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New York 18, N.Y.

Dear Mr. Rogers:

Yesterday I achieved the dubious distinction of appearing in print on the front page of the official Communist newspaper in Peiping. In the Peoples Daily I was listed along with sixteen others of various nationalities - American, Australian, Swiss, Swedish, Dutch and Chinese - who are correspondents or contributors to foreign news agencies and newspapers. The list of our names was appended to an order issued by the Peiping Military Control Commission which said that "during the present military period" (which was not defined) "all foreign news agencies and newspapermen are forbidden to carry on any of their activities in this city". Apparently thinking that this was not sufficiently clear the Commission added that both "sending news dispatches" and "gathering news" are forbidden.

This official act lowering the "bamboo curtain" on news sent out from Peiping was not entirely unexpected. It became clear soon after the Communist entry into the city that non-Communist foreign observers were persona non grata. It was unclear until yesterday whether or not this was in accord with a definite policy and it is still not clear whether the policy is a short term or long term one, but the Communists have effectively prevented foreigners from fully reporting current developments in any case. No foreigners (except, perhaps, for a handful in the Communists own ranks) whether consuls, newspapermen, businessmen, students or what have you, have talked with a single ranking Communist leader in the month since the city was taken. Nor have any been allowed to enter the inner sanctum of a single important Communist office. Even mass demonstrations and meetings have been out of bounds for curious foreigners since a week or so after the Communists' arrival. In innumerable ways the Communists have gradually isolated foreigners from the Chinese community as a whole as well as from the Communists themselves.

Because of this fact, no "inside story" of the Communist takeover of Peiping can be told by an outsider such as myself. Along with the other foreigners in Peiping I have had to endure the frustration of being on the spot yet knowing precious little of the story of what has taken place. Nonetheless, certain aspects of the takeover have been clear, even to a person on the fringe of events, and in this letter I will try to describe some of my impressions of the takeover period.

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"The takeover of Peiping is almost complete", according to an article this morning in the Peoples Daily, official Communist news-

paper in Peiping. In roughly a month Peiping has been "liberated" and consolidated into the rapidly expanding territory controlled by the Chinese Communist Party. From now on cartographers the world over will color it red.

The Communist takeover of Peiping has been systematic, undramatic and bloodless, without any of the violence and terror which often mark the accession to power of a revolutionary army. No violence was called for because the city was plucked like a piece of over-ripe fruit. Furthermore, to the Chinese Red Army Peiping was neither the beginning nor the end of their military struggle; it was merely one further step on their way.

The first solemn Communist troops entered the city walls on January 31, after a ten-day interregnum following Fu Tso-yi's "peace agreement", and marched past curbs lined with silent civilians who were for the most part unemotional and undemonstrative and seemed to show neither antipathy nor enthusiasm but rather a simple curiosity about their "liberators", their new rulers. The Communist troops which came in on January 31 and February 1 were the new garrison forces, and when they were finally settled in prearranged barracks the Communists had "secured" Peiping in a military sense.

The Communist garrison troops were the advance guard, and after their arrival it was considered safe for the political and administrative bodies to move in and start functioning. On February 1 the Joint Administrative Office, composed of both Nationalist and Communist members, held its first session and mapped out plans for facilitating the transfer of power. On the same day the Military Control Commission, which had been formed some time previously in the suburbs, and the People's Government, destined to be the new municipal authority, were officially and formally organized. The new Peiping Garrison Headquarters began to function at the same time.

The Communists went about the takeover in a businesslike way, and the process was not unlike the reorganization of a bankrupt corporation. The Nationalist regime in Peiping had been placed in receivership by Fu Tso-yi's surrender, and the Nationalist representatives in the Joint Administrative Office were assigned the job of revealing all remaining assets. (This Office quickly slipped into the background.) The Military Control Commission acted as receiver and was the supreme local authority during bankruptcy proceedings. Its job was to take possession of the Nationalists' assets, and then to pass them on to the Peiping People's Government and other Communist administrative and governmental organs. The People's Government, in the meantime, took over the most important assets, as well as most of the personnel, of the previous municipal government and began to function in a modest way.

The period of receivership has not yet ended, but the Military Control Commission has already completed the takeover of most of the important Nationalist assets in Peiping, and in due time the Commission will probably complete its tasks and either pass out of existence or take a back seat.

The takeover of Peiping by the Communists was obviously preceded by considerable thought and preparation. The process seemed slow at times, but it followed a definite and logical pattern. Probably because they did not have enough trained political workers to take over all Nationalist organizations and institutions simultaneously the Communists proceeded slowly, step by step, and took control of various bodies according to their priority rating.

