

PART ONE

Communists Rule in Nanking After One Month of Trial (April 23 – May 23, 1949)

I began my life behind the Bamboo Curtain on April 23, 1949, the day the nationalists pulled out of Nanking. “Bamboo Curtain” is a term coined by the American press for the totalitarian rule which the Chinese communists are expected to establish in China.

“Bamboo Curtain”, in my opinion, is a more appropriate term for China than “Iron Curtain”, which is used in reference to Soviet Russia, because the barrier against the outside world would not be as tight as that erected by Soviet Russia, due to the long vulnerable Chinese coastline and the large Chinese population abroad.

Another meaning of the Bamboo Curtain is that people behind a bamboo curtain can see outside the curtain, but people outside cannot see inside. This is generally presumed to be what the Chinese communists and communists in other countries are doing – banning foreign observation and inspection of their country, while maintaining a

gigantic information or espionage network in other countries.

The most remarkable thing that emerged after the “liberation” of Nanking was the ingenuity and scale of the communist underground network. The set-up of the nationalist political and economic nerve centre was infested with the virus of communist espionage and sabotage, covering every part and level of the governmental machinery and reaching deep even into the Army Headquarters. This was one of the causes of the fast disintegration of Chiang Kai-shek’s power.

One communist underground agent told me there were eight thousand underground workers in Nanking. He said three thousand of them were members of the Communist Party. Others were members of anti-Kuomintang parties and factions, communist sympathisers, individual political opportunists and people who were disgusted with the Kuomintang government. His figure may be a little exaggerated, but in my opinion it is pretty near to the truth.

Some of the underground agents were high up and deep in the most vital and confidential branches of the nationalist government. Some started their career in the civil service immediately after they left college and after going through the normal spell of training set up by the Kuomintang. Little wonder that all the secrets of the nationalist government were known to the communists

before they were locked in the safety box. In Nanking, whenever the Garrison Headquarters drew up a blacklist of names for a nocturnal police round-up, the communist underground always had the list before the police were informed of it.

During the peace negotiations in Peking in April 1949, nationalist peace delegate General Liu Fei insisted to chief communist peace delegate Chou En-lai, now Premier of the Central People's Government, that the nationalist army totalled over four million men and could still fight if the communists refused to accede to their peace proposals.

Premier Chou En-lai smiled and took a piece of paper from his drawer and showed it to General Liu. That piece of paper contained the most detailed information on the disposition of all the remaining nationalist units with the names of even the battalion commanders. The paper gave the total strength of the remnant nationalist army as 1.1 million. General Liu, according to the communist sources who gave me the story, “reddened with embarrassment” and said, “Well, our payroll shows over four million men”.

After the nationalist army pulled out of Nanking, communist underground agents immediately revealed their identity and quietly went on to take over governmental offices and property. The chief reporter, Mr. Li Kuo, and several typesetters in the Kuomintang party organ, *Central Daily News*, announced their identity in a meeting of

the paper's staff on April 23 and formed a committee for checking and taking over the paper's plant. In the Central News Agency, eight members of its staff emerged as communists.

Two editors of the Military News Agency (operated by the Nationalist Defence Ministry), who had access to all of the war and intelligence reports of the Ministry's G-2 Department, turned out to be members of Marshal Li Chi-sen's Kuomintang Revolutionary Committee.

Even the confidential secretary of the Chief of G-3 Department of the Nationalist Defence Ministry, Captain Huang, was a communist. He had obtained his commission after a period of training in a Kuomintang military academy and was given the important position because of his "loyal" service.

As the confidential secretary of the G-3 Chief, Captain Huang handled all of the top-secret documents concerning military operations, defence plans, and troop deployment. When the Defence Ministry was making preparations to move out of Nanking a few days before the fall of the city, he quit the Ministry – but not before stealing top-secret military maps of defence works and strategic areas in Taiwan.

At the end of May 1949, I wrote a series of six articles for the United Press on how communist rule had affected the common man in Nanking after a period of one month.

These six articles are reproduced here without any change as the first portion of my report on communist rule.

1. Communist Government

The communists have set up a skeletal, but efficient and lenient administration in Nanking; yet, communist occupation has thrown the city into a mild business depression and serious unemployment problem.

Despite the fact that the nationalists tore down the municipal government and police force when they left – obviously to make things difficult for their enemies – the communists with efficiency and thoroughness have now succeeded in restoring all of the city’s municipal and public services.

