

The History of the Twentieth Century

Episode 368

“The Second United Front”

Transcript

[music: Fanfare]

“The Japanese are a disease of the skin; the Communists are a disease of the heart.”

Chiang Kai-shek.

Welcome to *The History of the Twentieth Century*.

[music: Opening War Theme]

Episode 368. The Second United Front.

We haven't talked about the war in China in a very long time, not since episode 349. The war in Europe distracted us for a while, but now it's time to get caught up.

In episode 349, I took the story of the war between Japan and China up through the end of 1938. After the Japanese took the Chinese capital of Nanjing, Chiang Kai-shek's government made Wuhan its provisional capital. The Japanese took Wuhan after weeks of bloody combat, but the Chinese were able to make an orderly withdrawal to the city of Chongqing in Sichuan province. The city lay deep in the mountains, amidst highly defensible terrain, which made it unlikely the Japanese would be taking the city anytime soon.

There were at this time essentially three Chinas: the Republic of China, ruled by Chiang, the Communist Chinese, ruled by Mao Zedong within their redoubt in the northwest, and the “Reorganized National Government of the Republic of China,” supported by the Japanese, led by Wang Jingwei, and based in Nanjing. For all of the Japanese government's propaganda about how they meant to free their Asian brothers from Western rule and reserve Asia for the Asians, their puppet government in China did nothing but what it was permitted to do by its Japanese overlords, which was typical of the “independent” governments set up throughout Japan's self-proclaimed “Co-Prosperity Sphere,” beginning with the establishment of Manchukuo.

The Republic of China controlled more people and more territory than its rivals, about half of the country overall, but it was a rural half, capable of producing food, but lacking in manufacturing

and tax revenue to fund the war. The small region controlled by the Communists was in a similar situation.

Chiang's government also had to deal with refugees from the Japanese occupation, who numbered in the tens of millions, fleeing the notorious cruelty of the Japanese Army. Their large numbers meant overcrowding and frequent outbreaks of disease.

The only foreign power sending aid to China in 1939 was the USSR, and please note that Soviet aid was going to Chiang's government, not the Communists. When the Japanese began clashing with the Red Army along the borders of Manchukuo, these battles raised hopes in Chongqing that the Soviet Union and Japan might go to war, and China would then have an ally.

But to Chinese dismay, the Soviets and the Japanese made peace, leaving Japan free to pursue its war against China undistracted. Just days later came the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Agreement. After the invasion of Poland in September, the Nationalists began to fear that the Soviets and the Japanese might strike a deal to partition China, as the Soviets and Germans had done with Poland.

The war in Europe also dashed any hope that the British or the French might lend support to China.

On the other hand, in September 1939, as the Germans and Soviets were occupying Poland, the Chinese Army won a rare victory against the Japanese at Changsha. The Japanese had advanced on the city, less than 900 kilometers from Chongqing, but the Chinese had learned that the Japanese Army tended to advance too far too soon, as its generals competed for the honor of first to enter the city, so Chiang withdrew from Changsha, tempting the Japanese to enter, then ordered attacks on the Japanese flanks, threatening to surround the Japanese in the city. The Japanese were forced to retreat and suffered heavy casualties, 40,000 according to the Chinese. This victory aside, the Chinese would be forced into a defensive posture for the rest of the war.

When the Soviet Union invaded Finland and the League of Nations debated its expulsion, this put China in a difficult position. China had a veto at the League, but Western nations would be angry if a Chinese veto kept the USSR in the League even as it made war on another member state. To support the expulsion would be to alienate the only country sending China military aid. The Chinese tried to split the difference by abstaining, which meant the Soviet Union was still out; it also meant that China managed to annoy both Stalin and the West, and Stalin retaliated by cutting off Soviet aid.

Annoying the West proved moot once France fell in May. Gone was any hope that France might render aid, and the British had their hands full. With its enemies relentless and its friends few, China went through a lonely 1940.

