



Mao Tse-tung

**INTERVIEW WITH THE BRITISH JOURNALIST
JAMES BERTRAM**

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INTERVIEW WITH THE BRITISH JOURNALIST JAMES BERTRAM

October 25, 1937

THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF CHINA AND THE WAR OF RESISTANCE

James Bertram: What specific pronouncements has the Chinese Communist Party made before and since the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese war?

Mao Tse-tung: Before the war broke out, the Chinese Communist Party warned the whole nation time and again that war with Japan was inevitable, and that all the Japanese imperialists' talk of a "peaceful settlement" and all the fine phrases of the Japanese diplomats were only so much camouflage to screen their preparations for war. We repeatedly stressed that a victorious war of national liberation cannot be waged unless the united front is strengthened and a revolutionary policy is adopted. The most important point in this revolutionary policy is that the Chinese government must institute democratic reforms in order to mobilize all the people to join the anti-Japanese front. We repeatedly pointed out the error of those who believed in Japan's "peace pledge" and thought that war might be avoided, or of those who believed in the possibility of resisting the Japanese aggressors without mobilizing the masses. Both the outbreak of the war and its course have proved our views to be correct. The day after the Lukouchiao Incident, the Communist Party issued a manifesto to the whole country, calling upon all political parties and groups and all social strata to make common cause in resisting Japanese aggression and strengthening the national united front. Soon afterwards we announced the Ten-Point Programme for Resisting Japan and Saving the Nation, in which we set out the policies that the Chinese

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government ought to adopt in the War of Resistance. With the institution of Kuomintang-Communist co-operation we issued another important declaration. All this testifies to our firm adherence to the principle of waging the War of Resistance by strengthening the united front and putting a revolutionary policy into effect. In the present period our basic slogan is "Total resistance by the whole nation".

THE WAR SITUATION AND ITS LESSONS

Question: As you see it, what are the results of the war up to the present?

Answer: There are two main aspects. On the one hand, by capturing our cities, seizing our territory, raping, plundering, burning and massacring, the Japanese imperialists have irrevocably brought the Chinese people face to face with the danger of national subjugation. On the other hand, the majority of the Chinese people have consequently become very much aware that the crisis cannot be overcome without greater unity and without resistance by the whole nation. At the same time, the peace-loving countries of the world are being awakened to the necessity of resisting the Japanese menace. These are the results produced by the war so far.

Question: What do you think are Japan's objectives, and how far have they been achieved?

Answer: Japan's plan is to occupy northern China and Shanghai as the first step and then to occupy other regions of China. As to how far the Japanese aggressors have realized their plan, they seized the three provinces of Hopei, Chahar and Suiyuan within a short space of time, and now they are threatening Shansi; the reason is that China's War of Resistance has hitherto been confined to resistance by the government and the army alone. This crisis can be overcome only if resistance is carried out jointly by the people and the government.

Question: In your opinion, has China scored any achievements in the War of Resistance? If there are any lessons to be drawn, what are they?

Answer: I would like to discuss this question with you in some detail. First of all, there have been achievements, and great achievements too. They are to be seen in the following: (1) Never since imperialist aggression began against China has there been any-

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thing comparable to the present War of Resistance Against Japan. Geographically, it is truly a war involving the whole country. This war is revolutionary in character. (2) The war has changed a disunited country into a relatively united one. The basis of this unity is Kuomintang-Communist co-operation. (3) The war has the sympathy of world public opinion. Those who once despised China for her non-resistance now respect her for her resistance. (4) The war has inflicted heavy losses on the Japanese aggressors. The daily drain on their resources is reported to be twenty million yen and their casualties are also undoubtedly very heavy, though figures are not yet available. While the Japanese aggressors took the four northeastern provinces with ease and with hardly any exertion, now they cannot occupy Chinese territory without fighting bloody battles. The aggressors expected to be able to gorge themselves in China, but China's protracted resistance will bring about the collapse of Japanese imperialism. Thus China is fighting not only to save herself but also to discharge her great duty in the world anti-fascist front. Here also the revolutionary character of the War of Resistance is manifest. (5) We have learned some lessons from the war. They have been paid for in territory and blood.

