

Educational Work

We have had an opportunity to convince ourselves of the remarkable effective educational work which has led every soldier, farmer, and workman with whom we spoke—whether literate or illiterate—to know already of the opening of the European second front and its direct bearing on the speeding-up of the offensive against Japan. We have also seen how the predominantly barren north Shensi country, which had not recovered from a series of civil wars, culminating in the Japanese attack on China, has now been transformed into an area of intense cultivation, stock-breeding, handicraft, and industry, which has created sufficient food and clothing to make the Eighth Route Army units among the best-clothed and best-fed troops I have seen anywhere in China.

Reclamation of the great expanses of wasteland was accomplished not only by the people, but also by the local garrison of troops who work on the land throughout the summer and train as military throughout the winter. They are now able to feed themselves, and the commander, General Wang Chen, of the Eighteenth Group (Eighth Route Army), who dresses in an old uniform and rope sandals, shabbier than those of many of his soldiers, and who rode with us over more than a hundred miles of this country, explained both the production movement and the military training, which he summed up in the phrase "We study our enemy."

Japanese prisoners here are not held in camps, but are impressed with the belief that, by helping this Army, they are helping to liberate Japan from the military caste. They are also set the task of duplicating Japanese fortifications for training purposes—including one fort for a garrison of two hundred, which we saw. Even the present Communist Army ration has been reformed on the basis of an Army nutrition chart which was captured from the Japanese and found good after careful investigation.

Elsewhere in China we have seen numbers of Japanese trophies kept on exhibition at Army Headquarters. Here,

every soldier carries a trophy—a Japanese rifle, an officer's sword, or a pistol which uses captured Japanese ammunition.

In the artillery units we saw ten captured Japanese 75's, which their crews themselves took in Hopei, and whose history they avidly describe.

There is no doubt that the armies, which have been largely a mystery to the outside world for five years, are good valuable allies in the war against Japan.

Before leaving Yen'an after this tour, I interviewed Mr. Shushumu Okamo, who is the most important member of the Central Committee of the Japanese Communist Party and leader of the non-partisan anti-Fascist Japanese People's Emancipation League. Some league members are already serving in uniform with the Eighth Route Army as psychological warfare staff and instructors in Japanese methods of war.

But Mr. Okamo hopes that next month the first Japanese combat group, under the colours of the Japanese People's Emancipation League, will begin operations to prove his contention that the Japanese people increasingly realize that their real interests place them on the side of the United Nations against their own Fascists and that those who already understand this are willing to fight and die for their convictions.

When I saw Mr. Okamo, he was full of the Allied air raids on Japan proper, the significance of which was that they started from bases in China from which they could be repeated with regularity.

"The international situation and the Pacific military situation are both widely different from 1942, when the Axis was still gaining ground," he said.

"The effect on Japanese morale, therefore, is more serious. The prestige of militarists will tend to fall. People who are already tired will become more anxious regarding the war's future. This is bound to affect the spirit of the soldiers also.

"In ruling circles the bombings will stimulate the rise of the anti-Tojo group. This group is still not strong enough, but will grow with Tojo's defeats."