

Testing a four-wheel drive 'Power Wagon' truck in a simulated river and mud bank crossing. Some of these trucks are still in use on mainland China.

CHRYSLER HAS EDGE IN P.R.C., CAN'T USE IT.

Dodge "Power Wagon"
Trucks From W.W.II Still On
Road in Mainland China.

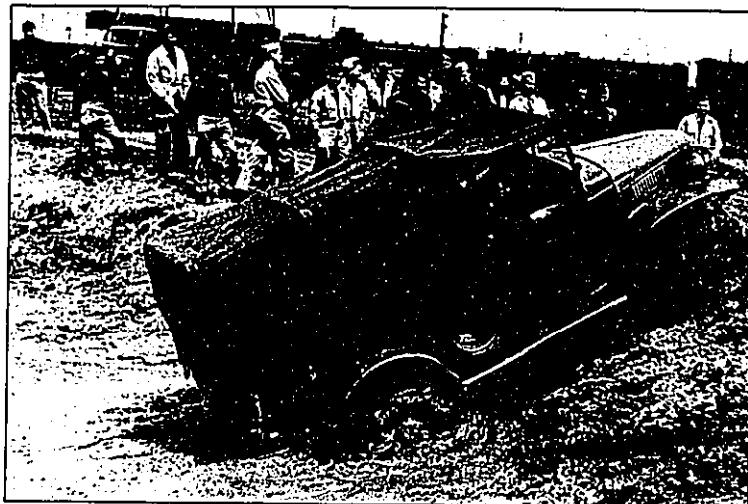
Chrysler Corporation produced more than 400 thousand trucks for the U.S. Army during the Second World War. Those trucks, some of which were four wheel drive 'power wagon' models, were shipped all over the world. They were used in Africa against General Rommel's Afrika Corp, in Europe against Hitler and Mussolini, and in Asia against Empéror Hirohito.

One of the routes in Asia was the Burma Road, a supply line from India to China over the Himalaya Mountains. War material and civilian supplies were shipped on the Burma Road to Chinese troops fighting the Japanese.

Following the end of World War II, the Chinese Nationalists and Communists ended their period of co-operation against a common enemy, and resumed their civil war. Although it wasn't intended, those Dodge 'Power Wagon' trucks became part of the Chinese civil war, on the side of Generalissimo Chiang Kai Sheik's forces.

The Chinese communists 'liberated' some of those Dodge trucks by capturing them from the nationalists. Even though there were no spare parts for the 'Power Wagons', the Chinese communists were able to keep them on the road. When the Chinese civil war ended with a communist victory over the Koumintang army, Chiang Kai Sheik's forces retreated to Taiwan, and took most of their army's supplies with them, including their remaining fleet of Dodge trucks.

All that happened more than thirty years ago. It's history in this country, but not in China. When Chrysler Cor-



poration approached the government on Taiwan in 1977, the name Chrysler didn't mean anything to Taiwanese officials, but Dodge (or Dod-gee, as they pronounced it) did. More than thirty years after the end of the Chinese civil war, the Taiwan government remembered using Dodge 'Power Wagon' trucks during the war years in the 1940's.

On the basis of the Dodge 'power wagon' truck performance Chrysler Corporation was able to begin negotiations with the government on Taiwan for the construction of a truck assembly operation.

In June of last year, Chrysler Corporation was contacted by the government on the Chinese mainland. As in the case of the Taiwanese government, the People Republic of China officials did not know the name Chrysler, but they did know the name Dodge (again, Dod-gee).

The officials of the Peoples Republic of China remembered the Dodge trucks they used in World War II against the Japanese, and in the Chinese civil war when the communists captured many of the Dodge trucks used by the Koumintang forces. Actually, the P.R.C. is still making use of those thirty five year old trucks they 'liberated' from the Nationalists.

As with the government on Taiwan, the government in Peking used the performance of the Dodge truck 'Power Wagon' during World War II as the basis for inviting Chrysler Corporation to submit a proposal for establishing a facility on the Chinese mainland.

It now appears, however, that

Chrysler will be unable to follow through on negotiations with the Peoples Republic of China. A reliable source in Chrysler told Car Biz that in its present condition, Chrysler will be unable to do business with the mainland Chinese. The Chinese want to establish a joint venture, and Chrysler cannot afford to do that at this time.

In the joint venture, both Chrysler and the Chinese mainland government would put up funds for building and stocking a facility.

Chrysler is, at present, pulling back from its overseas operations. Last year, it sold its European holdings to Citroen-Peugot, and last month sold part of its South American operations to General Motors. These actions are the latest moves by Chrysler to consolidate its losses overseas, and to attempt a comeback in the U.S. domestic market. In 1978, Chrysler lost more than 200 million, making it the second worst year in the Corporation's history.

These losses, and the Chinese insistence on a joint-venture operation, mean Chrysler will be unable to exploit the reputation its Dodge "Power Wagon" trucks earned in China, and on the Burma Road, more than thirty years ago.

Most experts are predicting China will be opening up to western technology, and will be using its oil reserves and mineral deposits to pay the bill for development. It's too bad Chrysler is in the position it now finds itself. It has a thirty year start on the automotive competition for the mainland China market, but apparently can't take advantage of it. ■