

## Liu Bocheng during the Red Army's Long March in Sichuan

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### Abstract

Sichuan is a key activity area during the Long March of the Chinese Workers' and Peasants' Red Army. During the Red Army's Long March in Sichuan, Liu Bocheng, as the head of the Central Red Army's Long March advance team, directly commanded the battle of crossing the Dadu River. After joining up with the Fourth Front Army of the Red Army, he fought against Zhang Guotao's wrong line with a clear-cut stand and achieved success. During this period, Liu also served as president of the University of Chinese Workers' and Peasants' Red Army, training many military commanders and political workers with firm ideals and beliefs. Liu Bocheng's series of glorious deeds in Sichuan are a vivid portrayal of the spirit of the Great Long March, which not only reflects his superb military command ability and firm belief in Marxism as a proletarian revolutionary, but also made immortal contributions to the victory of the Long March.

### Keywords

Long March; Sichuan; Liu Bocheng.

### 1. Introduction

As one of the main founders and leaders of the Chinese People's Liberation Army, Liu Bocheng made great contributions to China's revolutionary cause during the Long March. During the Red Army's Long March in Sichuan, Liu Bocheng showed his great military command and education ability, embodying the noble political quality and firm political principles of a proletarian revolutionary soldier, setting an example for the revolutionary team at that time.

### 2. Don't be a Second Shi Dakai

Marshal Liu Bocheng made a lot of achievements in the military field, especially in his skillful front-line command ability. In his youth, Liu Bocheng was already famous in Sichuan during the War of Protecting the Law, and was dubbed the title of a famous general in Sichuan. In 1923, during his healing in Chengdu, under the influence of Yang Angong and Wu Yuzhang, he first came into contact with Marxist thought and was greatly shocked. In 1926, he successfully joined the Communist Party of China and became a glorious proletarian soldier. Since then, he has dedicated all his military talents and life-long energy to the great cause of the party and the people. After the Zunyi Conference, Liu Bocheng was ordered to serve as the commander-in-chief of the Red Army's Long March advance team. In the face of the extremely difficult natural environment and the Kuomintang army that was stubbornly resisting, he was always able to turn danger into danger at a critical juncture. Clearing obstacles for the follow-up troops, effectively guaranteed the overall security of the Party Central Committee and the revolutionary army. Among the many famous battles he commanded during the Long March, the foremost one was the forced crossing of the Dadu River during the Sichuan period.

In May 1935, after Liu Bocheng formed an alliance with Xiaoye Danji, the leader of the Yi nationality, with the help of the Yi nationality compatriots, the troops successfully passed through the Yi people's area and advanced towards the Dadu River. Chiang Kai-shek believed that if the Central Red Army wanted to join forces with the Fourth Front Army near Ya'an, it

