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# Chinese Civil War Armies 1911–49



Philip Jowett • Illustrated by Stephen Andrew



**PHILIP JOWETT** was born in Leeds in 1961, and has been interested in military history for as long as he can remember. He has written a number of books for Osprey including a three-part sequence on The Italian Army 1940-45 (Men-at-Arms 340, 349 & 353). A rugby league enthusiast and amateur genealogist, he is married and lives in Leeds.



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## Dedication

Dedicated to my Grandfather, Gunner J.S. Pounder,  
Died Pekanbaru POW camp, August 1945.

## Acknowledgements

Many thanks to all the following who made this book possible by sharing their knowledge, giving advice and encouragement: Count Ernesto Vitetti, Ugo Pericoli for his research into the Manchukuo army, Nigel Thomas for his work on ranks, Kevin Mahoney, Anthony Coogan, Timothy Brook, Richard Fuller, Tony Sprayson, Pierre C.T. Verheyne, Gene Christian, Paul Cornish, William Crampton, Stephen Andrew, Darko Pavlovic, Arthur Waldron and my family.

## Author's note

This book is an attempt to cover a period of military history often overlooked by contemporary histories of modern warfare. Because of the difficulty in researching the subject, any additional information or corrections would be very welcome, and can be addressed to the author through the publisher.

## Chinese translation

There are two main forms of translation of Chinese, the Pin-yin and the Wade-Giles. Although the Pin-yin system is the one in common usage today, I have used the Wade-Giles system because the non-Chinese reader would be more familiar with the Wade-Giles version of Mao Tse-tung than the Pin-yin version, which is Mao Zedong.

The term *Chung-kuo Lu-chen* translates as 'Middle-Nation Land Force' - 'Middle Nation' meaning China and 'Land Force' meaning army. During the warlord period, the usual English term for the Chinese Army was the 'Chinese Republican Army' or the 'Army of the Chinese Republic'. When Chiang Kai-Shek came to power he called his force 'Chinese Army'. An error in translation led to *Chung-Kuo* being translated as 'Chinese Nation' rather than 'Middle Nation' i.e. China, hence it is known as the Chinese Nationalist Army

## Artist's note

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# CHINESE CIVIL WAR ARMIES 1911-49

## INTRODUCTION

**T**HE fall of the Manchu dynasty in 1911 brought to an end thousand of years of Imperial rule and ushered in 40 years of conflict and strife that was to tear China apart. For almost the whole of this period there was fighting somewhere in China, and armies, sometimes millions strong, battled for control of this vast country. There were many different forces involved in these conflicts, and this book hopes to describe them in as much detail as possible.

## CHRONOLOGY

- |             |                              |   |
|-------------|------------------------------|---|
| <b>1908</b> | <b>November</b>              | Death of Guangxu emperor, boy emperor Pu-Yi enthroned.  |
| <b>1911</b> | <b>October,<br/>November</b> | Wuchang uprising, 1911 Revolution, Pu-Yi abdicates; Sun Yat-sen becomes first Republican president.             |
| <b>1912</b> | <b>February</b>              | Sun resigns and Yuan Shih-k'ai, the strongest military leader, becomes new president.                           |
| <b>1913</b> |                              | The 'Second Revolution'; attempted rebellion by Sun Yat-sen's forces against Yuan Shih-k'ai's government fails. |
| <b>1915</b> | <b>December</b>              | Yuan makes himself emperor but throughout China faces revolts against his plans.                                |

General Lee-fen of the Imperial Army leads a cavalry patrol in the fight against the 1911 revolutionaries. He and his men wear the summer version of the 1910 regulation uniform which was worn by the majority of Imperial army soldiers during this campaign. (Corbis-Bettman)

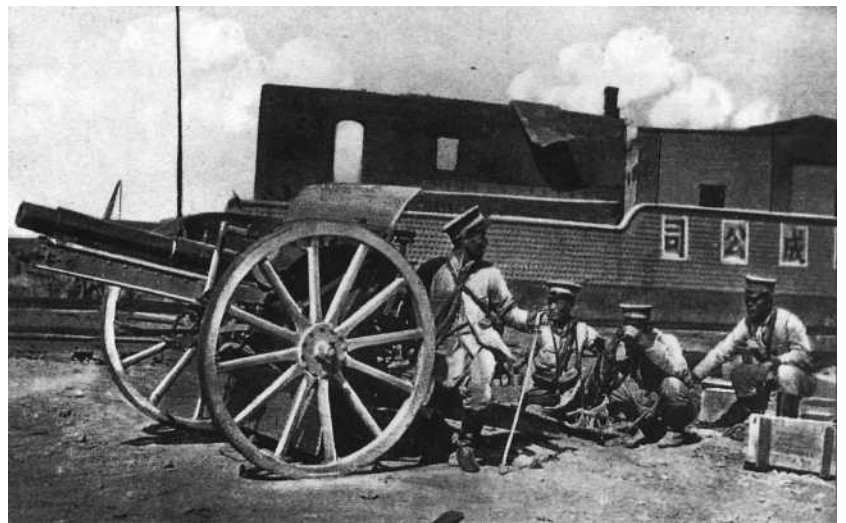


Revolutionary soldiers pose defiantly in the fighting of 1911. Most wear armbands, which would distinguish them from their Imperial foes. While most wear the summer uniform cap, the man on the right has had to make do with a Western-style civilian cap. The cartridge belts around their waists were often seen in use with the revolutionaries and must have been improvised locally at the time. (Xinghua News Agency)



- 1916 June** Yuan dies; power is now in the hands of provincial leaders - Warlords - who rule their own areas.
- 1917 June** Failed attempt at imperial restoration by 'Pig tailed army'.
- August** China declares war on Germany.
- September** Sun Yat-sen forms government in south China at Canton.
- 1920 Summer** War between An-fu 'clique' of Warlords and Chihli clique.
- 1922** War between Chihli clique and Fengtien clique.
- 1923 October** Soviet advisers arrive in Canton to help Sun Yat-sen's Kuomintang party to form their own army.
- 1924** Second Chihli-Fengtien war; Whampoa military academy formed to train officers for the Kuomintang army.
- 1925 March** Death of Sun Yat-sen.
- 1926 June** Start of Kuomintang's Northern Expedition to defeat all Warlord armies and unite China under one government.

Imperial artillery fire their field piece against the revolutionaries near Hankow in 1912. All the crew wear the summer version of the 1910 uniform, with boots rather than the more common shoes. (Peter Newark's Military Pictures)





- September** Northern Expedition takes the city of Wuhan.
- November** Northern Expedition takes the city of Nanchang.
- 1927 March** Northern Expedition takes Nanking and Shanghai.
- April** Kuomintang turn against their Communist allies and massacre many.
- August** Mutiny of 24th Division of 11th Nationalist Army leads to the forming of the first Communist unit, under Chu Te.
- September** Harvest Rebellion led by Communist Mao Tse-tung fails.
- 1928 June** Last major Warlord, Chang Tso-lin, is blown up on a train by his Japanese sponsors as he retreats to his Manchurian stronghold.
- 1929-30** **Warlord Period Ends**  
Chiang Kai-shek consolidates his power by defeating opposition from Kwangsi generals and the 'Christian' Warlord Feng Yu-hsiang.
- 1930 October** First encirclement campaign by the Nationalists against Kiangsi soviet fails.
- 1931 April** Second encirclement campaign.
- July** Third encirclement campaign.
- September** Japanese invade Manchuria.

ABOVE LEFT Cavalry in the city of Tientsin in 1912 wear an unusual uniform only seen in this part of China. It consists of a double-breasted dark blue jacket with the white shoulder boards of the cavalry and a peaked cap with a cap badge based on the flag of the Wuchang revolutionaries of 1911. The swords they carry are of Japanese make, as were many in use in China at this time. (C. Noda Collection)

ABOVE RIGHT Chang Tso-lin, Warlord of Manchuria and one of the most powerful men in China during the 1920s. His dress uniform would be light blue with gold epaulettes and collar. For many other Warlords the collar would have been even gaudier; some would have designed their own gold decoration, and it is rare to find two identical uniforms. (Author's Collection)

- 1932 January** Japanese proclaim the new state of Manchukuo in Manchuria, with last emperor of China, Pu-Yi, as head of state.
- January-May** Shanghai incident: Japanese attack the city and are held off by 19th Route Army.
- 1933 January-March** Japanese invade Jehol province in north-east China.
- April** Fourth encirclement campaign.
- December** Fifth encirclement campaign is successful; Communists in danger.
- 1934 October** Encircled Communists move out of their base and begin 'Long March' - 100,000 people begin the march.
- 1935 October** Communists reach new base in Yen-an, Shensi province. Only 10,000 people are left - the rest have been lost through death or desertion.
- 1936 December** 'Shansi' incident: Chiang Kai-shek kidnapped while in Shansi and forced to agree to a 'united front' with the Communists to fight the Japanese invaders instead of each other.
- 1937 July** 'Marco Polo Bridge' incident: Japanese use a clash on the border as an excuse to invade the rest of China and almost immediately capture Peking.
- November** Japanese take Shanghai after hard fighting.
- December** 'Puppet' Provisional Government formed in Peking; Nanking, capital of Nationalist China, falls and Japanese kill thousands of Chinese in the 'Rape of Nanking'.
- 1938 March** Puppet Reformed Government established in Nanking; Japanese army defeated in Battle of Taierhchuang.



Three Warlord soldiers of the early 1920s stand on a road near the battlefield wearing a good cross section of uniform of the period. The man in the centre wears a fur hat with ear flaps down and the other two wear peaked caps made of cotton. All wear padded cotton jackets and trousers of various shades of grey-green, with the one in the centre wearing a lighter shade. Two of the soldiers have unit numbers on their collar patches. The man on the right carries a fighting sword with a scarf tied to the handle possibly as a field sign. (Hulton Getty)



Soldiers of the Warlord Wu Pei-fu slow march in review in 1923. They are well turned out for the period, and are evidence that their commander was one of the better generals in China. Their uniforms are grey-green cotton with red facings with the five-coloured star on the peaked cap. All their rifles are the Hanyang 88 copy of the Mauser 88 made in various arsenals in China. (Vitetti archive)



- October** Japanese take Canton, Nationalist government moves to Chungking.
- 1939 March** Japanese take Nanchang.
- 1940 March** Wang Ching-wei forms puppet Reorganised government in Nanking; this becomes the puppet government for all occupied China.
- August, September** Communist 'Hundred Regiments' campaign defeated.
- 1941 January** 'New 4th Army' incident: Nationalists turn on their Communist allies and try to destroy Communist units under their command. This leads to the unofficial end of the united front against Japan.
- 1942/43** Stalemate in China as Japan withdraws troops for use in conquests in south-east Asia and Nationalists and Communists prepare for expected Civil War.
- 1944 June-October** Japanese ICHIGO offensive, large areas of Nationalist-held China conquered.
- 1945 September** Japanese surrender; Nationalists with US help move into Japanese-held territory. Communists with Soviet help move into Manchuria and make it their stronghold.

Soldiers practise loading their Mauser carbines in 1923, as part of the expansion that all Warlord armies were undertaking ready for the decisive fighting in 1924/25. These soldiers of Wu Pei-Fu's army were well drilled and prepared for the coming campaign, but their commander was eventually beaten by sheer weight of numbers. They carry cavalry carbines but have the red facings of the infantry, so the carbines were perhaps being used as training rifles. (Vitetti archive)



<b>1946</b>	<b>May</b>	Nationalists move into Manchuria.
	<b>July</b>	Heavy fighting begins in Civil War.
<b>1947</b>	<b>April-May</b>	Communist victories at Taian and Mengliangku.
	<b>November</b>	Communist victory at Battle of Shihchiachuang.
<b>1948</b>	<b>March</b>	Communists take Jilin. Battle of Luoyang.
	<b>May</b>	Battle of Kaifeng ends in stalemate.
	<b>September</b>	Battle of Jinan; final Communist assault in Manchuria.
	<b>October</b>	Battle of Huai-Hai; Nationalists lose 500,000 men.
<b>1949</b>	<b>January</b>	Peking surrenders.
	<b>April</b>	Nanking falls.
	<b>May</b>	Shanghai falls.
	<b>September</b>	Chiang Kai-shek flees to the island of Taiwan with his government.
	<b>October</b>	People's Republic of China established.

