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THE JAPANESE ARMY IN NORTH CHINA: PROBLEMS OF
POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CONTROL
JULY 1937 to DECEMBER 1941

by

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This thesis is my own original work.

Lincoln Li
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INTRODUCTION: THE PROBLEM

This is a study of the problems of occupation. It is not intended as a chronological narrative of Japanese rule over occupied North China. It is, rather, an analysis of the problem of the consolidation of power and control by an occupation army. Although the study is centred on the Japanese military occupation of North China, it is not concerned with the military history of the Japanese Army in North China. Military occupation was simply the initial step of establishing Japanese military dominance in the area under study, while it is the problems of consolidation and control subsequent to military occupation that the present study is concerned with. I do not presume to deal with all the problems consequent upon the Japanese occupation, but aim rather at bringing out some of the major problems of occupation which confronted the Japanese Army in North China, how solutions were attempted, and how the nature of these problems changed with the development of events within and without the North China theatre of war. This study on the problems of political and economic control is therefore an attempt to illustrate the basic nature of the problems with which the Japanese
Army in North China had to deal.

This study is also relevant in the context of internal development in China during the same period. Much work has been done by eminent scholars on the rise of the Chinese Communist Party and its successful reunification of China soon after the conclusion of the Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945). The success story of the Chinese Communist Party, the dedication of its cadres, and its almost limitless potential for mass organization have already been amply dealt with. The same attention, however, has not been given to the Japanese 'contribution', that is the parts played by the mere fact of Japanese military presence in China and the effects of Japanese policies designed for consolidating their power and control over the Chinese masses. It is my belief that the Chinese Communist effort and the Japanese effort were interrelated in their effects on internal Chinese political development. It is hoped, therefore, that the present study may, in a very moderate way, compensate for the erstwhile neglect of the Japanese 'contribution', and show that what the Japanese did in occupied China was not less important than what the Chinese Communists did in mobilizing mass support for the Chinese Communist cause. The thesis, however, is confined to the study of the Japanese 'contribution'. Where descriptions of Chinese Communist efforts are given, they
are based on existing publications and are meant only as a means to correlate the experiences of the Chinese Communists with those of the Japanese Army.

The problems discussed are mainly of political import. Economic, administrative, institutional, and military aspects of the occupation are examined in the light of the extent to which each contributed towards the consolidation of overall Japanese political control. This built-in bias of the present study is intentional and should explain why exhaustive study on any one of the problems raised is not pursued. Further, Japanese activities in North China, manifestations of national policies in one form or another, started long before the outbreak of full-scale hostilities in July 1937; events before this date, therefore, are brought in to provide background and continuity. The Japanese occupation of North China, though studied in isolation, is a part of the history of Sino-Japanese relations and proper perspective can only be gained by bearing this constantly in mind.

As Japanese policies in North China were based on their military strength, it is necessary first to examine the extent of their military commitment and the limits consequent upon the extent of military commitment.

1 The work most relevant to this aspect of my studies is Peasant Nationalism and Communist Power by C.A. Johnson.
within the period under study. The extent of Japanese military commitment, the pattern of troop deployment, the problem of logistic support for an army on foreign soil, and the precedence of military considerations above all else were factors basic to Japanese policy formation. Any changes in the size and location of Japanese armed forces in North China would lead to policy changes, or at least policy shifts, while any changes in policy would make new demands on the Japanese Army and hence affected its size and location. Japanese ambitions in North China were limited only by their own military capability, they grew with every extra soldier that was committed to the North China theatre.

