

沙石洽
 SHA SHIH-YU (Evening of March 30, 1972)

Talk with brigade head Chang Kuei-shun 張貴順 on personal and village history

Q. When did you join the party?

A. In 1941.

Q. Why did you join the party at that time?

A. Before liberation I was a beggar and had a bad life; then the party had us make revolution, so I joined being in agreement with the party organizers [translation and tape quite ragged at this point - will improve].

Q. Where did the CCP people come from? Had you known them?

A. They were underground Communists. I knew them, but didn't know they were Communists. They were local people but I didn't know they were in the party. They were the local workers who lived around here and he knew that they were opposed to government policy - but he didn't know that they were in the party.

Q. Were there guerillas around here.

A. Yes. They would come in the day and at night they would stay here. They were not from the Sha Shih-yu, but from elsewhere. [Chang continues, talking about the united front policy of the party and the guerillas at that time] ~~Chang said~~ We joined with the rich peasants and the landlords together in resistance against the Japanese.

Q. How many Communists were there among the guerillas?

A. Only a portion were Communists - and they were underground....[muddled] Chairman Mao ~~said~~ ^{said} political power grows out of a barrel of a gun, and to mobilize the peasantry to arise and resist the Japanese.

Q. When did you first see guerillas here?

A. In 1938.

Q. When were the Japanese first in this area?

A.
 A. 1937.

Q. Where were the Japanese - how far away?

A. We were surrounded by Japanese. They occupied four villages around here - the closest was 8 li away, the farthest 14 li.

[Enter Lao Li who starts translating]

Q. How frequently did the Japanese come to this village after 1938?

A. At the very beginning the Japanese didn't come very often because at that time this village did not have a name, so on the maps of the Japanese there was no such village. Later, however, because of national traitors and henchmen and renegades who reported that there were guerilla activities in this area, the Japanese knew about the village.

- Q. What did the Japanese do to try to stop the guerilla activities?
You told us the guerrillas came at night from 1938 on - how did the Japanese try to stop them?
- A. They intended to start a "mopping up" operation - trying to encircle the guerrillas and then wiping them out.
- Q. But did they attack this village? What did they do to the people in this village, since they knew the guerrillas came here at night?
- A. The Communist party and the guerrillas won the support of the people, so the Japanese failed. Then the Japanese adopted another tactic - the "kill all, burn all, and move all" campaign.
- Q. Did they ever burn this village down?
- A. They didn't burn houses in this village but they burned quite a lot of houses in the surrounding villages. Sometimes the Japanese made this area into what's called a "no man's zone" [interjected: like the free fire zones in Vietnam] - a strategic gambit- they move all the people out from this village and other places and it becomes a free fire zone.
- Q. They also asked people to block doors and windows with stones so that the guerrillas would not enter the houses. If you failed to do this, they would burn down your house.

But many people and party members did not leave the village. They didn't go to other places. [When the Japanese came], they hid in caves in the hills, in the mountains - staying there in caves. If the Japanese came in small numbers, we could wipe them out. If the Japanese came in large numbers, we would escape.

- Q. Where were they [guerrillas] getting their arms from - besides the Japanese [captured] ones?
- A. Most of the weapons were captured from the Japanese. In the beginning some of the big landlords had some weapons; the guerrillas took these weapons from these big landlords.
- Q. Did they also have factories to manufacture their own arms with or their own ammunition?
- A. There were such small factories, but at that time we could not produce rifles. What we could make were hand grenades, mines, and explosives. Later we developed and at our headquarters began making rifles.
- Q. When was that?
- A. Around 1940. But the rifles we made were indigenous ones - old type - using powder - gun powder.
- Q. You mean they were actually loaded through the muzzle of the rifle - down thru here - or were they loaded from the back?
- A. [Confusion at this point - apparently Chang answers that the rifles were loaded from the front] Later there were improvements. The gun powder was put in a bullet with some paper in a wad. Later they also made a cannon - an indigenous type of cannon operated by two men.

At that time they didn't have enough iron so they made the cannon from a tree trunk. The distance ~~was~~ - range - was 725 kilometers. This type of cannon can load 50 kilos of gun powder and with iron nails, when this gun ~~is~~ fired, many were killed.