### **The 1911 Revolution**

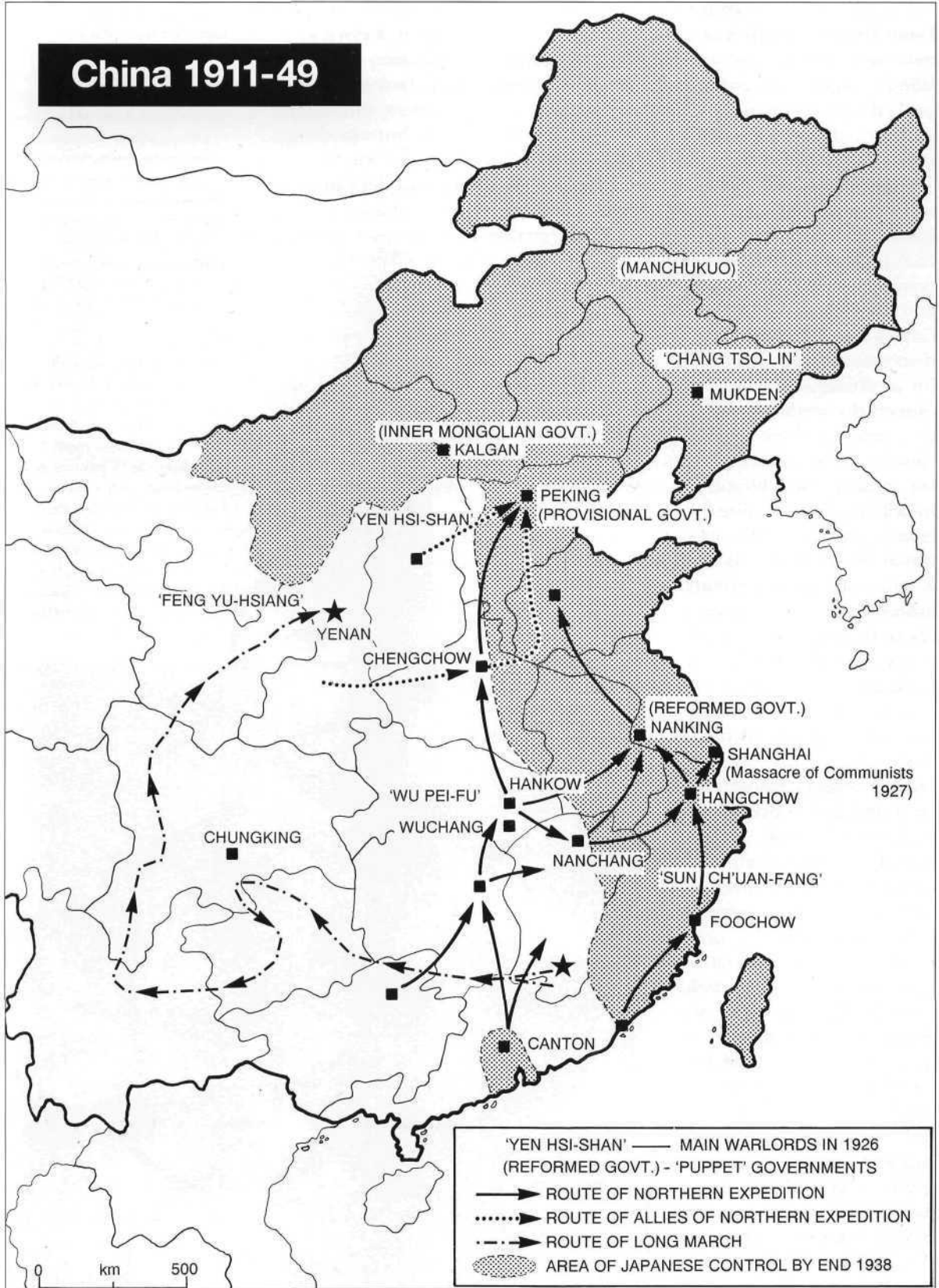
The Manchu dynasty had been in decline for many years and had faced many rebellions in the 19th century which it had managed to quell. With the accession of the two-year-old Pu-Yi as emperor, in 1908, its days were numbered.

A mutiny of the Imperial army garrison at Wuchang soon escalated into all-out rebellion, and when the commander of the main Imperial Army, Yuan Shih-k'ai, came out in favour of a new constitutional monarchy, the days of the emperor holding real power in China were over. Because the idea of a monarchy was so deep seated in the minds of the Chinese people, the new government allowed the emperor to continue to live in the forbidden city as a figurehead. The reality of the revolution was that power had now passed to the military men who had kept the emperor in power.

## **THE IMPERIAL ARMY**

The Chinese army up to 1911 was a mixture of old and new, with some parts of the army dressed in the Western style and using the latest weaponry and other units looking like something out of the Middle Ages. With the defeat of the Chinese army in the Sino-Japanese war of 1894 and the Boxer Rebellion in 1901, many Chinese militarists realised that the army had to modernise quickly or face further defeats and humiliations. Individual commanders were given permission to set up modern armies, and these varied greatly since there was no central control over their development. By 1911, when the army at Wuchang rebelled against the Manchu dynasty, the Imperial Army had approximately 200,000 men in these modernised armies, which were known as the Lu-chun. Besides these well-equipped troops there were about 270,000 provincial troops, who were poorly trained and equipped, and about 55,000 Green Standard militia. Unfortunately for the Imperialists, it was the modernised armies which rebelled and the poorer troops of the Provincial and Green Standard militias that stayed loyal to the dynasty.

# China 1911-49



## Imperial Army Uniforms

From 1910 the soldiers of the Imperial Chinese Army were dressed in a new Westernised uniform which had winter and summer versions. Winter uniforms were in dark blue with branch colour facings on the peaked cap, shoulder bars and sleeve stripes. Trousers were quite baggy, and tucked into white gaiters which fastened with small buttons down the side and had a strap that went under the shoe.

Rank was shown by the number of black stripes around the cap and the number of branch colour stripes on the arm of the jacket - one for a private, two for a corporal and three for a sergeant. Cap badges were a gold disc with a dragon design for ordinary soldiers. For officers there was a stone in the centre; these stones came in three colours - red for high ranks, blue for middle ranks and white for lower ranks. Officers' winter service uniforms had a stripe in branch colour around the lower sleeve; above this one, two or three black stripes indicated rank, and above these one, two or three gold discs showed the grade of rank. The officers' caps had no branch colours around the band but had between one and three black stripes round the band; the grade of the rank was denoted by one, two or three vertical stripes at the side.

Officers' parade uniforms consisted of a dark blue frock coat with an Austrian knot on the sleeve in gold or silver (gold for combat units infantry, cavalry and so on, and silver for administration and support staff). Officers' collars had a design of a dragon with a stone in its mouth on each side, with the colour of the stone matching the colour of the



BELOW LEFT Marshal Tsao-lun, head of the Chihli military clique in 1923. He wears full dress uniform of light blue with gold collar, cuffs and epaulettes. The awards on his left breast are all national awards issued by the central government, while the clutch of medals on the right breast are locally issued awards. Warlords would design their own awards and hand them out to their officers and friendly fellow Warlords like trinkets. (Gene Christian)

BELOW So-called 'government troops' search a village for bandits in 1923; a more 'rag tag' bunch would be hard to find. Most of them wear straw sandals instead of shoes and all of them wear cotton peaked caps. Notice that a few of them carry umbrellas for shelter from the sun and rain, and there are at least three different types of rifle in use in this one small unit. (Hulton Getty)



stone on the cap badge. Around the top and front of the collar was gold or silver braid, with the number of bands between one and three indicating the rank; the nine grades of ranks on collars went from one line of braid with a white stone in the dragon's mouth for the rank of lieutenant to three lines of braid with a red stone in the dragon's mouth for a general.

Officers' caps had a number of gold or silver stripes around the band and gold stripes vertically at the side to indicate rank and grade respectively. Epaulettes were woven gold or silver cord; rank was shown by the edging of the cord, lower ranks had red edging and gold and silver centres, middle ranks had gold or silver edging and red centres and the highest ranks had solid gold and silver cord. Grades of ranks were shown by one, two or three gold or silver buttons on top of the epaulettes.

Summer uniforms were in a light khaki cotton in the same style as the winter uniform but in a lighter material. Puttees would sometimes replace the gaiters in the summer uniform, especially for active service. For lower ranking soldiers the ranks on the summer uniforms were shown by black chevrons on the upper right arm.

**The Imperial Guard Division** was formed in 1908 and recruited exclusively from Manchus until 1910, when recruits were accepted from all parts of China. Guards wore a different uniform from the rest of the army: it was grey, with the same branch colours and red piping around the top of the peaked cap. Officers wore shoulder boards of woven silver cord similar to those on the dress uniform. According to the 1910 regulations, the gendarmerie, or military police, wore a distinct uniform in

blue-grey with red facings and a hat which was a grey shako with red band and a black leather peak.

Both winter and summer uniforms were worn by Imperialist troops during the fighting in 1911/12, and the majority of soldiers had been issued with the 1910 regulation uniform by the time fighting broke out.

**The Provincial and Green Standard troops**, who were the second line and militia soldiers of the Imperial Army, wore old and obsolete uniforms. Many of them still had turbans, as worn by the army in the 19th century. These units were soon to be disbanded so no new supplies of uniform or equipment would have been issued to them.

# THE REPUBLICAN ARMY

## Republican Uniforms

During the Revolution the Republicans had approximately 800,000 men under arms, and the majority of these were volunteers who returned home after the emperor abdicated. Many of the revolutionaries were mutinous soldiers, and they would have worn their Imperial uniforms, often without bothering to remove their old insignia. They also wore armbands to distinguish them from the Imperialists; one eyewitness described them as wearing 'a black cotton uniform with a white band round the peaked cap, white or grey puttees or long trousers'. Many of the revolutionaries were students or military cadets and they would have worn their university uniforms. Others are described as having worn semi-civilian dress, which suggests that it was at least in some part military.

The rebels were also often distinguished by the large canvas cartridge belts they wore, which would have been manufactured locally.

For a few years after the Revolution, until the issue of new dress regulations in 1914, the uniforms of the Republic went through a number of changes. Two new forms of cap badge were worn, each for a short period. One was a plain gold five-pointed star. The other was based on the flag of the Revolution, the 'Wuchang' flag, named after the city where the Revolution had broken out. In the centre of the flag was a symbol made up of a circle of nine discs, each with a ray coming out from it, and on the end of each ray another disc; the badge was a silver version of this. These badges were never universally adopted. The next national cap badge was the five-coloured star that was adopted as the army cap badge in 1914.

**Soldiers of the Warlord Sun Ch'uan-fang prepare to defend Shanghai in 1927 from the Northern Expedition. The unusual headgear was worn only by this particular army, and was improvised from available supplies. This unit is quite well equipped and all the men have the same Hanyang rifle, so these might well be an elite or bodyguard unit. (Popperfoto)**



## THE WARLORDS

### Warlord Conflicts

During the period 1916 to 1928 provincial governors, or *tuchans*, fought for power in a divided China. With no strong central government various military strongmen - Warlords - tried to build up power bases, forming alliances or 'cliques' with the aim of eventually controlling all China. When Warlords made alliances with each other they could sometimes put up to half a million men into the field at a time. Warlords would try to lend some legitimacy to their regimes by capturing Peking and forming a government there. However, these military dictatorships were usually short-lived; the next set of Warlords would soon move in to take their place. Disputes between Warlords might be settled by payment of bribes, and one army might make a strategic retreat if the commanding Warlord was paid enough. Warlords were often aware that their career could be cut short and they might have to make a dash for the

nearest foreign concession. There a wise Warlord could live out his retirement in luxury on the proceeds of his ill-gotten gains. Indeed, at one time there were nearly 100 retired Warlords in the city of Tientsin alone.

### Principal Warlords

**Chang Ts'ung-ch'ang (1881-1932), 'Dog Meat General'.**

An extremely brutal Warlord who ruled Shantung province for a few years.

**Chang Tso-lin (1873-1928), 'Tiger of the North', leader of Fengtien clique.**

He controlled Manchuria for many years, until he was defeated in 1928.

**Wu Pei-fu (1874-1939), 'Jade Marshal', leader of Chihli clique.** One of the best military brains in China; the main adversary for Chang Tso-lin.

**Yen Hsi-shan (1883-1960), 'Model Governor'.** Ruler of Shansi province from 1912 to 1949 and the greatest survivor among Warlords.

**Feng Yu-hsiang (1882-1948), 'Christian Warlord', leader of Kuominchun clique.** A colourful character who was a converted Baptist and baptised his men with a hosepipe.

**Sun Ch'uan-fang (1885-1935), 'Nanking Warlord', leader 'League of Five Provinces'.** Powerful Warlord of eastern China.



Boy soldiers of the Warlord Sun Ch'uan-fang hold an outpost in Kiangsu in 1927, waiting for the advancing Nationalists. Children were often recruited into Warlord armies out of desperation when no other troops were available. They wear peaked caps with five-coloured stars on and the boy on the right has collar and shoulder insignia on his uniform. (Hulton Getty)

### Warlord Armies

Warlord armies were the armies of *tuchans*, who controlled China for over ten years, from 1916 to 1928. This period is often called the era of 'High Warlordism', when Warlords were at their most powerful and the central government was at its weakest. Fighting between the various Warlords went on all the time; one or other would gain the upper hand, but none of them ever gained full control of China.