Among the many difficulties the Nationalist Army faced were its warlord armies. Even in 1940, the Republic of China was still all too dependent on the kindness of pro-Republic warlords, who contributed their personal armies to the common cause of fighting Japan, but their loyalty was always suspect. Chiang feared the day the warlords united behind one of their own and attempted to overthrow him. In deploying his forces on the front lines, he was careful to keep the warlord armies separated, with loyal units of the National Republican Army between them.

There were also the Communists to think about. Remember how back in the Twenties, the Nationalists and Communists joined forces to fight the warlords. We looked at this in episode 234. This alliance was known as the United Front, and it lasted four years, until 1927, when Chiang and the more conservative elements among the Nationalists purged the Communists from their ranks and massacred thousands of Communists and other leftists in Shanghai.

Ten years later, when the war with Japan began, the Communists agreed to put that unpleasantness behind them and join with the Nationalists once again to defend China from the invaders. This alliance was known as the Second National Front.

The Communists always had strong support in the southeast of China; they organized their supporters in that region into what was called the New Fourth Army, about 9,000 strong, and it was participating in the effort to hold the front line against the Japanese.

Most of the Communists, though, like Mao Zedong, were holed up in the mountainous northwest of the country, waging guerilla warfare against the Japanese. The Chinese Communists were something of a mystery to the outside world; in the late Thirties, American journalists, mostly left-leaning ones, made the trek to Yan'an to investigate. The most famous of these was Edgar Snow, an American based in China who lived with the Communists for four months and interviewed Mao extensively.

Snow wrote a book about his experiences with the Chinese Communists, which was published in 1937 under the title *Red Star over China*, which became *the* book for Westerners who wanted to better understand the reclusive Chinese Communists. It also became *the* book for Chinese people who wanted to better understand the reclusive Chinese Communists.

Snow's book painted a picture of agrarian reformers who had broken the grip of the old landlords and given the land to the people who farmed it. Mao himself was depicted as first and foremost a Chinese patriot and a dedicated anti-fascist, a reformer who dressed humbly and lived in a cave, writing essays on his vision for the future of China. His followers were described as enthusiastic and fiercely loyal.

This picture contrasted sharply with the image of the Republic of China government in Chongqing, where distrust, desperation, and corruption reigned, where Generalissimo Chiang had the last word on every aspect of public life, and where Chiang's relatives got rich off a

government that pleaded poor when it came to the war effort, let alone to ameliorating the misery of the Chinese masses.

Snow's writings left many wondering if the West might do better to support Mao rather than the corrupt Chiang, but Mao was hardly the humble agrarian democrat Snow described. More about that in a few minutes.

The Second United Front was an uneasy alliance from day one. The Communists had certainly not forgotten the Shanghai Massacre, and each side accused the other of neglecting the defense of China in favor of expanding their own wealth and power. The corruption on the Nationalist side made the charge easy to believe with regard to them, but it was perhaps more true of the Communists. The Japanese Army expended most of its efforts against the Nationalists. When the Communists holed up in their mountain fortress, the Japanese usually left them alone.

Stung by Nationalist criticism, in August 1940, the Communists began what was called the Hundred Regiments campaign, commanded by Peng Dehuai who, by some accounts, started the offensive on his own initiative, without consulting with the Party. Communist guerillas attacked in the Japanese Army's rear, concentrating on destroying roads, bridges, and railways, and sabotaging an important coal mine, putting it out of operation for nearly a year, but all this came at a cost of some 22,000 Chinese soldiers, and it would be the last Communist offensive against the Japanese.

The alliance between the Communists and the Nationalists broke down at the end of 1940. The details of this story are controversial; to this day the Communists and Nationalists tell different versions. It involved that New Fourth Army in the southeast of the country, which made Chiang nervous, because that was within Nationalist territory.

The Nationalist side says that the New Fourth Army disobeyed an order to advance north, out of its home territory, so Chiang ordered the National Revolutionary Army to attack the rogue unit. The Communists say the unit was obeying orders and was attacked by the Nationalists without provocation, just like 1927 all over again.