As for the lessons, they are likewise great ones. Several months of fighting have disclosed many of China's weaknesses. They are manifest above all in the political sphere. Although geographically the war involves the whole country, it is not being waged by the whole nation. As in the past, the broad masses are restrained by the government from taking part, and so the war is not yet of a mass character. Unless it has a mass character, the war against Japanese imperialist aggression cannot possibly succeed. Some say, "The war is already an all-embracing war." But this is true only in the sense that vast parts of the country are involved. As regards participation, it is still a partial war because it is being waged only by the government and the army, and not by the people. It is precisely here that the chief reason for the great loss of territory and for the many military setbacks during the last few months is to be found. Therefore, although the present armed resistance is a revolutionary one, its revolutionary character is incomplete because it is not yet a mass war. Here, too, the problem of unity is involved. Although the political parties and groups are relatively united as compared with the past, unity still falls far short of what is needed. Most of the political prisoners have not yet been released, and the ban on political parties has not been completely lifted.

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Relations are still very bad between the government and the people, between the army and the people, and between officers and men, and here one observes estrangement instead of unity. This is a fundamental problem. Unless it is solved, victory is out of the question. In addition, military blunders are another major reason for our losses in men and territory. The battles fought have been mostly passive, or to put it in military terms, have been battles of "pure defence". We can never win by fighting this way. For the attainment of victory, policies radically different from the present ones are necessary in both the political and the military fields. These are the lessons we have learned.

Question: What, then, are the political and military prerequisites?

Answer: On the political side, first, the present government must be transformed into a united front government in which the representatives of the people play their part. This government must be at once democratic and centralized. It should carry out the necessary revolutionary policies. Secondly, the people must be granted freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and freedom of assembly and association and the right to take up arms against the enemy, so that the war will acquire a mass character. Thirdly, the people's livelihood must be improved through such measures as the abolition of exorbitant taxes and miscellaneous levies, the reduction of rent and interest, better conditions for workers, junior officers and soldiers, preferential treatment for the families of the soldiers fighting the Japanese, and relief for victims of natural calamities and war refugees. Government finance should be based on the principle of equitable distribution of the economic burden, which means that those who have money should contribute money. Fourthly, there should be a positive foreign policy. Fifthly, cultural and educational policy should be changed. Sixthly, traitors must be sternly suppressed. The problem has become extremely serious. The traitors are running wild. At the front they are helping the enemy; in the rear they are creating disturbances, and some of them even put on an anti-Japanese pose and denounce patriotic people as traitors and have them arrested. Effective suppression of the traitors will be possible only when the people are free to co-operate with the government. On the military side, comprehensive reforms are required, the most important of these being to change from pure defence in strategy and tactics to the principle of active attack; to

change the armies of the old type into armies of a new type; to change the method of forcible recruitment into one of arousing the people

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to go to the front; to change the divided command into a unified command; to change the indiscipline which alienates the army from the people into conscious discipline which forbids the slightest violation of the people's interests; to change the present situation in which the regular army is fighting alone into one in which extensive guerrilla warfare by the people is developed in co-ordination with regular army operations; and so on and so forth. All these political and military prerequisites are listed in our published Ten-Point Programme. They all conform to the spirit of Dr. Sun Yat-sen's Three People's Principles, his Three Great Policies and his Testament. The war can be won only when they are carried into effect.

Question: What is the Communist Party doing to carry out this programme?