Communist leniency shown here is in conformity with their so-called “Eight Contractual Laws”, their basic policy of city administration which is based on the principles of maintaining economic status quo and clemency towards past anti-communist political activities.

Persuasion, not pressure, is used in bringing the “unorthodox” to the line of communist thinking. Even former Kuomintang secret service men are allowed freedom, albeit apparently under close surveillance.

Foreigners here fare better than those in Peiping or Tientsin. They enjoy the advantage of official contact

with the communists who have set up a foreign affairs department headed by Yenching graduate Huang Hua to attend to their troubles, if any.

Their property has not been violated and there are no restrictions imposed on their movement even to city suburbs. Initial anti-foreign actions taken by individual communist soldiers – such as the unconventional entry into US Ambassador John Leighton Stuart’s residence – were halted promptly by order of the Communist High Command.

Foreign diplomatic missions ran into their first major difficulty with the communists over the re-registration of automobiles and telephones. The communists, maintaining that they have not established diplomatic relations, refuse – as in Peiping and Tientsin – to recognise the international law status of the missions and require them to re-register cars, telephones, and names of individuals, though property actually belongs to their respective governments. The matter is still in negotiation.

The first concrete benefit of communist rule here is relative economic stability. Prices of imported and manufactured articles are much higher than before but essential daily needs such as rice, cooking oils and meat are enjoying a stability previously unseen. According to a Nanking University survey, the general cost of living index this month has risen only about forty percent,

which appears negligible compared with the doubling daily in skyrocketing inflation under the Kuomintang. The communist *renminbi* currency depreciated about sixty percent during the same period.

However, business has hit a mild depression. This is a natural result of the nationalist abandonment of Nanking as their capital, where former business prosperity thrived chiefly on the heavy concentration of purchasing power inherent in the city's political position as the seat of the national government.

The business decline is best illustrated in the words of a barber who told me, "I cut the hair of more than ten persons daily before, but now only one or two persons". The general shopkeeper, tailor, restaurant owner, and mechanic talk similarly.

2. Popular Reactions

Chiang Kai-shek, the Generalissimo, the President and the Kuomintang Tsungtsai, is now "Chiang the Bald Head" and "Chiang the Country Betrayer" in Nanking, the seat of his power since 1927.

This propaganda smear against the retired Chinese president is carried to the population in slogans and political lectures. The Nanking communist organ *New China Daily* published a short poem captioned "Chiang

the Bald Head” which is taught even to primary school children.

This is part of a well-organised propaganda campaign, carried out here by communist political workers and assisted enthusiastically by students, to proselytise ideologically the Nanking populace which has been fed with anti-communist propaganda for a longer time than those of other cities.

Communist underground workers and students posted slogans even before communist troops entered the city on April 24. One caricature depicted Chiang Kai-shek with five human skulls in his belly showing how he had “eaten up” the people. Most slogans attacked Kuomintang misgovernment.

One of the most popular posters demanded the confiscation of the bureaucratic capital of China’s big four families: the Chiangs, Soongs, Kungs and Chens. The *New China Daily* reported their total wealth is sufficient “to supply rice for the world’s population for thirty-two months, the Chinese population for twelve years; clothe the world’s poor for thirteen years, China’s for 680 years; purchase 2.2 billion ounces of gold; build 110,000 hospitals averaging one to every four thousand Chinese; and build eleven million schools in China”.

A chief part of the “ideological proselytism” drive is the so-called “learning movement”, that is, learning the “new

knowledge” consisting mainly of Marxist and Leninist theories, Mao Tse-tung’s “New Democracy” and “On Coalition Government” and Yangko dance and songs.

“Learning” meetings are held daily among the students, workers, and other types of people. They are organised by communist political workers, or even by the participants themselves.

The “ideological proselytism” drive appears to have achieved considerable success. Communist political theories, Kuomintang misgovernment and Mao Tse-tung’s political programme for China are now the main topics in private conversations. The Yangko dance is performed in schools, homes and the streets and its songs are hummed everywhere in the town. Mao Tse-tung’s two booklets, “New Democracy” and “On Coalition Government”, are best sellers in the town.

The populace here displaces a remarkable sense of security under the communists. The former feeling of tension appears to have given place to one of general contentment, stemming presumably from the widespread belief that with the communist occupation the civil war is over as far as this city is concerned.

The communists were getting a good start in their effort to win over support here by the public felicitous mood which resulted from the quick conclusion of the Battle of Nanking. Many had expected the battle to be drawn out

and the city beleaguered for some time and had hoarded a few months' supply of rice.