However it started, it ended with the New Fourth Army surrounded by a much larger Republican force, which killed or captured 7,000 out of 9,000 Communist soldiers. The other 2,000 escaped to the north.

This incident, in January 1941, marks the end of the Second United Front, and the beginning of the Chinese Civil War.

The Soviet Union began sending military aid to China again, though it stopped again in April, after signing the non-aggression agreement with Japan. The USSR did not take sides in the conflict between the Nationalists and the Communists; it merely expressed regret that the two

factions were fighting each other instead of the Japanese, but Communist parties internationally denounced Chiang and the Nationalists.

In March 1941, a small amount of US Lend-Lease aid began to flow to China. In June, when Germany invaded the Soviet Union, the war provided some clarity to the situation in Asia, reinforcing that the USSR and China were in some sense “on the same side,” even though the Soviets and Japanese were not directly fighting each other. Stalin pressed the Chinese Communists to attack the Japanese; Mao agreed, but did nothing. He had gotten burned in the Hundred Regiments campaign, which had cost the Communists dearly but only served to aid Chiang by weakening Mao. The Communists would retain this aloof posture for the rest of the war against Japan, concentrating instead on stockpiling arms and cash for the civil war. To raise money, they turned to the time-honored fund-raising technique of the warlords: they sold opium.

The Communists may have wanted to leave the Japanese alone, but the feeling was not mutual. The Japanese instituted an anti-guerilla campaign known as the “Three Alls”; that is, “kill all, burn all, loot all.” The Japanese moved into Communist territory to seize what crops they could and burn the rest. Chinese men of military age were taken for forced labor and other rural Chinese relocated to hamlets where the Japanese Army could keep an eye on them, and watchtowers were set up to monitor the movements of guerillas. Chinese historians estimate that the “Three Alls” policy was responsible for the deaths of over two million Chinese civilians.

In September 1941, the Japanese made another attempt to take the city of Changsha; again the National Revolutionary Army was able to beat them back, but this time the Japanese took the river port of Yichang after a tough battle. Yichang was an important supply source, where food arriving from northern regions of China was collected and shipped along to Chongqing. The Nationalists managed to take with them supplies stored in the city, but the Japanese had succeeded in cutting off an important source of food at a time when tens of millions of refugees from Japanese-controlled China were pouring into Nationalist territory.

When Japan went to war with the US and the UK, it had to redeploy the bombers that had been pounding Chongqing for three years. An estimated 15,000 Chinese civilians died in the Japanese bomber campaign over that period.

In February 1942, George Marshall chose Major General Joseph Stilwell to serve as US military commander in China and Burma. Stilwell, known as “Vinegar Joe,” had previously been US military attaché to Chiang’s government, so he seemed like a good choice. Unfortunately, Vinegar Joe was not an easy guy to get along with. He was contemptuous of the National Revolutionary Army, particularly its officers, whom he viewed as lazy, corrupt, and stupid. US military intelligence had assigned the code name *Peanut* to Chiang Kai-shek; Stilwell enjoyed demeaning Chiang by referring to the general as “Peanut” in conversation. Chiang, for his part, viewed Stilwell as a guy who simply didn’t understand the desperate conditions under which his army had to fight.

Stilwell did believe that the war in China was the key to beating the Japanese. He wanted an American army corps deployed to China to assist the Nationalist war effort, a request Washington denied.

The American general didn't think much of the British, either. He commanded the Chinese troops in Burma, and his view of the importance of China led him to fight hard to keep the Burma Road open, but as you know, that did not end well. The two Chinese divisions Stilwell commanded were forced to withdraw into India; now that the Burma Road was closed, American Lend-Lease aid to China had nowhere to go except to those two divisions. Chiang feared Stilwell was attempting to build his own private army, but Stilwell was being hailed as a war hero in the US press, so Chiang felt he had to swallow his pride and put up with him, for now.