had to cross the Dadu River. Therefore, Chiang Kai-shek arrived in Kunming and ordered Xue Yue, Yang Sen, Liu Wenhui and others to contain the Central Red Army, and flew to the front line twice to boost morale, delusionally making the Central Red Army the second Shi Dakai. At this time, the advance team of the Red Army commanded by Liu Bocheng and Nie Rongzhen was even more difficult than Shi Dakai's situation. On the one hand, from a time perspective. The advance team of the Red Army arrived at the Dadu River at least half a month later than Shi Dakai's troops, and the Dadu River at this time was already in the flood period. There are many stone cliffs on both sides of the Dadu River, and the 100-meter-wide river is swift and fast, and there is only a narrow passage between the two mountains. This only way has been occupied by the enemy, and a large number of fortifications have been built. On the other hand, from a military perspective. Chiang Kai-shek followed the strategy of the Qing army in chasing Shi Dakai. The Central Red Army was followed by Xue Yue's army, Liu Wenhui's troops were stationed on the north bank of the Dadu River in front, and Yang Sen and Liu Xiang's troops were on the flanks for support. As a result, the Red Army was surrounded by water at the mouth of the Dadu River. At the same time, Chiang Kai-shek also instigated some ethnic minorities to harass and invade the Red Army, and ordered the garrison troops along the coast to seize all available materials such as food and ships, trying to destroy the Red Army on the south side of the Dadu River. Faced with the above-mentioned dangers, Liu Bocheng and Nie Rongzhen closely analyzed the environment in which the advance troops were located, and formulated a strategy to forcefully cross the Dadu River. At the same time, Liu Bocheng ordered the soldiers to find an experienced boatman living along the Dadu River as soon as he arrived at Anshunchang. After fully understanding the water conditions and enemy conditions of the Dadu River, Liu Bocheng entrusted him to contact some experienced and young boatmen to assist the Red Army in crossing the river, and made corresponding guarantees in terms of remuneration. On the evening of the 24th, at the request of Liu Bocheng, the guards found Sun Jixian, the battalion commander of the 1st Battalion, who was the main attack task, to guide him and mobilize before the war. Nie Rongzhen asked Sun Jixian if he knew the story of Shi Dakai. Sun Jixian understood the purpose and made a firm guarantee that he would complete the task even if he sacrificed. Liu Bocheng told him, "Whether we will become Shi Dakai or not depends on you." [1] He also explained three tasks to him. First of all, after annihilating the enemies in Anshun Field, a pile of open flames is used as a signal. Second, after successfully occupying Anshun Field, immediately look for boats crossing the river and regenerate open flames as a signal. Finally, after doing all the preparations for crossing the river, a fire will be regenerated, and the follow-up troops will use this as a signal to cross the river. At ten o'clock in the evening, the second battalion went to the lower reaches of the Dadu River to confuse the enemy. However, during the battle, battalion commander Sun Jixian was so eager to find a boat to cross the river that he forgot to send a signal to the follow-up troops. Liu Bocheng sent guards to watch on the mountain many times. When there was only gunshots and no open flames, he sent people to the battlefield to investigate and learned that Anshun Field had been successfully occupied by the first battalion, and immediately set off for the ferry. After listening to the report on the course of the war, Liu Bocheng ordered the vanguard troops to keep up their spirits and began to forcibly cross the Dadu River after breakfast. At seven o'clock on the morning of 25th, under the watchful eye of Liu Bocheng and Nie Rongzhen, seventeen brave men, as the vanguard, officially kicked off the prelude of forcibly crossing the Dadu River. After carefully observing the firepower distribution of the enemy on the north bank of the Dadu River, Liu Bocheng ordered the sharpshooter Zhao Zhangcheng to make preparations to blow up the bunker on the other bank with the few shells he had. At nine o'clock in the morning, with the sound of the charge horn, the seventeen warriors took the only small boat and approached the opposite bank with the cooperation of firepower. Liu Bocheng walked out of the fortification regardless of his personal safety, and stood on the shore to attract the firepower of the enemy

on the other side. The charge trumpeter stopped blowing the charge horn considering Liu Bocheng's safety, and Liu Bocheng immediately ordered the trumpeter to continue blowing. Inspired by the sound of the passionate charging horn, the boats of the warriors crossing the river successfully docked. When more than 200 enemies rushed out to try to destroy the seventeen-man assault team, Liu Bocheng ordered Zhao Chengzhang to bombard the enemy. Under the fierce impact of artillery shells and seventeen warriors, the enemy was crushed, and the victory was won by crossing the Dadu River. After the victory, Liu Bocheng once again studied and judged the war situation and considered the issue of crossing the river for the follow-up troops led by Mao Zedong, Zhu De and Zhou Enlai. After MAO Zedong and others arrived in Anshun Chang, Liu Bocheng reported the latest situation and made suggestions. After listening to the report, Mao Zedong and others decided to follow the advice of Liu Bocheng and Nie Rongzhen, and divide the troops into two groups to meet at Luding Bridge. From May 26th to 29th, Liu Bocheng led his troops to Luding City, and together with the Fourth Regiment of the First Division of the Red First Army successfully captured the Luding Bridge [2], enabling the entire army to achieve the purpose of crossing the river.