Answer: We take it as our task tirelessly to explain the situation and to unite with the Kuomintang and all other patriotic parties and groups in the effort to expand and consolidate the Anti-Japanese National United Front, mobilize all forces and achieve victory in the War of Resistance. The Anti-Japanese National United Front is still very limited in scope and it is necessary to broaden it, that is, to "arouse the masses of the people", as called for in Dr. Sun Yat-sen's Testament, by mobilizing the people at the grass roots to join the united front. Consolidation of the united front means carrying out a common programme which will be binding on all political parties and groups in their actions. We agree to accept Dr. Sun's revolutionary Three People's Principles, Three Great Policies and Testament as the common programme of the united front of all political parties and all social classes. But so far this programme has not been accepted by all the parties, and above all the Kuomintang has not agreed to the proclamation of such an over-all programme. Dr. Sun Yat-sen's Principle of Nationalism has been partially put into practice by the Kuomintang, as shown in its resistance to Japan. But neither his Principle of Democracy nor his Principle of People's Livelihood has been applied, and the present serious crisis in the War of Resistance is the result. The war situation having become so critical, it is high time that the Kuomintang applied the Three People's Principles in full, or otherwise it will be too late to repent. It is the duty of the Communist Party to raise its voice and tirelessly and persuasively explain all this to the Kuomintang and the whole nation so that the genuinely revolutionary Three People's Principles, the Three Great Policies and Dr. Sun Yat-sen's Testament are fully and thoroughly

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applied throughout the country, and the Anti-Japanese National United Front is broadened and consolidated.

THE EIGHTH ROUTE ARMY IN THE WAR OF RESISTANCE

Question: Please tell me about the Eighth Route Army in which so many people are interested -- for instance, about its strategy and tactics, its political work, and so on.

Answer: Indeed a large number of people have become interested in its activities since the Red Army was redesignated as the Eighth Route Army and went to the front. I shall now give you a general account.

First about its field operations. Strategically, the Eighth Route Army is centring them on Shansi. As you know, it has won many victories. Examples are the battle of Pinghsingkuan, the recapture of Chingping, Pinglu and Ningwu, the recovery of Laiyuan and Kuangling, the capture of Tzechingkuan, the cutting of the three main supply routes of the Japanese troops (between Tatung and Yenmenkuan, between Weihsien and Pinghsingkuan, and between Shuohsien and Ningwu), the assault on the rear of the Japanese forces south of Yenmenkuan, the recapture twice over of Pinghsingkuan and Yenmenkuan, and the recent recovery of Chuyang and Tanghsien. The Japanese troops in Shansi are being strategically encircled by the Eighth Route Army and other Chinese troops. We may say with certainty that the Japanese troops will meet with the most stubborn resistance in northern China. If they try to ride roughshod over Shansi, they will certainly encounter greater difficulties than ever.

Next about strategy and tactics. We are doing what the other Chinese troops have not done, *i.e.*, operating chiefly on the enemy's flanks and rear. This way of fighting is vastly different from purely frontal defence. We are not against employing part of the forces in frontal operations, for that is necessary. But the main forces must be used against the enemy's flanks and it is essential to adopt encircling and outflanking tactics in order to attack the enemy independently and with the initiative in our hands, for that is the only way to destroy his forces and preserve our own. Furthermore, the use of some of our armed forces against the enemy's rear is particularly effective, because they can disrupt his supply lines and bases. Even

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the frontal forces should rely mainly on "counter assault" and not on purely defensive tactics. One important reason for the military setbacks in the last few months has been the use of unsuitable methods of fighting. The methods of fighting employed by the Eighth Route Army are what we call guerrilla and mobile warfare applied independently and with the initiative in our hands. In principle these methods are basically the same as those we used during the civil war, but there are certain differences. For example, at the present stage, in order to facilitate our surprise attacks on the enemy's flanks and rear over an extensive area, we divide our forces more often than we concentrate them. Since the armed forces of the country as a whole are numerically strong, some of them should be used for frontal defence and some dispersed to carry on guerrilla operations, but the main forces should always be concentrated against the enemy's flanks. The first essential in war is to preserve oneself and to destroy the enemy, and for this purpose it is necessary to wage guerrilla and mobile warfare independently and with the initiative in our hands and

to avoid all passive and inflexible tactics. If a vast number of troops wage mobile warfare with the Eighth Route Army assisting them by guerrilla warfare, our victory will be certain.