There are still people who maintain their anti-communist views and people who look askance at the communists. For instance, some businessmen are adopting a wait-and-see attitude before resuming operations with their former vigour. One businessman told me, "We are now hesitant of earning big money because we are unsure if the money we earn with our sweat will remain ours in the future".

However, indications show that people as a whole are inclined to accept the communists as their new government. A large section of the populace has displayed even more than the inclination to accept; but students and workers, who constitute the backbone of Chinese urban society, are more enthusiastic in welcoming the communists.

There are definitely more people who welcome the communists than those who regret the departure of the nationalists. Even the complainants I talked to do not wish for the return of the nationalists. The farthest they would go is to hope that the communists would modify their policies to suit their individual interests.

The favourable popular reactions to the communist rule here are generally ascribed by competent observers to three factors: (1) the relative economic stability they have brought in; (2) their well-behaved and disciplined army;

and (3) the popular conviction that with their arrival the civil war is over, permitting the revival of long-lost political security.

It is noted that it is only natural these factors have made such an impact on the psychology of the masses who were plagued by civil war and undisciplined soldiery during the last few decades and by a nightmarish inflation in the last three years. By habit they assess a system on the basis of its actual effects on their daily lives, rather than on its theoretical merits.

The broader international and political complications of the situation – one of the main worries of Western democracies – are absent from their minds. Communist political and theoretical influence is strong, sometimes even more so among the educated class.

3. Communist Press

Communist rule has created a news hunger in Nanking. The majority of the people I talked to in my survey of popular reactions to the communists complain, “There is no news to read nowadays”.

Two of them – a gasoline seller and a shop assistant – asked me if they could subscribe to the United Press news service. I told them we do not and perhaps never will distribute news in Nanking. To this the gasoline seller

persuaded, "But I would buy your service only for personal reference". I replied, "Sorry, even that we cannot do".

The news hunger is not the outcome of the decreased number of newspapers in the town but a result of the kind of news they had been accustomed to reading before the communists came no longer being available, namely, human interest and social stories such as divorces, crimes, reports on the activities and meetings of high officials, and foreign agency despatches on the China situation.

At present, only two vernaculars serve the estimated 1.1 million population of Nanking: the communist organ *New China Daily* and the privately owned but pro-communist *China Daily*. Another privately owned paper, the *Hsinminpao*, which was banned by the Kuomintang, is reported to have obtained communist permission to resume publication shortly. The other seventeen papers have been ordered to suspend publication pending registration with the communist military control commission.

The New China and the China dailies print only Communist New China News Agency despatches and some Tass reports on the international situation, and occasionally one or two other short foreign agency items. Their content is mainly propagandist, educative, and literary in nature, e.g., Communist Party declarations, editorials, propaganda features and lengthy stories on

production, political activities, and meetings of workers and students.

Because only one news distribution source is available, the papers contain practically the same information. Buying one paper is sufficient and after buying the morning paper it is usually unnecessary to buy the evening paper because it often prints the same material as its morning contemporaries.

One newspaper executive told me that under these conditions the future of journalistic developments in China will be extremely limited. During the first three weeks of communist occupation, when old newspapers were allowed to continue publication, their circulation rapidly declined because most people who used to buy more than one morning paper and people who used to buy both the morning and evening papers now bought only one, as one was sufficient to keep one abreast of all the printable news.

“Even if we were permitted to resume publication”, the executive added, “it is exceedingly doubtful we could get enough circulation to keep ourselves out of the red”. He observed that one or two thousand newspaper workers in Nanking were faced with the problem of “*chuang yeh*” (changing profession). The executive suggested one possible way out is to find a new type of reporting which would

fulfil the requirements of both the communists and the reading public.

One veteran Chinese editor who had watched communist press operations in Peiping the last few months said, "Under the communists there is no news competition and the entire emphasis is placed on accuracy. Accuracy under the communists is both factual and political in meaning".

In the *New China Daily* a reader frequently comes across delayed stories. For instance, I saw a story of a discussion meeting presided over by Mayor Liu Po-chen which was held four days earlier. Upon inquiry I was told by a communist newspaperman the reason for this delay was that after the reporter had written his story he had to show it to everyone he had quoted to check if the quotes were correct.

Though there were no restrictions on the foreign press in the collection of news, none of the communist officials in town would receive us in a news-gathering visit. The reasons, according to a Chinese newspaperman, are: (1) the communist journalistic code discourages reporting on officials or official activities and enjoins that reportorial effort should be concentrated on the production and the life of the common man; and (2) an ordinary communist official is not free to talk. Every word he says

to newspapermen must receive the prior approval of high authorities.

