

The First Blanket

Mementoes
of the Revolution



THIS blanket was the first one produced by a woollen textile mill run by the Eighth Route Army, which preceded the Chinese People's Liberation Army.

During the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, the Kuomintang reactionaries and the Japanese invaders imposed a strict military encirclement and economic blockade on the Shensi-Kansu-Ningsia Border Region where the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party and the general headquarters of the Eighth Route Army were located. This confronted the army and the civilians in the border region with grave financial and economic difficulties. In those days of hardship and privation, the Party, the government, the army and the civilians, responding to Chairman Mao's call, launched a large-scale drive for production. In addition to working in the fields, all of them, men and women, learned to run a spinning wheel. Those who had no such implement spun cotton and woollen yarn on a bamboo chopstick with a small wooden knob at one end. In this way people made woollen socks and mittens, home-spun cloth and towels, to ensure with their own hands that everyone was well fed and well clothed, as Chairman Mao had called upon them to do.

In those days it was not only cadres in general who joined in the work, but the leading comrades of the Party's Central Committee as well, and some of the yarn spun by the latter was displayed at an exhibition showing the achievements made in agricultural and industrial production in the Shensi-Kansu-Ningsia Border Region. To promote the textile industry, the logistics department of the Eighth Route Army made a machine from local materials, and wove warm, fine-looking blankets from wool produced in the region.