

Original Paper

The Economic Behavior (Function) of Chinese Militia during the Second World War (Anti-Japanese War)

Zhang Yuanhang^{1*}

¹ Political subject teacher in the Humanities Department of Zibo Teachers College, Zibo, Shandong Province, China

* Zhang Yuanhang, Corresponding author

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Abstract

A militia is an organization that operates like an army but whose members are not professional soldiers. The functions of a militia vary in different periods, particularly during a war, when the militia not only plays a special role in national defense but also plays a unique role in economic production, which has a vital impact on a war scenario. This paper is about the militia in the Shandong Province of China during the Second World War. It explores archival materials to examine the unique economic functions of the militia during this period, and it shows how the militia's economic role affected the Pacific War.

Keywords

militia, economic behavior, World War II

In the traditional cognition, a militia is an organization that operates like an army but whose members are not professional soldiers, it seems that the function of the militia is only to participate in wars or battles. However, during the Anti-Japanese War, in addition to participating in the war, it also has the functions of logistic support and economic production. This economic function of the militia played a vital role in the victory of China's Anti-Japanese War. This article takes Shandong Anti-Japanese Base Area as an example to demonstrate the economic functions of the Chinese militia during the Anti-Japanese War.

1. Reasons for Militia Participation in Economic Construction

During the Anti-Japanese War, the fundamental reason why the government departments in Shandong Anti-Japanese Base Area required the militia to participate in economic production was to solve the basic living materials and weapons and ammunition needed for the war. From a military point of view,

the core issue of a long-term war is logistics supplies. The strength of the army's combat effectiveness and the advancedness of weapons and equipment can only play a key role in quick-fix and short-time battles. Once a protracted war is entered, food resources and the production capacity behind it are the ultimate decision for win or lose. During the Anti-Japanese War, after Japan captured Shandong Province, it plundered the wealth of the Shandong people by using force. At the same time, in order to block the source of income of the CPC, the Japanese invading troops took methods such as looting farm cattle, destroying farmland and destroying the means of production in the base area, restricting food, strategic resources such as coal and medicine entered the rural areas where the CPC is located. These methods have greatly reduced the productivity of the base areas. In order to ensure the security of their own food supply, the Japanese aggressors led the Chinese puppet government troops to raid the rural areas of Shandong when the summer foods was about to be harvested. The purpose was to snatch the foods produced in the Chinese countryside. If this strategic objective cannot be achieved, the Japanese army and the troops of Chinese puppet regime will choose to destroy the grain. These actions not only caused the living difficulties for rural people, but also cut off the economic source of the CPC and achieved the goal of winning without fighting. Especially as the Anti-Japanese War entered a stage of strategic stalemate, the Japanese army intensified the damage to the economy of the base areas, and the issue of food production became a strategic issue. The Communist Party of China believes that it was the Japanese and puppet's consistent policy which made a big fuss about the food issue and reduced the food supply in the base areas by looting, burning or buying food at high prices. This policy is not only to realize the conspiracy of "supporting war with war", but its more sinister purpose is to push the soldiers and civilians in the base area to starvation by means of the food problem. (Note 1) With the increasing number of military personnel and the increasing food burden, the senior leaders of the Communist Party of China in Shandong Province once again recognized the importance of using armed forces to defend food production, and put forward a basic strategy of: "Combining force with labor, defending production with force, and supporting war with production is the way for us to support the long-term war of resistance behind enemy lines." (Note 2) And this also shows that mobilizing militias in base areas to carry out agricultural production is an important way for the CCP to solve its own food problem.

Giving the militia economic functions is also to protect the combat capability of the militia. The sources of weapons and ammunition for militiamen and professional soldiers are different. It is impossible to arm a large militia team only by relying on combat capture. One of the economic functions of the militiamen is to exchange labor for ammunition, or directly participate in the production of weapons and ammunition, in order to realize self-sufficiency of the real militia in terms of weapons and ammunition. In the later period of Anti-Japanese War, , the militia in some areas participated extensively in the production of weapons and ammunition, and basically achieved partial or even full self-sufficiency in the required ammunition and wartime supplies.

2. The Specific Way in which the Militia Participate in Economic Production

The basic way for the Chinese militia to perform its economic functions is to combine labor and armed forces. Under the leadership of the CPC, the Chinese militia participated in the commercial activities such as farming, and harvesting of grain and production of agricultural products.

