

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

ADB-24

On Board the SS Wing Sang
En Route Hongkong-Shanghai
December 10, 1948

Mr. Walter S. Rogers
Institute of Current World Affairs
522 Fifth Avenue
New York 18, N.Y.

Dear Mr. Rogers:

"Laboring people of the entire country, unite; ally with the intelligentsia, liberal bourgeoisie, all democratic parties and groups, social luminaries and other patriotic elements; consolidate and expand the united front against imperialist, feudal and bureaucratic capitalist forces; fight together to destroy Kuomintang reactionaries and build a new China. All democratic parties and groups, people's organizations and social luminaries, speedily convene a Political Consultative Conference, discuss and carry out the convoking of a People's Representative Assembly to establish a Democratic Coalition Government!"

This sweeping appeal for a broad united front was made by the Chinese Communist Party on May 1, 1948. It struck a responsive chord among a small group of Chinese political refugees in voluntary exile on the island of Hongkong. To these dissidents, joined in opposition to Chiang K'ai-shek, the Communist May Day appeal offered an alliance. They accepted the offer, and their telegram to Mao Tze-tung, Chairman of the Communist Party, on May 5 proclaimed, "We herein express our response and support to your call, and hope by its realization to meet our national renaissance." The telegram was signed by leaders of the Kuomintang Revolutionary Committee (KMTRC), Democratic League, Peasants' and Workers' Democratic Party (PWDP), National Salvation Society (NSS), Chinese Democratic Promotion Society (CDPS), San Min Chu I Comrades Association, Kuomintang Democratic Promotion Society (KMTDPS), and Chi Kung Tang.

The alliance of these splinter groups in Hongkong with the Communist Party lifted the names of their leaders from relative obscurity to prominence in the seething rumor markets of present-day China. According to one rumor, for example, the top KMTRC leaders, Li Chi-shen (or Li Chai-sum) and Feng Yu-hsiang (before his death) were slated to become political and military chiefs, respectively, of a new Chinese government set up under the Communists, with Communist leaders Mao Tze-tung and Chu Teh in the number two positions.

At present representatives from these Hongkong groups, meeting with the Communists in Harbin, are helping to plan the Political Consultative Conference (PCC) which is scheduled to convene early next year ("probably in Peiping, if the military situation permits",

according to Li Chi-shen) to prepare for a "People's Representative Assembly to establish a Democratic Coalition Government". The most prominent of these representatives are General Ts'ai T'ing-k'ai (of the KMTRC), Shen Chun-ju and Chang Po-chun (leaders, respectively, of the NSS and PWDP, but both representing the Democratic League in Harbin). Pro-Communist "luminaries" of many sorts, including Madame Feng Yu-hsiang, have converged on Harbin as these meetings proceed, and more representatives from Hongkong groups are en route, probably by ship via North Korea.

Already most of China north of the Yangtze River is in the hands of Communist armies, and military observers are almost unanimous in predicting that the Red's victories will continue. It is predicted, therefore, that the Communists will proceed as they have promised to set up a government which will possess effective control at least over most of North China and will claim to be the government of China. (Peiping is the most likely capital according to the best sources in Hongkong.) This step will bring about an important change in the overall China situation. It will mean that the Communists have definitely emerged from the mountains and the plains. It will mark the beginning of their final efforts to establish, consolidate, and legalize their control over the country.

To date there has been no single government over all Communist territory; centralized control has rested with the party and army. This is true even today. Government in Communist territory is localized and provisional, and the Liberated Areas (Northeast, Northwest, Central China, and East China) are admittedly temporary. The first attempt to set up something more definite was the establishment of a North China People's Government on August 19 of this year, but even this government is only regional (it includes two former Border Regions: Shansi-Chahar-Hopei and Shansi-Hopei-Shantung-Honan). The job of establishing a unified government over all Communist territory is the job of the forthcoming PCC and the assembly which it convokes. The Hongkong political groups already listed have been given the role of junior partners in this job, and it is reasonable to assume they will be rewarded with political posts in the new government. No one will admit that definite promises have been made, but secrecy is endemic in Chinese high-level politics.

It is probable, therefore, that some time next year press dispatches and other reports of developments in China will contain the names of many political parties, groups, and leaders in China which heretofore have been virtually unknown, even to many people within their own country. Some knowledge of these small groups, as well as of the Communists, will be required for an understanding of future developments as they are reported.