The first organizations affected were the obvious instruments of power, thought control and propaganda. On February 1 the North China Daily, Central News Agency and Central Broadcasting Station were transformed into the People's Daily, New China News Agency and New China Broadcasting Station. With as little fuss as a chameleon changing color these organizations abruptly changed their propaganda line and continued operations. On February 2 a new police commissioner installed himself in office, and the Bureau of Police became the Bureau of Public Safety. The new commissioner brought a few assistants along with him but no policemen. The protectors of law and order simply continued on their old beats. Within a relatively short period of time, however, the police force was disarmed and its personnel reduced. Its members became little more than traffic cops, and real responsibility for law and order passed to the garrison troops who had arms and ammunition.

The government printing plant was also taken over on February 2 and immediately began printing People's Bank notes to replace the Nationalist GY. Preliminary steps were taken to transform the Central Bank of China into the People's Bank soon thereafter.

The way in which the takeover of the printing plant was accomplished illustrates some of the Communists' methods of working. It was described to me by a former official of the Central Bank who assisted the Communist political worker in charge of financial matters for Peiping and Tientsin. "This man asked me to take him to the printing office", the Central Bank official said. "There we had a twenty minute interview with the man in charge, the former deputy manager. After this conversation the Communist said 'let's visit the plant'. There he gave the place a quick once-over, asked a number of questions about organization, production methods and wages and then turned to the deputy manager. 'You seem to know what you're doing. You're in charge', he said. He handed over the new plates for People's Bank notes and ordered the plant to continue normal operations." If later developments followed the procedure in other organizations the Communists probably later installed their own people in top posts but continued operations without any great changes. The Central Bank official was greatly impressed, however, by the initial takeover and by the Communist political worker who carried it out: by his frankness and directness, his knowledge and apparent competence, his lack of old-style ceremony, his willingness and authority to make on-the-spot decisions and his energy. "He sleeps on the floor next to the desk in his office!" the Central Bank official exclaimed with a note of awe in his voice when he described him to me.

During their first days in Peiping the Communists not only began a takeover of key organizations but also carried out an intensive sales promotion campaign. Once the garrison and police force were theirs they had a monopoly of the instruments of force in the city, but in dealing with the population as a whole they relied primarily on persuasion rather than force. They organized parades and mass meetings and used all the propaganda techniques at their disposal to sell themselves to the people.

The first big demonstration was held on February 3. The occasion was a monster victory parade, and it was a spectacular show. Thousands of people assembled in the square south of Chien Men, the front gate of the Tartar city. Hundreds of them waved colored paper pennants scrawled with slogans. Brass bands blared. Propaganda trucks crawled slowly through the crowd distributing leaflets to everyone. Professional dancers wearing opera costumes and heavy make-up performed the Communist theme-dance, the Yangke or Rice Transplanting Dance (a folk dance which combines elements of the Big Apple, the Charleston and the Shag). Many non-professionals tried it too. Huge cloth banners with Communist slogans written in large black characters were hoisted above the crowd. Portraits of Mao Tse-tung and other Chinese Communist leaders, some of them pasted against large red-paper stars, were prominently displayed. And the most brilliant touches of color standing out against the drab grey mass of people were several crimson Communist flags, each with the hammer and sickle emblem forming a yellow patch in the upper left hand corner.

The assembled thousands came not as individuals but as groups and therefore represented the most effectively organized sections of the population. Student groups, government employees, guild and labor union members and others were turned out en masse. They watched, and some of them joined in, an extremely impressive parade of Communist military might. For roughly six hours the Red Army put on a show of force which made it quite clear to everyone present that they had not captured Peiping by bluff. Infantrymen, motorized troops, armored cars, tanks, artillery and cavalry (part of the equipment was American and part Japanese) poured in one city gate, through several main streets and out another gate in a steady stream. The troops were well equipped and tightly disciplined. They marched through the city unsmilingly with eyes front or rode through sitting on their vehicles with backs almost as stiff and erect as the bayoneted rifles between their knees. This army looked very different from the demoralized Nationalists. It looked like a powerful fighting force. By the time the parade was over the onlookers were tired and impressed.

Except for the organized groups which turned out or were turned out to provide this official welcome to the Communists not many ordinary citizens bothered to watch. Even among the organized spectators there was no wild spontaneous outburst of emotion. A sort of happy-go-lucky carnival atmosphere prevailed throughout the crowd and the students were excitedly enthusiastic, but the parade didn't noticeably disturb the apathy of a large part of Peiping's populace. When this fact was reported by certain foreign correspondents it aroused the righteous indignation of both the Communists and their strongest supporters, and for almost

three weeks thereafter the local press reverberated with bitter re-crimination against the calumny of "foreign imperialist newspapermen" and rapturous praise for the "joyous welcome" given to the Communist "liberators" on February 3.