The forcible crossing of the Dadu River under the command of Liu Bocheng is a glorious stroke written in the history of the Communist Party of China. First of all, the forcible crossing of the Dadu River is a concrete manifestation of Liu Bocheng's superb military command ability. As a life-and-death battle during the Red Army's Long March, Liu Bocheng led the Red Army soldiers to overcome all difficulties and united the masses, including ethnic minorities, under the difficult situation of being attacked and besieged by the enemy. And it broke Chiang Kai-shek's vain attempt to eliminate the Chinese Communist Party, preserved the revolutionary ranks, and laid the organizational and personnel foundation for the victory of the Long March. Secondly, the forced crossing of the Dadu River embodies Liu Bocheng's lofty ideals and firm beliefs, and is a clear manifestation of the great Long March spirit. These spirits always inspired the soldiers of the Red Army during the Long March, and laid a solid spiritual foundation for the victory of the Long March. Finally, the forcible crossing of the Dadu River was a key battle for the Chinese revolution to proceed smoothly. Liu Bocheng's successful command opened up a new situation for the Chinese revolution. After that, the Central Red Army successfully joined forces with the Red Fourth Front army in Ya 'an, which effectively dealt a blow to the ambition of the Kuomintang army, showed the determination and confidence of the Communist Party of China, and inspired countless Communists who struggled for national independence.

### 3. A Clear Stand Against Zhang Guotao

Since Marshal Liu Bocheng accepted Marxism, he has always demanded himself as a revolutionary soldier. In his view, the revolutionary soldiers of the proletariat must accept the leadership of the party unreservedly, and bluntly said: "We are a revolutionary soldier, if we leave the leadership of the party, we cannot become a revolutionary soldier"[3]. During his revolutionary career, he strictly demanded himself for this point, and was always closely united around the Party Central Committee. During the Long March, he was in the face of Zhang Guotao's separatist line, adhered to the decision-making and deployment of the Party Central Committee from beginning to end, and actively fought against wrong ideas.

After successfully crossing the Dadu River and successfully meeting with the Fourth Front Army led by Zhang Guotao, the Central Red Army held a meeting at the mouth of the two rivers to study the relevant issues after the two armies joined forces. Liu Bocheng attended the meeting as Chief of the General Staff of the Military Commission. On July 6, 1935, according to the instructions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, Liu Bocheng and Li Fuchun went to the Fourth Front Army to condole the soldiers, and conveyed the spirit of the Lianghekou meeting. At this time, due to the long-distance travel and the pursuit and

containment of the Kuomintang, the Central Red Army was far behind the Fourth Front Army in terms of personnel and security. On the one hand, in terms of numbers, the Central Red Army of more than 10,000 people is far less than the Red Fourth Front Army of more than 80,000 people. On the other hand, in terms of security, the Red Fourth Front Army is superior to the Central Red Army in terms of equipment and physical fitness. In view of the above situation, Zhang Guotao tried to take power alone, and his ambition to split the party began to be exposed. Under his instigation, the CPC Chuankang Provincial Committee proposed to the Central Committee that Zhang Guotao should be appointed as the Chairman of the Central Military Commission in order to centralize leadership. On July 18, from the perspective of uniting revolutionary comrades, the Party Central Committee appointed Zhang Guotao as the general political commissar of the Red Army. On August 3, the Central Military Commission made a decision to divide the troops northward, and Liu Bocheng followed the Left Army led by Zhang Guotao according to the arrangement. On September 9, Chang Kuo-tao ordered Chen Changhao to stop the right army from moving south and attempted to hijack the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China. In order to avoid the bloodshed caused by the internal struggle, the Party Central Committee quickly decided that the Right Route Army would go north first. The hopeless Zhang Guotao coerced and lured Zhu De and Liu Bocheng in the Left Army, hoping to respond to their strategy of going south in their name. Zhu De and Liu Bocheng remained unmoved and insisted on fighting against Zhang Guotao's wrong behavior. When Zhang Guotao had no choice but to set up another central committee and held several meetings, he instigated the participants who had been deceived by him to besiege Zhu De and Liu Bocheng, forcing them to express their opinions. Liu Bocheng bluntly stated at the enlarged meeting of the Sichuan-Kangzhou Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of China: "I agree to go north. From the perspective of the national situation, going north is beneficial, but going south is going to hit a snag." [1] And carefully analyze the situation of the southward to the participants. During the Left Route Army cadre meeting, Liu Bocheng took the initiative to stand up and draw everyone's attention to himself in the face of others' groundless accusations against Zhu De. He angrily scolded: "It's not the interrogation of prisoners, how can you treat Commander-in-Chief Zhu like this?" [4]. Zhang Guotao was so angry that he even threatened Liu Bocheng's life. At this time, Liu Bocheng rebuked Zhang Guotao with justice and resolutely supported the central policy and Mao Zedong's line. In the end, Zhang Guotao was forced by Liu Bocheng's prestige in the party to remove Liu Bocheng from the post of chief of the general staff and delegate him to the post of president of the Red Army University. After the Battle of Baizhangguan, the Fourth Red Army commanded by Zhang Guotao suffered heavy losses, while the Central Red Army continued to win victories in northern Shaanxi. In the face of the factual demonstration, the soldiers of the Left Route Army who were bewitched by Zhang Guotao gradually recognized the correctness of the central government's decision to go north. At the same time, Liu Bocheng actively promoted the correct line in the Red Army University, and worked hard to influence the cadres and soldiers who were recuperating in the Red Army University. With Liu Bocheng's active activities, the views of the Fourth Front Army in support of going north have become more popular among the people. At the beginning of March 1936, the Fourth Front Army withdrew from Tianquan, Lushan and Baoxing, and climbed the Jiajin Mountain to the north again. On the way north to the grassland, Liu Bocheng once again spared no effort to educate the soldiers. Make them remember their lessons, unite their comrades, and uphold the leadership of the Party Central Committee.