As you know, the Doolittle Raid in April 1942 infuriated the Japanese, who began a campaign to hunt for the American aircrews that landed in Japanese-controlled China and root out the Chinese who had assisted them. The Japanese campaign led to the deaths of an estimated 250,000 Chinese and sent millions more to flee for refuge in Republican-controlled China.

Stillwell, with the full support of his superiors in Washington, kept pressuring Chiang to go on the offensive more often, but the Americans didn't understand the challenges Chiang's government was facing in 1942. To begin with, there was a drought. Rice and wheat were both in short supply and prices were soaring. The Chongqing government had not only to feed itself and its own people, but all those refugees.

For these reasons, by the end of 1942, the Republican government didn't have enough food left over to keep a large full-time army in the field, and calls from the Americans for more offensive action came across as faintly ridiculous.

When the United States entered the war, the Republic of China now found it was allied with the US and the UK. This made Chiang Kai-shek a key international figure. People at the time spoke of the Big Three Allied leaders—Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin—but now they sometimes spoke of the Big Four, adding Chiang into the club. Chiang liked the prestige that came with attending international summit meetings alongside the most important Allied leaders.

On the other hand, it got Chiang and China mixed up in the controversies among the Allies. What the Chinese needed most was a bigger share of those Lend-Lease supplies the Americans were handing out so generously, but the closure of the Burma Road made it nearly impossible for any of that materiel to reach China. Chiang wanted the British and Indian forces along the eastern border of India to retake Burma and reopen the Burma Road, but Winston Churchill was reluctant to engage the Japanese, after they had so thoroughly humiliated British-led forces in Burma and Malaya. Besides, Churchill and his government were staunchly committed to the "Germany First" strategy.

Churchill thought Chiang ought to open the Burma Road himself by redeploying some of his best Army units to the Burmese frontier and invading. Chiang felt he needed his best units to oppose the Japanese, and that removing them would be risky. Chiang also smelled a rat. It looked to him as if Churchill was attempting to get China to do the work of reasserting British imperial rule over Burma. Chiang was no fan of the British Empire. He was already planning to seize Hong Kong, once the Japanese were gone, and in a 1942 meeting with Mohandas Gandhi, Chiang publicly supported independence for India, which did nothing to endear him to Churchill.

Stillwell at least agreed that re-opening the Burma Road should be a top Allied priority. But Claire Chennault, the American who had organized the Flying Tigers and hated Stillwell as much as Chiang did, argued that the war against Japan could be won by American bombers attacking the Japanese Home Islands from bases in China, which would eliminate the need for sending either American soldiers or assistance to the Chinese. Many other American military planners were perfectly happy with the status quo in China. Chiang's army was tying down 80% of the Japanese Army, leaving America with only the other 20% to worry about.

The Republic of China's finance minister, Soong Tzuwen, who was also Chiang's brother-in-law, figured that if the Americans would just supply 100 of their C-47 transports, these planes could deliver 12,000 tons of military aid to China every month, direct from India and flying over the Himalayas to the Chinese city of Kunming.

This route became known to Allied pilots as "the Hump," and it was challenging. American aid to China took two weeks to reach India by ship from the US Atlantic coast, and it had to compete with the needs of the British Eighth Army in Egypt, which at this time was trying to stop Erwin Rommel's Army before it reached the Suez Canal. Once the aid arrived in India, it took a further two months to transport it over India's rickety, inadequate railway system to the airfields from which it could be flown to China.

Living conditions for the air crews, in a remote corner of India in the Himalayan foothills, were crude. Poor food, poor sanitation, and rampant disease led to low morale. The air route itself, over the Himalayas, was difficult and dangerous, requiring high-altitude flying through a region where rain, snow, and turbulent storms were common.

The effort got off to a slow start in 1942. Despite Soong's prediction of 12,000 tons per month, the first months averaged just 10% of that number. But they got better at it over time, though they also paid a high price in air crews and machines. September 1943 saw monthly deliveries top 10,000 tons for the first time, and December 12,500 tons, exceeding Soong's target for the first time. By spring of 1944, they were delivering 22,000 tons per month. In January 1945, 44,000 tons, and in the last month of operation, 55,000 tons. Overall, the airlift brought some 650,000 tons of supplies to China, though most of that reached China late in the war, at a cost of 1,659 air crew killed and 594 aircraft lost.