More mass demonstrations followed the first. On February 7 a Workers' Mass Meeting of sizeable proportions was held on the glacis east of the former Legation Quarter, the field which Fu Tso-yi had made into an airstrip. On February 12 there was a tremendous Liberation Parade and Meeting in front of the Forbidden City, where top Communist leaders addressed the people. For the latter meeting every administrative district (pao) in the city was ordered to turn out some of its ordinary citizens to participate.

These were the big shows, but in addition there were innumerable smaller ones. Student teams and army propaganda groups toured the streets, gave lectures, passed out leaflets. The press and radio got into the groove and repeated innumerable proclamations, official orders and editorials building up the Communists. Two large Communist information centers were set up, and in them eager political workers from the Red Army Political Department answered questions about the Communists and their policies. Communist slogans were painted all over the place. Posters by the thousands were pasted on walls, store windows, telephone poles. The red star and Mao's portrait replaced the Kuomintang's twelve-pointed white star and Chiang's portrait. Even the apathetic sections of the population gradually got the idea that something new had been added to Peiping.

The theme of the Communist takeover was "liberation" - from "Kuomintang reactionaries and American imperialists" - and the beginning of an era of "New Democracy". Many people who had been bitterly anti-Kuomintang did experience a sensation of political liberation. A larger number of people during the first few days felt liberated in a more prosaic way - from the stringent blockade of the siege, from the curfew and from the thousands of Nationalist soldiers who had been billeted in their homes. (Some Communist troops were also billeted in homes, but they were fewer in number and were usually put in large homes of wealthy people, so the average citizen was much less affected than under the Nationalists.)

The parades and all the balleyhoo did not interrupt the less dramatic but more important tasks of taking over the city, however, and on February 4 General Yeh Chien-ying, the appointed Communist chief of both the Military Control Commission and the People's Government, walked casually into the municipal government building, made an informal speech and assumed his job as new mayor. In his speech Yeh said, "We've been living in the hills right along, and we know much less than you gentlemen about municipal government. Henceforth we must learn from you." This sort of humility was characteristic of the Communists' line in taking over many organizations, but the Communists didn't hesitate to start issuing orders and soon began teaching as well as learning. The mildness of these

first official contacts with the Communists, however, surprised and pleased many persons who had been apprehensive of the takeover, and in many respects Peiping reacted like a small puppy which, when told to roll over, turns over meekly. During the first weeks of the takeover there was almost no resistance on the part of non-Communists and almost no violence on the part of the Communists.

A catalogue of the dates on which specific organizations were taken over by the Communists would be of no great interest or significance. Suffice it to say that the list included all military, political, economic and cultural organizations which were previously a part of or under the control of the Kuomintang and the Central Government and all of their administrative, provincial and local sub-divisions. In addition, it included organizations and enterprises formerly the personal property of prominent Kuomintang leaders. (This property the Communists label "bureaucratic capital.") Government offices, communications, transport, utilities, banks, hospitals, museums, schools, factories and mines in the above categories have all been placed, or are scheduled to be placed, under Communist management. Private institutions and enterprises, except for the so-called "bureaucratic capital", were not included in the takeover. In short, the takeover in addition to being a transfer of power was a transfer of ownership in which the new government took possession of what had belonged to the old government. In human terms it was somewhat like a game of musical chairs. The top personnel of key organizations, together with certain titles and names, were reshuffled and changed overnight, but the organizations continued to function much as they had before. There were new stamps at the post office, new money at the banks and new nameplates on the doors, but the same offices and administrative organizations continued. The Communists may plan to carry out a more drastic housecleaning and reorganization in the future, but they have begun slowly and cautiously.

No steps have been taken so far to sovietize the government. (This still lies in the future according to current party doctrine.) The major administrative districts (ch'u) have been retained, and they are now headed by Communist appointees put in as "elected" representatives. The pao-chia system has already fallen into disrepute, however, and although it still carries out some functions nobody calls a pao a pao or a chia a chia. The system may get a new name, or it may be abolished and replaced by something else after the present transitional period is over.

As these facts indicate, the first stage of the Communist revolution in Peiping has been mild, and in a sense no revolutionary changes have occurred (although the way is now clear for the Communists to introduce revolutionary changes when they decide to do so). For most people in Peiping, who do not even try to look very far into the future, the change of regime has been a sugar-coated pill which has been easy to swallow. It is difficult to predict, however, what the popular reaction will be in the future if the medicine becomes stronger and the sugar coating is dispensed with.