Before describing each of the major political groups in Hongkong a few generalizations can be made about them, for they have many similarities. To begin with, none of them are really political parties at the present time, although several aspire to be. They are merely

small political organizations numbering between a few hundred and a few thousand members. None of them have a mass following or a strong political organization. They do not possess armies - a prerequisite for political power in China during the past few decades. In short, they have none of the obvious qualifications for successful independent action in the rough and tumble of contemporary Chinese politics. In terms of tangible power they can't make a showing.

All of the Hongkong groups call themselves "liberals", and often they are labelled simply as "Chinese democratic groups". Without doubt some of them can rightly claim to be liberals (although the word is a difficult one to define), but others are definitely political opportunists. In the case of some top leaders it is difficult to discover basic points of difference distinguishing them from Central Government leaders except that they are now on the opposite side of the fence in the civil war.

Intellectuals and professional politicians make up almost the entire membership of these groups. The small Peasants' and Workers' Democratic Party asserts that fifty percent of its members belong to the laboring class, but this claim, even if true, has little significance because the party's total membership is pocket-size. The most important groups do not even claim a proletarian following at present.

One point of complete agreement between all the groups is their uncompromising opposition to Chiang K'ai-shek, and this really is their *raison d'être*, in several cases. Their hatred of Chiang was probably more important than their love of either Marx or Mao in drawing them into alliance with the Communists. A great many of these people once were respectable members of the Kuomintang, and many held high positions under it, but all of them are now dissidents for either personal or ideological reasons.

Their public statements often have a strong ideological flavor, but actually their platforms are vague, and, at present at least, ideology seems to be of secondary importance to many of them. In a general way they are all Leftist, according to their own definition and admission, but practically speaking this has simply meant that except for a few independents they have strung along with the Communist line during recent months. They themselves admit that now there are few ideological differences among them and that they accept the present Communist program of New Democracy.

The personal element, so strong in all Chinese politics, is fundamental in understanding these groups. The nucleus of leaders in every group consists of a few men united by past friendship and association, and the major groups are linked by similar ties.

The main dissident elements in Hongkong fall into two main categories: the KMTRC and its affiliates, and the Democratic League and its affiliates.

For many years the Kuomintang has been divided into numerous cliques held together by their acknowledgement of Chiang K'ai-shek's leadership. The origins of the Kuomintang Revolutionary Committee trace to the clique politics of the war years, and in many respects the KMTRC is simply a clique which opposes Chiang K'ai-shek's leadership.

In 1940 a group of party dissidents including General Feng Yu-hsiang and Marshal Li Chi-shen began to hold regular secret meetings in Chungking to discuss the political situation. These men formulated a program for "organizational democracy within the party and constitutional democracy throughout the country". Another group of Kuomintang liberals (this term is a label in many cases, not necessarily an accurate description of political beliefs) in Hongkong, including Madame Sun Yat-sen, Liu Ya-tze, and Madame Liao Chung-k'ai, established contact with them. Together they formed the Society of Kuomintang Democratic Comrades. Their activities in South China were placed under an executive board in Kweilin which eventually included Marshal Li, Madame Liao, and Liu Ya-tze, but the subsequent Japanese drive southward and the fall of Kweilin disrupted the organization.

In the Spring of 1945 Marshal Li and General Ts'ai T'ing-k'ai organized a group in South China to lead anti-Japanese guerilla activities. Organization of this group had political as well as military implications. In Chungking, in the meanwhile, another group of party progressives (this term is also a label), including some of those already mentioned, began to hold secret sessions. Participants in this group included Sun Fo, Feng Yu-hsiang, Yu You-jen, and Shao Li-tze.

These were the seeds which after the war sprouted into more definite political organizations - which included some but not all of those who had met together secretly during the war (Sun Fo, for example, is now Premier of the Central Government). In Canton Marshal Li and General Ts'ai organized the Kuomintang Democratic Promotion Society. Its supporters were mainly natives of Kwangtung and Kwangsi, and many were former members of the 19th Route Army under Ts'ai. When Marshal Li left Canton a few months later, Ts'ai took over as leader of the KMTDPS. His principal associates were Li Chang-ta (onetime chief of staff to Sun Yat-sen), Ch'en Ts'u-sheng (former dean of Kwangsi University), Mei Kung-p'in, (law professor at Sun Yat-sen University), Ch'u Yun-shan, and General Chang Wen.