In the process of fighting against Zhang Guotao's wrong line, Liu Bocheng insisted on proceeding from reality while taking into account the overall situation and uniting comrades. This is another concrete manifestation of the spirit of the Long March. Liu Bocheng made immortal contributions to the Long March and the Chinese Revolution in his struggle against Zhang Guotao. On the one hand, from the perspective of his contribution to the Long March and

the Chinese Revolution. First of all, Liu Bocheng has always adhered to the strategy of the Central Committee going north, which has effectively maintained the authority of the Party Central Committee, strengthened the centralized and unified leadership of the Party Central Committee, and set an example for other cadres and soldiers in the Long March. Secondly, he consolidated Mao Zedong's position in the party during the struggle with Zhang Guotao, and gradually established the Chinese Communist Party as its core leading figure. In the end, the large-scale battle sacrifice of the Red Fourth Front Army and the Kuomintang army was effectively reduced, part of the strength of the Red Fourth Front Army was preserved, and many excellent war commanding talents were reserved for the Chinese revolution. On the other hand, from the point of view of the method of struggle. Liu Bocheng always adhered to the unity of principle and flexibility in the struggle against Zhang Guotao. The first is principle. In the face of Zhang Guotao's splitting behavior, Liu Bocheng showed a firm stance as a proletarian fighter. He resolutely resisted and bluntly criticized Zhang Guotao's attempts to coerce and use his reputation within the Red Army against the central government. The second is flexibility. First, he took the initiative to point the finger at himself at the public meeting, effectively protecting Commander-in-Chief Zhu De from being persecuted by Zhang Guotao. Second, in order to maintain the unity of the Red Army, he agreed to go to the Red Army University to take up a post. While avoiding conflicts, the struggle against Zhang Guotao started from the cadres and soldiers recuperating in the Red Army University, which made the decision of the Party Central Committee continue to be deeply rooted in the hearts of the people. Liu Bocheng's persistence in the struggle not only promoted the victory of the Long March, but also promoted the realization of the strategic goal of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China to the north.