It is difficult, in fact, even to analyse exactly what the reaction of various persons and groups has been to date. It is safe to say, however, that apart from a few diehards with strong vested interests in the old regime and a few Kuomintang troops and secret service men who have gone underground there has been no real opposition to the Communists. Almost everyone has accepted the Communists as the wave of the future in China. Their acceptance takes various forms, however, ranging from enthusiastic optimism or moderate hopefulness to passive acquiescence or cynical resignation. On the basis of my limited observation I would say that a large part if not the majority of professors, students, professional workers, intellectuals and the like, together with certain labor leaders, fall into the first category and are enthusiastic about what they believe the Communists will do for China. In my opinion most other people, the numerical majority of the population, are either moderately hopeful, passively acquiescent or cynically resigned.

Student groups have been invaluable allies of the Communists in the takeover period and have worked energetically to help transform Peiping into a Communist-controlled city. It probably is not going too far to say that the Communists would have had a difficult time getting along without them. Although only a few students are members of the Communist Party almost all of them in Peiping now accept its credo of New Democracy and have worked tirelessly and idealistically to assist the Communists. In addition to widespread propaganda activities (which has been their most important service to the Communists) they have provided a reservoir of manpower for minor political tasks which has been particularly useful to the Communists because of their lack of political workers. Almost five hundred students went to work for the Military Control Commission soon after it was set up. They were put to work doing such things as making surveys, giving indoctrination lectures in schools, pao and chia and helping to "reeducate" teachers in primary and high schools (whose textbooks, incidentally, are to be reedited and whose students are to have their outside reading "supervised"). They did various sorts of leg work as well.

At times the exuberant students wanted to move faster than the Communists themselves. For example, although the Communists have taken over the major public universities in Peiping they haven't introduced any startling innovations yet, but in many institutions, both public and private, pressure for immediate changes has come from the students themselves. The students have also reorganized their self-governing bodies and formed an enlarged and strengthened Peiping Student Union which will take part in the All-China Student Assembly scheduled to convene in Peiping March 1 (tomorrow). The students, in fact, have been almost too exuberant to suit the Communists at times. The authorities flatly forbade the students to hold one demonstration they had planned.

During the takeover period the students have been on vacation, but classes are scheduled to reopen shortly. When studying resumes, however, the traditional three r's of education will have been increased to four: reading, 'riting, 'rithmetic and revolution. The students are now much more interested in revolution than in normal study, and the Communists, who are well aware of this fact, have set in motion a

tremendous scheme to mobilize students for revolutionary activities. The Communists' North China University and their Political and Military University are attracting many students from established institutions in Peiping. In addition, the Communists have appealed to students in particular to join two other newly organized bodies. One is the North China People's Revolutionary University which will give a four-months training course for political workers. The other is the Southgoing Corps (Southgoing Working Group) which is organizing political workers to send in the near future with the Red Army as it moves south to help takeover new areas. The Communists have appealed for 10,000 persons to join each of these groups! Students have already responded to these appeals in hundreds, and perhaps thousands, and are flocking to take the necessary examinations. It is not yet clear what effect this will have on older established educational institutions in Peiping, but if the figures already published are correct the student bodies of some of these institutions will be virtually wiped out.

The relationship between the Communists and the students is one of mutual support. News of student activities is given more front page space in the local Communist newspaper than any other single subject, and the "people's opinions" which take up most of the back page of the official daily come largely from student groups. Mao Tse-tung and Chu Teh have recently made personal statements arousing student enthusiasm, and the forthcoming All-China Student Assembly is officially sponsored. Recently, also, the Communists have given a lot of publicity to their Youth Corps for students of pre-university ages. The Communists, in other words, have placed a great deal of emphasis upon the importance of harnessing and directing the energy and idealism of student groups in their territory. It is a policy which seems to be paying dividends. It may become increasingly important, furthermore, as the Communists take over more urban areas, for although the students are not competent to do many of the things which they with their enthusiasm think they can do, they certainly can be put to work by the Communists doing many important minor jobs.

The reaction to the Communists on the part of other groups is harder to judge, because no other group is as active or articulate as the students. In Communist propaganda, however, organized labor is given considerable attention (although in Peiping it has been given less attention than the students even though the laborers are proletarian and the students are not). Peiping is not an industrial city, but certain lines of labor policy have been vaguely discernable nonetheless in the actions taken in the few plants operating here. The Communists have started to reorganize their own unions to replace former Kuomintang unions (in private plants as well as the ones taken over) and have exhorted workers to adopt a "learning attitude" and to study Marxism and New Democracy. The workers have been encouraged and urged above all to increase production for the revolutionary cause. To date, however, there has been little talk of such basic union issues as collective bargaining rights and increased wages, and in the short period during which it has been implemented here Communist labor policy seems to have followed

a line similar to that of Kuomintang policy in the sense that the approach to unionism and labor generally seems to be primarily political rather than economic. I do not know how laborers in Peiping have reacted to the Communists, but undoubtedly some workers have responded to the Communists' effort to raise the level of their political self-consciousness. The Communists repeat ad infinitum in their policy statements and propaganda that they are a workers' and peasants' party and in many ways attempt to increase the feeling of importance and sense of dignity among laborers. My guess is that as a result many workers in Peiping feel that the government is more interested in their welfare than the previous one. It is also possible, however, that some workers have been disappointed by the fact that no spectacular change has taken place yet in their earnings. If any of them expected the millenium to take place immediately after the "liberation" they have been disappointed, because the scanty available reports indicate that wages are being kept at approximately their "pre-liberation" level, for the present at least.

