last statement explains much of the successful Communist expansion in North China prior to 1940. As one old "China-hand" wrote in 1938, the secret of the Communists' success in North China was their rapport with the peasantry, much of which was built up by the Eighth Route Army's "record...against feudal warlordism."

By now, the conclusions of this thesis should be self-evident. The peasant nationalism and agrarian revolution theories which have been advanced as the two principal explanations of Communist political expansion during the Yenan Period do not suffice to explain three years of Communist growth in two very important North China base areas. This being the case, I believe new paths should be taken in the study of Communist political expansion from 1937 to 1940, and I am confident that the study of the normative power generated by the Eighth Route Army's behaviour toward the Chinese peasantry will shed new light on the Chinese Revolution. The peasants of North China were familiar enough with bad armies to know a good array when it came along. All evidence indicates that the model discipline and political consciousness of the Eighth Route Army were key normative factors en-

80. Ibid., p. 264.
encouraging peasant acceptance of Communist political authority in the Chin-Ch'a-Chi Border Region and Shantung Guerrilla Area during the years 1937-1940.
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