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THE STRUGGLE FOR COMPLETE LIQUIDATION
OF BANDITS IN THE NEWLY LIBERATED AREAS OF CHINA

Wang Chia-hua

I

In the first half of 1950, with the enthusiastic assistance of the local people in the respective areas, the People's Liberation Army launched its bandit-liquidating campaign in the newly liberated areas of Southwest, Central and South, Northwest, and East China and concluded it with a successful victory. According to the first draft of statistics, some 40,000 bandits were liquidated in those 6 months. At present, with the exception of certain areas in Fukien, Kwangtung, Kwangsi, and Western Hunan, bandit groups in East, Central South, and Northwest China have been basically destroyed. The bandits' strength in Southwest China has received a crushing blow. Bandits who had caused considerable trouble or had created rather serious tensions in other areas have also been practically eliminated.

In the immediate future, one of the most important tasks of the People's Liberation Army and the People's Militia in the respective areas is to continue destroying the remnants of bandit groups still scattered in the Southwest, Kwangtung, Kwangsi, Western Hunan, and Fukien who are still causing much trouble to the local people in out-of-the-way places. Remnants of the Kuomintang Army have turned into bandits and have conspired with the local feudal elements and professional bandits to cause trouble, ~~thus~~ making conditions extremely complex and our task of liquidating them very difficult. However, our undaunted Liberation Army, with its glorious tradition of relentlessly annihilating enemies, working in co-operation with the People's Militia in the respective areas, will continue to follow faithfully the pronouncement of Chairman Mao that "We are a fighting team, also a working team." They will penetrate deeply into the farm villages in rallying the masses to implement land reform, to carry out the program of rent reduction, and to wage war against bandits and local blackguards under the guidance of the Central People's Government.

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At the same time, a policy of leniency on the one hand and determined suppression on the other has been adopted by the government: "punishment for the ringleaders, leniency to the followers, and acknowledgment of those who have shown merit by aiding in the liquidation of fellow bandits." By such a policy, we shall be able to cut off the bandits from their source of dependence, the feudal elements of the old society, and finally liquidate all bandits completely and restore peace and order to society.

Southwest China

The Southwest is the last region on the mainland to be liberated by the People's Liberation Army. Before their complete defeat on the mainland, the Kuomintang bandits had laid the groundwork for large-scale intelligence work in this region. In May 1949, the fifth "Guerrilla Cadre Training School" was established by the bandits in Ch'eng-tu. Here, a large number of special agents were trained to conspire with the remnants of counterrevolutionary elements to carry on so-called "guerrilla activities behind the enemy's lines," scheming to sabotage and destroy revolutionary order. After the Southwest was liberated, the bandit special agents were largely composed of remnants of the defeated Kuomintang bandit army who, by conspiring with professional bandits and local blackguards, and especially by utilizing feudal elements, planned to carry on their obstructive activities in the Southwest.

Since late January 1950, they have intensified their activities; they have organized into groups to rob the people and the traders, to destroy highways, bridges, telephone and telegraph wires, to attack trucks and convoys, and to assassinate local cadres, continuing these activities to the degree of seriously endangering the revolutionary order and threatening the people's lives and property. After having fought bravely under extremely difficult conditions to liberate the Southwest, the People's Liberation Army immediately launched its bandit-liquidating campaign. Revising its tactics to meet conditions in the various liberated areas, it carried on military and political offensives and rallied the masses' support in order to bring about the bandits' disintegration and defeat. By the end of March 1950, over 70,000 bandits had been annihilated, and bandit groups in Western and Eastern Szechuan had been liquidated.

In April and May, the People's Liberation Army shook off its previous passive attitude and took the initiative by employing the tactics of encirclement and annihilation. Progress was made rapidly and over 200,000 bandits were annihilated. Bandits in Szechuan Province, with the exception of certain small areas, have been liquidated, and land and water communication lines have been restored. In Kweichow and Sikang provinces, after the bandits were dealt a severe blow, conditions were restored to normal. Although the major bandit groups have been defeated in Western Yunnan, remnants are still causing the government considerable concern. On the whole, from January to May 1950, over 280,000 bandits of Southwest China were liquidated, while those in many other areas have been entirely annihilated. The vicious schemes of the Kuomintang remnants in their so-called "guerrilla activities on the mainland" have received a fatal blow under the attack of our People's Liberation Army and People's Militia. At present, in view of past accomplishments, it is estimated that all bandit groups can be largely eliminated within a few months.