The armies that the Warlords used in these conflicts varied greatly in quality and quantity, from armed rabble only good for the slaughter of innocent peasants to well-dressed, well-trained, well-equipped and disciplined armies. According to Western

TABLE 1  
Branch Colours of Chinese Armies

	Infantry	Cavalry	Artillery	Military Police	Engineers/Pioneers	Transport
<b>Imperial</b> 1910	Red	White	Yellow	-	Blue	Black
<b>Warlord/Republican</b> 1912-28	Red	Yellow	Blue	Pink	White	Black
<b>Nationalists</b> 1930s-40s	Red	Yellow	Blue	Crimson	White	Black
<b>Manchukuo</b> 1932-45	Red	Green	Yellow	Black	Purple	Silver

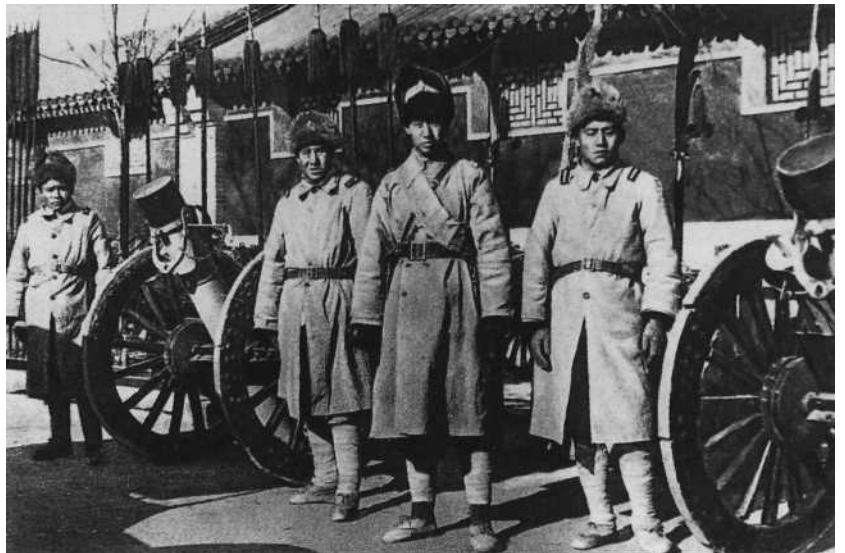


**Soldiers of the 'Young Marshal' Chang Hsueh-liang march past him in review in Mukden in 1930 shortly after he had pledged his forces to the Nationalist cause. These troops soon were to be defeated by the Japanese invaders. Their uniforms include the peaked cap worn mainly by northern soldiers at the time. (Peter Newark's Military Pictures)**

observers, the best of the Warlords' troops compared quite favourably with European armies of the time.

All Warlords had elite units which were always in the thick of the action, and many had so-called 'Dare to Die' units which were virtual suicide squads, who would be thrown against their enemies in attacks from which few returned. One Fengtien unit lost 5,000 men in a single attack. Soldiers of this calibre were in the minority' the vast majority did not receive the training or the equipment necessary to create a professional force; they were mere cannon fodder.

Men joined the army to survive and to fend off hunger, and their loyalty was to whoever kept them fed and clothed. Ordinary soldiers were despised by the rest of Chinese society and seen as the lowest of the low. This view of the Chinese military by the people was made worse by the fact that there were so many armies roaming around China at that time, helping themselves to whatever they wanted, be it livestock to eat or farmers' sons as pressed recruits. Not all Warlords and their armies were



**Some improvised artillery in use by the Nationalists in their fighting with the Christian Warlord Feng Yu-hsiang in 1930. The heavy Stokes mortars are mounted on cartwheels to produce makeshift field pieces. The soldiers all wear fur hats - essential against the cold in that part of China. (Peter Newark's Military Pictures)**



so bad: some more enlightened commanders looked after their soldiers' welfare and insisted that their armies pay for goods they took from the people; others tried to improve their armies' military capabilities with good training, imported European arms and foreign instructors.

Modern war methods were used by one Warlord or the other, with armoured trains, tanks and armoured cars all in use in the fighting in the 1920s. Chang Tso-lin had Renault FT-17 light tanks, and his rival, Wu P'ei-fu, had Citroen-Kegresse half-track armoured cars. The most powerful Warlords even had quite large airforces; Chang Tso-lin's had almost 100 aircraft of the latest types, including Breguet-14 light bombers.

Just about every kind of rifle and machine-gun available was also used, and some weapons were manufactured in arsenals set up by the Warlords. Machine-guns were highly prized, since until the mid-1920s there were only about 1,000 in total in China. The many kinds of weapon in use in one army made it very difficult for supply officers to provide their units with ammunition. As a result most soldiers would have had only a few rounds.

Artillery was always in short supply and most field guns were of small calibre - often mountain guns, which were easier to handle. To make up for the lack of field artillery, many Warlord armies used mortars of the Stokes design, and these were produced in some quite large calibres, up to 8in. Artillery caused relatively few casualties and does not seem to have been effectively used by Warlord armies.

There is no way that the average Warlord army could be described as an efficient fighting machine; until the Northern Expedition of 1926 all the Warlord army had to fight were other Warlord armies. Against the better disciplined and motivated Nationalists in the fighting in 1926-28, they were usually quickly defeated.

### **White Russians in Warlord Armies**

Quite a few Warlords employed White Russian refugees to fight, and their combat experience was put to good use. Chang t'sung-ch'ang, the 'Dog Meat General', was one of the main recruiters of White Russians, with up to 4,600 in his army. He used them to crew armoured trains, which were a major weapon in the Warlord's armoury. Chang also had a so-called 'foreign legion' made up of 700 White Russians, 300 Japanese and two Chinese companies. The Manchurian Warlord Chang Tso-lin also used White Russians and had a unit known as the Mukden Lancers in his army. They wore a special uniform in dark green with yellow leather boots and were armed with a lance, a Mauser pistol and a beheading sword. Apart from elite units such as this, most White Russians wore the same uniform as their Chinese comrades.



**Nationalist General Tsai Ting-kai, hero of Shanghai in 1932. He and his 19th Army valiantly defended the city against the Japanese, and he became a national hero. He wears the standard Nationalist officer's uniform, with his collar insignia of three triangles for general. His field cap carries the usual sun emblem of the Nationalists. (Gene Christian)**



## Warlord Uniforms

A new uniform was introduced for the army in 1914, and this became the basis for uniforms worn throughout the Warlord period. It consisted of a grey-green cotton uniform with a peaked cap which had a five-coloured star on. Branch colours were shown on the band of the cap and on the collar patches and shoulder bars. Ranks were indicated by the number of silver or gold stars on the shoulder bars - one for a private, two for a private 1st class and three for a lance-corporal. The higher ranks had a gold stripe down the centre of the bar; on these, one star was for corporal, two for sergeant and three for staff sergeant. For officers there were three stripes on the bar in silver and gold; for lower ranking officers the two outer stripes were silver and the centre one gold. On these

bars there was one star for 2nd lieutenant, two for lieutenant and three for captain. The next ranks up had two gold outer stripes and a silver centre one, with one star for major, two for lieutenant-colonel and three for colonel. For the highest ranking officers the shoulder bars were all gold, with one star for major-general, two for lieutenant-general and three for general (see Table 2).

Officers' ranks could also be shown by the number of red stripes down the trousers - one for a company officer, two for a regimental or battalion officer and three for a general officer.

Unit numbers were shown on the collar patches, using a confusing system of Roman, Arabic and Chinese numerals. The soldier's battalion number was shown on the left collar patch with Roman numerals, and his regiment on the right collar with Arabic numerals. The individual soldier's number was shown on the left collar patch, using Chinese characters. When these numbers were worn they were not always complete and in the confused situation among Chinese armies of the time only the best organised units would have had them.

By the early 1920s the Warlord armies were wearing a variety of uniforms all based loosely on the 1914 uniform. Northern soldiers wore a padded cotton jacket and trousers which were usually grey or grey-green. Thick woollen grey puttees were worn up to the knees to keep the

**TOP** Nationalist soldiers in trenches near Shanghai in 1932 prepare to fight off the Japanese invaders. All wear the peaked cap worn by northern Nationalist troops and have blanket rolls over their shoulders. Their rifles are the Hanyang 88 copy of the German Mauser 88, produced in China in large numbers. (Fusiliers' Museum, Lancashire)

**ABOVE** More Nationalist troops shoot from behind a barricade in the city of Shanghai in March 1932, when they desperately fought off the Japanese. These men belong to the 19th Route Army, which shocked the world by beating off the Japanese. The peaked cap with Nationalist sun emblem is again worn and the rifles are Hanyang 88s. (Fusiliers' Museum, Lancashire)



**Cadets of the Communist military academy pose for the camera in 1936. These cadets would go on to be the officers in the Civil War ten years later. They are quite smartly dressed, three of them in uniforms of grey cotton with red star cap badges. (Xinhua News Agency)**

soldiers warm in the bitter climate of northern China and Manchuria. Northern headgear was either a fur hat with ear flaps that could be worn up or down, or a peaked cotton cap which had a smaller crown than the type worn in the rest of China.

Southern soldiers wore a lighter cotton uniform in light khaki or grey, with a cotton peaked cap which bore a five-coloured star badge. Trousers were often worn without puttees, and straw sandals were worn

because of a shortage of good shoes. The soldiers of the southern Warlord armies were generally more poorly equipped for colder climates, and when campaigning in winter suffered greatly because of this. Shoes were one of a Warlord soldier's greatest problems: the canvas shoes worn by most soon wore out on the march or disintegrated in the wet. Soldiers would often buy their own shoes from markets or simply take them from the long-suffering peasantry. A soldier's kit would be pretty basic, and although some troops had backpacks, most had to do with a haversack or bundle, which was worn across the shoulder. One item of kit often used by the Warlord soldier was an umbrella, which was very useful for sheltering from both sun and rain.

While most Warlords were intent on carving out as much territory as possible for themselves, officially they were loyal to the central government in Peking. So no Warlord dressed his army in non-government uniforms, and no Warlord raised his own flag over the territory he controlled; all fought, at least officially, under the flag of the Republic. This



**Officers of the Communist Second Front army in Shansi province, 1937, all wear cotton uniforms in various colours and field caps with red stars sewn on the front. The caps have ear flaps, which on these men are all tied up on top of their heads. Although youthful, these officers may already have seen a great deal of combat in the previous few years. (Xinhua News Agency)**



**Mao Tse-tung, leader of the Communist Party, and Chu Te, head of the People's Liberation Army, in Shensi province at the end of the Long March. Both wear blue-grey cotton uniforms with the new design of cap of the time. Both Mao and Chu have red stars sewn on to their caps, but only Chu has the red insignia on his collar; he also has a red star on a piece of white cloth sewn loosely on his breast pocket. (Xinhua News Agency)**

meant that when two opposing armies met on the battlefield, they were often wearing the same uniform, so field signs had to be worn to distinguish friend from foe. The usual form of field sign was an armband, worn on the upper left arm. The armbands were usually made from linen and were either red, blue, green or white. Often the armband would have the name of the commanding officer stitched onto it in white or, in the case of white armbands, black characters. Others had the name of the relevant army, such as the 'National Pacification Army' of Chang Tso-lin. Still others had white discs on a coloured background with black Chinese characters in the centre. Armbands could easily be replaced in battle, allowing units to change sides in the middle of an engagement if their unit commander decided to betray his commanding general.

Local changes were sometimes made to headgear. For example, in the Chihli army some of the soldiers tied scarves around their peaked caps. Due to shortages of official headgear, improvisation was also necessary, as in the army of the Warlord Sun Ch'uan-fang, which in 1927 wore a locally produced felt hat which can only be described as of 'Robin Hood' style, with the sides folded up and fastened high at the back. The soldiers of the Christian Warlord Feng Yu-hsiang

wore a summer sun hat of grey cotton, which resembled a bathing cap and had a 4in. brim.

None of these forms of headgear would have protected the soldier's head, but as with all other types of equipment, steel helmets were in short supply and were a rarity in Warlord units. The only unit known to have worn them was part of Wu Pei-fu's Third Division, which became known as the 'Tin Hat Brigade'. Chang Ts'ung-ch'ang did receive a shipment of arms in 1928 which included steel helmets, but it is doubtful that they reached his army before his defeat.

Warlords and high-ranking officers wore smartened up versions of the ordinary soldier's uniform in the field, but their dress uniform was much grander. Officers' dress uniform was light blue and was worn with a kepi style hat which had a white plume. There was gold decoration around the kepi and on the collar and cuffs, and the gold epaulettes had a fringe. Epaulettes also had a system of stars to denote rank. Other details varied, and Warlords would often compete to see who could wear the most gold and the most awards and medals on their chests. They awarded themselves honours and medals, usually with their own face adorning them, and they handed these out to their officers and to other friendly Warlords. This led to some Warlords looking like strutting peacocks, with their feathers, sashes and gold decorations. However, some went to other extremes: the Christian Warlord Feng Yu-hsiang liked to dress as scruffily as possible in order to feel as one with his troops; he was described as looking like a 'rough farm boy'.