Q. Were the leaders of the guerrilla force that you came in contact with local people or were they from other places? Were the leaders from here or other parts of China - are they still here, are they local people?

A. At the beginning, there were some Communists from other parts of China, but after the guerrilla teams were set up, many local people became leaders - because they were much more familiar with the local situation.

Q. When he joined the party in 1941, how did that change what he was doing in the community? I mean how did his role change once he joined the party? How did his life change not just in thought but in action? Did he then join the guerrillas or did he work underground? What work did he do the first year he was in the party?

A. My main job was to get information. Disguised as a peddler, I moved around in surrounding areas which were occupied by the Japanese and collected information on whether they had reinforcements or what the situation was there. Then I would report this back to the guerrillas.

Q. Did the Japanese use planes and tanks in fighting around here?

A. Yes, they did.

Q. Could you give us an example of a time when you were going around as a peddler collecting information? Could you tell us a story of your travelling, a small example of some time when something happened to you?

A. My main job at that time was to collect information from the surrounding enemy occupied areas. In Hsin-tien neighboring village there was a stronghold of Japanese, which was a very stubborn one. A poor family lived nearby this stronghold. Sometimes I went to this family and asked them about the enemy's movements, about new reinforcements, or about whether they had reduced their number and which way they were going (?). Because this family was really poor, they used to go into the enemy's stronghold to see if there was some waste paper, which they could sell and get some money. Thus by and by the enemy did not pay any attention to family members when they went into the stronghold, ~~and~~ collected waste paper, and went out again. One day they the family ~~had~~ got the information that the enemy forces staying there at the time were moving out and new forces were moving in that evening. Acting on the basis of this information, the guerrillas snuck into the stronghold when it was empty, during the brief period before the new forces came. So when the enemy's new forces came in, they launched a surprise attack and wiped them out.

The enemy was very cunning. After this, they suspected the poor family. So the guerrillas tried to help them the family out. A young man from this family joined the Communist party. Recognition amongst other villagers present as to who this young man was. Chang then continues ... you may also remember that after the enemy stronghold was wiped out, the guerrillas carried ~~off the rifles~~ captured rifles here - to Sha Shih-ju - and the young man lived here for two months.

I also went to the country, Tsunhua county - county seat - to gather information. There the Japanese had an information department. The head of this department was called by the Chinese "the butcher" because he killed so many Chinese people. It was quite hard to get at him because he had many bodyguards wherever ~~he went~~.

he went. However he thought it was quite safe to walk in the streets of the city without bodyguards. He was seen on several occasions in the street and we brought this information to the underground party. At that time I thought that in order to make revolution there are two requirements: one is bravery, the other is not being afraid of death. When the guerillas went into the city they could not bring pistols with them because the Japanese would search everybody that ~~to~~ came in. On a ~~few~~ day of a fair, one of our underground party members entered the city with a pipe - not a real pistol - and saw the man the butcher on the street. He followed him; then suddenly took out his pipe and put it ~~in~~ in his back, saying "stand still - don't move" and he thought this was a pistol.

Q. The butcher - he stuck the pipe in the back of the butcher?

A. Yes. He the butcher thought this was a pistol in his back, so he did not move; he thought that if he moved an inch he would be shot. Then the guerilla took the butcher's pistol and forced him to go a little bit farther - being already at the edge of the city gate - and just as soon as he was outside the gate, he opened fire and shot him. At that time there were many people inside the city because a fair was going on. Suddenly they heard shots and were frightened. The guerilla ran away in the confusion, succeeding in escaping.

Q. What were the Japs reprisals for that? What reprisals did the Japs take for that? The Jap reprisals - they could kill a whole village for that.

A. This comrade shot the butcher at the southern gate of the city. When the Japanese inside the city heard the shots, they tried to pursue, and they thought there was fighting at the southern gate. But our guerillas were also on the other side of the city and when they heard the shots in the city, they began fighting from a different side. So the Japanese were confused; they thought that they were surrounded.