Central and South China

The various provinces in Central and South China were not liberated at the same time; hence, the progress made in bandit-suppression programs in those provinces was not uniform. The bandits in Honan Province have already been entirely liquidated, those in Kiangsi Province liquidated to a large degree, and those in Hopeh Province eliminated except for a small southwest area bordering Szechuan and Hunan where small bandit bands are still at large.

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In Kwangtung and Kwangsi provinces, especially in areas along the coast where the Kuomintang bandits had sent a group of armed special agents to penetrate the mainland, the number of bandits increased in January and February, and incidents such as the assassination of citizens and revolutionary cadres and attacks on local garrisons occurred repeatedly. After having examined the true conditions prevailing in each provincial military district, the responsible authorities issued in February and March orders of mobilization against bandits. These orders clearly outlined the policies and missions of the liquidating campaign by summoning the bandit-suppression units in the respective areas to contact the local inhabitants and to seek their cooperation in destroying the vicious schemes of sabotage and destruction planned by the Kuomintang bandits. After 2-3 months of struggle, an antiblackguard movement and a rent-reduction movement were inaugurated in the numerous farm villages throughout Hupeh, Hunan, and Kiangsi provinces, and peace and order in the farm villages were gradually restored. In Kwangtung, Kwangsi, Western Hunan, and Western Hupeh, where the bandits had caused serious troubles, the bandits' strength has been greatly reduced. The major bandit groups in the central part of Western Hunan and in northeastern Kwangsi have been largely liquidated and the remnants of bandit bands are now being forced out of action. The bandit-suppression force of the Kwangtung Military District is strengthening its political position and rallying the masses' support. Altogether, from January -- May 1950, over 170,000 bandits were liquidated in the Central and South China area.

Northwest China

The region of Northwest China was completely liberated last year. At that time, remnants of the Kuomintang bandits had caused much trouble there; they conspired with local blackguards to rob, kidnap, and intimidate, and to interrupt the work of the Central People's Government. Since Northwest China is inhabited by people of many races, the task of liquidating bandits there was rather difficult. However, under the guidance of the sound principles of the equality of the races, the People's Liberation Army adopted a policy of close cooperation between military and political branches of the government. A policy of suppression and consolidation, with the promotion of political disintegration used as the chief weapon to eliminate the bandits, achieved great success. In the last few months bandit groups in Kansu Province have been essentially eliminated, as have bandit groups in Ningxia and Tsinghai provinces, but remnants of bandit bands in southern Shensi are still at large in the mountains on the border.

In Sinkiang Province, the rebels headed by Osman, Yalolopur, and Ku-ni-mu-han, underlings of US imperialists and the Kuomintang bandits, after being routed by the determined attack of the People's Liberation Army in cooperation with the local people, had been essentially wiped out early in July and one of the ring-leaders, Ku-ni-mu-han, was captured by our army. It is estimated that the bandits in Northwest China can be largely liquidated before the end of this year.

East China

In East China, with the exception of bandit groups operating in Fukien Province and small groups of bandits still at large in Chekiang Province, major bands within this region can be said to have been essentially liquidated.

General

Thus, after a half year of struggle, bandits in the vast liberated areas have either lost their leadership or been largely eliminated. After the bandit groups along the communication lines in the Southwest had been eliminated, goods between the city and the country were able to flow freely and hence food prices have been gradually stabilized. At the same time, restoration of production and collection of public grains have been facilitated, and the way has been paved for rallying the masses' support. In all parts of Hunan Province, the progress made

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in liquidating bandits has been good, and attention has been paid to establishing the people's armed forces in strategic locations to strengthen the people's political power in the farm villages and to prepare the groundwork for land reform in that province this fall. In the Northwest, the bandit groups in the various areas have been eliminated, and thus communication and transportation lines in that area have been made safe, and revolutionary order has been established. At the same time, the people, who had been much troubled by the bandits, are now returning to their homes to pursue their normal productive activities.

II

The guiding principles of the People's Liberation Army in eliminating bandits are military suppression, political reindoctrination, and rallying and uniting the masses. By examining its experiences in various regions, it has developed the following three procedures to accomplish its task:

The first procedure is based mainly on military suppression in conjunction with political offensive, aimed at eliminating bandit groups and defeating their main forces. When launching a bandit-liquidating campaign, superior armed strength is concentrated to confront the bandit groups with a determined attack. After the bandit groups have been defeated, all available tactics of warfare, such as blockade and encirclement, are employed to liquidate remnants of the band by not giving them a minute's respite.