# ORGANISATION

The unit organisation of the Imperial, Republican and Nationalist armies was basically the same up to divisional level.

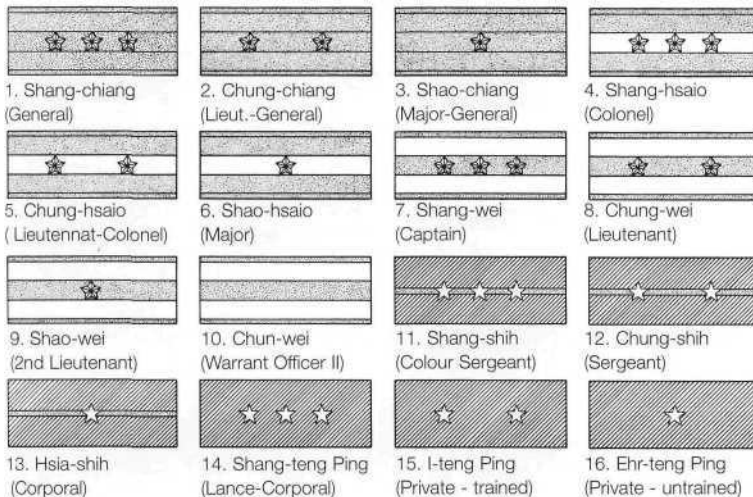
Squad	Section/Platoon	Company	Battalion	Regiment	Brigade
14 men	42 men (3 Squads)	126 men (3 Sections)	504 men (4 Companies)	1,512 men (3 Battalions)	3,024 men (2 Regiments)

The strength of divisions was slightly different; the Imperial division having a full strength of 12,368 men, the Republican division 12,512 men and the Nationalist division 10,923 men. In the British army the next level above division would be the corps. This did not exist in Chinese armies of this period. In its place were two levels of army: the field army and the group army. The field army consisted of two divisions and the group army consisted of three field armies. Thus an average group army had a strength of 60,000-80,000 men - the same as a British army.

The Communists in the 1920s and 1930s had little or no unit structure. Their main armies were the 8th Route Army and the New 4th Army. The former went from 80,000 in 1937 to 550,000 in 1944, and the latter went from 12,000 in 1937 to 294,000 in 1944. With the rapid

expansion of the Communist forces during the Civil War, after 1946 the Communists adopted Nationalist unit structure but with larger numbers per unit. In the Civil War a Communist battalion had 852 men, a regiment 3,242 men and a division around 10,000. By 1949 the People's Liberation Army had 219 divisions in 73 armies, which were in 23 group armies.

TABLE 2  
**THE CHINESE REPUBLICAN ARMY  
(Chung-kuo Lu-chiin) 1912-1929**



## THE NATIONALIST ARMY

The Nationalist Army of China began life as the army of the Kuomintang political party founded by Sun Yat-sen. Sun realised that the Warlords would not relinquish power peacefully and that the only

1-3: Shoulder bars with three gold stripes, piped gold, 3-1 gold stars. 4-6: Shoulder-bars with two gold outer stripes, one silver centre stripe, piped gold, 3-1 gold stars. 7-10: Shoulder-bars with two silver outer stripes, one gold centre stripe, piped gold, 3-1 gold stars. 11-13: Red shoulder-bars with narrow gold centre stripe, 3-1 yellow stars. 14-16: Red shoulder-bars with 3-1 yellow stars.  
Branch-colour collar-patches: Infantry - red: Cavalry - yellow: Artillery - blue: Engineers - white: Transport - black: Medical - dark green: Military Police - pink: Pay Corps - crimson.

Note. The Manchukuo Army wore this rank and branch insignia from March 1932 to May 1937.

way to achieve the democracy he wanted for China was by force. So he formed the Kuomintang Army in 1922 and set up a military academy at Whampoa, with Soviet instructors to train the officers. By making alliances with the local Warlords around the Kuomintang base of Canton, the new army survived long enough to train for the coming Northern Expedition. When Sun Yat-sen died, in 1925, his successor Chiang Kai-shek continued to plan the Warlords' overthrow and finally launched the Northern Expedition in 1926. By 1928 the main Warlords had been defeated and Chiang set up a new government in Nanking; the Kuomintang Army became the National Army of China.

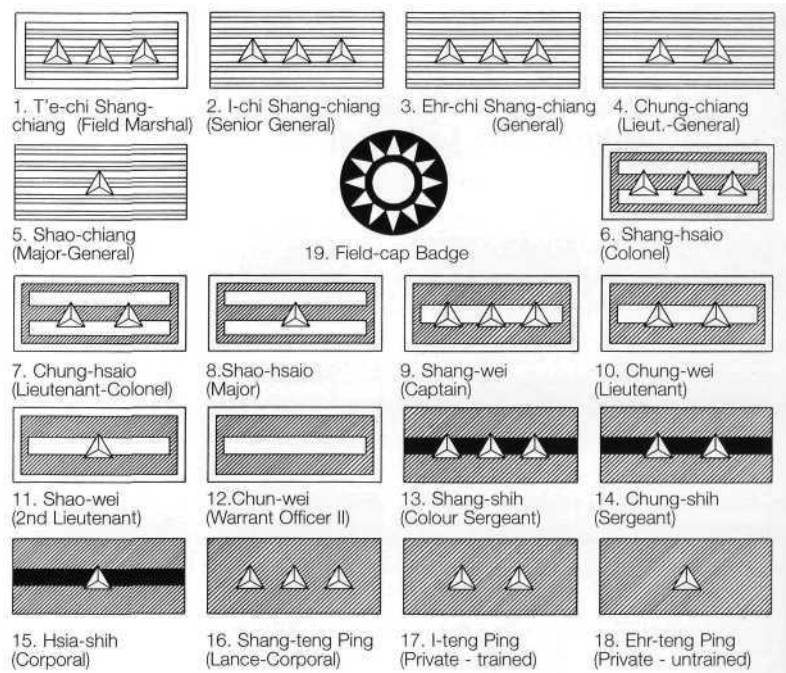
### Nationalist Uniforms 1920-28

The very earliest Nationalist uniforms consisted of a loose-fitting cotton shirt and trousers with a canvas sun hat. Even for Chinese uniforms these were not very martial looking, and as soon as better uniforms became available they were replaced. In 1922 a new uniform was designed for the Kuomintang Army. It was described in the press as the 'new uniform of the warriors of Sun Yat-sen'. It consisted of a cotton peaked cap with a black band and the five-coloured star cap badge. The jacket was light khaki in colour and had red collar and shoulder insignia with the same system of ranks as the other armies of China at that time. Light khaki shorts and black woollen puttees finished off the new uniform, which was available in limited numbers only.

By the time of the Northern Expedition of 1926 the Nationalists were wearing their own uniform, made from light brown cotton with the Nationalist sun emblem on the peaked cap. Trousers were worn with or without puttees. Riding breeches and leather gaiters were popular with officers. No rank distinctions were normally worn, although a few high-ranking officers did improvise by wearing Republican shoulder ranks on the left upper arm with a small Nationalist sun badge

RIGHT Manchukuo cavalry on the march on their Mongolian ponies, which were small and hardy creatures. Cavalry made up an important part of the Manchukuo army, totalling about 25,000 men. They wear early fur hats, later replaced with a neater model. They have the five-coloured enamel star cap badge with the same colours as the old Chinese Republican badge but in a different order. Nearly all equipment and weaponry of the army would have been Japanese - as are these soldiers'. (Popperfoto)

TABLE 3  
Chinese Nationalist Army  
(Chung-kuo Lu-chun) 1929-1946



1: Gold collar-patch edged gold, 3 gold triangles. 2-3: Gold collar-patch, 3 gold triangles (ranks were only distinguishable by the different gold insignia on the cuff of the dark-blue ceremonial tunic). 4-5: Gold collar-patch, 2-1 gold triangles. 6-8: Branch-colour collar-patch edged gold, 2 gold bars, 3-1 gold triangles. 9-12: Branch-colour collar-patch edged gold, 1 gold bar, 3-0 gold triangles. 13-15: Red collar-patch, dark blue centre-stripe, 3-1 gold triangles. 16-18: Red collar-patch, 3-1 gold triangles. 19: Silver sun on dark blue disc. Branch-colours: Infantry - red: Cavalry and Armour - yellow: Artillery - blue: Engineers - white: Transport - black: Medical - dark green: Military Police and Pay Corps - crimson.

Note. Collar-patches 3 (Shang-chiang) - 17 were worn on the left collar by personnel of the Chinese National Defence Army (Chung-hua Kuo-fang Lu-chun) of the 'Reorganised National Government of the Republic of China' from April 1940 to August 1945.



**BELOW** Manchukuoan Imperial Guard cavalry at the Coronation of Pu-Yi as emperor of the new Empire of Manchukuo in April 1934. They men wear Japanese khaki uniforms with the collar insignia in the branch colour of green. The pennants on their lances are yellow with in the fly vertical stripes of red, blue, white and black after the Manchukuo flag. The dress uniform of the Imperial Guard was a much more ornate uniform of 'comic opera' design. (Ugo Pericoli)

attached. The majority of early Nationalist uniforms had only a cotton name or unit patch above the left breast pocket and the cap badge as insignia.

Flags had a highly symbolic role in the Kuomintang armies of the Northern Expedition, and the Nationalist sun flag of the party was always seen in battle. Even small squads of soldiers carried their own flags, which they would have used to stir up revolutionary fervour in the men. As Warlord soldiers switched to the Nationalist side, they wore their old uniforms with the five-coloured star removed and the Nationalist sun added. The constant fighting and confusion meant that any attempt at standardising uniforms during this period was very difficult; it is rare to see two soldiers of the early Nationalist Army wearing exactly the same uniform.

### Nationalist Uniforms 1928-45

By 1930 the Nationalists' victory had brought about a certain amount of order to China, and this was reflected in the better dress of the bulk of the army. Rank insignia was introduced which consisted of collar patches in the branch colours and a series of gold triangles - from one for a private 3rd class to three for a private 1st class. The next ranks up had a black line behind the triangles - from one triangle for a corporal to three for a first sergeant. The next ranks up had a gold line behind the triangles - from 2nd lieutenant to captain, then two gold lines from major to colonel and finally the highest ranks had a gold background with one, two or three triangles going from major-general to general (see Table 3).

In the early 1930s two basic uniforms were worn by the rank and file of the Nationalist Army. The Northern troops that first faced the invading Japanese wore grey padded cotton uniforms with either fur hats, old-style peaked caps or a field cap similar in shape to a French 'kepi'; all hats had the Kuomintang sun emblem.

The southern Nationalist uniform became the standard uniform after the defeat of the northern armies in the fighting against Japan in the early 1930s. There were two versions of the southern uniform — summer and winter.



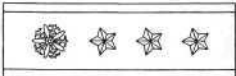
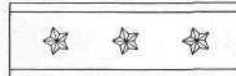
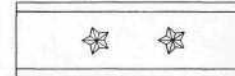
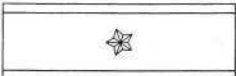
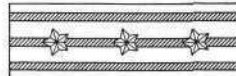

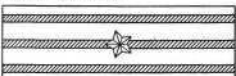

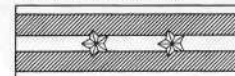
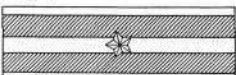
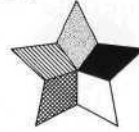
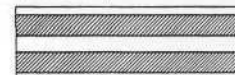

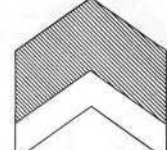







The summer uniform consisted of a light cotton khaki jacket which went from light khaki in colour to mid-brown, with many variations depending on local supplies. Jackets usually had two breast pockets and two waist pockets with five buttons down the front of the tunic and a stand and fall collar which carried the rank insignia. Above the left breast pocket was a unit patch which had a border in the branch colour - red for infantry and yellow for cavalry etc. Trousers were either breeches or long shorts in cotton and were worn with woollen puttees that came up to the knees. Headgear was either a field cap of the 'ski' type or a steel helmet, which came in various patterns.

Winter uniforms were made of padded or 'wadded' cotton material and were blue-grey in colour. They are usually described as blue uniforms that have faded, but this was not always the case: some would have been made from grey material. The padded jacket and trousers gave the wearer a 'podgy' and ungainly look but were quite effective at keeping him warm.

Steel helmets became more widely used during the 1930s, and by 1937 they were in quite widespread use in the Nationalist Army. Helmets came in a variety of types, including the German 1935 model, the French Adrian and both the British and American World War I models. Three types of Chinese-produced helmets were also in use; two were based on early Japanese helmets and one was a 'Pith'-type helmet similar to that worn by the Viet Cong in the Vietnam War.