Compared with conditions during the siege, however, economic conditions in Peiping have improved tremendously during the past month. Railway connections to all parts of Communist territory were restored speedily after the Communists took Peiping, and trade began to reopen. With the economic blockade ended, prices began to follow a downward curve.

The exchange of Nationalist GY currency for Communist JM (Jen min or People's Currency) started on February 4 and continued until the 22nd. Sixty-five exchange points were designated, and two different exchange rates established. One was a general rate of ten GY to one JM while the other was a special "complimentary" rate of three to one for all workers and special groups such as students, up to a maximum of \$500 per person. When the exchange was completed on the 22nd over one-half the GY turned in had been exchanged at the special rate, according to official figures.

The first public reaction to JM, like the reaction to many other things, was skeptical, one reason being that the notes were poorly printed on low grade paper. Many merchants began quoting prices in silver dollars, and a large open curb market for silver and U.S. dollars grew and festered on the corner of a major thoroughfare. People wondered whether or not JM had any better backing than GY. The value of JM in terms of silver dollars and U.S. currency began to depreciate rapidly (and is still depreciating). This did not affect ordinary people very much, however, because in terms of basic commodities such as grain JM managed to maintain a constant value and then gradually began to increase in purchasing power as trade grew and commodities became more plentiful. Finally, on February 28 (this morning) the circulation of silver dollars was banned, although people were not forced to surrender them immediately but could do so as they wished at an official rate. No regulations have yet appeared regarding foreign currencies, but it is reported that an official exchange rate for U.S. dollars is being discussed.

In general the Communists' approach to the economic situation in Peiping up to the present time seems to have been based on a desire to avoid disrupting normal production and trade as much as possible, and to introduce only a few changes during this transitional period. Even the cumbersome inefficient tax structure which the Nationalists had used has been restored. In the economic field a few innovations have been introduced, however, although it is too early to say what effect they will have. A municipal cooperative system is now in the process of organization with the announced purpose of eliminating the "skinning" of people by middle men (these are not, of course the first cooperatives in Peiping, but they appear to have stronger official backing than previous ones), and a state-owned commercial company has been set up. The latter, the Peiping Trade Company, has several purchasing branches and fifty-five sales agents or outlets for selling daily necessities such as flour, coal, vegetable oil, and salt at fixed prices slightly below the prevailing market quotations to stabilize the price level.

The payment of wages and salaries in kind has already become even more firmly established in the short time the Communists have been in Peiping than it was under the Nationalists who also used the system extensively, but whereas the Nationalists usually gave out wheat flour the Communists are now paying wages with coarse grains such as millet. There has been no enthusiasm about this change, and there is grumbling about what has already been labelled the "Communist millet economy". A few civil servants who haven't received any pay since the "liberation" have an added reason for grumbling - under their breath.

In the long run whether or not the Communists can win and ensure firm popular support in a city such as Peiping will depend to a large extent on their ability to solve basic economic problems, because the average Chinese is a pragmatic person who will judge the Communists on the results of their policies. Most people in Peiping are still reserving judgement. Land reform slogans don't interest them very much, and they are waiting to see what happens regarding inflation, taxes and wages.

Peiping people have a certain smug feeling of superiority as sophisticated, cosmopolitan urbanites which, in addition to all other factors, influences their attitude toward the Communists. The city is full of yokel stories about the hicks from the country who are trying to run their city, about how Communist soldiers use latrines for wash basins and how they would rather sleep on wooden boards than on soft beds. Whether or not the jokes which are circulated are true is unimportant, because true or not they indicate a widespread attitude which will probably induce the Communists to move slowly in making changes. Any Communist failures will provide the raw material for more jokes, and ridicule is a potent social weapon.

Despite the yokel stories, however, the Communists troops which people see every day in the streets have made a favorable impression. They are well-behaved, dignified, and obviously take pride in being "warriors of the liberation", as they are called in the press, and they have a strong political consciousness. When asked by a student whether

or not he belonged to General Lin Piao's army (which he did), one soldier replied, "I belong to the people's army".