The second procedure is based mainly on political offensive in conjunction with military isolation. The masses are rallied to assist in rounding up the ringleaders and eliminating scattered bandits. When the armed forces are marching toward areas in which bandits are operating, a large number of the local inhabitants may fear coming in contact with the People's Liberation Army, and others may even leave due to the bandits' threats. Under such conditions, the People's Liberation Army will try to propagate the army principles and regulations, the importance and objectives of liquidating the bandits, and the determination of the Central People's Government to eradicate bandits, asking the people not to assist bandits but to aid the government's campaign by giving information. Because the people have been much annoyed by the bandits, they have a deep hatred for them, and only with patient treatment will they eventually conquer their fear and aid bandit-suppression units. For example, once a citizen of Ning-tung in An-shun Hsien, Kweichow Province, raced 40 li (one li equals 1/3 mile) to the headquarters of the bandit-suppression unit to give information. The people's warm love for their army is very moving. During the battle at Yang-niu Chai in Kweichow Province, when the People's Liberation Army had gone without food or water for 2 days, the local populace, upon their own initiative, sent food and water to their positions.

In fostering political disintegration of bandit groups, the policy of leniency and determined suppression is employed, pointing out to the bandits that if they do not surrender, the only road left open to them is death, while toward those who truly repent the People's Liberation Army will adopt the policy of leniency. Therefore, in all areas, fostering of political disintegration has given outstanding accomplishments; the inner circles of the bandit intelligence headquarters are being shaken; and the numbers of those who surrender or repent have multiplied. For example, in the Southwest Military Region, the number which surrendered in March was 20 percent of the total number of bandits, in April it was 34 percent, and in May it reached 54 percent, while in Eastern and Northern Szechuan Province, the number ranged from 60 percent to 80 percent. Also, in breaking up the bandit groups, attention is paid to families and relatives. They are invited to round-table discussions, where the government's liberal and lenient policies are explained, as well as its determination to suppress the bandits, and they are told

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not to miss the excellent opportunities offered them of persuading the bandits to repent, return to their own homes, and engage in productive work. A mother of a bandit at Pi-shan in Szechuan Province, when she understood the policies of the People's Liberation Army in liquidating bandits, by crying and begging, persuaded her son to surrender.

The third procedure is to rally the masses to support the government in liquidating scattered bandits and local blackguards, with the aim of uprooting the bandits' sources of supply and destroying the feudal exploitation of the farm villages. After the bandit groups have been defeated, the consciousness of the masses will be promoted. Then, the bandit-suppressed units will proceed to study true village conditions, to discover and foster helpful elements in order to use them in the work of completely liquidating the bandits, truly attaining a goal in which "everyone is engaged in the task of liquidating bandits, everyone is engaged in propaganda, every village has its soldiers, and every village has its work to do." Experience in various areas proves that the bandits lose their means of subsistence only after the blackguards have been exterminated, and, consequently, after this the troubles caused by them abruptly cease.

III

A sound policy and a centralized leadership are the keys to the success of our bandit-liquidating campaign. The intelligence activities of the bandits are dependent on the puppet pao-chia organizations, the armed strength of landlords, local blackguards, and, secret groups who carry on a keen and complicated struggle against us either openly or secretly, politically or militarily. Therefore, to eliminate bandits of a political nature, all branches of the government and the masses must join in united action against them. The main armed units, military organizations, and the party must organize a centralized office or command headquarters charged with marshaling the total available strength of the party, the army, the political organizations, and the people. In every region, a centralized directing office of the party, the military, and the people must be separately established in each city and village in accordance with the conditions and needs of the area.

In the Southwest, local bandit-liquidating committees and people's organizations for self-defense have been widely established, making it possible for the military to work in close cooperation with the masses in launching antibandit operations. Through close cooperation between political and military branches of the government, with warm assistance and support from the people, our bandit-liquidating campaign has become a popular movement and has enabled the government to check the expansion of bandit activities.

In Northern and Eastern Szechuan, a bandit-suppression command headquarters for centralizing operations has been established. It since has delivered the bandits a crushing defeat in the border region of those two areas.

In Hunan Province, the military authority has also taken as its chief function and mission the task of liquidating bandits. In November 1949, employing a certain unit of a field army as a nucleus, a command headquarters for bandit liquidation was established. After the establishment of this command headquarters, with the assistance of the local populace, this organization accomplished in 20 days a mission originally scheduled to take one month. It shattered the schemes of the remnants of Chiang Kai-shek's and Pai Ch'ung-hsi's so-called "resistance movement behind enemy lines."