In Chungking during October 1945 a general conference of "party progressives" was called under the joint sponsorship of Chen Ming-shu (onetime Minister of Communications, later President of the short-lived Foochow People's Government), General Yang Chieh (former Ambassador to Russia and President of the Army College), Wang K'un-lun, Hsu Pao-chu, and T'an P'ing-shan, in addition to a few others. The group attending this conference set up the San Min Chu I Comrades Association. T'an and Hsu became its most active leaders.

Finally in 1947 both of these groups were joined in close alliance under the leadership of Li Chi-shen. On October 10 Marshal Li issued a

declaration calling for a congress of "all Kuomintang democratic groups", and a month later, on November 12, the KMTRC was formed with the KMTDPS and Comrades Association as affiliates.

From the beginning the KMTRC has been anti-Chiang. It claims to be true inheritor of "the revolutionary spirit of the Kuomintang" and faithful adherent to Sun Yat-sen's Three People's Principles. Its program has demanded cessation of the civil war, establishment of a coalition government with the Communists, and termination of all foreign intervention in China. At present the leaders of the KMTRC place considerable emphasis upon what are called Sun Yat-sen's Three Great Policies: 1. cooperation with the Communist Party, 2. friendly relations with the U.S.S.R., and 3. laying the party's foundation on workers' and peasants' support.

The primary basis for the establishment of the KMTRC, as revealed by its history and composition, lies in the personal relations between its members. More than anything else it is a club of old friends who are political "outs". This fact is most clearly illustrated, perhaps, by the number of its members and leaders who participated in the 1933 Fukien revolt which established the ill-fated Foochow People's Government. Marshal Li and General Ts'ai were leaders of that revolt, and the Foochow People's Government included such men as Chen Ming-shu, Li Chang-ta, Mei Kung-p'in and others who later tied their political careers to Marshal Li and his KMTRC - and indirectly to the Communist Party. It is interesting to recall, also, that the Foochow People's Government during its brief existence made a local truce with the Communists whose base of operations in China at that time was in Kiangsi near the Fukien border.

The membership of the KMTRC and its affiliates is not revealed officially. One member of the KMTRC Executive Committee told me unofficially, however, that the Hongkong membership is about 200 - and most of its active membership is in Hongkong. In short, the KMTRC is still primarily a political clique rather than a political party.

Despite its similarity to the KMTRC on some points, the Democratic League has a different character. It began as a union of several reformist, progressive groups which met in Hongkong on October 10, 1941, and formed the League of Democratic Political Organizations. From the start liberal intellectuals have been predominant in the League's membership, and the term liberal has more meaning when applied to the League than when applied to the KMTRC. Professors and scholars are more characteristic of the League than militarists and politicians.

In 1941 the main components of the League were the Third Party, the National Socialist Party, the Youth Party, the Chih Chiao Group (Vocational Educationalists), the Hsiang Chien Group (Rural Reconstructionists), and a few leading non-partisan individuals. The League took a strong stand for civil liberties and democratization of the government.

Early in 1944 the organization adopted its present title because of the increasing number of persons who were joining it as individuals.

In October, 1944, the League held its first congress, in Chungking, and a year later, in October, 1945, it adopted a program which is often described as similar to that of British Labor. It participated in the post-war PCC in 1946, and its representatives played an important role in drawing up the conference's resolutions on political reform.

During the following year and a half, however, relations between the League and the government deteriorated badly. Several League leaders were murdered under circumstances which suggested Kuomintang instigation. After the breakdown of the post-war Kuomintang-Communist negotiations the resolutions of the PCC were shelved, and the League placed the blame entirely on the Kuomintang. Suspicion and bitterness increased on both sides, and the League gradually moved far into the anti-Kuomintang, pro-Communist camp. The final break was made by the government, which issued an order dissolving and banning the League on October 27, 1947. The top League leaders including Chang Lan, its chief, and Lo Lung-chi, its official spokesman, were placed under house arrest in Shanghai, where they remain today. Some slipped into Communist territory. Others moved to Hongkong, and active leadership of the League passed to Chou Hsin-min, its general secretary, Shen Chun-ju, and Chang Po-chun.

The Democratic League's component parts have changed since 1941. The Youth Party and the National Socialist Party (renamed Democratic Socialist Party) broke with the League in late 1945 and 1946 respectively. Both joined the Kuomintang in the Central Government. The Chih Chiao and Hsiang Chien Groups have faded into obscurity. The only organizations of any importance now associated with the League are the National Salvation Society (which joined the League in 1944-45) and the Peasants' and Workers' Democratic Party (formerly the Third Party). In a formal sense, even these bodies no longer belong to the League, for in January, 1947, it was decided that membership would be limited to individuals rather than organizations.

