

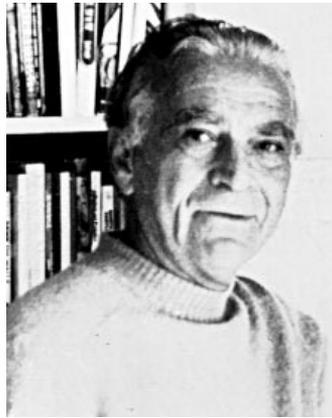
Chapter 29 Primary Source Activity

For nearly a year, starting in October 1934, thousands of followers of Mao Zedong trudged from southern Jiangxi province across 6,000 miles of rugged countryside and into northern China, fleeing the Guomindang (textbook page 753). American journalist Edgar Snow, a long-time expert on China, interviewed Mao and others. Here Snow tells about the last few months of the epic journey of the “Reds,” the Chinese Communists. ♦ *As you read Snow’s account, notice the behavior of the marchers. Then, on a separate sheet of paper, answer the questions that follow.*

The Long March Across China

Another 2,000 miles of marching, studded by seven great mountain ranges, still lay ahead of them. . . . North of the Tatu River the Reds climbed 16,000 feet over the Great Snowy Mountain, and in the rarefied air of its crest looked to the west and saw a sea of snow peaks—Tibet. It was already June [1935], and in the lowlands very warm, but as they crossed the Ta Hsueh Shan many of those poorly clad, thin-blooded southerners, unused to the high altitudes, perished from exposure. Harder yet to ascend was the desolate Paotung Kang Mountain, up which they literally built their own road, felling long bamboos and laying them down for a track through a tortuous treacle of waist-deep mud. “On this peak,” Mao Tse-tung [Zedong] told me, “one army corps lost two-thirds of its transport animals. . . .”

The journey of the Kiangsi [Jiangxi] Reds thus far had provided them with much food for reflection. They had won many new friends and made many bitter enemies. Along their route they had provisioned themselves by “confiscating” the supplies of the rich—the landlords, officials, bureaucrats, and big gentry. . . .



Edgar Snow

There were big “surpluses”—more than the Reds could carry—and these were distributed among the local poor. In Yunnan the Reds seized thousands of hams from rich packers there, and peasants came from miles around to receive their free portions—a new incident in the history of the ham industry, said Mao Tse-tung. Tons of salt were likewise distributed. In Kweichow [Guizhou] many duck farms were seized from the landlords and officials, and the Reds ate duck until, in the words of Wu Liang-p’ing, they were “simply disgusted with duck.” From Kiangsi [Jiangxi] they had carried Nanking notes, and silver dollars and bullion from their state bank, and in poor districts in their path they used this money to pay for their needs. Land deeds were destroyed, taxes abolished, and the poor peasantry armed.

Except for . . . western Szechuan, the Reds told me they were welcomed everywhere by the mass of the peasantry. Their Robin Hood policies were noised ahead of them, and often the “oppressed peasantry” sent groups to urge them to detour and “liberate” their districts.

Source: *Red Star Over China*, by Edgar Snow (rev. ed.; Grove Press, 1968).

ILLUSTRATION/PHOTO CREDIT: BETTMANN.

Questions to Think About

1. What were some of the hardships the marchers faced in this section of their trip? Why was this region of China especially difficult for many?
2. Where did the marchers get their food supplies? What did they do with extra food?
3. **Drawing Conclusions** Snow says that the Reds had made “many new friends” and “many bitter enemies”? From this excerpt, who do you think were the friends and who the enemies? Why?
4. **Activity.** Using an encyclopedia or other source, find the route taken by the thousands who made the Long March. Draw or trace a map of eastern Asia, including all of China, and labeling major cities and the provinces mentioned in the excerpt. Then show the route of the Long March.