Q. Could you identify the city?

A. Yes, the capital of the county (hsien) - Tsunhua.

Lao Li interjects here: Wait, I was mistaken. He the butcher was not killed. The guerilla opened fire to the sky, as a signal to make a disturbance, causing the people to be confused and run in different directions. Actually they kidnapped the butcher.

We took the butcher as hostage, demanding from the Japanese one-hundred rifles and thousands of rounds of bullets. They paid us and we set him free. After that he was more timid and restrained in his behavior. We have been talking about this as a story, but actually it was quite terrible.

Q. What did the guerillas say to the Japanese butcher when they were holding him in the hills? Did they discuss his job with him?

A. We carried out educational work with him. We did not ill treat the captive.

Q. Was he a good student?

A. Garbled here..... After this incident, this fighting, some of our enemy traitors Chinese who were traitors decided to surrender. They knew if they did not surrender they might be killed. If they did surrender, we'd set them free.

But there other, more stubborn cases. There is a place called Tang-yü some 15 kilometers away. A Japanese there was very cruel. He was captured twice and set free twice, but only became all the more cruel..... There was a village quite close to Tang-yü. We had a party member in that village. This man was quite familiar with the situation in Tang-yü. So the leadership assigned to him the job of killing the Japanese - whatever way seemed best. He went to Tang-yü several times and was unable to have a chance at killing the Japanese. Then one day of a fair he went to Tang-yü. Standing on the street on his right hand side was a small shop selling hardware, knives and tools, on the left hand side there was a stand selling yu-tiao (roll-twists?). The Japanese came to this stand to have some yu-tiao. At this point the party member, pretending to buy a knife, moved closer. Just as the Japanese was eating, he grapped a knife ~~and~~ cleaver? and chopped off his the Japanese head. Then he took two pistols from the Japanese and opened fire to the sky, alarming the people and causing great confusion. In the confusion he ran off....

- Q. I'd like to ask a question, getting off the subject a bit,. When was the first time in the day time that the guerillas controlled this area, or let's say more accurately the Communist party - when did the Communist guerilla group first control this area during the day time?
- A. It was during that year when the guerillas were advancing and they surrounded the city (Tsunhua?), & the towns. The Japanese could not come out. At that time this area became a liberated area.
- Q. 1944 approximately?
- A. 1943-44.
- Q. Before the Japanese were powerful in this area were there any communist organizers aroundd here? In other words: the Japanese came here in 1937, at about that time or before that time were there any party organizers around?
- A. No, not clear on this. When I joined the party, I just knew that I was a member of the Communist party. I did not know the party organizers.
- Q. When did the KMT lose control of this area?
- A. I do not remember exactly. Perhaps in 1937 there was some fighting and they lost. After that the KMT was retreating.
- Q. Now, ~~was~~ the Japanese forces came here in 1937. They began that policy of "burn all, kill all" in 1940 or so? 41?
- A. Before that I think.
- Q. In this area, when did they begin... they got here in 1937, did they at once begin to behave very badly or did ~~that~~ begin a few years later? Were they terrorists right from the beginning?
- A. The nature of the Japanese was the same, but at the beginning they tried to use different tactics, tried to win the hearts of the Chinese.
- Q. When did they begin to behave in a very bad way?
- A. Since 1938.
- Q. What was it that made them behave so badly when they changed their policy from winning hearts and minds to burning and killing. Was there something particular that caused that to happen?