In July 1937 the Japanese Army, then known as the Tientsin Garrison, had no more than ten thousand men.²

² The Tientsin Garrison (Tenshin Shūtōngun 天津駐屯軍) was the name of the Japanese military establishment in North China up to the end of August 1937. It was stationed at Tientsin, with a small detachment at Peking, under the terms of the Boxer Protocol. Its actual strength in July 1937 is not known and the Japanese themselves gave conflicting estimates, varying between five to fifteen thousand men. See JFA, (Japanese Foreign Office Archives) SP161, Saionji-Harada Memoirs, p.1818; Horiba Katsuo, Shina Jihen Sensō Shidōshi, p.87; F.C. Jones, Japan's New Order in East Asia, p.30, for Japanese figures. See also Kuo-fang yen-chiu-yüan, K'ang-Jih Chan-shih, p.23, and Chou K'ai-ching, K'ang-chan i-ch'ien chih Chung-Jih kuan-hsi, p.145, for Chinese estimates which varied between ten to twenty thousand men. I favour the moderate Japanese estimate of 7,000 as cited by Jones and the moderate Chinese estimate of 10,000 put forward by Chou and recogn
The ambitions of the Japanese Army in North China at that time had to match its troop commitment to the area. Its ambitions then definitely did not go to the extent of contemplating the occupation of North China, for it was beyond the military capability of ten thousand men to do so. The two major acts of the Tientsin Garrison, the Fengtai and Lukouchiao Incidents, should reflect the intentions of the Japanese Army in North China up to July 1937. The strategic importance of both Fengtai and Lukouchiao can be seen at a glance from the sketch map below.

2 Cont'd...
that the actual strength of the Tientsin Garrison was somewhere between seven to ten thousand men. Harada Kumao, Saionji Kō to Seikyoku, vol. 4, p.268.

3 See Map 1 for the location and strategic importance of Fengtai and Lukouchiao. In August 1936 the Japanese occupied Fengtai following a minor incident between Chinese army stable boys and Japanese troops. (See Shina Jiho,
Possession of them would enable the Japanese to have a stranglehold over rail communication from Peking to the sea and to Central China. The two moves were therefore calculated to gain influence over Peking by gaining a stranglehold over its major communication links.

Peking was the seat of the Hopei-Chahar Political Council, the political regime in control of the provinces of Hopei and Chahar. The attempts of the Tientsin Garrison to increase Japanese influence over Peking were obviously designed to pressure the Hopei-Chahar Political Council to become more amenable to Japanese

3 Cont'd..
vol 25, No. 2, Aug. 1936, p.45). In July 1937 the Lukouchiao Incident occurred when the Japanese wanted to enter the district city of Wanping on the pretext of having lost one soldier during night manouvres in the Lukouchiao area. According to Fang Chiu-wei in her article "Lukouchiao shih-chien chih ch'ien-hou"; the Japanese military in North China committed only 2,000 men to the Lukouchiao area before substantial reinforcements arrived from Manchuria, Korea and Japan, showing that the Lukouchiao skirmish was a limited military venture of the Tientsin Garrison. See also Shina Shūtōgun Hohei Dai-ichi Rentai, "Lukouchiao fukin sentō chōhō" in Misuzu Shobo, Nicchū Sensō, vol 4, pp.335-363.

dictates within the two provinces under its jurisdiction. The Fengtai and Lukouchiao Incidents, backed up by an armed force of no more than ten thousand men, were attempts to strengthen Japanese indirect control. They were initially threats of force, followed by very limited uses of force in order to strengthen future threats of force vis-à-vis the Hopei-Chahar Political Council. A crisis resulted only when the Chinese soldiers defending the Lukouchiao area refused to budge, exposing the inability of the Tientsin Garrison to push the Chinese soldiers away from Lukouchiao and such an exposure would cause the Imperial Japanese Army to lose face.

The ambitions of the Japanese Army in North China, however, magnified with substantial troop increases in July and August 1937. To forestall any semblance of a military defeat at Lukouchiao, the Japanese Army commands in Manchuria and Korea despatched one and a half divisions to reinforce the Tientsin Garrison for the occasion, bolstering the numerical strength of the latter to about 40,000 men. The Tokyo Government grudgingly matched this with a promise of three more divisions. The Tientsin Garrison was

