

Editorial: The 80th Anniversary of Long March Victory Sees China on a New Journey toward a Brighter Future

By Ren Zhongping Source: People's Daily

October 22nd, 2016, marks the 80th anniversary of victory of Long March, which is a significant event in modern Chinese history.

The Long March, together with the use of gunpowder and Genghis Khan conquering Europe, are enlisted among “100 Events that Changed the World” in the fall 1997 issue of Life Magazine The Millennium.

From October 1934 to October 1936, the Chinese Workers' and Peasants' Red Army soldiers left their bases in southeast China's Jiangxi Province and marched through raging rivers, snowy mountains, and arid grassland to break the siege of the Kuomintang (Nationalist Party of China) forces and continue the fight against Japanese aggressors. Some of them marched as far as 12,500 kilometers, the same distance from Beijing to London.

During the Long March, the soldiers had to deal with airstrikes and fight against hundreds of thousands of enemy soldiers who were after them every day. The Red Army soldiers, who were wearing shoes made from grass, fought once every 72 hours while marching 50 kilometers a day on average. The surviving military force was less than 7,000, down from 86,000 at the start of the Long March. “Compared to the Long March, Hannibal's crossing of the Alps was like a summer's day stroll,” noted American journalist Edgar Snow in his book “Red Star Over China”.

The spirit of the Red Army soldiers during the Long March is stunning. Chen Shuxiang, a division commander of the Red Army, was caught after exhausting all the division's food and bullets in the four days' battle along the Xiang River with his soldiers. Chen avoided capture by tearing open his wounds and cutting his bowel. Jiang Xiuying, a Tibetan female soldier, severed her toes with an axe after they had mortified when the Red Army climbed the snowy mountains.

What empowered the Red Army soldiers to be so fearless, even of death? It is the ideals and causes they believed in that empowered them. They wanted to “change China,” they were determined to end the century of humiliation, they wanted to show the Chinese people that a fair and just society can be won, and that the people's destiny is in their own hands. British missionary Rudolf Alfred Bosshardt who had followed the Red Army's Long March described in *The Restraining Hand*: “These people, known as bandits by the Kuomintang, are in fact people who believe in Marxism and practice its principles”.

Their determination has astounded many people and propelled some of them to re-walk the Long March. In October 2002, two British men, Andy McEwen and Ed Jocelyn, set off to retrace the Red Army's footsteps and recorded the experiences of the last-remaining witnesses and participants of the Long March. Their book “The Long March” became an instant best seller.

The Long March has become an important symbol in modern China. Many streets and roads in Chinese cities are named after the Long March, as are many rockets and nuclear submarines designed and made in China. President Xi Jinping has called for carrying forth the spirit of the Chinese Red Army on the Long March, and striving fearlessly to realize China's dream of national rejuvenation.

China is undergoing comprehensive reform, which means the country is not only trying to liberate thinking and transform mindsets, but also stand against vested interests. The Chinese people commemorate the 80th anniversary of victory of the Long March to remember our forefathers' spirit of working hard, fearing no sacrifice, and believing in the ultimate victory of China's revolution.

Today, on October 17, 2016, China launched the Shenzhou-11 manned spacecraft with a Long March-2F carrier rocket. The successful launch marks another giant step forward for China's space exploration program. The sixth plenary session of the 18th Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee will be held from October 24 to 27, 2016, to discuss the issue of party building. Eighty years after the victory of the Long March, China is on a new "Long March" journey toward a brighter future.