Next about political work. Another highly significant and distinctive feature of the Eighth Route Army is its political work, which is guided by three basic principles. First, the principle of unity between officers and men, which means eradicating feudal practices in the army, prohibiting beating and abuse, building up a conscious discipline, and sharing weal and woe -- as a result of which the entire army is closely united. Second, the principle of unity between the army and the people, which means maintaining a discipline that forbids the slightest violation of the people's interests, conducting propaganda among the masses, organizing and arming them, lightening their financial burdens and suppressing the traitors and collaborators who do harm to the army and the people -- as a result of which the army is closely united with the people and welcomed everywhere. Third, the principle of disintegrating the enemy troops and giving lenient treatment to prisoners of war. Our victory depends not only upon our military operations but also upon the disintegration of the enemy troops. Although our measures for disintegrating the enemy troops and for treating prisoners of war leniently have not yielded conspicuous results as yet, they will certainly do so in the future. Moreover, in line with the second of the three principles, the Eighth Route Army replenishes

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its forces not by coercion but by the much more effective method of arousing the people to volunteer for the front.

Although Hopei, Chahar and Suiyuan and part of Shansi have been lost, we are not at all discouraged but are resolutely calling upon the entire army to co-ordinate with the friendly armies and fight with grim determination to defend Shansi and recover the lost territories. The Eighth Route Army will co-ordinate its actions with those of other Chinese troops in order to maintain the resistance in Shansi; this will be very important for the war as a whole, and especially for the war in northern China.

Question: In your opinion, can these good points of the Eighth Route Army also be acquired by the other Chinese armies?

Answer: Certainly they can. In 1924-27 the spirit of the Kuomintang troops was broadly similar to that of the Eighth Route Army today. The Communist Party and the Kuomintang were then co-operating in organizing armed forces of a new type which, beginning with only two regiments, rallied round themselves many other troops and won their first victory when they defeated Chen Chiung-ming. These forces later grew into an army corps and still more troops came under its influence; only then did the Northern Expedition take place. A fresh spirit prevailed among these forces; on the whole there was unity between officers and men and between the army and the people, and the army was filled with a revolutionary militancy. The system of Party representatives and of political departments, adopted for the first time in China, entirely changed the complexion of these armed forces. The Red Army, which was founded in 1927, and the Eighth Route Army of today have inherited this system and developed it. In the revolutionary period of 1924-27, the armed forces which were imbued with this new spirit naturally employed methods of fighting consistent with their political outlook,

operating not in a passive and inflexible way but with initiative and with an eagerness to take the offensive, and consequently they were victorious in the Northern Expedition. It is troops of this kind we need on the battlefields today. We do not necessarily need them in millions; with a nucleus of a few hundred thousand such men, we can defeat Japanese imperialism. We deeply esteem the armies throughout the country for their heroic sacrifices since the War of Resistance began, but there are lessons to be learned from the bloody battles that have been fought.

Question: Japanese army discipline being what it is, will not your policy of giving lenient treatment to prisoners of war prove ineffective?

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For instance, the Japanese command may kill the prisoners when you release them and the Japanese army as a whole will not understand the meaning of your policy.

Answer: That is impossible. The more they kill, the more sympathy will be aroused for the Chinese forces among the Japanese soldiers. Such facts cannot be concealed from the rank and file. We will persevere in this policy of ours. For instance, we shall not change it even if the Japanese army carries out its declared intention of using poison-gas against the Eighth Route Army. We shall go on giving lenient treatment to captured Japanese soldiers and to those captured junior officers who have fought us under coercion; we shall not insult or abuse them, but shall set them free after explaining to them the identity of the interests of the people of the two countries. Those who do not want to go back may serve in the Eighth Route Army. If an international brigade appears on the anti-Japanese battle front, they may join it and take up arms against Japanese imperialism.