The Third Party was formed by Left-Wing members of the Kuomintang soon after Chiang K'ai-shek's 1927 purge. Its principal founder, Teng Yen-ta, convened a congress of his supporters in Shanghai in September, 1930, which established the Provisional Action Committee of the Kuomintang. When Teng was killed about a year later, his group became active in instigating the 1933 Fukien Revolt and creating the Foochow People's Government. One of the co-chairmen of the group, Chen Ming-shu, was elected President of the Foochow Government. At a congress in Hankow in November, 1935, the title Kuomintang was dropped and a new name, Action Committee of China's National Liberation, was adopted. German-educated Chang Po-chun, who was a member of the Foochow Government and had headed the party since Teng's death, participated in the People's Political Council under the Central Government during the war, but soon after the war the split between his party (which finally changed its name to Peasants' and Workers' Democratic Party at a congress in Shanghai in January, 1946) and the government became complete.

The present membership of the PWHP is estimated to include approximately 6,000 persons, many of whom are sprinkled along the China

coast from Kwangtung to Shanghai. The party's platform is vague but is usually labelled "very Left", and its spokesmen use good Marxist jargon. The party leader, Chang Po-chun, has the reputation of being one of the most forceful personalities among the Hongkong emigres.

The National Salvation Society is even less of a political party than most of the other Hongkong groups. It started before the Sino-Japanese War when about 300 intellectuals led by Ma Hsiung-po issued a patriotic appeal for resistance against Japan. In January, 1936, an organization advocating active anti-Japanese resistance was organized in Shanghai, and in May of the same year a national federation was organized. On November 22, 1936, the Nanking Government arrested seven members of the society (Shen Chun-ju, Chang Nai-chi, Li Kung-po, Tsou Tao-fen, Wang Tsao-shih, Sha Chien-li, and Shih Liang) and created a famous cause celebre. The trial of the seven attracted world-wide attention, but finally they were released just four days before the Marco Polo Bridge incident in 1937. Once the fighting against Japan started the society became inactive, and most of its leaders cooperated with the Central Government. It was revived late in the war, however, and under the leadership of Shen Chun-ju, a venerable political figure whose career started before the 1911 Revolution, it joined the Democratic League. Its present membership is insignificant and its politics vague, but the inclinations of its leaders, like those of the PWDP, are said to be "well to the Left" (whatever that means).

The most important segment of the Democratic League's membership cannot be classified into definite groups such as the PWDP and NSS. They consider themselves independents and non-partisans. Many well-meaning liberals belong to this category, for before it was banned the Democratic League probably had a wider appeal among non-party, liberal intellectuals than any other organization in China. It still has many sympathizers among mainland intellectuals even though it is in exile as an organization. League spokesmen state that at its peak the total membership was "over 100,000". They no longer estimate total membership, but they do assert that the League has approximately 8,000 members in Hongkong and Southeast Asia plus a large underground and submerged membership in China.

Most leaders of the League in Hongkong have gone along with the other dissidents in echoing the Communist line since the May alliance. A few, however, have maintained their individuality and continue to stand for independent action, moderate socialism, and non-Communist methods. They are a minority, but some people believe that the pliability of the majority is temporary and tactical and that the League's liberal tradition will assert itself in the future. This is possible but not inevitable.

Two other Hongkong groups should be mentioned briefly. One is the Chinese Democratic Promotion Society under the leadership of Ma Hsu-lun. This society was formed in Shanghai soon after the end of the war to protest against government inefficiency. It consisted merely of a small group of scholars, but its influence was an important factor behind the Shanghai Federation of People's organizations, a loose alliance of

68 organizations claiming a combined membership of 400,000. The CIPS was vociferous in its opposition to the civil war and the Central Government, and a handful of its leaders was compelled to flee to Hongkong. Since then, Ma Hsu-lun, despite the nebulous character of his support, has been taken into the Communist's bosom as an ally.

The other group deserving mention is the Chi Kung Tang, political offshoot of the Hung Men Chi Kung Tang, a Chinese secret society. The roots of the latter go back almost 400 years, and the society was actively involved in the T'ai'ping Rebellion. Later it helped to finance the revolutionary efforts of Sun Yat-sen. Before the Sino-Japanese War the society claimed to have approximately 800,000 members, most of them overseas and a large percentage in the U.S., and its leaders liked to call themselves "Chinese Masons". The present leader of the Chi Kung Tang in Hongkong, Chen Chi-yu, is an old follower of Sun Yat-sen and a new follower of the Democratic League. Little is known of the political activities of the group, but the significance of its response to the Communist May Day appeal is probably financial. Contributions from Overseas Chinese have supported revolutionary groups in China in the past, and although it would be difficult to prove it the Chi Kung Tang may be the channel for such support at present.