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5 Gunreibu Sanbō Honbu, 11th July 1937, "Hokushi sakusen ni kansuru Kai-Rikugun kyōtei" in Misuzu Shobō, vol 2, pp.5-7, (see also pp.10-13 for naval and air support); JFA, SP161, Saionji-Harada Memoirs, p.1818 and p.1832;
thus about to be enlarged to five divisions, with an approximate total of 100,000 men. These reinforcements started to arrive on 19th July, and the Japanese Army in North China was no longer satisfied with any political compromise with the Hopei-Chahar Political Council. The Tientsin Garrison started military operations along the Tientsin-Peking sector on 25th July 1937. The sector was then guarded by the Chinese 29th Army, estimated to be about 100,000 strong. Within two weeks the Tientsin-Peking

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5 Wachi Takaji, "Shina no genshi to waga taishi seisaku no shinkichō", in Suzuki Toshisada, Kōnichi Shina no Kaibai, pp.4-15; F.C. Jones, Japan's New Order in East Asia, p.34. Horiba Katsuo, op cit, pp.83-85, elaborated the issue by saying that the Central Military Authorities in Tokyo were split on the question of reinforcements to North China. Ishiwara Kanji was against sending reinforcements as he judged that it was likely to cause a long drawn out war in China and this was detrimental to Japan's preparation for an eventual war with Russia. The War Ministry advocated sending 15 divisions at a cost of 55 billion yen to conduct a limited war of six months in North China. Konoe, the Prime Minister, compromised by sending 3 divisions at a cost of 3 billion yen.

6 Boeicho Boeikyushujo Senshishitsu, Hokushi no Chiansen, pp.18-20. A truce agreement was reached between the Hopei-Chahar Political Council and the Tientsin Garrison on 11th July. However, the arrival of a new commander on 12th July, the promise of troops from Manchuria and Korea on the same day, and finally Prime Minister Konoe's decision to dispatch three divisions to North China, all helped to change the mind of the Tientsin Garrison from observing the truce agreement.

7 Chou K'ai-ching, op cit, p.5; Kuo-fang yen-chiu-yüan, op cit, p.21; Shina Shūtōngun Hohei Dai-ichi Rentai, "Lukouchiao fukin sentō chōhō"; Boeicho, op cit, p.13; Horiba Katsuo, op cit, p.87.
sector fell into Japanese hands, indeed, it would have taken less time had there not been an unexpected revolt of puppet police units at Tungchow, the capital of the East Hopei puppet regime.  

A full scale war between China and Japan resulted when both the Chinese Nationalist Party and the Chinese Communist Party challenged the Japanese invasion. The Nationalist Chinese Government at Nanking despatched troops to the north to stiffen resistance at Paoting, while the civil war with the Chinese Communists was suspended to make way for an Anti-Japanese United Front. The Tientsin Garrison wanted to stage a decisive battle to crush Nationalist-Chinese-led resistance at Paoting so as to

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8 On 29th July 1937, puppet police units at Tungchow rebelled and massacred their Japanese officers and local Japanese residents. This was the Tungchow Incident. See JFA, Report by Vice-Consul Shimazu at Peking, dated 5th August, 1937, "Tōshū (Tungchow) Jihen hassei kei-i gaihō" in SP205-6, History of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Police, China, September 1870 to December, 1940, pp.2376-2380.

9 The Chinese Communist Party despatched a draft communiqué of cooperation with the Nationalist Chinese to the Nanking Government on 15th July 1937. The Nationalist Chinese agreed to the proposed terms of cooperation on 22nd August 1937 and the Military Council of the Nanking Government regrouped Communist troops into the Eighth Route Army and New Fourth Army and nominally put them under Nanking Government control. See Bōeichō, op. cit., p.30.
bring the war to a speedy conclusion. The three divisions earlier promised by Tokyo arrived in North China at the end of July, and four additional divisions were ordered to leave for North China at the end of August. Thus before September 1937, the Japanese Army in North China had about 200,000 combat troops and it was renamed the North China Army (Hokushina Hōmengun). The North China Army was divided into three army corps consisting of a central command and two army corps, they were later joined by the Mongolia Army Corps (Shūmōgun).