In those early days, before the airlift was in full operation and when desperation for food and supplies was at its peak, it drove Chiang and his government into turning a blind eye to smuggling and black market dealings, including trade with Wang Jingwei's puppet government. This helped keep the Nationalists in the war, but it also contributed to their image of corruption.

[music: MacLeod, *Asian Drums*.]

During China's Nanjing Decade, the ten-year period leading up to the beginning of the war with Japan, China enjoyed a degree of stability and prosperity it had not seen in more than a century. That period also represents the peak of Western influence in China. Modernization was all the rage, and modern advertising, imported from the US, strove to equate modernity with the acquisition of consumer goods, especially makeup, cigarettes, and Western-style clothing.

American films and American jazz were popular cultural imports. Chinese popular music became infused with jazz elements, and there was a vibrant domestic Chinese film industry, based in Shanghai.

It had been a good time for artists, especially writers, actors, and filmmakers, many of whom were Communist or at least left-leaning in their political views. Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist government had banned the Communist Party and Guomindang censors were on the lookout for anything that even hinted at Communist sympathies, but government censorship, like government in general in the Republic of China, was unreliable and haphazard.

Established artists could get away with more than unknowns; established artists also had a pretty good idea of exactly how far they could go before the censors brought down the hammer.

The period saw a revival of woodblock prints. The Chinese invented woodblock printing in ancient times, but it fell out of favor in the 18th and 19th centuries. The Nanjing Decade saw a revival in woodblock prints created by leftist artists. The very traditional form of the work makes it a little easier for the audience to accept the radical content; for example, Zhou Xi's *Disputing with the Landlord*, a commentary on the need for land reform, or Chen Tiegang's *The Meshes of the Law*, which condemned police repression.

The censors came down particularly hard on the woodblock artists for some reason. They got to know police repression first hand. A group of twenty-three men and women who made woodblock art were executed for pushing their political message too far.

Chinese authors sometimes found not only refuge but also publishers in the foreign concessions, where they were beyond the reach of Chinese police.

These leftist artists in some sense went to war with Japan before Chiang did. After the Japanese seizure of Manchuria and the invasion of Shanghai in 1932, they began to produce works that celebrated Chinese resistance, and implicitly criticizing Chiang's cautious response.

When all-out war began in 1937, artists fled their bases in Shanghai or Tianjin or Beijing ahead of the Japanese occupation and joined the flow of refugees headed west. Many of them chose to seek refuge in the Communist-controlled region in the northwest. One prominent example was a noted stage and screen actress named Jiang Qing, who fled to Yan'an after the Japanese occupied Shanghai. There she caught the eye of Mao Zedong. Mao, who had already been widowed twice, divorced his third wife and married her. His Party colleagues were scandalized, but they agreed to accept his divorce and remarriage on one condition: that Jiang Qing would stay out of politics for twenty years. The couple agreed, and she kept that promise.

Yan'an, you remember, served as the capital of a mountainous region about the size of Ohio in the United States or the nation of Kuwait on the Persian Gulf. The town of 7,000 swelled to over 35,000 once the Communists arrived from their Long March in 1935.

Many of the artists arriving in the Communist enclave were veterans of the May Fourth Movement, which, you'll recall, began on May 4, 1919, when word got out that the Paris Peace Conference was going to allow Japan to keep the territories it had captured in China. We looked at that in episode 200.