These are the major Hongkong groups which have joined the Communists in their united front. They are the midgets who are now partners of the practical, hard-bitten Communist Party which has fought its way to power and now has an army of over two million men and a party membership (according to recent claims) approaching three millions.

After examining these groups as they are today one is inclined to look bewildered and ask, "What's all the noise about? In a civil war between mammoths like the Kuomintang and the Communist Party for control of a populace of 450 million people how can this handful of men have any importance at all?" There are people who would answer that the noise is about nothing. "The importance of these political groups", one Chinese newspaperman said to me in Hongkong, "is an invention of foreign correspondents".

There are reasons to believe, however, that these small groups (particularly the KMTRC and Democratic League) may play a political role of considerable significance in the immediate future - a role created for them by the complex factors at work in the China situation. The period China is entering will be one of tremendous adjustment and change. Civil war, social and economic revolution, power rivalries, personal struggles, and international conflicts all enter into the confused picture. As the situation changes, many persons and groups will find it imperative to make adjustments, reach compromises, and find their places in a new political, social, and economic setting, and for many these adjustments and compromises will not be easy. The KMTRC and the Democratic League may be in an excellent position to play the role of political middle men and to facilitate the adjustments which many individuals and groups will find necessary, expedient, or desirable to make.

Alliance with the Hongkong groups has obvious advantages from the Communists's point of view. The idea of a coalition is popular in China. Since the end of the Sino-Japanese War, in fact, coalition has been almost synonymous with internal peace in the minds of many people, and the term coalition has taken its place among the most respected catchwords in China's current political vocabulary. A coalition requires several parties, and the Hongkong groups are ready-made for the purpose. They bear the popular tags of democracy and liberalism, and their names can be useful in dressing up a Communist government for both internal and international consumption.

There is evidence to show, also, that the Communists really do want an economic and social coalition, that is, they want the cooperation, under their leadership, of as many economic and social groups as possible. That is why they have broadened their united front. The Hongkong groups may be the bait by which the Communists hope to lure certain key groups in the country - the "intelligentsia", "liberal bourgeoisie", and "social luminaries" - and to obtain their cooperation or at least acquiescence under a new regime. Communist statements and action during the past year show that they consider this a major task, and they place special emphasis upon attracting the "petty and middle bourgeoisie".

With the expansion of their territory the Communists have found it necessary to get along, temporarily at least, with many non-proletarians, and as they have captured an increasing number of cities they have become increasingly aware of the economic importance of industrial and commercial groups. Today, the pronouncements from party headquarters place foremost emphasis upon production - and industrial production is often stressed more than agricultural production. This new policy has necessitated compromises to gain the support of key economic groups. A few statements made by Communists themselves will illustrate this fact.

"The property and legal operations of persons engaged in industry or commerce shall be protected from infringement." (Article 12 of the Basic Program of the Agrarian Law adopted September 13, 1947) "The petty bourgeoisie and middle bourgeoisie, oppressed and injured by these classes (landlords and bureaucratic bourgeoisie) and their state power, although they are bourgeoisie, may however, participate in the New Democratic Revolution or maintain neutrality.... The objects which the New Democratic Revolution is to eliminate are only feudalism and monopoly capitalism, only the landlord class and the bureaucratic bourgeoisie (big bourgeoisie), not capitalism in general and not the petty bourgeoisie and the middle bourgeoisie. Owing to the backwardness of China's economy, it will still be necessary to permit the existence for a long time of the capitalist economy represented by the broad petty bourgeoisie and middle bourgeoisie.... Adopting ultra-left erroneous policies toward petty bourgeoisie and middle bourgeoisie economic elements as our party did in the period 1931 to 1934 - "excessively high working conditions, excessively high income tax rates; infringing on industrial and commercial elements in agrarian reform; not taking as our objectives the development of production, the flourishing of