The bulk of Japanese forces in North China was engaged in ousting Nationalist Chinese troops which were moving northwards along the major railways of Peking-Wuhan and Tientsin-Pukow. To facilitate quick pursuits and bring supplies to the front, the pattern of Japanese troop deployment closely followed the railway pattern in China. (see Map 3). Major battles with Nationalist Chinese armies preoccupied the attention of the Japanese Army in China up to the fall of Wuhan in October 1938. This was preceded by the Battle of Hsuchow in April 1938, and Japanese troop

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10 Horiba Katsuo, op cit, p.102; Bōeichō, op cit, p.25.

11 Hokushina Hōmengun 北支那方面軍, Shūmōgun 駱蒙軍. See Map 3 for the war zones assigned to each army corps within the North China theatre. See also Bōeichō, op cit, pp.25-26 and 80. The Mongolia Army Corps was put under North China Army Command in late February 1938.
movement immediately after the Battle of Hsuchow was impeded for four to five months, according to Nationalist Chinese estimates, after Chinese troops had breached the banks of the Yellow River to slow down the Japanese advance. A military stalemate resulted after the Battle of Wuhan, not because of Chinese military capabilities, but because of limited Japanese troop commitment to the China theatres of war.

Decision on Japanese troop commitment overseas were the responsibility of the Combined Headquarters (Daihon-ei), the Joint General Staff of the Army and Navy, at Tokyo. The Combined Headquarters set the troop ceiling for the North China Army at 250,000 men. Although the Combined Headquarters had little authority over Japanese overseas commands, yet its decisions on troop deployment affected every overseas command and put a limit to what commitments the individual commands could make on their own. The Combined Headquarters not only put a troop ceiling for North China, it also wanted to reduce the overall Japanese troop commitment in China when it was realized that a

12 Kuo-fang yen-chiu-yüan, op cit, p.67; Fukada Yūzo, Shina Kyōsangun no Gensei, pp.386-387.

13 Daihon-ei 大本營; Bōeichō, op cit, pp.451-452, citing an Army document dated July 1940 and known as "Kokai gumbi jujitsu keikaku" 更改軍備充實計畫.
decisive and quick military settlement was not in sight. Reduction of Japanese troops, however, was to be accompanied by an increase in the total war effort. The Combined Headquarters was definitely not interested in scaling down the war. An increase in the war effort was to be achieved through intensifying political and economic control measures and a gradual build up of puppet armies so that the effect of troop withdrawal would not be felt. The principle was that of partial Sinification of the war and puppet troops were to be stationed in 'secure' areas so as to free Japanese troops for combat duties. The Combined Headquarters suggested the creation of a puppet army of 100,000 men in Central China, followed by a second one of comparable size in North China. This was, of course, a plan of the military authorities in Tokyo and its adoption in North China depended entirely on the decision of the North China Army high command.

Prospects for troop reduction in North China never materialized. When troop reductions began in Central China, two divisions were diverted to reinforce the North China Army to enable it to deal with Yen Hsi-shan's

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14 Daihon-ei Rikugunbu, 30th Jan 1941, "Shinagawa busō dantai seibi narabi shidō yōkō", in Boeichō, op cit, pp.455-456.
army in southwestern Shansi. Before this military objective could be attained, the Japanese Army was suddenly confronted with a viable military challenge to their presence in North China by the Chinese Communists. In August 1940 the Chinese Communists launched their first Hundred Regiment Offensive and its effectiveness showed the North China Army that the Chinese Communists had emerged as the most formidable military challenge to its presence in North China. The North China Army could not deal with both Yen Hsi-shan and the Communists at the same time and a truce with Yen was therefore arranged in September 1941.