The communist journalistic code also is said to enjoin the publication of only the good things in ordinary social life. This accounts for the disappearance of reports on robberies, murders, and divorces in the communist press.

4. The Communist Army

The Liberation Army appears to be the trump card of the communists – it wins battles as well as popularity for them.

If you ask ten Chinese in a city newly-captured by the communists you will find nine of them starting off, “Oh, their army is really good and well-disciplined”. Even people whom I know to still be anti-communist in their political views have admitted that the communist army is the best China has ever seen. I know of at least two friends who changed their views about the city’s new rulers after they had seen more of the Red Soldiers.

A common observation in this town is that if Chiang Kai-shek were to have a similar chance of personal contact with the communist army, he might change his mind, too.

Communist soldiers have brought a new story into Nanking, though it is not possible to ascertain how true

it is. The story, now widely circulated in the city, is that a nationalist soldier cannot meet his communist counterpart, as he will defect before the conversation is over.

The story also claimed there were many straying nationalist army men in the front trying to get back to their units running into straying communist soldiers. They stopped to talk with each other with the communists always starting off, “For whom are you fighting?” Invariably the result is, according to the story, the nationalist soldiers picked up their rifles and walked away in the opposite direction behind the communist soldiers.

From what I have seen of the communist soldiers in Nanking I found that they possess the following features which are never or very rarely evident in other Chinese soldiers:

They are well-mannered, polite and “chiang tao li” (talk reason). They say “please” and “tui pu chi” (sorry), and you can argue with them. With the nationalists, prudence frequently is the better side of valour when it comes to a dispute.

One day I watched several communist soldiers pleading patiently with some stall-keepers to move their stalls inner to the road along Chungcheng Street. They implored, “We are sorry, but please move your stalls inner. It’s safer for you and more convenient for motor traffic”. This is in sharp

contrast to the way the nationalist gendarmes kicked down traffic-blocking stalls I saw before.

They have a high level of education. It cannot be ascertained what is the exact literacy percentage, but one noteworthy observation is that when they came into Nanking the best selling commodity in town was cheap Chinese-made fountain pens.

In political indoctrination, qualified observers granted them an easy one hundred percent. This is believed to be the main factor accounting for the high sense of confidence and fighting for a cause among the Liberation Army men.

They are well cared for medically. I learned that the Communist 35th Army, which was the first unit to enter Nanking and which originally was the Nationalist 84th Division which defected at Tsinan last year, has two thousand doctors and Liu Po-chen's general headquarters five thousand doctors. (Most of these doctors, however, are graduates of short-term courses.)

Dr. K.F. Yao, superintendent of the Central Hospital, said the level of medical education must be very high in the communist army. He noted that during the first two weeks of communist occupation a long stream of communist soldiers came to his hospital for a physical check-up and he had to set up a special clinic just to take care of them.

The pay scale in the communist army is lower than in the nationalist army, but their food is better and contains more meat. One novel piece of equipment in the communist army is a sausage-like bag about four feet and four inches in diameter containing rice and carried by the soldiers. It apparently is a guerrilla warfare necessity.

It is reported that the communists drill very little. Their chief training is walking, marching and shooting straight. The average communist soldier has little knowledge of the modern city facilities. One day the *New China Daily* reported that the soldiers were learning how to use the flush toilet, switch on electric lights, and turn on the water pipe.

5. Nationalist Retreat from Nanking

The nationalist retreat from Nanking, orderly at the beginning, degraded into an undisciplined, and in some phases, a panicky flight, leaving behind a backwash of bitterness and disrepute.

The general retreat began at four a.m. on April 24, the decision to abandon the capital having been made only seven hours earlier after the city's right and left flanks were turned by communist river-crossing operations.

Acting President Li Tsung-jen and Premier Ho Ying-chin returned to Nanking in the afternoon of April 22

from their meeting with Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek at Hangchow with no thought of the contingency ever arising to evacuate the city next morning. They sneaked out of Nanking by plane one hour after the general retreat started.

Defeated soldiers maintained correct army discipline for a few hours and then started robbing, looting and “*la fu*” (forcing people to carry loads for them). Even now some people still talk bitterly of the way they had been robbed and “*la fu*”. Alert communist propagandists took full advantage of the incorrect behaviour of the nationalist soldiers immediately when they entered the city on the morning of April 24. They pasted posters all over the town asking the people, “Have you seen them taking a needle or a piece of thread from the people? Compare them, please, with Chiang Kai-shek’s rebels!”