These folks from the May Fourth Movement leaned left. Many of them were Communist sympathizers, but few of them were full Party members, and their habit of questioning authority and devising their own political ideas did not mesh with Mao's approach. They had come to Yan'an as idealists, but the harsh realities of living in the mountains with a guerilla movement quickly soured them. The Party exerted far more control over artistic expression than the Guomindang ever did. Life among Communists proved to be far more hierarchical than they expected, and criticism of what they saw as the hypocrisy of Mao and other Party leaders was strictly forbidden. One writer, a woman named Ding Ling became prominent among these disaffected artists. She wrote satirical essays mocking the Communists; she was particularly critical of the second-class status of women in the purportedly classless society and of the married Mao jumping from hookup to hookup.

Likewise, some of the Party leaders were experienced soldiers who, unlike Mao, had formally studied military theory, and they questioned his conduct of the war against Japan. Then there were the Party intellectuals who studied in Moscow, the Mecca of Communism, notably Wang Ming, who was dedicated to the Party but also believed in strict adherence to the proven Marxist-Leninist approach of the Soviet Union.

Mao didn't agree with any of this. Mao believed that Marxist-Leninist theory had to be adapted to the unique circumstances of China. He dismissed orthodox thinkers like Wang as "dogmatists" who failed to grasp that a theory, no matter how correct it was, had to reconcile with practical experience.

Mao devised his own adapted version of Marxism-Leninism and laid it out in those political texts his admirers praised so highly. Mao distributed them to the Party rank and file, many of whom

were in their teens and twenties and full of revolutionary ardor, then used their revolutionary ardor to enforce his doctrines on the Party leadership. This process reached its apogee in 1942 with what was called the Rectification Movement. Mao condemned those whom he called dogmatists for adhering too closely to textbook theory while also denouncing those whom he called empiricists, who paid too much attention to the practical.

In Mao's view, there was also such a thing as too much education. The authority of the Party and the Revolution came from the peasants, not from schools or books. The comrades who needed to understand this were not only those who challenged his military leadership, but the artists and intellectuals of the May Fourth Movement, who were reluctant to give up the principles of freedom, democracy, and individual thought they had embraced in the Twenties and Thirties. To Mao, the leader and the collective were all that mattered. The individual was nothing.

He launched the Rectification Movement during a time when the Japanese were content to leave the Communist enclave alone, which allowed some room for political debate. Mao strove to enforce his own doctrines by playing the dogmatists and empiricists against one another, relying on a system of self-criticism sessions, known in Chinese as "struggle sessions." When someone was denounced as disloyal to the Party and its ideals, meaning Mao's ideals, they were forced to appear before an audience of those young and zealous revolutionaries who were devoted to Mao and make a lengthy statement describing and criticizing their own misdeeds. Audience members could join in, and often did with gusto, shouting angry and humiliating accusations. To be an isolated individual facing a hostile crowd like this would be an unpleasant and painful experience for anyone; in a society in which the concept of "face" is hugely important and preserving one's "face" is crucial to one's self-esteem, these sessions were emotional brutality. Indeed, they sometimes degenerated into physical brutality.

It didn't take long for people to figure out that the best way to avoid getting denounced and forced to endure one of these painful "struggle sessions" was to denounce someone else first. It was a useful tool for Mao to weaken his political opponents as empiricists denounced dogmatists and vice versa, everyone competing to demonstrate how much more loyal they were to Mao's teachings than was anyone else.

It's notable too that the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was preoccupied with the war and in no condition to push back against Mao's version of Communism. When the Moscow-educated Wang Ming was attacked, it was not only for his own thoughts, but as a surrogate for Comintern.

Eventually, through this process, the principles and goals of the Chinese Communist Party became whatever Mao said they were, strictly enforced by the very people who used to dispute them. It would become a key tool of the Chinese Communist Party.

The Party set up what was called a "Forum on Art and Literature," led by Mao naturally, which he used to explain to the disaffected artists that all art served a political purpose. The only question was whether that political purpose was a good one or a bad one. What the Chinese

Communist Party required from its artists was that they communicate the purposes and goals of the Party in words and images the workers and peasants could relate to. The Party's goals came from the masses. The Party refined them in the crucible of Marxist-Leninist-Maoist thought and it was the role of artists and intellectuals to transmit the refined form back to the masses from whom these ideas originated.