Soldiers are less in evidence in Peiping now than they were a month ago, because the present garrison is small compared with the mass of troops crowded into the city during the siege, but a military atmosphere persists. The Communists, in fact, guard themselves more closely and are physically more isolated from the general population than former Kuomintang leaders in Peiping. Sentries keep strict watch at every Communist office, including many (including newspaper offices) where there were no guards under the old regime. No one is allowed to take photographs without a permit, even though there is nothing of military importance within Peiping, and photographs of soldiers, parades and demonstrations are banned. A military sort of discipline appears to be characteristic of all the Communists, including political workers, who wear uniforms similar to those worn by the troops.

One reason for the Communists' strict security is undoubtedly a feeling of nervousness about an opposition underground of Kuomintang troops and secret service men. There is no indication that the underground is sizeable, but apparently the Communists are slightly worried about it nonetheless. During the past two weeks a number of Kuomintang secret service men (or at least persons given that label) have been arrested. There have been a few political arrests also since the initial honeymoon period immediately after the takeover when everyone was left alone, but the number has not been large. They have included "bad" pao chiefs and former "reactionary" officials.

The Nationalist 19th MP regiment which dispersed in the city with its arms just before the Communists came in has also been the source of some trouble. On February 5 a military proclamation ordered the surrender of all illegal arms. On February 12 the Garrison Commander ordered all members of the 19th regiment to turn in their arms and register with the authorities by the 20th. On February 19 this order was repeated, but the deadline was moved up to the 25th. Apparently some of those who went underground weren't giving themselves up. There has been no evidence, however, that the Communists have had any trouble with the bulk of the 150,000 Nationalist troops who had been moved to concentration points outside of the city. On February 16 the Communists took over responsibility for these troops and began to supply them, and at present the final plans for incorporating them into the Red Army are being completed.

Although the People's Daily can say with some justification that "the takeover of Peiping is almost complete", many aspects of Communist policy have not yet crystallized in any definite form. The Communists' press policy in Peiping, however, is an exception and is already fairly definite (which does not mean, of course, that it cannot be changed or modified later). To American observers it looks disturbingly like the pattern already established in the Soviet Union and its satellites elsewhere. It is a policy which ends freedom of the press as it is understood in the United States.

When the Communists first entered Peiping they took over only one newspaper. The official Kuomintang North China Daily News was converted into the official Communist People's Daily under the editorship of Fan Ch'ang-chiang ("Yangtze River Fan"), a well-known Communist journalist who is often given credit for starting feature writing in China in his pre-Communist days. This newspaper is a pure propaganda organ which takes its national and international news from the releases of the official Communist New China News Agency (which quotes Pravda and Tass on much of its foreign news). The New China News Agency releases are fairly accurate on certain things, such as war casualty figures for example, but are entirely one-sided and heavily-slanted in general content. Actually, only a small portion of the People's Daily is devoted to news of any sort. Editorials, proclamations and policy statements take up a large part of the space. No clear distinction is made between news stories and editorials, however, because no clear-cut distinction between the two is made by Communist journalists. The press in their eyes is clearly and admittedly an "instrument of revolution".

At first other newspapers were allowed to continue publishing, and even more surprising all censorship was lifted as a result of "liberation". The non-Communist papers copied the People's Daily, took most of their material from the official news agency and became redder than the rose (although they continued to have more national and international news than the official daily, because they printed some news stories telegraphed from Nanking and Shanghai!) An article in one non-Communist paper stated that some Chinese writers who have the "habits of European and American bourgeois newspapermen" often "only ask for news value but sometimes don't pay attention to revolutionary aims and the people's interests". The article went on to say that, "from now on, however, this should be corrected." This was the Communist line, but even though the non-Communist papers adhered to it strictly the squeeze was gradually put on them. One by one they were closed down for being "reactionary" or for "spreading pro-Kuomintang propaganda" or, in some cases, for no reason at all. At present, besides the official paper there is only one single-sheet newspaper left in business on Peiping, out of twenty-odd papers which were operating a month ago. The life expectancy of the remaining sheet is doubtful.

Foreign correspondents were handled in a different way. First they were subjected to a bitter smear campaign which was started by an official Communist release, followed up by the official paper and echoed by the rest of the Chinese press. The press attacks concentrated on two "American imperialist newspapermen", neither of whom ironically is an American citizen although both work for American news agencies. The dispatches of these two correspondents were called "an insult to the people of Peiping". The denunciations became more vehement and the epithets more colorful as the campaign developed, and the papers printed a flood of written protests many of which demanded that these correspondents be "driven out" of Communist territory. The reporting of foreign correspondents was called "a plot of Americans purposely to destroy the Chinese people's democratic revolution".