The German 1935 model helmet was the most widely worn model from

TABLE 4  
**THE MANCHUKUO ARMY**  
**(Man-chou-kuo Chun) May 1937-August 1945**

		
1. Tsung-ssu-ling (Field Marshal)	2. Shang-chiang (General)	3. Chung-chiang (Lieutenant-General)
		
4. Shao-chiang (Major General)	5. Shang-hsaio (Colonel)	6. Chung-hsaio (Lieutenant-Colonel)
		
7. Shao-hsaio (Major)	8. Shang-wei (Captain)	9. Chung-wei (Lieutenant)
		
10. Shao-wei (2nd Lieutenant)	20. Field cap badge	11. Chun-wei (Warrant Officer II)
		
12. Shang-shih (Colour Sergeant)	15. Shao-shih Ch'in-wu-che (Acting Corporal) arm-badge	13. Chung-shih (Sergeant)
		
14. Shao-shih (Corporal)	16. Shao-shih Ch'in-wu-che (Acting Corporal)	16. Shao-shih Ch'in-wu-che (Acting Corporal)
		
17. Shang-teng Ping (Lance-Corporal)	18. I-teng Ping (Private - trained)	19. Ehr-teng Ping (Private - untrained)

1: Gold shoulder-bars piped gold, 3 gold stars, 1 gold orchid. 2-4: Gold shoulder-bars piped gold, 3-1 gold stars. 5-7: Maroon shoulder-bars piped gold, 2 gold stripes, 3-1 gold stars. 8-11: Maroon shoulder-bars piped gold, 1 gold stripe, 3-0 gold stars. 12-14: Maroon shoulder-bars, 1 gold stripe, 3-1 gold stars. 15: Red (upper) gold (lower) arm-badge. 16-19: Maroon shoulder-bars, 3-1 yellow stars. 20: Five-coloured cap-badge - clockwise yellow (top) - black - white - blue - red.  
 Branch-colour collar-patches: Infantry - scarlet: Cavalry - light green: Artillery - yellow: Engineers - brown: Service Corps - dark blue: (Supply) - silver-grey: Medical - dark green: Veterinary Corps - purple: Legal Services - white: Band - blue: Airforce - light blue: Gendarmerie - black.

Note. Shoulder-bars 2-14, 16-19 were worn by personnel of the Inner Mongolian Army (Men-chu Chun) November 1937 to August 1945, with Mongolian mid-blue replacing Manchukuo maroon.



the mid-1930s till 1949. They were still being worn in the Civil War even though the American M1 was the standard model by that time. French Adrian helmets were mostly worn by troops in the provinces bordering French Indo-China and by the 19th Division, which was an American-trained division. All helmets had the Nationalist sun emblem on the left side of the helmet or on the front, and some of the French Adrian models had a badge on the front with the sun emblem in the centre of a wreath.

After the outbreak of World War II Chiang's American allies began to supply the Nationalists large amounts of aid in the form of equipment and advisers. The Americans persuaded Chiang to send 20 divisions to India to be trained to fight in Burma on the Allied side. The troops were trained and equipped by the Americans and British and wore a mixture of their cast-off uniforms with American M1 or British helmets. When the Japanese were defeated they were airlifted back to China to become a useful addition to the Nationalist forces in the Civil War.

The officer's service uniform was khaki, usually wool, and consisted of a field cap of the German 'ski' type with the Nationalist sun emblem. On the single-breasted jacket were two breast pockets and two waist pockets with the rank shown on the collar by the usual rank patches. Trousers were of a Western style, worn without puttees, although in the field, officers would often revert to their breeches and puttees.

Air force personnel were part of the army and wore the same basic uniform as army officers but with different rank insignia, worn on the collar and cuffs of the jacket. Air force officers wore a peaked cap similar to the US model, which was later adopted by army officers as well.

New dress uniforms were introduced for higher ranking officers. They consisted of a dark blue jacket and trousers and kepi. The jacket had gold embroidery on the stiff collar and cuffs and gold epaulettes with fringes. There was also gold embroidery on the peak of the kepi, which had stripes of gold braid around the sides. The cap badge was a Nationalist sun emblem with a floral wreath of very intricate design around it. Ranks were shown on the dress uniform by means of a series of gold rings, flower blossoms and stripes on the sleeve of the jacket. For example, for the rank of 'One Grade High General' the sleeve had three



**A Japanese instructor trains troops of the puppet Reformed Government army in 1939. They wear khaki cotton uniforms with Japanese field caps with puppet insignia added. These men belonged to the pacification department of the government and would have taken part in anti-guerrilla operations. (Author's Collection)**



**Jen Yuan-tao, minister of pacification in the Reformed Government of China set up by the Japanese in Nanking in 1938. He wears a Japanese officer's uniform with regime insignia - an enamel flower with five different coloured petals. The colours (clockwise from top) are red, black, white, blue and yellow. The collar insignia is a gold bar with two eight-pointed stars indicating he is a lieutenant-general. (Author's Collection)**

gold stripes with three flower blossoms above and two gold rings above them.

Officers also wore ceremonial daggers or dirks, which were similar to the type worn by the various German armed forces and political groups in the 1930s and 1940s.

### **Nationalists Versus Communists 1927-45**

The alliance between the Nationalist Party and the Communist Party in China was always fragile, their joint hatred of the Warlords the only thing that kept it together. When Chiang Kai-shek decided to wipe out his Communist allies in 1927, he began 20 years of fighting. After the Nationalists' victory over the Warlords in 1928, Chiang then turned his attention to the Communists. In a series of extermination campaigns he tried to eradicate the bases or 'soviets' that were under Communist control, and by 1934 it seemed he had finally succeeded. The main soviet in Kiangsi was surrounded by 800,000 Nationalists and all seemed hopeless. Then the Communists broke out and began the epic 'Long March' - which would cover some 3,000 miles - to

a new base in Shensi province, from where they would continue their fighting.

Warfare between the Nationalists and the Communists continued even when the Japanese began their incursions into Chinese territory. The Nationalists were accused of being more concerned with defeating the Communists than fighting the Japanese, although some Nationalist officers were unhappy with this tactic. This unhappiness with Chiang's policy of attacking the Communists rather than facing up to the invading Japanese came to a head in the famous 'Shansi' incident of 1936. Chiang was visiting some of his soldiers in Shansi province because they had refused to attack the Communists, when he was kidnapped by the 'Young marshal' Chiang Hsi-yuang. Chiang was forced to agree to

form a united front with the Communists to fight the Japanese. This uneasy alliance held until 1941, when the Nationalists attacked a Communist unit, the New 4th Army, which was under Nationalist command. After this incident any pretence of co-operation ended, and for the next few years neither side made any real effort to fight the Japanese on a large scale. They were both preparing for the Civil War they believed would follow an Allied victory over Japan. The end of World War II, in August 1945, started a period of 'false' peace, with attempts at talks failing. Both the Nationalists and the Communists were now spoiling for a fight, and the fight began in earnest in 1946.

### **Communist Army Titles**

Chi-t'uan-chun Ssu-ling-yuan	Group Army Commanding Officer
Chun Ssu-ling-yuan	Army Commanding Officer
Shih Ssu-ling-yuan	Divisional Commanding Officer
Lu Ssu-ling-yuan	Brigade Commanding Officer
T'uan-chang	Regimental Officer
Fu T'uan-chang	Deputy Regimental Commander
Ying-chang	Battalion Commander
Lien-chang	Company Commander
Fu Lien-chang	Deputy Company Commander
P'ai-chang	Platoon Commander
Fu P'ai-chang	Deputy Platoon Commander
Pan-chang	Squad Commander
Fu Pan-chang	Deputy Squad Commander
Chan-shih	Fighter

- 1: Imperial Army soldier, 1911
- 2: Imperial Army lieutenant, parade uniform, 1911
- 3: Republican Army executioner, 1912
- 4: Dragon decoration from A2's collar



3

1

2

- 1: Warlord soldier, Fengtien Army, 1924
- 2: Soldier, 'Tin Hat' Brigade, 1924
- 3: Warlord soldier, 1916-28
- 4: Detail of Warlord Armies' five coloured star



4



2

1

3



4



3

1

2

- 1: Military policemen, Feng Yu-Hsiang's Army, Peking 1924
- 2: White Russian, armoured train crewman, North China 1925
- 3: Nationalist soldier, Northern Expedition, 1927
- 4: Detail of Nationalist cap badge on C3



- 1: Anti-Japanese fighter, Manchuria 1932  
 2: Communist guerrilla, Long March, 1934  
 3: Communist soldier, New Fourth Army, 1941  
 4: Detail of Fourth Army arm patch on D3



4



2

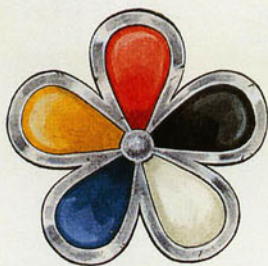
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- 1: Nationalist private 3rd class, 1931
- 2: Nationalist corporal, 'Big Sword' unit, Jehol 1933
- 3: Private 1st class, Nationalist Army, Shanghai 1937
- 4: Nationalist cap badge of E2

- 1: Manchukuo Army soldier, 1933
- 2: Pu-Yi, Emperor of Manchukuo, in officer's uniform, 1934
- 3: Manchukuo Army soldier, 1940
- 4: Detail of Manchukuo Army cap badge of F3







4.



2



3



1

- 1: Reformed Government officer, 1939
- 2: Inner-Mongolian cavalryman, Suiyuan 1939
- 3: Provisional Government soldier, 1939
- 4: Detail of Reformed Government cap badge on G1



4



5



1

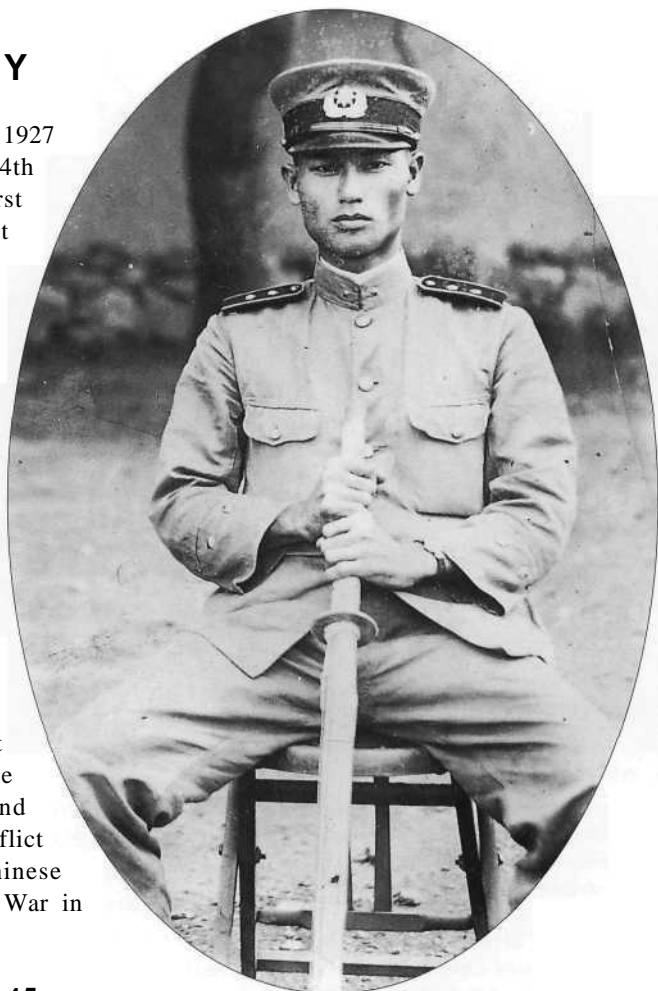
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2

1: Communist soldier, 1946  
 2: Nationalist soldier, 1949  
 3: Communist soldier, 1949  
 4: Detail of badge commemorating communist victory  
 in battle of Huai-Hai on H3  
 5: Detail of red star from cap of H1

## THE COMMUNIST ARMY

The Communist Army began life in August 1927 following the mutiny of the Nationalist 24th Division under its commander Chu Te. The first proper military unit of the Communist Party, it joined forces with another revolutionary, Mao Tse-tung, and his band of guerrillas, to become the 'Workers and Peasants Red Army'. For the next ten years the Red Army battled against the Nationalists, until 1937 when the Japanese invaded China on a massive scale. It then formed an uneasy alliance with the Nationalists against Japan - the 'United Front' - and put its two main armies, the 8th Route Army and the New 4th Army, under Nationalist control. This alliance broke down in 1941 following the Nationalist attack on the New 4th Army. The Red Army then spent the next few years fighting the Japanese independently - notably in The Hundred Regiments Campaign, when it suffered heavy losses. For the next few years the Communist forces licked their wounds and prepared themselves for the inevitable conflict with the Nationalists. With the new title of 'Chinese People's Liberation Army' it began the Civil War in 1946, having learned some hard lessons.