The following are a few instances of nationalist “*la fu*” and robbery which came to my attention:

- (1) A pedicab belonging to the Shanghai *Takungpao Daily* was taken away. The paper’s jeep was also “requisitioned” and its driver was forced to drive nationalist soldiers to Tangshan, fifteen miles south of Nanking, where the dissolved American Joint Military Advisory Mission was once established. Only the driver was allowed to return from Tangshan.

- (2) One Catholic-owned *Social Welfare Daily* reporter came across a nationalist soldier trying to rob a man of his bicycle. He broke in to mediate and settled it by giving the soldier the man's wristwatch.
- (3) A United Press newsboy disappeared for four days and when he came back he said he was "*la fu*" up to Tangshan.

Robbery outside Nanking city by soldiers was said to be even worse. One popular singsong girl who left the city April 23 for Shanghai by bus returned two days later minus all her jewels, gold bars, and dresses. A detailed story of her misfortune was published in a Nanking evening paper later.

One of my friends, whose Nanking-bound train was halted at Chengkiang and who had to walk to Nanking, reached home two days later, robbed of everything except his pants and singlet. He said he tried to take detours to avoid the robbing soldiery but "there were soldiers all over the countryside".

Panic was said to have struck the retreating nationalists at the later stage. One bank employee who left Nanking for Shanghai April 23 by car went only as far as Chuyung, twenty-five miles southeast of Nanking. He said his car could go no further because the road bridges had been destroyed and the road itself was blocked by a concentration of over ten thousand nationalist soldiers. As he was trying to find a detour, word came that the communists had

arrived, which in turn threw the nationalist concentration into panic. Soldiers scattered, fleeing in all directions. Later it developed that the advance communist unit consisted of twenty communist soldiers.

Retreating nationalist soldiers, gendarmes, and police fought a sanguinary battle at Tangshan among themselves wrestling for motored transportation. Police and gendarmes possessed the trucks which were loaded mostly with personal belongings. Soldiers argued that the trucks now should carry men instead of baggage. Police and gendarmes refused to discard the cargo and the battle ensued with a large number of casualties.

The communist army's fast marching ability was another factor injecting confusion into the nationalist retreat route. The communist force marched to Liyang, fifty-five miles southeast of Nanking, in two and a half days. A nationalist division from Nanking trudged to Liyang on the fourth day. The rested communists disarmed with little difficulty the fatigued nationalists.

6. Communists and Foreign Recognition

Foreign diplomatic opinion here believes the communists at present are not anxious for foreign recognition.

This, foreign diplomats explain, means that they would establish diplomatic relations when offered on a footing of

complete equality and in a spirit of friendliness. However, they would not ask for it.

A talk I had with one communist worker seemed to confirm the belief that to the communists it is mainly a question of accepting, not requesting, recognition. The worker, replying to my question, said, “We will accept the recognition of any country if that country abandons its superiority complex and unequal treaties and rights”.

An independent Chinese source who enjoyed intimate connections with top communist officials told me, “The communists have not yet given any serious thought to recognition. They are still concentrating their energy and effort on completing the liberation of all China and restoration of production in liberated areas”.

The communists seem to be exercising extreme caution in the question of foreign recognition and approaching the issue with a spirit of nationalistic pride. As a rule the communists are unwilling to talk about the question even in private conversations. One source told me that they have been instructed not to talk with any outsider on foreign matters without proper authorisation.

Opinions thus far regarding the communist position towards foreign recognition mostly are conjectures. The only official word on the matter was found in communist army spokesman Li Tao’s statement recently on the incident involving the British sloop *Amethyst*. He said:

If any foreign government is willing to consider the establishment of diplomatic relations with us, it must sever all connections with the remaining power of the Kuomintang and withdraw its armed forces from China.

A *Takungpao* editorial throws some light on the question. The privately owned daily is considered best capable of reflecting the communist official attitude. Deducting from utterances made by Mao Tse-tung and Army spokesman Li Tao's statement, the editorial concludes that new China's foreign policy during this interim period is thus: "We want all foreign governments to respect new China's independent and equal status and they will not be allowed to encroach on our internal affairs. We will by our own efforts strive to build a new democratic country and will not be too anxious about the establishment of diplomatic relations with foreign governments. Foreign life and property, however, will be protected".