CAPITULATIONISM IN THE WAR OF RESISTANCE

Question: I understand that while carrying on the war, Japan is spreading peace rumours in Shanghai. What are her real objectives?

Answer: After succeeding in certain of their plans, the Japanese imperialists will once again put up a smokescreen of peace in order to attain three objectives. They are: (1) to consolidate the positions already captured for use as a strategic springboard for further offensives; (2) to split China's anti-Japanese front; and (3) to break up the international front of support for China. The present peace rumours are simply the first smoke-bomb. The danger is that there are certain vacillating elements in China who are ready to succumb to the enemy's wiles and that the traitors and collaborators are manoeuvring among them and spreading all kinds of rumours in their efforts to make China capitulate to the Japanese aggressors.

Question: As you see it, what could this danger lead to?

Answer: There can be only two courses of development: either the Chinese people will overcome capitulationism, or capitulationism will prevail, with the result that the anti-Japanese front will be split and China will be plunged into disorder.

Question: Which of the two is the more likely?

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Answer: The whole Chinese people demand that the war be fought to a finish. If a section of the ruling group takes the road of capitulation, the rest who remain firm will certainly oppose it and carry on resistance together with the people. Of course it would be a misfortune for China's anti-Japanese front. But I am sure that the capitulationists cannot win mass support and that the masses will overcome capitulationism, persevere in the war and achieve victory.

Question: May I ask how capitulationism can be overcome?

Answer: Both by words, that is, by exposing the danger of capitulationism, and by deeds, that is, by organizing the masses to stop the capitulationist activities. Capitulationism has its roots in national defeatism or national pessimism, that is, in the idea that having lost some battles, China has no strength left to fight Japan. These pessimists do not realize that failure is the mother of success, that the lessons learned from failures are the basis for future triumphs. They see the defeats but not the successes in the War of Resistance, and in particular they fail to see that our defeats contain the elements of victory, while the enemy's victories contain the elements of defeat. We must show the masses of the people the victorious prospects of the war and help them to understand that our defeats and difficulties are temporary and that, as long as we keep on fighting in spite of all setbacks, the final victory will be ours. Deprived of a mass base, the capitulationists will have no chance to play their tricks, and the anti-Japanese front will be consolidated.

DEMOCRACY AND THE WAR OF RESISTANCE

Question: What is the meaning of "democracy" as put forward by the Communist Party in its programme? Does it not conflict with a "wartime government"?

Answer: Not at all. The Communist Party put forward the slogan of a "democratic republic" as early as August 1936. Politically and organizationally this slogan signifies: (1) The state and government must not belong to a single class but must be based on the alliance of all the anti-Japanese classes to the exclusion of traitors and collaborators, and must include the workers, the peasants and other sections of the petty bourgeoisie. (2) The organizational form of such a government will be democratic centralism, which is at once democratic

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and centralized, with the two seeming opposites of democracy and centralization united in a definite form. (3) This government will grant the people all the necessary political freedoms, especially the freedom to organize and train and arm themselves for self-defence. In these three respects, it can be seen that a democratic republic in no way

conflicts with a wartime government, but is precisely the form of state and government advantageous to the War of Resistance.

Question: Is not "democratic centralism" a self-contradictory term?

Answer: We must look not only at the term but at the reality. There is no impassable gulf between democracy and centralism, both of which are essential for China. On the one hand, the government we want must be truly representative of the popular will; it must have the support of the broad masses throughout the country and the people must be free to support it and have every opportunity of influencing its policies. This is the meaning of democracy. On the other hand, the centralization of administrative power is also necessary, and once the policy measures demanded by the people are transmitted to their own elected government through their representative body, the government will carry them out and will certainly be able to do so smoothly, so long as it does not go against the policy adopted in accordance with the people's will. This is the meaning of centralism. Only by adopting democratic centralism can a government be really strong, and this system must be adopted by China's government of national defence in the anti-Japanese war.

Question: This does not correspond to a war cabinet, does it?

Answer: It does not correspond to some of the war cabinets of the past.