When the invading army could increase its military pressure continuously, military strength was the deciding factor. When the limit for maximum military commitment had been reached and a decision had not been arrived at in the field of battle, politics and economics were to play complementary roles of increasing importance in the struggle for control over North China. When the

15 Boeicho, op. cit, pp.452-454; Yen Hsi-shan 関錫山.
invading army was no longer capable of sustaining the military effort single-handed and had to rely on the use of conquered human, as distinct from natural, resources to supplement its military effort, then a point was reached where the political effort was as important as the military effort. This point was reached in early 1941, and helps to explain the phenomenon where Chinese Communist military strength and the area and population under their control continued to grow, after only a brief period of recession, in spite of intensified Japanese military-based efforts directly aimed at Chinese Communist strongholds. This does not mean that politics had come to play the dominant role, for Japanese military might continued to be of primary importance in the struggle. The invading army had been frustrated in its objectives, but was not in danger of being annihilated.

Limited Japanese military commitment in North China contributed to the fragmentation of the political map of North China into four zones (see Map 4). The North China Army occupied chiefly railways and urban centres and could not spare troops for occupation of the countryside beyond. The Chinese Communists entered North China after July 1937 and established guerrilla base areas deep in the 'unoccupied' countryside. The two invasions by the Japanese and the Chinese Communists of different parts of
North China left a 'neutral' zone in between. The neutral zones were occupied by dispersed Chinese troops of varying shades of political affiliation and were open for absorption by either the Chinese Communists or the Japanese. They were tolerated because neither the Chinese Communists nor the Japanese Army had sufficient man-power to absorb the dispersed Chinese forces in the neutral zone. Japanese attempts to expand into rural areas on either side of occupied railways to secure their lines of supply resulted in a fourth zone of semi-occupation where it was near enough for Japanese troops to strike. The semi-occupation zone differed from the occupied zones in that the Japanese would enter the semi-occupied zones only in case of necessity, whereas occupied zones were areas where Japanese troops were either stationed or patrolling regularly; that is, they were areas of constant and regular Japanese military presence. Semi-occupied zones were those where Japanese military presence was periodic and irregular, and they were contiguous to occupied zones. Thus the political map of North China was distinguishable into roughly four zones: the occupied, the semi-occupied, the neutral, and the Communist. This concept of political zones in North China will be discussed further in chapters VI and VII, where variations in line with economic and political control measures are made.
The next issue to be clarified before entering into the main body of the thesis is that of periodization. This presents a certain amount of difficulty, especially when it is necessary to decide on a terminal date for the present study. As later discussions revolve around a number of significant events, an attempt is made here to describe these in connection with the problem of periodization.

The Lukouchiao Incident marked the end of limited Japanese incursion into North China. Chinese resistance made it impossible for the Tientsin Garrison to strengthen influence and tighten control over the Hopei-Chahar Political Council without additional Japanese troop commitment to the area. Additional troops despatched from Manchuria, Korea and Japan, however, increased the ambitions of the Japanese Army in North China accordingly and its intention was changed to one of effecting a direct military solution. Thus the despatch of troops from Japan, intended to forestall the possibility of a local Japanese defeat, led to the physical act of military occupation over Tientsin, Peking, and adjacent areas by the Tientsin Garrison. July 1937 was therefore the crucial period when the Japanese Army in North China shifted from the policy of the threat of force to the actual application of force.

The Japanese Army in North China realised that resort to a direct military solution would inevitably lead
to political, economic, and cultural involvements as indicated by the subsequent formation of the Provisional Government in Peking in December 1937 under Japanese sponsorship. This Japanese-sponsored state structure had authority only in Japanese occupied areas and, in its attempt to extend its influence over the whole of North China, was challenged from two directions: organized resistance led by the Nationalist Chinese and that led by the Chinese Communist Party. The Japanese military regarded the Nationalist Chinese challenge as the more important by far and, as Nationalist-Chinese-led resistance was more vulnerable to Japanese military force, the Japanese concentrated their military drives against Nationalist Chinese armed forces. This phase of active military drive against the Nationalist Chinese continued up to the fall of Wuhan in October 1938, resulting in the rout of Nationalist-Chinese-led resistance in North China and the retreat of Nationalist Chinese influence to the upper reaches of the Yangtze. The Japanese termed the result of their military drive against the Nationalist Chinese as the reduction of the Nationalist-Chinese-dominated Nanking Government from a national government to a local provincial regime.18 The Japanese military drive against

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18 Horiba Katsuo, op cit, pp.128-133. Japan dictated harsh terms to the Chinese Government during a German mediation and set a deadline for the Chinese to accept all terms
the Nationalist Chinese drastically changed the internal balance of political forces in North China, weakened the most formidable political opponent of the Chinese Communists, and thus contributed significantly to the growth of Chinese Communist influence in North China.