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From this, it can be seen that close cooperation between political and military branches of the government and people's assistance and support are the most important links in the gigantic chain of struggle to liquidate the bandits completely. It is only with such close cooperation that we can prevent loopholes through which the bandits might escape, and avoid unsatisfactory results. If this aspect of the work is well done, then our accomplishment will be great; otherwise, it will be trivial or of no avail.

In our activities, we must strictly and faithfully put into execution the policy of leniency and determined suppression. In doing this, we must be wary of any actions which would fail to separate the guilty from the innocent; we oppose any action which would result in arresting, beating, or punishing innocent persons. In punishing bandits, we shall distinguish between those with political backing and those without. We shall also find out whether they became bandits of their own initiative or were forced to join. We shall investigate the gravity of their crimes, so that separate convictions and punishment can be given. Our past experiences prove that if we faithfully execute our policy of leniency and determined suppression, the evil counterrevolutionary elements will be isolated and sooner or later brought to judgment. As the bandit bands disintegrate many bandits, whom we shall encourage and welcome, will surrender. Those who refuse to surrender or repent, we shall determinedly suppress, giving no leniency whatsoever. Generally speaking, all those who were forced to join bandit groups and who have committed no great crimes will be set free after their surrender. The only requirements we will make of them is that they hand over their weapons and register. If they are willing to go home to pursue productive work, we shall set them free after a short period of education. Those who indicated repentance by bringing about the disintegration or liquidation of their fellow bandits will be acknowledged in accordance with the degree of merit; but those who give information while clandestinely assisting the bandits, spread rumors to undermine the people's confidence, or any other similar obstructive action, we shall strictly suppress.

Before March 1950, the above-mentioned policies were not faithfully carried out in the Southwest. The responsible authorities declared the lenient policies, but executed these policies more or less too strictly. As a result, those who deserved severe punishment were not given the right punishment, while those who deserved leniency were severely punished. This caused dissatisfaction in the people and helped the bandits. Many persons have said to us that our policy is "unlimited leniency," suspecting that our policy of leniency is just "to set everyone free." Therefore, in rallying the masses to support our campaign, these results created ill effects which impeded our work. But fortunately, the responsible authorities in the areas quickly corrected these mistakes and faithfully executed our policy of leniency and determined suppression. As a result, the masses have gradually given up their fears as well as their misunderstanding.

Many of the people have voluntarily organized propaganda teams to assist the bandit-liquidating units of the Central People's Government in liquidating bandits. Farmers Hsiang An-jung, Wei Hung-chung, and three others at Fu-lu Village in Liang-shan Hsien in Szechwan Province organized some 20 farmers and arrested three bandits in that village. They first asked these bandits to write letters of repentance and then turned them over to the local government. When they were arresting bandit T'an Chi-pin, T'an's wife prepared some food for them for breakfast. Although they had made a long journey before dawn with empty stomachs, Hsiang An-jung and others declined, saying: "We cannot throw away the People's Government's confidence in us."

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IV

To gain victory in our bandit-liquidating campaign, strict discipline and a spirit of comradeship must be observed by the People's Liberation Army and the People's Militia in the various areas. At the same time, they must manifest a high degree of heroism and devotion in wiping out evils for the good of the people. In the transition from regular fighting to mopping-up campaigns against the bandits, certain groups of the bandit-liquidating units in the Southwest are ignoring the difficulties ahead.

In the Northwest, the bandit-liquidating units still do not fully realize the seriousness of the bandits in those areas, thinking that "several hundred thousand soldiers of Hu Tsung-nan and Ma Pu-fang have been defeated, and the remaining few thousand are not worthy of any great attention." Besides, many of our fighting comrades, erroneously think that "since the revolution has succeeded, it is not worthwhile to get killed fighting bandits"; hence, they are not willing to fight in small battles and fear difficulties. But after political education by the party and government, together with their actual experiences in fighting the bandits, these unfortunate attitudes are being overcome. They now all realize that our struggle against the bandits is one of the most important tasks confronting us on the road to reconstruction and prosperity. In the regular discussions of the various units, after they understood the importance and meaning of completely liquidating the bandits, our comrades realized that this struggle against the bandits is a class struggle and that they must possess higher political consciousness and be willing to shoulder responsibilities. Therefore, all the comrades in the armed forces have raised their enthusiasm and spirit of comradeship. In many areas, they have put up the slogan: "The bandits are still not liquidated, we must remain soldiers." Many of them are fighting determinedly against the bandits in order to be admitted into the party and to add more honors and awards to those they have already attained.

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