Question: Have there ever been any war cabinets of this kind?

Answer: Yes. Systems of government in wartime may generally be divided into two kinds, as determined by the nature of the war -- one kind is democratic centralism and the other absolute centralism. All wars in history may be divided into two kinds according to their nature: just wars and unjust wars. For instance, the Great War in Europe some twenty years ago was an unjust, imperialist war. The governments of the imperialist countries forced the people to fight for the interests of imperialism and thus went against the people's interests, these circumstances necessitating a type of government such as the Lloyd George government in Britain. Lloyd George repressed the British people, forbidding them to speak against the imperialist

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war and banning organizations or assemblies that expressed popular opinion against the war; even though Parliament remained, it was merely the organ of a group of imperialists, a parliament which rubber-stamped the war budget. The absence of unity between the government and the people in a war gives rise to a government of absolute centralism with all centralism and no democracy. But historically there have also been revolutionary wars, *e.g.*, in France, Russia, and present-day Spain. In such wars the government does not fear popular disapproval, because the people are most willing to wage this kind of war; far from fearing the people, it endeavours to arouse them and encourages them to express their views so that they will actively participate in the war, because the government rests upon the people's voluntary support. China's war of national liberation has the full approval of the people and cannot be won without their participation; therefore democratic centralism becomes a necessity. In the Northern Expedition of 1926-27, too, the victories were achieved through democratic centralism. Thus it can be seen

that when the aims of a war directly reflect the interests of the people, the more democratic the government, the more effectively can the war be prosecuted. Such a government need have no fear that the people will oppose the war; rather it should be worried lest the people remain inactive or indifferent to the war. The nature of a war determines the relationship between the government and the people -- this is a law of history.

Question: Then what steps are you prepared to take for this system of government to be instituted?

Answer: The key question is co-operation between the Kuomintang and the Communist Party.

Question: Why?

Answer: For the last fifteen years, the relationship between the Kuomintang and the Communist Party has been the decisive political factor in China. The co-operation of the two parties in 1924-27 resulted in the victories of the first revolution. The split between the two parties in 1927 resulted in the unfortunate situation of the last decade. However, the responsibility for the split was not ours; we were compelled to resist the Kuomintang's oppression, and we persisted in holding high the glorious banner of China's liberation. Now the third stage has come, and the two parties must co-operate fully on a definite programme in order to resist Japan and save the nation. Through our ceaseless efforts, the establishment of co-operation has at last been announced, but the point is that both sides must accept a common

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programme and act upon it. An essential part of such a programme is the setting up of a new system of government.

Question: How can the new system be set up through the co-operation of the two parties?

Answer: We are proposing a reconstruction of the government apparatus and the army system. We propose that a provisional national assembly be convened to meet the present emergency. Delegates to this assembly should be chosen in due proportion from the various anti-Japanese political parties, anti-Japanese armies and anti-Japanese popular and business organizations, as Dr. Sun Yat-sen suggested in 1924. This assembly should function as the supreme organ of state authority to decide on the policies for saving the nation, adopt a constitutional programme and elect the government. We hold that the War of Resistance has reached a critical turning point and that only the immediate convening of such a national assembly vested with authority and representative of the popular will can regenerate China's political life and overcome the present crisis. We are exchanging views with the Kuomintang about this proposal and hope to obtain its agreement.

Question: Has not the National Government announced that the national assembly has been called off?

Answer: It was right to call it off. What has been called off is the national assembly which the Kuomintang was preparing to convene; according to the Kuomintang's

stipulations it would not have had the slightest power, and the procedure for its election was entirely in conflict with the popular will. Together with the people of all sections of society, we disapproved of that kind of national assembly. The provisional national assembly we are proposing is radically different from the one that has been called off. The convening of this provisional national assembly will undoubtedly impart a new spirit to the whole country and provide the essential prerequisite for reconstructing the government apparatus and the army and for mobilizing the entire people. On this hinges the favourable turn in the War of Resistance.