Militia participation in agricultural production activities has a high degree of discipline and division of labor. The most basic command organization of the militia is the village headquarters. The headquarters divided the militia into several groups according to the harvest time of grain and these groups were mainly engaged in agricultural activities near the Japanese occupation areas. This is because the militia is composed of young and strong personnel with certain combat experience and combat effectiveness. Some of them are responsible for using the night as a cover to quickly cultivate and harvest foods, Some people are responsible for remote surveillance,, and some are responsible for military realm., which ensures that in the process of farming and harvesting, they can receive information in advance and quickly transfer to the battle. With such division of labor, the militia can always complete the task of farming or harvesting food quickly. For example, the archives record that Shouguang (Note 3) Sixth District used this method to spend half a day with the militia as the main force to organize the strong men to harvest grain, and after farming, they came back together and distributed the money according to labor. Of course, it is unfair to hand over the most dangerous areas to the militia for farming. In order to make up for the militia, the corresponding leading organizations will give the militia some compensation. For example, providing free food to the militiamen during the period of protecting cultivation, or giving the militiamen higher pay “work points” which can be exchanged for more commodities. (Note 2) The ratio of ordinary farmers to militiamen in the distribution of crops is 4:5. In addition, in order to ensure both the participation of the militia and agricultural production, the CPC also established a production committee in the village as a unit. This organization is responsible for the cultivation of farmland when the militiamen fight, so as to ensure that the militiamen will not worry about their farmland not be cultivated when they participate in the war. This practice was also recorded in the 1945 archives. Although such an approach increased the work of ordinary farmers, it greatly guaranteed the safety of farmers’ property, so it was widely supported by farmers at that time. The militia participates in the production of agricultural and sideline products in a commercial mode. The main form is to participate in the production activities of agricultural and sideline industries by means of helping labors and funding. Since the militia is responsible for more functions, more food is distributed to the militia. The militia joins the cooperative as capital, which is a production organization similar to a company, and the militia obtains corresponding dividends. The archives record that in 1944, a village established a tofu-producing cooperative. The 29 militiamen in the village each contributed four buckets of grain as capital shares, while the poorer ordinary farmers took labor and technology as capital shares, and the production tools were provided by the government. They worked together and earn 3335 yuan in two months, which was a lot of profit at that time. As for the distribution of profits, they stipulated that 50% of the profits should go to the village government, 30% should be distributed

to the militia and workers, and 20% should be invested in the company's reproduction activities. The village government also distributes this part of the income publicly, 30% of the funds are used to manufacture ammunition, which can be sold at a low price or given to the militia as a gift, 10% of the funds are invested in public welfare undertakings, and the remaining 10% is used to treat military families preferentially. (Note 4) In fact, the militia's ability to carry out sidelines businesses is essentially due to its own advantages. The militia itself is composed of rural elites, coupled with the militia's dominant position in production, it has considerable economic resources for sideline production. The results of sideline production can not only benefit the poor and the families of the resistance in the base areas, but also increase the income of the militia, and solve the government's funding problem to a certain extent, which can be said to kill three birds with one stone.

We can draw such a conclusion through the above two specific ways of militia participation in economic production. The CPC organized rural peasants to establish militia organizations to participate in local economic production. The militiamen are physically strong, so they have more food and higher labor efficiency as capital to promote local economic production. And this way also provides basic food resources and logistical support for the Eighth Route Army's war of resistance behind the enemy, It broke Japan's economic blockade strategy against the CPC, and provided economic assistance, weapons and ammunition assistance for the Eighth Route Army in Shandong Province to launch guerrilla warfare.

3. Chinese Militia from the Perspective of World History

From the perspective of world history, the economic function of the militia has been greatly underestimated. The fact that the CPC gave the militia with economic functions not only affected the course of Japan's war of aggression against China, but also affected the historical course of world anti-fascism. The militiamen carried out economic production in the rural areas of Japanese-occupied areas which strengthened the power of Chinese farmers to protect food, and to a certain extent impacted Japan's basic strategy of supporting war with war. On the other hand, it is precisely because the militias participated in economic production that the already impoverished rural areas of China were guaranteed a labor force this meant that the guerrilla forces led by the Communist Party alone active in the rear of Japan had basic material security. In this sense, the CPC were able to carry out guerrilla warfare on the Japanese rear battlefield and the continuously develop and expand its troops thanks to the militia's promotion of rural economic production. With the continuous expansion of the scale of guerrilla warfare in the Japanese-occupied areas, Japan had to station a large number of troops in the occupied areas to deal with the threat from the Communist army. This has also greatly affected Japan's military strength in Southeast Asia and the Pacific battlefield. With the deepening of the World Anti-Fascist War, the CPC began to functionally divide the militias into the junior and the senior, with a ratio of about 3:1. The junior militia's function is more to protect the security of the rural regime and participate in the economic construction, while the senior militia's function is to undertake more active

raids on Japan's military strongholds. The division of militia functions has led to a collective increase in the size of the militia. According to the archives, in Shandong Province alone, the number of militias led by the CPC has reached 2 million, of which the number of high-level militias has reached 500000. Which shows that China's guerrilla warfare has achieved long-term and large-scale. Therefore, Japan cannot deploy more troops to reinforce the Pacific battlefield and Southeast Asia battlefield under the premise of absolute victory in the frontal battlefield.

Notes

Note 1. Co-editor of Shandong Provincial Institute of Financial Sciences and Shandong Provincial Archives: Selected financial historical data of Shandong revolutionary base Volume I. Printed by Jinan No. 8 Printing Factory, 1985, 24.

Note 2. "Summary and future tasks of militia work in the Bohai region" (July 20, 1945). This file is kept in Shandong Provincial Archives. Case number: G026-01-0167-003.

Note 3. The name of a county in Shandong Province.