economy, taking into account both public and private interests and benefits to both labor and capital, but taking as our objectives shortsighted, unilateral so-called welfare of the toilers" - must absolutely not be permitted to recur." (Speech by Mao Tze-tung, December 25, 1947)...."....workers should endure a certain degree of exploitation for their own long range interests so that these private enterprises can carry on and appropriately develop production to attain a prosperous economy in Liberated Areas....It should be known that the difference between a New Democratic Society and a socialist society is that enterprises of private capital are an indispensable element of production in the former society." (New China News Agency editorial, February, 1948) "The Communist Party firmly protects industry and commerce....the pre-condition for deciding everything should be that it must be favorable to the constant raising of production." (Article by Chen Po-ta, Communist Central Committee Member, NCNA, April 26, 1948) "....all law abiding industrialists and commercial businessmen (no matter how large their scale of operation is)....should be protected from infringement....Industrial production should be regarded as of equal importance to or more important than agricultural production." (NCNA editorial, August 3, 1948)

In addition to the evidence of these statements and directives, the limited available information about cities under Communist control indicates that in these cities all skilled personnel has been very well treated, efforts have been made to obtain the cooperation of merchants and industrialists, and industrial production has been encouraged. There are many indications that the leaders of the Chinese Communist Party are hard-headed pragmatists who realize that Rome was not built in a day and that they cannot move too fast.

The KMTRC and Democratic League fit into this general picture as political groups which may help bridge the gap between the Communists and the petty and middle bourgeoisie. Both the KMTRC and the League draw their members from these economic classes, both have good contacts with industrial and commercial leaders, and both claim that in the future they will enlarge and become real political parties "defending and representing the interests of the industrial and commercial classes". Although it is doubtful if many merchants and industrialists will embrace Communism in the foreseeable future, even under a Communist regime, it is probable that most of them will try to get along under any regime. (There have already been many indications, for example, that Shanghai manufacturers and traders feel that any regime would be better from their point of view than the present one.) If the League and KMTRC can provide them with the cloak of political respectability, and perhaps with a political mouthpiece as well, many may find it worthwhile to join or support these organizations. And from the Communist point of view, the KMTRC and League will be performing a great service if they minimize the resistance and obtain the cooperation of important economic groups and their leaders.

It is possible that the KMTRC and League may play a similar role in bridging the gap between the Communists and two other important groups in China.

The intellectuals (professors, scholars, students, some professional men, and so on) comprise one of these groups. Undoubtedly, a fairly large number of intellectuals can be expected to join the Communist Party, in the territory under its control, and accept its credo with enthusiasm - as some already have done. Marxist influences have figured strongly in the general atmosphere in which the Chinese intellectuals, particularly those connected with education, have lived and worked during the past twenty years. Even most conservative intellectuals, in fact, believe that mild socialism of some sort is desirable for China. Nonetheless, many will not be willing to go the whole way with the Communists. (The civil rights issue may be an important point of difference with the Communists.) The Democratic League will have a special appeal to these men (and women) and may gather them into its fold.

The other group is the large mass of government officials and civil servants, almost all of them Kuomintang members, who have not been involved in high-level politics. The Communists have promised "war crimes trials" after they set up a government but have limited the definition of criminals so as to exclude the large mass of the Kuomintang's membership. It should be remembered that active participation in government administration in China has been limited to a few. Political reasons are not the only explanation; there are only a few who have the required skills. Until they have consolidated their position, the Communists can ill-afford to exclude from government the largest single group with administrative experience - namely, the membership of the Kuomintang. There are indications that the Communists will attempt to absorb them into any regime they establish. For many of these men, however, a direct jump from the Kuomintang to the Communists would be a violent transition. The KMTRC will have a special appeal to these men. The KMTRC, in fact, claims to be the "true" Kuomintang, and if Kuomintang members find themselves under a Communist regime many may suddenly decide that the KMTRC claims are valid. This applies not only to the unimportant party members but to many well-known officials and party leaders who are not a part of the so-called Right-Wing of the party. (The worst Communist epithets are reserved for the "Four Families": Chiang K'ai-shek, T.V. Soong, H.H. Kung, and Chen Li-fu.) During the past few months, many unofficial representatives of high Kuomintang officials have surreptitiously visited Hongkong for secret conversations with Marshal Li and others. Marshal Li's public stand regarding these people at present is that they must make some sort of symbolic break with the Central Government before it falls if they want to join the KMTRC, but he may not follow his own dictum too rigidly.

It is possible, therefore, that the Democratic League and KMTRC may be in a position to play an important role as middle men in the political situation in months to come. It is difficult at this stage, however, to predict whether or not they will be able to fill that role.