Now properly educated on their role in the proletarian revolution, and inspired by the folk traditions of rural China, the artists went to work. Musicians composed music in the style of Chinese folk songs that explained the need to defend the nation from the Japanese. Dramatists wrote plays meant to inspire revolutionary ideals. The thoroughly chastised Ding Ling wrote an epic novel about land reform.

Mao prepared the Communists for the war after the war. He spoke of the 7-2-1 policy, by which he meant that the Party would dedicate 70% of its effort to reforming society, which in rural China largely meant land reform, 20% to relations with the Guomindang (which, if you are cynical, you might read as a coded way of saying "preparing for the inevitable civil war after Japan is defeated"), and 10% to the war against Japan.

The Communist war against Japan was mostly guerilla hit-and-run attacks after the failure of the Hundred Regiments offensive, but their public relations office was working overtime, especially compared to Chiang's. The Communists won sympathy and support from the outside world for their incorruptibility, their commitment to fighting Japan, and to improving the lives of the rural peasants.

As for the truth of all this, well, whatever else you say about Mao Zedong—and there is plenty else to say—you have to give him this much: in all the history of China, which stretches back for millennia, he was one of the few Chinese leaders to give a damn about the welfare of China's hundreds of millions of rural peasants. And they would repay Mao with their loyalty. On the other hand, the Communists' legendary incorruptible honesty and commitment to the war against Japan is just that: legendary. The Communists were not above growing and selling opium to raise funds to support themselves, nor were they above black-market trading with Wang Jingwei's puppet government, or with Chiang's Republic of China, for that matter. In fairness, the drought of 1942 put the Communists in a difficult position, just as it had Chiang's government, which had also turned to smuggling to support itself.

While Chiang's army focused on fighting a Western-style war, which meant first and foremost defending what they already controlled, the Communists organized guerrilla resistance to the Japanese in rural regions behind Japanese lines. The Japanese controlled the cities and the railway lines, but in many places the Communists controlled the countryside. They took advantage of the support of the rural peasants, who despised the Japanese, to fight an unconventional war against an economically and technologically superior enemy. We can debate how effective this was against the Japanese in conventional military terms, but the Communists'

commitment to the struggle impressed the rural Chinese, and here perhaps is where their image as tenacious and determined fighters came from. Rural Chinese would remember this after the war, when the Nationalists, and the landlords, attempted to reassert their authority over the territories formerly occupied by the Japanese.

We'll have to stop there for today. I thank you for listening, and I'd especially like to thank David and Michael for their kind donations, and thank you to Logan for becoming a patron of the podcast. Donors and patrons like David and Michael and Logan help cover the costs of making this show, which in turn keeps the podcast available free for everyone, so my thanks to them and to all of you who have pitched in and helped out. If you'd like to become a patron or make a donation, you are most welcome; just visit the website, historyofthetwentiethcentury.com and click on the PayPal or Patreon buttons.

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Next week is a bye week for the podcast, but I hope you'll join me in two weeks' time, here on the *History of the Twentieth Century*, as take a look at the strategic planning of the Western Allies, the UK and the US, as they debate how best to confront Germany. The Americans wanted to invade France in 1942. The British were, shall we say, hesitant. Operation Sledgehammer, in two weeks' time, here, on *The History of the Twentieth Century*.

Oh, and one more thing. The Chinese Communist style of waging war as a guerilla conflict cut against most of the military experience of the Second World War, which taught that a developed economy, large-scale industrial production, and modern weapons were the keys to victory. The guerilla war against the Japanese taught the Communists a very different lesson: the power and hit-and-run tactics. They learned to pull their forces together where the Japanese were weak, and melt away where the Japanese were strong. In contrast to conventional military doctrine, which emphasized seizing and holding strategic points, Mao and his armies learned the power of seizing and holding the initiative and of keeping the enemy perpetually off balance.

This unconventional approach would prove quite useful to the Communists after the war.

[music: Closing War Theme]