The phase of active military drive against the Nationalist Chinese was succeeded by the phase of active political drive against the Nationalist Chinese. Contacts were started with a number of well-known Chinese politicians for effecting a political settlement of the war, the objective was not to arrive at any acceptable compromise but to corrode the will of the Nationalist-Chinese leadership to continue resistance. This phase led to the defection of Wang Ching-wei and his formation of a puppet Nationalist-Chinese Government at Nanking. This event, however, was not favourable to the interests of the North China Army for two reasons. Firstly, the presence of a

18 Cont'd...
dictated. The Chinese offered to negotiate the terms dictated on 13th Jan 1939. This was taken as Chinese insincerity and the Japanese made a declaration on 16th Jan 1939 that Japan would no longer accept the Chinese Government as a party in any negotiation for a political settlement in China on the ground that the Chinese Government had been reduced to a local provincial regime and therefore not representative of China as a whole.

19 Imai Takeo, Shina Jihen no Kaisō, Chapters 2 and 5 on secret contacts between China and Japan before and after the outbreak of the Pacific War.
puppet figure of national stature in Central China enhanced the political importance of occupied Central China vis-a-vis occupied North China. Secondly, the formation of a puppet Nationalist-Chinese party apparatus and government structure threatened to resurrect Chinese nationalism within Japanese occupied areas. The North China Army had only just succeeded in ousting Nationalist-Chinese influence from North China and did not relish a possible Nationalist-Chinese comeback to the area even if the move was ostensibly to serve Japanese interests. Thus the North China Army insisted on acquiring autonomous status for North China with the establishment of a North China Political Council to rule areas occupied by the North China Army. Only a nominal allegiance was accorded by the Political Council to the Nanking puppet regime. 20

During this phase of active political drive against the Nationalist-Chinese Government at Chungking, the military strategy of the Japanese in China also changed. Failure to crush Nationalist-Chinese military resistance in battle led the Japanese to extend their military commitments first to South China and then to the Indo-China Peninsula, in an attempt to cut off supplies

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to the Chungking Government. This, in effect, marked a change in Japanese strategy from one of inflicting decisive defeats on Nationalist-Chinese troops to one of tightening a Japanese economic blockade to secure an eventual collapse from within. The extension of the area of military commitment necessitated the re-deployment of troops, including those in the China theatres of war, to areas outside or on the periphery of China.

The establishment of the Wang Ching-wei Government was in fact the first step towards reducing Japanese troop commitments in China. The Combined Headquarters envisaged reducing the approximate total of 770,000 men in China to about half a million between 1940-43. The troop reduction was moderate and was to span over a three year period. During this time Chinese military and police units were to be trained and organized to supplement the Japanese war effort, so that troop reduction on the part of the Japanese would not lessen the total war effort at all. It was envisaged that two

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21 Japanese military operations in South China was restricted to severing rail and sea communications between Chungking and the outside world. Japanese troops occupied only areas around the mouth of the Pearl River and gained control over sections of the Canton-Hankow Railway. Japanese entry into Thailand was facilitated by treaty when the Thais decided to give in to Japanese pressure as the best way of avoiding a one-sided military conflict. See Hata Ikuhiko, *Nippon Senso*., pp.295-296.
puppet armies would be formed for peace maintenance duties in 'secure' areas, thus freeing Japanese troops for front line and mopping up duties. Major troop reduction was first to be effected in Central China, where the total of 300,000 was to be halved by 1942.\(^{22}\)