They may be nothing more than puppets under the Communists. Theoretically, however, they may be able to develop into political parties which can influence government decisions on policy. This will depend on a number of factors. For one thing, it will depend on their ability to develop a strong, solid party organization, which they lack at present. It will depend on the future size of their membership and the character and independence of their leaders. To date few really strong leaders have emerged from these groups, and their membership is potential rather than actual. It will also depend on how much the Communists feel compelled to compromise. It is not likely that the Communist Party will want serious political competitors who can block their program, but they may have to accept a good deal of mild political opposition, even in the territory which they control, during the next few years. One should not forget the Chinese skill and experience in underground organization and in exerting pressure by passive resistance, non-cooperation, and the boycott. Key groups such as industrial and commercial leaders, intellectuals, and civil servants may possess a leverage, out of proportion to their numerical strength, which can be exerted upon the government.

There are no signs at present, however, that the KMTRC or League will be able to compete with the Communists among the rural and urban proletariat. At best, therefore, they may influence the government, not compete for fundamental power and control, under a Communist regime.

So far, I have speculated about the role which the Hongkong groups might play under a Communist regime from which the Kuomintang has been excluded as a party. Although it seems unlikely at this moment, it is too early to rule out the possibility of a compromise (involving the whole of China) between the Communist Party and a Kuomintang purged of Chiang K'ai-shek and other "Right Wing elements", and the establishment of a Communist-Kuomintang coalition under Communist "leadership" - and control. This idea now appeals to many leaders of the demoralized Kuomintang as "a way out" of the present situation, and from the Communist point of view it might have the advantage of bringing China south of the Yangtze under control immediately. If a compromise of this sort takes place, or if a purged Kuomintang is allowed to exist under any regime which the Communists establish, the future role of the Hongkong groups, as I have outlined it, may never materialize.

South China is the big question mark in China today which puzzles almost everyone. At least a dozen alternatives figure in speculation about its immediate political future. Communist military power is still in the North, and most observers believe that even after some sort of military and political solution is reached in the North, a chaotic situation will continue south of the Yangtze. If the Central Government moves to one or more secondary capitals in the South (Formosa, Canton, Kweilin, and other places are rumored possibilities, although all the rumors are officially denied), with or without Chiang K'ai-shek, it may increase rather than decrease the confusion, because few people believe that the Central Government will be able to rally support or continue strong resistance from new bases.

It is generally believed that the Communists will not continue their military push directly into South China without a breathing spell. This belief is based on recognition of the fact that the Communist forces (particularly in the category of political organizers) are not unlimited. It is assumed that the Communists will not want to spread their military and political forces too thinly in the immediate future.

Many observers believe, therefore, that the trend toward regionalism and localism, already visible, will continue in the South and will produce a mosaic of semi-autonomous regimes below the Yangtze during an interim period while consolidation takes place in the North. These observers expect feverish bargaining, negotiation, and compromise during this period before the South is again amalgamated with the North. If this takes place, Marshal Li Chi-shen, head of the KMTRC, may take a central role in the political jockeying and compromising which can be expected.

Marshal Li is an old-timer in Chinese politics. He was born 63 years ago in Kwangsi and became a prominent member of the Kuomintang when the party was still struggling for power. He was taken into the Kuomintang Central Committee in 1924, and on the Northern Expedition in 1925-26 he was Commander of the 4th Army and Chief of Staff to Chiang K'ai-shek. Since that time he has been alternately in and out of the government. Despite his leadership of the Fukien revolt in 1933 he has continued to hold high posts in the government until recently (although most of them have been posts with prestige rather than power). Positions which he has held during his long career include: Councillor of the Central Government, member of the Standing Committee of the Supreme Military Council, Chairman of the Kwangtung Political Council, and Chief of Army Training. Today this little man with a wispy beard and a slight lisp lives behind padlocked gates in a huge house in Hongkong.

Hongkong today is a great center of intrigue. Taking advantage of what a British official calls "the tradition of sanctuary" in the colony, politicians of many sorts meet behind doors with peepholes and discuss bargains, plans, and deals. The most important center of this intrigue is Marshal Li's mansion. It is said, probably correctly, that every important leader in South China, most important political figures in Northwest China, and numerous Central Government officials have had secret contacts, through direct or indirect representatives, with Marshal Li in recent months. It is impossible to know what deals have already been made. Undoubtedly there have been some, but it is possible that to date many of these contacts have been merely feelers.