### Communist Uniforms 1927-45

The early Communist fighters would either have worn civilian dress or uniforms captured from the Warlord armies or the Nationalists. Shortage of good equipment in general was to be a problem for the Communists for the whole of the period of conflict. As they established bases and Soviets, they were able to manufacture the simple cotton uniforms in small workshops.

The Communists were not too interested in the smart appearance of their soldiers and a typical Communist fighter of the 1920s and 1930s would often have been dressed in quasi-civilian dress. Early attempts to produce a unique uniform gave soldiers patchwork-type uniforms with large red stars sewn on home-made caps. Different combinations of cotton shirts, jackets, puttees and field caps would have been worn, with home-made shoes or sandals and home-made canvas bandoliers. Communist fighters could not be choosy about what they wore; they took anything available from their own sources or the enemy's. Even the highest ranking officers wore the same uniform as a private, and if any insignia at all was worn it was usually the red star on the cap and red collar patches of the plainest design.

No rank system existed in the Communist forces of the 1920s and 1930s, since their political beliefs meant that all soldiers were equal. They did have positional titles (see Table 5), but these were not indicated by

A puppet army cadet poses during Kendo sword training with Japanese instructors in north China in the 1930s. The eight-pointed star on his cap badge suggests that he belongs to the fledgling army of the Provisional Government in Peking. (Ronald III)



**Communist spearmen set out on a guerrilla operation against the Japanese in the late 1930s. All wear civilian dress and are armed purely with their roughly made spears; at the first opportunity they would swap these for a captured rifle. Although these spearmen might have looked ridiculous in the modern military age, they did provide a ready trained force for when better equipment became available. (Xinhua News Agency)**

their enemy's uniforms. The commander-in-chief of the Red Army, Chu Te, was seen as late as 1946 wearing the Nationalist sun badge, but this was for the benefit of the US general marshal, who was trying to broker peace in China at that time.

## **PUPPET ARMIES**

The term 'puppet' army is used here to describe the armies of the various regimes set up by Japan as part of their plan to control most of China. As the Japanese took more and more territory, they realised that they needed some form of client states that would control parts of China for them but remain under the command of Japanese masters. The different Japanese armies worked independently of each other and of the government in Tokyo, and they each set up rival regimes in the area that their army garrisoned. These puppet armies were at first kept small, but as the war dragged on and more Japanese troops were withdrawn to fight in the Pacific, the Japanese needed more manpower and the puppet armies began to grow in size. Although vast in numbers by the end of the war, they were never considered much of a threat either by the Communists or the Nationalists, and were a good supply of weapons and recruits.

### **Manchukuo**

The Japanese invasion of the Chinese province of Manchuria in 1931 was their first step in their planned conquest of all China. They had already asked the last emperor of China, Henry Pu-Yi, who was in exile, if he would become the head of this new state as 'chief executive'. He had

any rank markings. It was only when the Communists fought with the Nationalists in the 'United Front' against Japan that rank insignia was worn, and this was of the Nationalist type. The two armies of the Communist forces under the command of the Nationalists during the 'United Front' were the New 4th Army, which was made up of various Communist units from east China, and the 8th Route Army from Shensi. These armies wore Nationalist uniforms and were officially units of the Nationalist Army; even after the ending of the alliance with the Nationalists, in 1941, soldiers of these units wore

agreed, hoping it would be a stepping stone to becoming emperor of the new Empire of Manchukuo, as Manchuria was renamed. In 1934 he got his wish when he was made emperor of Manchukuo. His further ambitions to become emperor of all China once again were not to be fulfilled; the Japanese only wanted him as puppet emperor under their firm control. Until the Russians invaded in 1945, Manchukuo was a satellite state of Japan, with its own army, navy and airforce and with all orders coming from the Japanese high command.

### **The Manchukuo Army**

The army of Manchukuo should be dealt with separately from the rest of the puppet armies because the Japanese did intend this army to be an independent one, albeit firmly under their control. Set up in 1932, shortly after the Japanese conquest of Manchuria, it was originally made up of former soldiers of the northern Chinese Army. In the early 1930s it reached a strength of about 70,000, but by the 1940s Allied intelligence reports estimated a possible strength of 500,000. This is almost certainly an exaggeration, the figure was probably more like 200,000.

The Manchukuo Army was used largely for bandit suppression, often with Japanese officers in charge of operations. If properly led, the Manchukuo army could perform well in this role. When assessing the combat effectiveness of puppet troops it should always be remembered that most soldiers of puppet armies fought for food and the uniform on their backs, not the glory of their regime, and certainly not for the Japanese.

### **Uniform of the Manchukuo Army**

In the early days of the state of Manchukuo the soldiers of its army wore the uniform of their former employer, the 'Young Marshal'. The only difference in dress between the Manchukuo Army and their foes, the Nationalist northern army, was that the Manchukuo Army wore yellow armbands and the Nationalist troops wore red. The basic uniform at that

time would have been light grey in colour, with the new cap badge in the shape of a star divided into five colours - red, blue, black, white and yellow. New dress regulations were introduced throughout the 1930s, and by 1939 the Manchukuo Army had a distinctive uniform. The colour was Japanese khaki and the style was similar to the Japanese model. Three types of headgear were worn: a forage cap, which was similar to the Japanese model but with a flatter crown; a peaked cap; and a fur hat for winter service.

**More anti-Japanese guerrilla fighters parade before their comrades of a regular Communist unit with their home-made rifles and spears. These men and women would harass the Japanese lines, tear up railway tracks, attack isolated enemy posts and generally hound the occupying forces. (Xinghua News Agency)**





**Nationalist light machine-gun crew in action in the late 1930s. Both men wear the German 1935 model steel helmet and the light khaki cotton summer uniform. The light machine-gun is the Czechoslovakian ZB-30, which was imported in large numbers and also produced in China. (Fusiliers' Museum, Lancashire)**

The Japanese 1930 model helmet was also worn in limited numbers in the fighting on the border with Mongolia in 1939.

Ranks were indicated by the same system of stars and stripes on the shoulder bars as in the Warlord armies of the 1920s, but the highest ranking general had, in addition to three stars, an orchid blossom on the end of the shoulder bar nearest the collar. Before

1937 shoulder bars were in the branch colour, the same as on the collar insignia; after that date the collars stayed in the branch colour but all shoulder bars became maroon for all branches.

### **White Russians in the Manchukuo Army**

Emigre White Russians served in the Manchukuo Army in the 1930s and 1940s, first individually and then as whole units. In 1932 two small units were formed under General Kouniow, each about 200 men strong. The Assano brigade, formed in 1938, was stronger, at 700 men, and was supposed to be trained to operate behind Soviet lines. By 1945 there were about 4,000 men on the rolls of the Assano brigade involved in sabotage training. Uniforms worn by the White Russians were the same as in the rest of the Manchukuo Army, but one unit was seen wearing side caps not worn by the rest of the army.

### **Other Puppet Troops**

When the Japanese invaded China on a large scale in 1937, they soon set up puppet regimes through which they hoped to control vast parts of the country. These regimes in turn were made to enlist puppet armies to help the Japanese fight the guerrillas that continued to resist the invaders. The main armies involved were those of the Provisional Government in Peking, set up in 1937, the Reformed Government in Nanking, set up in 1938, and the Inner Mongolian regime, set up in 1935. The Provisional Government army was 41,000 strong, the Reformed Government army 30,000 strong and the Inner Mongolian forces up to 18,000.

These armies were employed on guard duties and were never equipped to a good standard; certainly they were never given heavy equipment such as artillery. The Japanese didn't trust them and often only gave them a few rounds of ammunition each, in case they went over to the guerrillas. In 1940 all the puppet regimes were united under one government under Wang Ching-wei, and all armies were joined together. By 1945 Allied intelligence estimated that about 900,000 men were in puppet armies of one sort or another, either in the regular army or in local militia. So although of poor quality and with little combat effectiveness, their sheer size means that they must have been of significance to the Japanese war machine.



Light artillery of the Nationalist Army in training at the firing range in the Pootung region of China. Most artillery used in China was of small calibre like this piece and was usually kept under the control of commanding officers, since they regarded its possession as giving them power. The two artillery men wear cotton field caps and uniforms and have a unit patch on their left breasts. This would have been bordered with blue, the artillery branch colour. (Fusiliers' Museum, Lancashire)

Girls of the Citizens' Training Corps practise shooting as part of their training course. This corps was one of the numerous patriotic groups set up to fight the Japanese. The girls wear loose-fitting cotton overalls and large caps with leather peaks; round their waists are canvas bandoliers. (Fusiliers' Museum, Lancashire)



Girls of the Citizens Training Corps receiving rifle instruction as part of their training course.

## Uniforms of Puppet Armies

Uniforms of the puppet armies were as diverse as the armies themselves, with a motley assortment of dress. Some troops that had come over from the Nationalist side wore their old uniforms with the old insignia removed. Others were issued with simple cotton uniforms and Japanese caps with new insignia added, while many were simply given surplus Japanese uniforms with the Japanese insignia taken off.

The puppet regimes did not invent new insignia and flags for their armies on a large scale; what new badges were used were based on the old Republican flag from the 1911-28 period. The five-coloured star was used by the first puppet regime, the East Hopei Autonomous Anti-Communist Government, set up in 1935, and by the Provisional Government set up in Peking in 1937. The Reformed Government established in Nanking in 1938 used the same flag as the two earlier regimes and a cap badge based on the flag but of a slightly different design (the badge used the same colours but each of the five colours was the petal of a five-coloured flower).

In 1940, when the Wang Ching-wei regime took over, uniforms were issued that were identical to Nationalist ones in every detail. This was because the Wang regime claimed to be the true Nationalist government of China, so they wanted their army to look the part. Wang Ching-wei's general's uniform had one distinctive feature - a small Nationalist sun emblem at the front of his gold collar patch, alongside three gold triangles that denoted his rank. The Wang Ching-wei regime even used the same flag as the Nationalist government, with the addition of a small yellow pennant which carried an inscription which told of the anti-Communist nature of the regime. This pennant was added at the insistence of the Japanese.

All the puppet regimes were desperately short of money: the only form of revenue came from tariffs charged on smuggled goods. This meant that there was little or no money available to clothe and equip the armies, so anything they could get from the Japanese or from captured Nationalist stocks was put to use.

## THE CIVIL WAR, 1945-49

The Nationalists and Communists had unfinished business after World War II, and although attempts were made to settle their disputes peacefully, fighting soon broke out all over China. Chiang Kai-shek was determined to control all China, so he advanced into the Communist stronghold of Manchuria, and it was there that the decisive battles of the Civil War were fought. During the Sino-Japanese war the Nationalists had lost not only their best soldiers but, more importantly, their best officers. This lack of good officers

resulted in poor tactics and cost the Nationalists the Civil War. The Nationalists took cities and held them but were gradually surrounded by the Communists in the countryside. Cities became virtual prison camps for the Nationalists as the Communists took stronghold after stronghold. Chiang Kai-shek insisted right up to the end of the war on giving the cream of the equipment to his most loyal divisions, thus weakening most of his army. Some of his most able commanders were not trusted by Chiang, so their units received little of the American equipment that was being supplied in large quantities. It was attitudes like this that severely weakened the Nationalist war effort and helped the Communists, who were united in their aims. At the beginning of the Civil War the Nationalists had overwhelming superiority in men and equipment, but by 1949 the pendulum had swung the other way, and the Communists had overtaken them.

The Civil War wasn't all one sided and the Communists did face many setbacks, but it soon became a matter of when and not if the Nationalists would be defeated. In September 1949 Chiang Kai-shek and hundreds of thousands of supporters left the mainland and set up a government on Taiwan. Mao Tse-tung declared the foundation of the People's Republic of China in October, ending 40 years of fighting for control of China.

#### **Nationalist Uniforms in the Civil War**

When full-scale civil war between the Nationalists and the Communists broke out in 1946 new uniforms were introduced on the Nationalist side. The new officer's uniform consisted of a US-style khaki peaked cap with a cap badge which had the old sun emblem surrounded by a wreath. The green-khaki service tunic had a rounded collar with new branch badges replacing the old branch colours. The new branch badges were as follows: infantry - crossed rifles; artillery - cannon on wheels; cavalry - crossed swords; staff - crossed batons; signals - crossed flags; quartermasters - wheel; tank troops - tank; engineers - castle; and military police - crossed pistols.

Many of the Nationalist soldiers still wore the old-style uniforms from 1937-45 but with more American equipment such as belts and boots.

As the Civil War drew to a close, a new padded grey cotton uniform was in service, similar to the old winter issue uniform but smarter in appearance. The hat had ear flaps as in the old uniform but without the fur lining and with cut-outs for the ears so the ears were protected when the flaps were worn down. US M1 steel helmets were also worn during the Civil War, particularly by the American-trained divisions that had been set up in India during World War II, and were airlifted back to China by the Americans at the end of the war. The Americans were supplying more and

**Well-equipped Nationalist soldier on guard at Tientsin station, dressed in light khaki cotton uniform and field cap. He has a fighting sword on his back and a Mauser rifle with bayonet fixed and ready. The blanket roll, with its many bits and pieces attached, is in place of a back pack or haversack. (Fusiliers' Museum, Lancashire)**





more equipment and uniforms, but these often didn't reach the front-line troops due to bad organisation or corruption.