- A. [garbled...]...they tried to get some Chinese traitors to serve them in order to build up strongholds.
- Q. You said the guerillas were rather well known in this area. Why were the Communists, why did they keep it a secret that they were Communists? If the people knew who the guerrillas were, did the communists not say from the beginning that they were communists?
- A. Afterwards the party organized the guerillas...(?)...
- Q. Did the KMT blockade affect this area?
- A. KMT?
- Q. Yes, did their blockade against the supplies affect this area?
- A. When?
- Q. Was it 41 and 42? Didn't they try to blockade supplies coming into this area?
- A. KMT?
- Q. Yes, there was a large northern blockade. Wasn't there a KMT blockade - it may have been later, did the KMT try to keep supplies from getting to the guerillas?
- A. In this area? There was no KMT - they ran away... It was in other areas - the KMT blockade, not this area - the KMT blocked in the south - Yunnan, Kweichow, and Szechwan - there, they could not blockade here. There was no KMT here.
- Q. Yes, but some of the northern provinces were blockaded, maybe not this Hsien(?) but some of them were blockaded. Am I wrong?
- A. Far away from this place. This place was completely occupied by Japanese and they set up a puppet government - Wang Ching-wei.
- Q. Where was the Japanese airfields? Did the guerillas attack them?
- A. There was an airport in Chahar (Tsun-i county?). At the beginning the guerillas did not attack it but later we surrounded it and it became useless.
- Q. When the guerillas first occupied this area, which was in 1943-44, what did they do, how did they govern this area in early years - 1943-44-45?
- A. The guerillas?
- Q. Yes, how did they govern this area, what kind of government did they have?
- A. No formal government was set up.
- Q. Were there any landlords to collect rent?
- A. Landlords were still collecting rent.
- Q. When most of the peasants around here join the Communist party or began to support the Communist party, was this because they fought the Japanese or was this because of the rent reduction on land? [background chuckling about C. Johnson] When was that? Well, in this area it was not until 1947 but rent reduction is more important... Was the reason they supported the Communist party,

in your mind, was it because they fought the Japanese or because they reduced the rent and divided the land? Which was more important in mobilizing the broad masses - not just the activists - in the 1943-45 period?

A. It was not land reform in the 1943-45 period.

Q. No - not land reform - rent reduction.

A. Managing the distribution of land?

Q. No, no. When the broad masses of the peasants began to favor the Communist party what was most important to them, fighting the Japanese or was it because of rent reduction and land reform?

A. But at that time there was not land reform.

Q. There was rent reduction though.

A. Yes. To fight Japanese - the main reason was.

Q. That's what Mao Tse-tung said to Edgar Snow in 1970 wasn't it? He said without the Japanese we never could have done it. Did they have rent reduction in 1943-45? When was the first time they reduced rent?

A. It was near the close of the end of the Japanese war.

Q. 1944-45?

A. Right. 1945.

~~What~~

Q. What was the impact of the reduction of land on the community here, did it help raise their political consciousness?

A. Mainly, the reduction of rent was carried out during the liberation war period. During the liberation war period, landlords were reactionaries. At that time the landlords were close to Chiang Kai-shek.

Q. What happened to the Japanese collaborators in this area? Do they still live here or did they all flee to the county seat?

A. When?

Q. At the end of the war.

A. As soon as the anti-Japanese war ended, the KMT Chiang Kai-shek reactionaries re-occupied this area, making use of the landlords and collaborators of the Japanese imperialists.

Q. I think though you told me once at dinner that the troops came here ^{at} first and then they retreated and only came back rarely from Tang-shan. In other words, the KMT was pretty far away; there was not a post nearby, they were not in this area very much between 1945 and 1947. Is that right?

A. They just stayed in here. (?)

that what you are talking about was later when our forces were extended (expanding), they retreated to Tang-shang

Q. That was in 1947?

A. Yes.

Q. ~~When the guerillas began to be organized,~~ some were directly under communist leadership and some were not, is that correct?

A. In this area?

Q. Yes.

A. They were all under communist leadership.

Q. What does he think it was about the communist leadership that made it able to mobilize the peasantry and the guerillas around here, what made them so effective?

A. The communist party appealed to the people's interests and it had high prestige among the people, so it ~~can~~ could lead the revolution and it could organize the people's army.

Q. Was this part of a much larger communist theatre of operations, and if it was ~~done~~ you know what the name was of the overall commander for this area?

A. In this area?

Q. Was there in this part of China a large area in 1940-41-42 that was a particular theatre of operations and was there somebody in the party who was particularly responsible for this area? And is that person a leader now in the party?

A. At that time, because we were underground, we had different names. I know that there was a man called Huang Chung-shan.

Q. Did you ever see this person?

A. Later?

Q. Yes, ~~was this one of~~ did you see this man?

A. He came here very frequently.

Q. And what happened to him after the war of resistance, did he fight during the liberation war?

A. I do not know where he is now.

Q. When did the party members become publicly known?

A. In this area, in this brigade it was 1943. They were known only among party members, not publicly, not to the masses. Before that even party members did not know each other.