This smear technique (which has also been used against certain Chinese including the former chairman of the Peiping City Council)

affected all foreign correspondents as well as the two principal targets. It classified them all as pariahs. Many of the correspondents' Chinese friends stopped contacting them, and the correspondents themselves were reluctant to risk the possibility of embarrassing Chinese friends by calling on them. In addition, correspondents were not permitted to see or interview any Communists and even written communications went unanswered. It was not even possible to interview a private in the Red Army, because the troops had been instructed to avoid talking with foreigners. Foreign correspondents were effectively isolated, and it became impossible to do a good reporting job. Today's Military Control Commission ban on all activities by foreign correspondents merely completes the process begun by the smear campaign.

Today it is impossible for a person in Peiping to keep abreast of world events unless he has a short wave radio (and equally impossible for the world to keep abreast of developments in Peiping). The picture of the world which the Communist propaganda machine is feeding to the people here is one in which a dangerously predatory U.S. is spreading its octopus-like tentacles over the globe and is meeting desperate resistance from the countries following the leadership of the Soviet Union. Every scrap of propaganda issued in Peiping indicates that at present the Chinese Communists have close and strong psychological ties with the Soviet Union and on international questions follow the Soviet and Cominform line completely. Every mention of the Soviet Union is laudatory. (No mention is ever made of Dairen or Port Arthur, and the current Russian negotiations with the Central Government over rights in Sinkiang have not been mentioned once.) Conversely, all U.S. action is portrayed as motivated by sinister imperialism, and every indication of U.S. weakness (as, for example, a slight drop in employment) is seized upon and played up as proof of America's impending disaster. The Communists do not try to hide the fact that they believe in Marx-Leninism and are close friends of the Soviet Union (as some writers have done on their behalf); they are obviously proud of it. (It is very difficult on the basis of publicly known facts, without any "inside information", to know what the real relations between the Chinese Communists and the Soviet Union are, apart from the psychological attachment which is obvious to anyone seeing and hearing their propaganda every day. In Peiping, however, there has been no visible evidence of Russian manipulation or interference. Unless evidence to the contrary is uncovered, there is no reason to believe that the Chinese Communists are puppets of Moscow. Their strength seems to be their own. Their degree of dependence upon or independence from the Soviet Union should become clearer, however, in the months to come.)

The anti-American propaganda line is used very effectively by the Communists. Strong nationalism, perhaps mixed with a general sort of xenophobia and anti-foreignism, is one of the strongest and most widespread sentiments in China today, and when the Communists point an accusing finger at the U.S. and say, "there is the culprit who is interfering in China's affairs, robbing us of our sovereignty and prolonging the civil war," many Chinese agree and become indignant.

Much of the Chinese Communists' present propaganda seems to be based on a belief in the over-riding importance of the present U.S.-Soviet antagonism and split, and the dangers of a third world war. The propaganda makes quite clear the fact that if a war comes while the Chinese Communists are in their present frame of mind they will be supporters of the Soviet side.

Incredible as some of the distortions of the Communists' propaganda appear to an American observer (Nehru's support of the Indonesian nationalists rather than the Indonesian Communists is somehow blamed on the U.S. for example), most of the propaganda seems to be credible to large numbers of Chinese. Another fact which should be noted is that few Chinese seem to be disturbed about what has happened to their local press during the past month. Freedom of the press, of course, was subject to severe limitations under the Kuomintang, but in recent weeks there hasn't even been a murmur of protest against the disappearance, of that degree of freedom which did exist previously.

Although the Communists in their propaganda have been vituperously anti-American they have not molested Americans or other foreigners in Peiping and have lived up to their promise that foreign lives and property would be protected. For the most part the Communists have politely ignored foreigners, refusing to see them or answer communications from them. Until recently foreigners were given the run-around even on such things as requests for automobile registration certificates and passes to go in and out of the city walls, and have felt very much like "the little man who wasn't there". The establishment of a foreign affairs office on February 17 changed the situation slightly, but hasn't changed the basic fact that the Communists still politely ignore foreigners.

Foreign consular establishments as well as individuals have been ignored and have had no contacts with the Communists who make a point of classifying consular personnel as "private citizens". (Apparently the Communists believe that any contacts with the consulates would imply recognition of governments which do not recognize them, although in international law consular activities are generally divorced from the issue of recognition.) For some unknown reason, however, the Communists have placed armed guards at the gates to all consulates to watch the people coming and going. The Communists seem to regard all foreigners as spies and are extremely wary of them. (They have specifically warned the populace through the newspapers that all American newspapermen can be considered potential spies.)

The American consulate has been ignored like the rest, but the United States Information Service has been ordered to stop distributing its news releases, and on February 17 the Communists removed 6666 bags of flour from the Peiping office of the Economic Cooperation Administration. This ECA flour was removed by armed guards who showed no credentials and gave no receipts, and the protest against the "unlawful seizure" made by the American director of ECA in Peiping has never been answered by the Communists.

