

Civil Strife Still Boils Across South China Despite Peace Talks With Communists

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SHANGHAI, China, Apr. 7.—While Nationalist and Communist delegates were settling down to talk peace in Peiping, civil strife was boiling up across South China.

Now the revolts, frequently Communist-led, have reached proportions where the Nationalists are denied effective control over large areas nominally theirs.

These rebellions are the payoff on the rapidly disintegrating economy and disorganized and weakened Nationalist military

position, combined with efficiency of the Communist organization.

So far they are centered mainly in four areas—Chekiang province south of Shanghai, Kwangtung, Hunan, and Yunnan in the far southwest.

But the trouble is spreading rapidly with "native" Communists openly attacking Nationalist troops and requisitioning food between Shanghai and Nanking.

Chekiang, Chiang Kai-Shek's home province and stronghold of the rightwing co-clique, has seen the fastest growth of Commu-

nist power. Four months ago Chekiang was relatively quiet.

With small bands of Communist guerrillas raiding from mountain bases. In the past month entire counties with officials and local militia have gone over to the Communists. The Nationalists

now have lost control of an estimated one-third of the province. They also have lost much of their grain tax revenue.

Three weeks ago a Nationalist battalion in eastern Hunan "turned bandit," joining irregulars near the border.

In the southwestern province

of Yunnan—largest U. S. wartime China base—the postal commissioner reports he is only able to deliver mail to one-third of Yunnan's counties due to "bandit Communist interference."

The Nationalist defense ministry estimates that the Yunnan Communist guerrillas number roughly 25,000.

In the main South China Communist stronghold—Kwangtung province—the Reds are reorganizing guerrillas into regular army units numbering an estimated 65,000. Communist troops are

concentrated in the northern and

southern ends of Kwangtung and on Hainan Island, with Nationalist control strongest around Canton.

The Kwangtung Communists are being joined by increasing numbers of defecting Nationalist troops. To date they have avoided attacking major cities. But comparison of Nationalist and Communist strength in Kwangtung suggests that if and when the Communist armies north of the Yangtze strike south, Kwangtung will hardly be a safe Nationalist retreat.

Communist troops are concentrated in the northern and

Yunnan and Kwangtung guer-

illas reportedly are co-operating with Vietnamese forces in Indo-China, transshipping arms and supplies.

In an effort to halt the spreading chaos and meet a possible Communist "cross-Yangtze" offensive, the Nationalists are attempting to rebuild their shattered military machine. Nanking has ordered a conscription speed-up with Shanghai scheduled to provide 37,000 recruits. Conscription in the countryside has driven an increasing number of men to join local bandits and Communists.

In China's twilight of half-war and half-peace local officials as well as citizens are refusing to believe in the necessity that they get out and fight.

Lethargy is seeping through Nationalist administrative ranks. It is combined with widespread conviction that the Communists are coming anyway.

This is inducing many to jump onto the assumed winning side of the Communist-led rebellions of South China.

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