### Communist Uniforms in the Civil War

By the start of the Civil War the Communist forces were much better dressed and equipped than in their earlier campaigns. The new equipment came mostly from the Japanese army stocks in Manchuria, captured by the Russians when they invaded in 1945. Although the Communists could have developed new uniforms at this point, they continued to wear basically the same uniform as their Nationalist enemies. This had the advantage that any captured Nationalists that came over to the Communists could simply remove their Nationalist insignia. Unit patches were sometimes worn on the left sleeve, and pin badges were issued for special anniversaries such as the twentieth anniversary of the founding of the Red Army, in 1947. These were the only forms of insignia worn by the Communists, and even the unit patches were not universally worn.

Japanese steel helmets were widely worn, sometimes by whole units, and they were handed over in vast numbers by the Russians from stocks captured in Manchuria in 1945. As the conflict wore on, the Communists were often better dressed and equipped than their Nationalist foes, and this was largely due to the stocks captured from the defeated Nationalists. The Red Army troops victorious in the Civil War had evolved from a badly-equipped, trained and dressed group of desperadoes in the 1920s into one of the largest combat-efficient armies in the world by 1949.



Well-turned-out Nationalist private 1st class on parade in a cotton uniform of a mid-brown colour. His rank is indicated by the metal collar patch, which is red with three gold triangles. The unit patch over his left breast pocket is bordered with red for the infantry branch. (Popperfoto).



Nationalist machine-gun crew train with their American Browning medium machine-gun in the late 1930s. The crew wear the blue-grey padded cotton jacket with field cap in contrast to the 'dapper' looking officer. He is wearing the standard officer's khaki service uniform with brown leather gloves. (Fusiliers' Museum, Lancashire)

Communist soldier of 1947 wearing a padded cotton uniform in a blue-grey colour and cap in a much lighter shade of grey. The cap badge could be one of the many pins issued to commemorate victories or anniversaries of the foundation of the Red Army. His home-made bandolier and haversack would have carried all his worldly goods and everything he needed on campaign. (Xinghua News Agency)



Nationalist motorcycle troops of one of the few mechanised units of the army on the Hankow Front. This unit had German Sd Kfz 222 armoured scout cars as well as the motorcycles, and would have been a 'showpiece' unit. They have M35 German helmets with the sun emblem on the left-hand side and unit patches on their sleeves. Unusually for Nationalist troops of the late 1930s, they have no collar rank insignia. (Imperial War Museum).



BELOW Cavalry of the Communist Army on morning parade in Yanchang in the 1940s. The Communists had 14 cavalry divisions totalling about 100,000 men. These men are mounted on Ningxia ponies, bigger than the Mongolian ponies normally used by cavalry in China. The cavalry was regarded as the elite of the Communist forces, and soldiers would have seen it as an honour to serve in units like this. (Xinghua News Agency)

## FURTHER READING

Dreyer, Edward L., *China at War 1901-1949*, Longman  
Wilson, Dick, *China's Revolutionary War*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson  
Bonavia, David, *China's Warlords*, Oxford in Asia paperbacks



## THE PLATES

### **A1: Imperial Army soldier, 1911**

Imperial Army soldiers wore the 1910 regulation uniform to a large extent in the fighting against the revolutionaries in 1911/12. This soldier wears the winter version of the uniform in dark blue cotton; he has the red branch colour of the infantry on his cap and shoulder bars. His cap badge is a gold disc with a dragon design on it, and the three red stripes round the side of his hat show his rank. The rifle he carries is a Austrian Mannlicher, one of several types of rifle imported for use by the Chinese Imperial Army as part of their modernisation programme.

### **A2: Imperial Army lieutenant in parade uniform, 1911**

This officer of the Imperial Army wears the dark blue parade uniform issued in 1910. His rank is indicated by the gold border round his collar and the colour of the stone on his cap badge - white for the lowest ranks, blue for the middle ranks and red for the highest. His epaulettes have a red border to the gold thread and one gold button in the centre, which also indicates his rank. The sword is the one specified in the 1910 regulations, but many variations of this would have been in use.

### **A3: Republican Army executioner, 1912**

This cavalryman has been given the job of patrolling the streets of a newly captured town with his large 'chopping' sword, ready to behead any peasants that are too troublesome. He wears the old Imperial Army summer uniform with the addition of a star cap badge to replace the Imperial one. His rank of sergeant is shown by the two black stripes on his right sleeve, and his shoulder boards and collar tabs

are in the white of the cavalry. The fearsome sword he carries was much used in China at the time - and for many more years - as a means of keeping order, and the display of a few heads in baskets was a good way to stop any riotous behaviour. His pistol is a Mannlicher 1901 model automatic pistol, one of several types of pistol used by the Imperial Chinese Army.

### **A4: Dragon decoration**

Detail from figure A2's collar.

### **B1: Warlord soldier of Fengtien Army, 1924**

This soldier belongs to the army of Chang Tso-lin, Warlord of Manchuria and northern China during the 1920s. He has a padded grey-green cotton uniform with the red branch colour of the infantry on his collar. The armband is one of the types used by the Fengtien Army and is red over white with no insignia. Collar insignia was not always worn, but this soldier does have them; the numerals are a mixture of Chinese, Arabic and Roman, and in his case indicate that he is soldier 765 of the 1st Battalion, 78th Infantry Regiment, 20th Division. His hat is a fur-lined type worn by the northern Chinese soldiers, with an enamel five-coloured star on it. Black pump shoes were worn by Chinese soldiers throughout the Warlord period. The rifle he has is a Japanese Arisaka 98 model, which was supplied in large numbers to the Fengtien Army.

### **B2: Soldier of 'Tin Hat Brigade', Chihli Army, 1924**

This unit was the only known unit of the Warlord period to wear steel helmets, hence the name 'Tin-Hat'. As one of the Warlord Wu Pei-fu's elite brigades, it was reasonably well equipped and would have been in the forefront of most



actions. He wears a Russian version of the Adrian helmet with the Imperial eagle beaten out; these must have found their way to China by a very roundabout route, as did much Warlord equipment. The armband he wears has the black Chinese character 'Wu' in the centre of a white disc on a dark green linen cloth. His submachine-gun is captured from his enemies in the Fengtien army, which had a large number in use in their units. There were a quite surprising number of submachine-guns in use in Warlord armies; this one is a German MP18/20, which was a modification of the MP18 from World War I.

#### **B3: Warlord soldier 1916-28**

This typical Warlord soldier from the 1920s is wearing a light khaki cotton uniform of the period. His peaked cap has the usual enamel star and his armband shows that he is a soldier of the so-called 'Nanking' Warlord, Sun Ch'uan-fang, who was defeated by the Nationalist Northern Expedition in 1927. Collar insignia shows that he is soldier 854 of the 2nd Battalion, 4th Division, although these numerals could be confusing and were often incomplete. The umbrella he carries is one of the most useful parts of his kit, to keep both sun and rain off his head. Western observers often ridiculed the Chinese soldiers' use of umbrellas, but for an army with few tents they were often the only shelter available. Shoes were always in short supply, so his straw sandals would have been quite normal wear. The rifle he shoulders is a Hanyang 88, a copy of the Mauser Model 88, which was one of the most commonly used rifles in China.

#### **B4: Detail of five-coloured star of Warlord Armies**

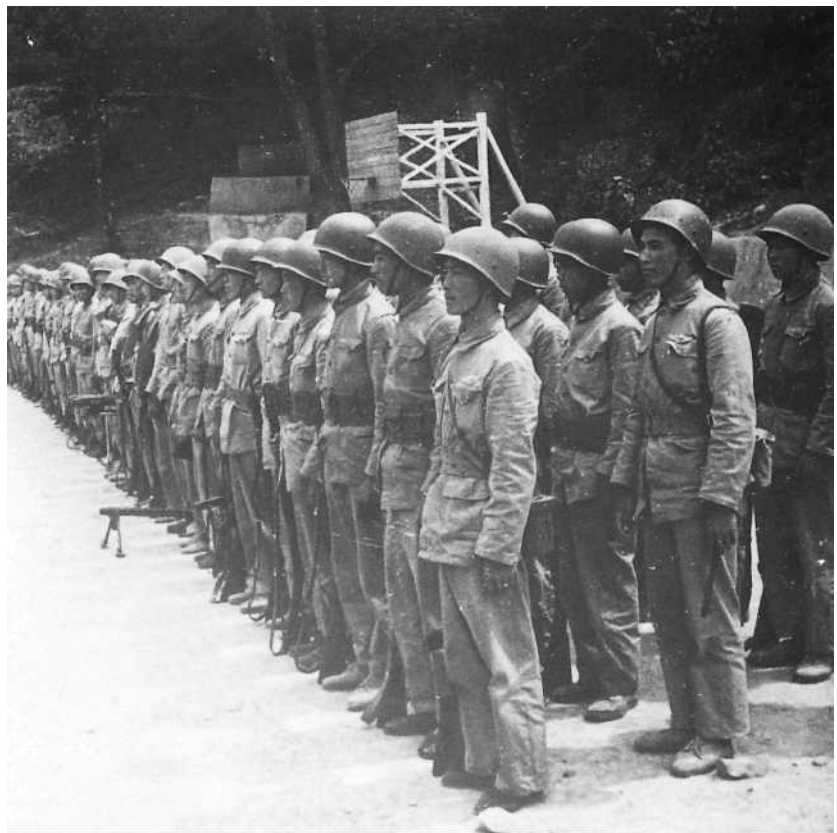
#### **C1: Military policeman of Feng Yu-hsiang's Army, Peking 1924**

The soldiers of the 'Christian Warlord' that took over Peking in 1924 wore light brown cotton uniforms. This soldier is a military policeman who is checking cars at a roadblock just after the coup was launched. His goggles are of a type that seem to have been issued to many of the Christian Warlord's men; it does not mean that he was a motorcyclist, and they were useful for keeping dust out of eyes. The collar insignia is in the branch colour of the military police - pink. His armband is black with a white disc with the character 'Feng' in the middle. The Russian Moisin-Nagant rifle was widely issued to the Christian Warlord's Army, and was known as the 'Three-Line Nagant'. His bayonet is fixed in the Russian style.

#### **C2: White Russian, Armoured train crewman, Northern China, 1925**

White Russian mercenaries were employed by several of the Warlords and their combat experience was highly valued. Many Russians were used to crew the armoured trains that were effectively used as mobile fortresses by all sides. This crewman is resting during a lull in the fighting. He wears the standard uniform of the Warlord armies. His armband shows him to be in the service of Chang Ts'ung-ch'ang, one of the biggest employers of White Russians in China. He smokes a Russian pipe and probably dreams of returning to his homeland. The future of these stateless renegades was very uncertain, and if their Warlord was defeated, as they were by 1928, the future could be very grim. His rifle is a Mannlicher-Schonauer, yet another type in use in China at the time.

**RIGHT** The same OSS-trained commandos on parade in August 1945. They wear US fatigues and M1 helmets. Besides the Springfield rifles they have M1919/A4 light machine-guns and Thompson submachine-guns. Well-trained Nationalist troops like this would have been swallowed up in the mass of poorer trained recruits that made up the bulk of the Nationalist Army in the Civil War. (National Archives Records Administration)



**LEFT** An unusual picture of a American OSS (Office of Strategic Studies) instructor training Nationalist Army commandos in China in August 1945. They wear US M1 helmets and fatigues and are armed with a mixture of Springfield rifles and M1 carbines. (National Archives Records Administration)



**C3: Nationalist soldier, Northern Expedition, 1927**

A soldier of the Northern Expedition to defeat the Warlords that began in 1926 and ended with the Nationalist victory in 1928. He wears a light brown cotton uniform with his unit patch on his left breast, and the Nationalist sun emblem on his peaked cap. He carries no rank insignia; the chaotic situation of the campaign meant that military niceties were often ignored. The Mauser pistol he is armed with was one of the favourite weapons of the Warlord period, and the Nationalists used it for the next 20 years. The discipline and training of these early Nationalist troops compared very well with their enemies, the Warlord soldiers, but as the Nationalists were joined by Warlord soldiers who had deserted, this discipline was undermined.

**C4: Detail Of Nationalist cap badge on C3**

**D1: Anti-Japanese fighter, Manchuria 1932**

This soldier belongs to one of the many volunteer armies formed after the Japanese take-over of Manchuria to continue to fight the invaders with guerrilla warfare. He wears his old Nationalist uniform with a fur-lined surcoat added to combat the extreme cold of the region. His old Nationalist rank of sergeant is shown on his jacket collar insignia - two gold triangles with a black line behind. The cap is an early stiffer version of the normal field cap and is shaped like a French kepi; these were worn by northern Nationalist troops.