#### **4. The Contemporary Sun Tzu and Wu Qi**

"Liu Bocheng is one of the founders of our army and one of the founders of the modernization and regularization of our army"[3]. Marshal Chen Yi once praised him with "The contemporary sun Tzu and Wu Qi". As an outstanding contemporary Chinese military theorist and military educator, he not only has a talent that is different from ordinary people in actual combat command, but also has made great achievements in military theory and teaching. . After the Nanchang Uprising, Liu Bocheng went to the Soviet Union to study abroad under the arrangement of the central government, and systematically studied the advanced political thought and military theory of the Soviet Union. Liu Bocheng, who had just arrived in Moscow, gave a speech of thanks on behalf of the same batch of students from China: "We must study hard and be Bolsheviks. The domestic revolutionary cause is waiting for us"[1]. After entering school, Liu Bocheng studied hard and finally mastered Russian proficiently. At this time, Liu Bocheng had already begun to consider introducing Soviet military works and advanced teaching ideas of military academies into China through translation. During the Long March period when our army was still relatively backward in equipment, Liu Bocheng had already focused on the modernization of the army. He stressed that a regular force must have a strict internal order. In all matters, work must be carried out in strict accordance with regulations and prohibitions, so that the military can become a systematic and regular collective, so as to efficiently achieve common goals. At the same time, he also emphasized the importance of military education. In his view, a strong army must have a group of excellent military commanders, and the ability of military command often requires the study of relevant military theoretical knowledge. Therefore, he put forward the point of view of "governing the army must first govern the school". During the Red Army's Long March in Sichuan, Liu Bocheng still insisted on translating Soviet military works and made important contributions when he served as the headmaster of the Red Army University of the First Front Army.

During the Sichuan period, its military and educational thoughts were first reflected in the translation and writing of military works. After the Central Red Army joined the Fourth Front Army, the situation was relatively stable compared to before the forcible crossing of the Dadu River. During this period, Liu Bocheng continued to start his translation work on the "Field Service Regulations of the Soviet Red Army Command", and finally completed the translation of the whole book before October 1935. In the translator's preface, he evaluated the book as the crystallization of war command in the Soviet civil war and world wars. He also emphasized that learning is not a mechanical copy, but must be combined with current practice when applying the experience in conducting. At the same time, in October 1935, he collected the experience of many defile battles encountered during the Red Army's Long March into a book, and wrote the article "Current Defile Battles". This article of more than 3,000 words uses extremely concise and vivid vocabulary to comprehensively explain the situation of the defile battle and the coping strategies. Liu Bocheng pointed out in the article that during the Long March, our army fought defile wars with the enemy from time to time in the rapids and rapids at the junction of Sichuan and Kangxi. The so-called defile refers to the terrain where the army is unable to fight on both sides at the bottom of narrow mountains and valleys during combat. And this kind of terrain exists in many places such as swamps and ponds. In view of this, Liu Bocheng made a strategic and tactical analysis of the defile war from the following aspects. First of all, when passing through the defile, the troops must quickly carry out the reconnaissance of the internal topography of the defile, so as to "know themselves and the enemy", and comprehensively consider how to effectively switch between defense and offense. Secondly, when both the enemy and the enemy have to pass through the defile, arrangements should be made from two angles. On the one hand, when facing the enemy attacking from the outside of the defile, we must quickly enter the defile and cooperate with the infantry to seize favorable terrain with intensive firepower. While attacking the enemy who entered the defile from the front, it fired roundabout from the side, and attacked the enemy's head and flanks. On the other hand, when our side is attacking the enemy occupying the defile from the outside, the troops should advance in echelon, concentrating superior forces to quickly attack the frontal enemy and seize favorable terrain. Finally, when the troops retreat through the defile, they must be carried out in a certain order. In receiving the defeated enemy troops to arrange a strong guard, to prevent the enemy's second attack caused casualties of troops. The last evacuated troops should block and destroy the road [5] to prevent the enemy's follow-up pursuit. In addition to the above points, Liu Bocheng also explained the organization and communication of the troops and how to take defense in different defiles. This military masterpiece by Liu Bocheng not only set an example for the generals of the army to convert practical experience into theory, but also laid a solid foundation for the victory of related battles in the later period.

