

The Long March: Not as great as it seems



Timeline

- October 16th 1934** The Red Army breakthrough Nationalist troop lines and escape from Jiangxi, marking the start of the Long March.
- November 25th – December 3rd 1934** Battle of Xiang River, 45,000 men lost – over 50% of the Red Army's fighting force.
- January 1935** The control of the Red Army handed over to Mao and Zhou, Bo and Braun get suspended.
- May 1935** The Red Army secures Luding Bridge as a river crossing vital to the Red Army
- October 1935** The Red Army reaches Yanan, marking the end of the Long March. Less than 10,000 survive out of the 870,000

Was Long March really one of the greatest military feats achieved in the history of mankind or just a huge exaggeration made by the Chinese Government for the sake of propaganda purposes? Read on to find out.



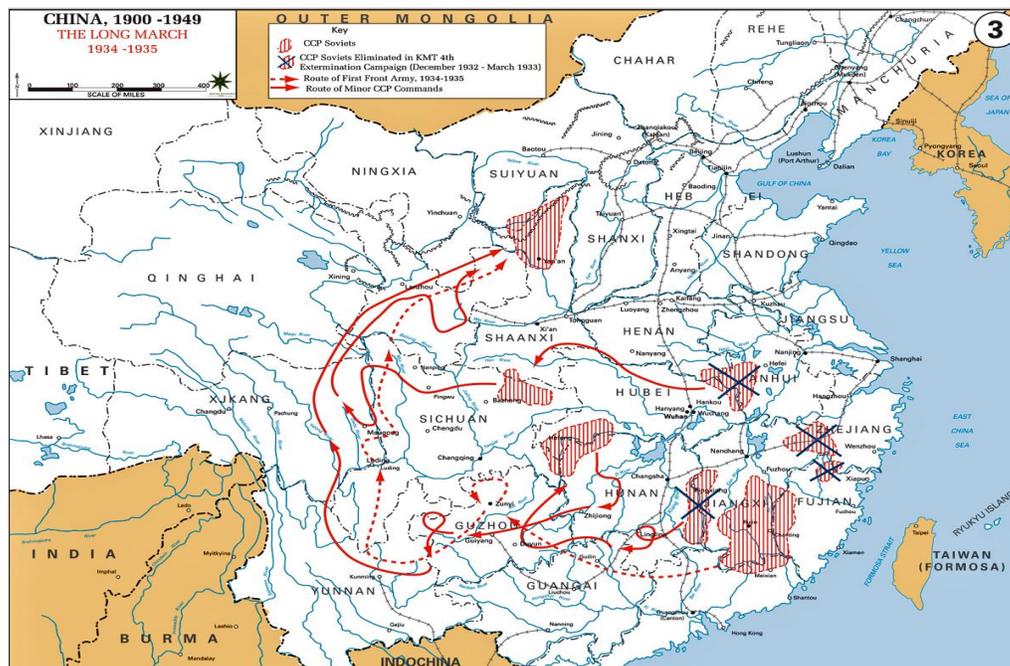
“The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.

-- Confucius
(551BC- 479BC)

On 16th October 1934, the Chinese Communist Party set out towards the Communist Base on the Hunan-Hubei border after being surrounded by the Nationalist Party in Jiangxi. After 368 days, approximately 9000 kilometers of marching through extreme conditions and having the Nationalists constantly on their back, the Red Army finally reached their

destination. Less than 10,000 survived out of the 87,000 people that set out, but this significant event was one of the major turning factors for the victory of the Communist Party. However, these numbers are only an approximation; and many questions have arisen as to whether the Long March was really as great as China makes it sound.

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Route the Red Army took during the Long March, notice how the route they took was easy to predict until the Battle at Xiang River

Battle of Xiang River: A massive failure of the Chinese Communist Party

Right after the Red Army had broken through the Nationalist lines that encircled them in Jiangxi, they forced to fight a battle when they reached Xiang River against the Nationalist Party. The fight lasted only 8 days, between 25th of November and 3rd of December, but by the of the battle, more than half of the Red Army were killed;

approximately 45,000. This catastrophic disaster was mainly blamed on Otto Braun, for he commanded the Red Army to bring unnecessary heavy equipment, such as typewriters, which greatly limited their mobility and gave time for the Nationalists to prepare their attacks. Furthermore, Otto Braun led the Chinese Communist Party in a

straight line, which made their movements very easy to predict, which resulted in more unnecessary deaths of the Red Army. From this disastrous battle, we could say that the Long March isn't that great of a success since more than half of the casualties (45,000 out of the 80,000 who died) could have been saved if it wasn't for such poor decisions made.

“War can only be abolished through war, and in order to get rid of the gun it is necessary to take up the gun.”

-Mao Zedong



Battle at Luding Bridge:

Important for the victory of the CCP, but it wasn't heroic

The crossing of Luding Bridge was one of the most heroic acts in the history of the Chinese Military. The daring twenty-two soldiers that swung across the river gorge on chains, all that was left of Luding Bridge, under heavy enemy fire. This made the Red Army able to cross the river, giving the Chinese Communist Party a huge advantage. In reality, according to the commander

Source

At last one Red crawled up over the bridge flooring, uncapped a grenade and tossed it with perfect aim into the enemy redoubt. Nationalist officers ordered the rest of the planking torn up. It was already too late. More Reds were crawling into sight. (Kerosene) was thrown on the planking and it began to burn. By then about twenty Reds were moving forward on the hands and knees, tossing grenade after grenade into the enemy machine-gun

(Account from the website of the Late will downs)

of the actual attack (Yang Chengwu),

there were no fatalities on the bridge itself, meaning it was in fact relatively safe compared to other military actions such as the British soldiers going over the trenches in WW1 against the Germans, which resulted in many casualties. Furthermore, the secure of this bridge actually was already a definite success by the CCP, for there

(continued)

was actually a second battle fought simultaneously along with the battle at the bridge- a battle that Chinese propaganda never mentions and also a battle that was essential to the securing of Luding City. Before the crossing of Luding Bridge even happened, five-dozen soldiers of the Red Army built two rafts 2 kilometers down Luding Bridge, and crossed Dadu River into Luding City, with the Nationalists being completely unaware. Although the Nationalists finally discovered them at 2 pm, May 29th 1935, they were 250 meters apart, and the Nationalist's inferior guns could not shoot that far, resulting the the five dozen soldiers quickly conquering the enemy position within 2 hours. Because of this, the Nationalists sent out forces towards them, leaving only as little as one squad guarding Luding Bridge, giving the Communist Party an easy crossing. In conclusion, because of the second battle won by the Red Army because of the disorganization and inferiority of the Nationalist army, the Red Army managed to cross Luding Bridge, and not because of the supposedly heroic actions that the twenty two soldiers did to cross the bridge.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Long March, although a great physical achievement for marching over 9000 kilometers, it was clear that the communist were going to win, and it wasn't that great of a struggle either for the Nationalists were disorganized, not well-trained and not disciplined either. At least, for propaganda purposes, during that time, most people were convinced that it was a huge struggle and success, massively boosting the morale for the Communist Party, and eventually leading to the overthrowing of the Nationalist Party.

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