BELOW A machine-gun squad of the Communist north-east field army advance in 1947. The mixture of uniform and weaponry shows what diverse sources they came from. Some of them carry Japanese rifles, and the light machine-guns are a mixture of Czech ZB-26s and Canadian-produced Bren guns. Some of the uniforms are dark blue-grey, which soon faded. (Xinhua News Agency)

ABOVE Smiling sentries of the Nationalist Army guard at Haichow aerodrome in Kiangsu province in the late 1930s. Their uniforms are the usual mixture of various cotton field caps and shirts with, in this instance, baggy shorts. The soldiers' puttees are wound tightly round the legs and are being worn with leather sandals. Basic equipment is worn, consisting of canvas bandoliers with ammunition for the Mauser 98 rifles they are all armed with. (Popperfoto)



Eight generals of the People's Liberation Army gather for a conference on the outskirts of Peking in 1948. The wide variety of uniforms worn by the generals is striking, with the man fourth from right wearing a Nationalist officer's tunic and the rest a mixture of colours and styles. Note also the lack of any rank insignia apart from the pens in their pockets, which shows they were officers. (Xinghua News Agency)



His flag is the banner of the volunteer army of Feng Chan-hai, one of the foremost anti-Japanese commanders. These guerrilla armies caused the Japanese all sorts of problems for the first years of their occupation in what they renamed 'Manchukuo'; guerrillas numbered up to about 100,000 men. The rifle he carries is the Chinese copy of the German Mauser 88, known in China as the Hanyang 88.

**D2: Communist guerrilla, Long March, 1934**

One of the marchers who set off from the Communist base in 1934 on the journey that would see their numbers reduced from 100,000 to about 10,000 by the end. This fighter is dressed in civilian clothes as was much of the army and his only equipment is the home-made bandolier made from canvas. His machine-gun is the Danish Madsen light machine-gun which was imported in large numbers and also manufactured in Canton as the 'Rex' in the 1920s. As more equipment became available he would have been issued it in dribs and drabs and most Communists had by the start of the Civil War in 1946 at least a basic uniform.

**D3: Communist Soldier, New 4th Army, 1941**

The New 4th Army was a Communist unit under the control of the Nationalist high command after the forming of the 'United Front' against Japan. In 1941 the Nationalists turned against this unit and tried to wipe it out. This soldier wears a Nationalist uniform in blue-grey cotton, with the Nationalist sun badge on his cap. The unit patch would soon have had '1941' added to it to commemorate the incident that ended the uneasy alliance between the Communists and Nationalists. His Mauser rifle could have been supplied by the Nationalists or captured from them in an earlier battle (this was how most Communists got their arms). His pack is typical of those used by all Chinese armies of this period and would often have had many more bits and pieces tied to it.

**D4: Detail of arm patch of New 4th Army on D3**

**E1: Nationalist private 3rd Class, defending Manchuria 1931**

One of the soldiers who tried unsuccessfully to defend

Manchuria from the invading Japanese in 1931. He is dressed for winter conditions in his padded cotton uniform and fur-lined hat with the Nationalist badge on the front. The flaps on the hat could be either down over the ears, as here, or tied up. His collar rank is one gold triangle on a red background, which indicates that he is of the lowest rank of private 3rd class. The automatic rifle he carries is a ZH-29 of Czechoslovakian make - quite a modern rifle for its time. These rifles were seen in quite wide use in the armies of northern China when the Japanese attacked. Many of these troops when defeated either joined the anti-Japanese guerrillas or the army of the new Empire of Manchukuo.

**E2: Nationalist corporal, 'Big Sword' unit, Jehol, 1933**

A member of an elite unit that was armed unconventionally with large swords based on medieval cavalry swords called ma-tao. These troops were meant to be shock troops with their swords and Mauser pistols, and in this role they are said to have been quite successful. The motto that they had on their patches read:

"When we fight we first use bullets; when the bullets are gone, we use bayonets; when the bayonets are dull, we use the rifle barrel; when this is broken, we use our fists; when our fists are broken, we bite!"

This soldier shows off his trophy of a Japanese helmet, which would have been highly prized since he is part of the army defending Jehol from the Japanese and Manchukuo invading army. His padded cotton uniform bears the collar insignia of one gold triangle and one black stripe. The cap has the sun emblem seen in a few different versions in enamel.

**E3: Private 1st class, Nationalist Army, Shanghai 1937**

This soldier is from one of the Nationalist German-trained divisions that defended Shanghai against the Japanese so valiantly in 1937, and were destroyed in the process. These troops formed the backbone of the Nationalist Army, and their loss in the battle was a crushing blow to further Chinese resistance. He wears a light cotton uniform in light khaki with

his rank of two gold triangles on his collar. His unit patch on his left breast denotes that he is the 'loyal soldier' of his commanding general and has the red branch colour around the edge of the patch. The German 1935 model helmet with the Nationalist sun emblem on the left side shows the influence of the German mission that trained him. His rifle is a Chinese-produced copy of the Mauser 98k, which was known in China as the 'Chiang Kai-shek' rifle.

**E4: Detail of Nationalist cap badge on E2**

**F1: Manchukuo Army soldier, 1933**

This soldier of the early army of the puppet Empire of Manchukuo was probably an ex-soldier of the 'Young Marshal's' army that was chased out by the Japanese in 1931. Many of these soldiers swapped their allegiance to the new regime, not for political reasons but simply to fill their rice bowl. He wears an early uniform of the new army with the five-coloured enamel star on his peaked cap. The colours in the cap badge are the same as the earlier Republican ones, but arranged in a different order. Most of the Manchukuoan soldiers would have been lucky to have a new uniform and would have worn their old Nationalist ones with the insignia removed. The yellow armband was to distinguish between the Manchukuoan troops and the anti-Japanese fighters who wore red armbands. His collar insignia shows him to belong to the 2nd sub unit of the 8th company. Rain-hats like this were often worn on the march and kept the rain off quite effectively. The rifle is a 6.5mm Mannlicher export model - part of the booty taken from the defeated Nationalists.

**F2: Pu-Yi, Emperor of Manchukuo, in officer's uniform, 1934**

Pu-Yi, the puppet emperor of the new state of Manchukuo, was the last emperor of China. After years in exile he allowed the Japanese to use him as the figurehead of their new puppet state. He is dressed in a smartened-up version of the

new uniform for officers of the Manchukuo army - in Japanese khaki material. His cap has the new badge of the army, which is a five-coloured star with the same colours as the old Republican one but arranged in a different order. The order on his chest is the grand order of the orchid blossom, a newly issued award which was only received by Pu-Yi and the Emperor Hirohito. The sword the emperor carries is a Japanese company officer's model which he has borrowed to hold while he has his photograph taken.

**F3: Manchukuo Army soldier, 1940**

By 1940 the army of Manchukuo had its own distinct uniform which had gradually been issued throughout the 1930s. The field cap was a distinctive part of the uniform: at first sight it looks like the Japanese field cap of the 1930s and 1940s, but it was stiffer and had a flatter crown. The uniform is made from Japanese khaki wool material and is cut like the Japanese uniform of the period. His rank of private first class is indicated by the two gold stars on his maroon shoulder bars; his collar insignia is for the 1st sub unit of the 17th unit. The cap badge is one of several patterns worn by the Manchukuo army, and this type seems to have been worn during the latter years of the regime. All other equipment is of Japanese make, as is the rifle, an Arisaka 98 - the standard rifle of the Japanese army in World War II.

**F4: Detail of Manchukuo Army cap badge on F3's cap**

**G1: Reformed Government officer, 1939**

This officer of the Reformed Government set up by the Japanese in Nanking in 1938 is a major-general, as indicated by the single eight-point star on his collar. His uniform is a Japanese officer's with puppet insignia added. His cap badge is an enamel flower with five petals in the colours of the old Republican flag, which this regime used. He is armed with a Japanese officer's sword-standard issue for most



Nationalist officers prepare to evacuate Nanking in 1949 in a stripped-down US jeep. Two of them wear the new pattern peaked cap introduced in 1946 while the other two still wear the old pattern field cap. By the time of this photo the Nationalist Army was well beaten and these men would have had little fight left in them. (Popperfoto)



puppet army officers. Other Reformed Government troops wore a motley assemblage of uniform. One unit was seen wearing a mixture of Japanese and German helmets, worn at every angle and looking as if they had all dressed quickly in whatever captured uniform the Japanese had given them.

#### **G2: Inner Mongolian cavalryman, Suiyuan 1936**

The soldiers of the puppet regime in parts of Inner Mongolia invaded Suiyuan in 1936 and this man is one of the irregulars of that force. He is dressed in traditional Mongol dress, which consists of his tunic, or deel, and soft leather boots. The lamb's wool hat is quite Cossack-like. He would not have looked out of place in the army of Ghengis Khan, apart from the modern submachine-gun. His flag was used until 1937, when it was changed along with the name of the regime. Other Inner Mongolian soldiers were captured wearing Japanese uniforms with insignia removed. His submachine-gun is a rare Swiss Sig Model 1930, which must have been bought in very small numbers for the elite of this army and would have come complete with the chest magazine holder.

#### **G3: Provisional Government soldier, 1939**

The Provisional Government was set up by the Japanese in Peking in December 1937 and began to recruit a limited number of soldiers in late 1939; this soldier would have been one of the first. All the puppet governments were desperately short of finances, and the Provisional Government was no exception, so this soldier is equipped and uniformed very basically. The cheap cotton uniform would probably have been manufactured locally along with his haversack; the water bottle is Japanese army issue. His cap badge is a five-coloured star in the colours of the old Republican flag - red, black, white, blue and yellow. He is armed with a Japanese Nambu light machine-gun which has been donated by his Japanese masters. Puppet troops were later given weapons captured by the Japanese in their conquests in the rest of Asia, so they could have been armed with Dutch, French or British firearms.

#### **G4: Detail of Reformed Government cap badge on G1**

#### **H1: Communist soldier, 1946**

This Communist soldier of the early Civil War period wears a khaki cotton uniform with the red star sewn onto his cap. The Communists wore a variety of types of uniform, with captured items of clothing put to good use. No rank insignia is worn by this soldier, or most other Communist forces during the Civil War. The straw rain hat was widely used for protection against the sun and rain, and the style of it would be very regional. Red armbands were sometimes worn by squad, platoon or special unit leaders and didn't have any writing on. As with most uniforms of the period, it was difficult to have a standard dress because of the various sources of supply and the scarcity of some items of clothing and equipment. His Type 44 Japanese carbine would be from one of those sources of supply from the defeated Japanese army.

#### **H2: Nationalist soldier, 1949**

By the end of the Civil War many Nationalist troops were wearing a new type of uniform which was an updated version of the old winter quilted uniform. He is surrendering to his captors, as were thousands of his comrades by 1949, when the defeat of the Nationalists was assured. The name tag over his left breast pocket did not have a branch colour round it as in earlier uniforms. American equipment was supplied in



**Mao Tse-tung reviews the victorious People's Liberation Army at Hsiyuan airfield outside Peking. He rides in an American jeep captured from the Nationalists past a line-up of anti-aircraft guns also captured in the Civil War. The anti-aircraft guns are German Flak 18s, which were imported in small numbers by China in the 1930s. Mao wears a new heavy overcoat in green, with one of the caps named after him. (Xinghua News Agency)**

large quantities to the Nationalists, and the Thompson sub-machine-gun at his feet would have been part of those supplies. The magazine pouches on his chest were to hold 30 round magazines for the Thompson. Ordinary soldiers like him may well have been absorbed into the Communist Army after political re-education as part of the Red Army's realistic approach to expanding the size of their forces.

#### **H3: Communist soldier, 1949**

This soldier wears another version of the uniform of the Communist armies of the Civil War. The blue-grey padded jacket was in wide use through the 1930s and 1940s, and was not replaced till the early 1950s. On his jacket he wears a pin badge issued to celebrate one of the Communists' major victories - the battle of Huai-Hai in late 1948. Much of the Communists' equipment was captured from the Japanese in 1945 or handed over by the Russians from booty they had captured in their Manchurian campaign. So the Japanese Type 96 light machine-gun and Japanese army helmet were widely used by the Communists. The unit patch is for the 18th Group Army, which began life as the famous 8th Route Army.

#### **H4: Detail of badge to commemorate Communist victory in Battle of Huai-Hai on H3**

#### **H5: Detail of red star from cap of H1**

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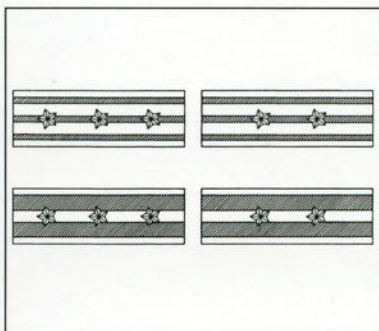
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