During the Sichuan period, Liu Bocheng's military and educational thoughts were also reflected in the management of the Chinese Workers and Peasants' Red Army University. After the Central Red Army and the Fourth Front Army met at Jiajinshan, in order to improve the political and military literacy of the cadres, the University of the Red Army of China Workers and Peasants was established, and Liu Bocheng assumed the post of president. When he was in charge of the Red Army University in Sichuan, Liu Bocheng mainly carried out his work from the following two aspects. On the one hand, external publicity work. The generals and soldiers of the Red Army who were in danger during the Long March were still eager to learn cultural knowledge to enhance their political level. In view of this, Liu Bocheng organized and founded the "Red Furnace" school journal at the Red Army University, and he personally titled and wrote the publication speech for this journal. In view of this, Liu Bocheng organized the establishment of the school magazine "Red Furnace" in the Red Army University, for which he personally wrote the title and the publication. In the article, he compared the Red Army university to a burning furnace, and urged everyone to firm up their revolutionary will, struggle against

difficult conditions while seeking knowledge, and carry forward the fine tradition of the Red Army. Today, the school magazine Liu Bocheng organized and founded during his time in Sichuan is little known due to historical reasons, but its role in the Chinese revolution cannot be ignored, especially in the history of the Chinese People's Liberation Army newspapers and periodicals. Another aspect is teaching work. One can imagine how difficult it was to create a university during the Long March. Liu Bocheng led the staff of the Red Army University to overcome many difficulties and carry out the teaching activities in an orderly manner. Taking into account the actual conditions of the Red Army at that time, Liu Bocheng put forward the general policy of "connecting theory with practice and comprehensively training cadres". This requires the Red Army University to insist on combining the theory of Marxism-Leninism, especially their military theory, with the concrete reality at that time in the teaching process, so that the students can become commanding talents with high political belief and comprehensive theory. He personally led the formulation of corresponding teaching plans, and passed on the experience of running a school in the Central Soviet District to the teaching staff. First of all, in the setting of political courses. The Red Army University has established courses such as Marxist theory, the history of the Chinese revolution and the history of the Communist Party of China. These courses mainly clarify the nature, purpose and tasks of the Red Army. At the same time, in the process of political education, teachers must actively respond to the decision-making and deployment of the Party Central Committee to go north to fight against Japan, and strive to unite comrades and unify their thoughts. The Red Army University also vigorously publicized the party's ethnic policy outside of the classroom, combining the Red Army's experience of interacting with ethnic minorities during the Long March, so that the concept of ethnic equality was deeply rooted in the Red Army. At the same time, the "three disciplines, eight attention" educational activities were also carried out on the campus, which strengthened and shaped the overall image of the students. Secondly in the military curriculum setting. The Red Army University has set up courses such as "Soviet Red Army Combat Regulations" and "Soviet Army Field Regulations". These courses are all military works translated by Liu Bocheng in the intervals of battles. At the same time, the Red Army University also offered practical theoretical courses such as shooting principles to the students, and carried out teaching work by means of sand table deduction or drawing. Liu Bocheng called on the students to summarize their combat experience while studying, and carry out Long March education around "fighting" and "walking". "Fighting" mainly tells the students how to fight when they encounter different terrains such as mountains, rivers, etc. or different enemies such as cavalry and infantry during the Long March. "Walking" is mainly to tell the students how to camp and be vigilant in the process of climbing the snowy mountains and crossing the grasslands. These teaching activities are not only vivid, interesting and easy to understand, but also adapted to the general cultural level of the students at that time, which can improve the comprehensive quality of the students in a relatively short period of time, and cultivate a group of excellent commanders for the Red Army.

General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized the need to "build a military academic discourse system with Chinese characteristics and an international perspective"[6]. Therefore, in the face of the new international situation and the needs of modern warfare, it is of great value to further explore Liu Bocheng's military education thought during the Long March period in the Red Army University, which will help our country build a world-class army and enhance its national defense strength.

## 5. Conclusion

The Red Army's Long March over Sichuan played an important role in Liu Bocheng's growth. Not only strengthened his talent in the military field, but also forged his noble party spirit. The

Long March spirit of overcoming all difficulties, not afraid of sacrifice, taking into account the overall situation, close unity, and hard struggle, which he showed in this process, reflects his firm revolutionary ideals and beliefs. Exploring Liu Bocheng's important deeds during the Long March, excavating his spirit play an important role in strengthening the education of party members and cadres, promoting party building, and taking the Long March road in the new era.

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