Q. Was this for security reasons, is that the reason?

A. Yes, for security.

- Q. I'd like to ask if any of the party cadres ever went to Yen-an for special training or to receive special instructions. How did instructions come from the central command to here?
- A. No party member in this village went to Yen-an.
- Q. Why did the peasants support the communist party then, was it because ~~of~~ they fought the Japanese or was it because of land reform?
- A. During the anti-Japanese war the KMT disregarded the lives of the people. They retreated and the communist party carried on the fight. After the Japanese surrendered the KMT came in and still they exploited the people. The KMT served the interest of a small minority and it exploited the majority.
- Q. If the KMT had fought off the Japanese would they still have wanted to overthrow it because of the need for land reform?
- A. I think your question is too hypothetical - ~~that~~ [had that happened] the whole history would be different - and the communist policy vis-a-vis the KMT would be different.
- Q. I have a question that I think is more to the point that we're trying to get at. When the war ended did the make-up of the guerilla group change? In other words, did they lose membership because the war was over? In the guerilla band that later fought the KMT - did they have to recruit ~~different~~ new people of a different type? Did the membership change in the guerilla band when the war ended?
- A. After the anti-Japanese war ended the guerillas became the regular army and in the countryside there were militia.
- Q. The guerilla units did not change - they were the same people? There were some people ^{amongst} the guerillas, he said before, who were not communists. Perhaps they ran, went somewhere else? Perhaps they wanted to be bandits or something else after the war was over and they ran off.
- A. No.
- Q. I'm kind of confused. I don't know if the question will come across, but awhile earlier ~~you~~ said that the communists could organize the people because they had prestige among the people, because they served the people. But at that time the people didn't know - the members of the CCP were not known publicly to the people in this area. So how can you develop prestige? How can the CCP develop prestige when the mass of people don't know the CCP - don't know who they are?
- A. At the beginning they did not know who are the party members; but members acted as leaders amongst the people, organizing the people, serving the people, so the people thought that they were good men and they followed them. Afterwards it was made known to them that these people were CCP members and they realized ~~all~~ that all these good people were members of the CCP.
- Q. Beforehand did the people know that there was such a thing as a communist party?
- A. No.

Q. I think maybe every body's getting tired - is that the consensus?
Let me say something. I think this is a very extraordinary story. I think this whole village is extraordinary, but you said that you were a beggar before the war began, is that right?

A. Yes.

Q. It's probably the most important insight that I've had into what kind of energy you can release in a revolution when a man who was a beggar before the revolution can fight a war of liberation and then help I believe this village from its extraordinary poor beginnings to the place we see now. Such an event could only happen in a revolution; I can't imagine it happening any other way.

A. I moved here in 1933 and from 1933 to 41 I suffered the same as the peasants here. I did not know a way out. I did not know how to rebel. It was after 1941, when I joined the CCP, that I began to organize the masses. Now I often think that the reason why I could do something for the revolution was all because of education by the party, and the people of the army. It's only by implementing Chairman Mao's proletarian revolutionary line that the people have a life like today. I also think that now we are liberated, but in the world there are many people still under suppression and exploitation and now we should make great efforts.

A woman comrade adds: People in Sha Shih-yu often say that now that they are liberated they will never forget the CCP and enjoying such happiness today they will never forget Chairman Mao. They also often say that when the CCP came to this area it was barren, but now we have turned the terraced field into orchard and the barren fields into forest and we will never forget that our happiness comes from our good leader, Chairman Mao. Now we have realized that, as proletariat, only by liberating the whole of mankind can the proletariat achieve final emancipation.

Q. We've learned a lot about history that isn't the kind of things we've read in books before. To actually meet a man who's gone through these momentous changes is really fabulous for us. It has had a great impact on us.

More than that. We are very moved by what you have told us tonight and also by what we've seen in the last few days. I think that we have no end of respect for you and the people here.

A. All these achievements - we attribute all our achievements to our great leader Chairman Mao and the CCP. All this achievement can not be separated from the force of the people of the world. Also our achievements can not be separated from our American friends, but my memory is not good, I apologize.