Marshal Li's central position in this intrigue and political bargaining has been due to three factors: his personal prestige, his innumerable friendships and contacts formed through the years, and most important of all his position as middle man in close contact with the Communists. This function as a middle man is sometimes difficult for foreigners to understand, but it is fundamental in

most political as well as economic dealings in China. (It is closely connected with the Chinese concept of "face"; a middle man reduces the necessity for direct commitments which are undesirable because a withdrawal without loss of face is then difficult.) Marshal Li is not a very forceful leader in his own right (although most people say he lives up to the traditional Chinese virtue of righteousness - "li"), but he holds a strategic political position. He is the back door to the powers that be in the Communist Party and the rear entrance to whatever regime they set up. Establishing contacts with the Marshal is like investing in political futures which may pay off later. It is good insurance in any case.

The complicated secret negotiations centering about Marshal Li are sometimes interpreted as preparation for an attempt to swing South China into the orbit of Communist control by political means - i.e. by deals with important local leaders in the South - as soon as the Communists set up their government. This is what the Marshal himself said to me on this subject, however. "There is no possibility of solving the South China problem by political means alone. Some military pressure from outside and inside will be required. In the South there are military-political leaders who are willing to join a coalition, but results in the South as a whole will depend on military pressure from the outside also."

When he spoke of military pressure from the inside, Marshal Li was referring to two things: Communist guerilla forces, and local military leaders who could be won over politically.

The center of Communist guerilla activity in South China is Kwangtung Province and the areas bordering it. The Communist spokesman in Hongkong, Ch'iao Mu, claims that there are 100,000 organized Communist guerillas in this region under a man named Lin P'ing, but some other estimates place the figure as low as 10,000 plus a large number of unorganized, non-Communist bandits. Although it has not been proved, it is widely believed that the Communists's South China command headquarters are located in Hongkong. Several high-ranking Communists, including General Fang Fang, P'an Han-yen, Liao Cheng-chih, and Hua Kang, live in Hongkong. Great secrecy surrounds these men - and they don't bother themselves with publicity and propaganda. As the struggle for China shifts southward, the activities of guerilla forces in the South undoubtedly will be intensified, but the guerillas in the region at present are not strong enough to be a decisive force.

Many of the local leaders in the South are still old-timers or their proxies. None of them have a great deal of military power at the moment, but they probably are in a position to maintain their control until real pressure is applied from the outside, and they might temporarily be able to build up their power if the Central Government's power disintegrates. If Li Tsung-jen and Pai Chung-hsi return to their old stamping ground (Kwangsi) and take over from their protege Governor Huang, they might build up their local power, particularly if Pai can bring some troops with him from Central China. (Li is now the silent

Vice-President under Chiang and Pai the outspoken Central Government Commander in Central China. In 1936 they led a revolt against Chiang in Kwangsi.) The same sort of thing might happen in Yunnan if Lung Yun (the old warlord, now powerless in Nanking) returned home and took over from his protege Governor Lu Han. In Kwangtung T.W. Soong, the Governor, is closely tied to Chiang and will probably stand or fall with him, but lurking in the background are forces and personalities which could emerge to form a local regime. (They include local generals, supporters of Marshal Li, inactive but well-known generals such as Chang Fa-kwei, and others too numerous and involved to mention.) These are merely possibilities, and there are many more.

If localism develops in the South, its leaders will undoubtedly maneuver to come to terms eventually with the most powerful party in China - unless they believe their power is great enough to hold out on their own indefinitely, which doesn't seem likely. It looks as if the most powerful party will be the Communist Party. The logical front man through which both the Communists and South China local leaders can work is Marshal Li - the middle man.

Marshal Li has close contacts with most important South China leaders, and during the past few months he has met with representatives of many of them. His contacts in Kwangsi-Kwangtung, which is the most important area in the South from a political point of view, are particularly good. (He was once definitely associated with the so-called Kwangsi clique.)

Once the outside pressure the Marshal speaks of is applied - Communist military moves, threats, or pressure directed toward the South - he may have prepared the way for negotiations and compromise between the Communists and local leaders. Marshal Li himself says that ultimately the changes in South China must be "fundamental", that old warlord armies and local control must go. Undoubtedly the Communists agree with him. But political as well as military means may be employed to bring about even these fundamental changes.

I am sure that all of this sounds extremely confusing. The situation itself is confusing and full of ifs and buts. The future of the Chinese political groups now in Hongkong is no more certain than anything else, but it is possible that they will play an interesting political role in the ways I have suggested.

Sincerely yours,

A. Doak Barnett

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