Before the Japanese had started planning troop reductions in North China, they were awakened by the first Hundred Regiment Offensive in August 1940 to the fact that the Chinese Communists had emerged as an effective military challenge. The Communist bogey which the Japanese had so long used as an excuse for expansion into North China had become a reality, and this led the Japanese and their collaborators into earnest efforts towards coordinated political, economic, and military rural pacification campaigns aimed at eradicating Communist strength.\(^{23}\) The planned change in strategy could not be effected in North China and, instead of reducing troops in North China, additional divisions were diverted to the area. The North China Army had to evolve an independent strategy of its own;

\(^{22}\) Bōeichō, op cit, p.451 citing Army sources; also pp.455-456 for Daihonei Rikugunbu, 30th Jan 1941, "Shinagawa busō dantai seibi narabi shidō yōkō".

\(^{23}\) These were labelled as Law and Order Strengthening Movements, Chih-an ch'iang-hua yun-tung 治安強化運動. See Bōeichō, op cit, pp.494, 537-538, and 573-577.
concentration of military strength against Communist base areas. As the North China Army was basically short of troops and could not effect occupation of all of North China, its new drive against Communist base areas employed a policy of calculated terrorism. Villages suspected of supporting the Communists were victimized by the infamous Three All Policy: take all, kill all, and burn all.²⁴ Chinese Communist sources indicated that the Japanese had scored significant victories in their new strategy. So effective did it seem to them that the Chinese Communists revised their overall resistance strategy to accommodate the new challenge as indicated by the Cheng Feng Movement and the slogan of "cut troops and simplify administration" (ching-ping chien-cheng).²⁵ The Japanese terrorist tactics

²⁴ Jen-min ch' u-pan-she, K'ang-Jih Chan-cheng shih-ch'i te Chung-kuo Jen-min Chieh-fang Chün, pp. 119-120.

²⁵ In 1942 the Chinese Communists responded by initiating the Cheng Feng Movement, which was essentially a retrenchment movement, and sought to cut troops and simplify administration (ching-ping chien-cheng) so as to offset the effects of Japanese economic blockade. On the other hand the Communists had to intensify their war efforts while they were cutting back their regular troop strength. The answer was to rely more on irregular forces, i.e. village based guerrillas. See Lee Ngok, The Chinese Communist Bases in North China 1938-43: a Study of Their Growth and Anti-Japanese Activities, with Special Reference to Administration and Mass Mobilization on the Village Level, pp. 88-93;
succeeded in reducing the known boundaries of Communist strongholds, but they also sowed the seeds of hatred among the victimized peasantry and thus hardened their will to resist. Japanese terrorist tactics were in fact mobilizing peasant nationalism against them and the Japanese were driven to rely more and more on brute force. The struggle for control over North China thus began in earnest with the first Hundred Regiment Offensive in August 1940, three years after the North China Army had resorted to military occupation.

In fairness to the Japanese Army, it must be realized that the struggle was never allowed to be pursued to its logical conclusion. What it entailed was an about turn in Japanese military strategy from one of troop reduction to one of continuous increase in military commitment in terms of logistic support and manpower. Although the Russo-Japanese Non-Aggression Pact, the building up of a small puppet army, and the diversion of troops from Central China, all helped towards a significant increase of Japanese troop strength in North China, the increases were simply inadequate for the occupation of North China. Further, involvement in South East Asia and the Pacific, and the eventual outbreak of war between the United States and Japan had in fact condemned the occupying forces to a defensive position. The Japanese had reached
an impasse in their strategy in China with the outbreak of the Pacific War in December 1941, they could not advance without additional troops nor would they retreat and give up the spoils of hard fought battles. Since Japanese policies in occupied China depended on their military strength, a frozen military commitment limited their freedom to implement policy changes in political, economic, and cultural matters. December 1941, therefore, is taken as the terminal date for this study. Discussions are carried on beyond this date, however, in order to gauge the effects of the war with the United States on Japanese occupation policies in North China.