(Also on February 17 the Russian consulate took a step which was curious and difficult to interpret. It officially went out of existence, and the consul became what the Communists insist all the consuls are, a private citizen. This step was ordered by the Russian Embassy in Canton. The consul, who has scrupulously avoided anything which might even hint Russian involvement in China, has taken up the study of Chinese history.)

Some foreign observers predicted that when the Communists took Peiping and Tientsin they would begin modifying their present attitude toward the U.S. and western countries and would begin looking forward to the day when they would want to bargain for foreign recognition and international relations. Their actions in Peiping to date have given no hint that such an adjustment in attitude is imminent. In the future it is possible, of course, that their attitudes and policies can change, and if such a change comes the motivation undoubtedly will be economic because the Communists will need materials for reconstruction and industrial development which cannot be obtained solely from the Soviet Union. In the past month there has been one outstanding instance where economic realities have dictated Communist policy. On February 13 it was announced that Mao Tse-tung had approved negotiations for reopening navigation between Kuomintang-held Shanghai and Communist-held North China. In short, he officially sanctioned "open trading with the enemy", primarily because of a need for flour imports. The negotiations between the Communists and representatives of Shanghai shipping interests who came north have now been completed, and limited trade is about to commence. The main basis of this trade will be an exchange of flour from Shanghai, to be used principally for distribution at the Kailan coal mines, for coal, which is needed in Shanghai. The Kailan Mining Administration is a Sino-British concern, but it has been given every encouragement by the Communists because it is the main coal producer in North China, and the Communists cannot afford to have their coal supply interrupted. (On February 19, also, an American President Liner was allowed to discharge a previously contracted cargo at Tientsin.) Whether or not economic considerations of this sort will force a major change in the Communists' attitude toward foreign countries still remains to be seen, however.

The prediction that Peiping would become the Communists' national political headquarters (and probably their capital) seems to have been borne out by events of the past month. For one thing, Peiping has been the center for informal peace negotiations between the Communists and two groups representing Li Tsung-jen (unofficially) and that part of the Central Government which remains at Nanking. The first group consisted of several relatively unknown and unimportant professors from Nanking who apparently accomplished little, but the second group was more important. Headed by Shao Li-tse and W.W. Yen it negotiated from February 14 to the 27th and made a three-day trip to Shihchiachuang to talk with Mao Tse-tung. Their talk with Mao and the fact that they participated in several important Communist meetings in Peiping made it look as if Li Tsung-jen and the Communists might be making progress toward a peace settlement - which, if it followed the pattern set by Fu Tso-yi would mean Nationalist surrender (called by another name) on the basis of Mao's eight points and pardon for Li and those of his cohorts now on the Communists' war criminals list. (Fu is still in Peiping

and is participating in many Communist-sponsored meetings.)

On February 20 the Communist North China People's Government under Tung Pi-wu moved to Peiping. Five days later the leaders of all the small "democratic groups" slated to participate in the Communists' coalition (the groups I described in my letter on Hongkong) arrived in Peiping and were greeted with great fanfare. Included were Li Chi-shen, Shen Chen-ju, Chang Po-chun, Ma Hsu-lun and many others. At about the same time Communist leaders began to converge on Peiping in larger numbers. Included among them was Li Li-san, one-time leader of the Chinese Communist Party before Mao, who is now Vice-Chairman of the Communists' All-China Labor Union and is preparing to set up union headquarters in Peiping. Delegates for the All-China Student Assembly also flocked to Peiping.

These developments look like the overture to big events, and all that is now needed to make Peiping the capital of Communist China is for Mao Tse-tung and Chu Teh to transfer their headquarters from Shihchiachuang. Now that the takeover of Peiping is almost complete this may happen soon.

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With the stage set for major developments in Peiping, the Communist ban on foreign writers may be explained by a desire on their part to veil these developments from the probing eyes of foreign observers. It is also possible, however, that the ban is merely part of a general tightening up of their control now that the city has been taken over. Reports from other cities have indicated that a tightening up process has generally begun only after the transitional takeover period. Most of the reports to date, however, have come from dubious or at least undependable sources, so I will not speculate but will wait and see. There already are a few indications, however, that over-all tightening up may take place here. There have been several reports, for example, of pao-chia and student meetings called for the purpose of denouncing "reactionaries" and rooting out "enemies of the people", but it is too early to say whether or not this sort of thing presages a general witch hunt against "enemies".

I plan to stay on in Peiping as long as it is feasible. If the ban on interviewing people and travelling continues I, like the Russian consul, will settle down to more leisurely and academic study of the Chinese language and history and will follow current history as best I can by reading the newspaper(s) and talking with those who aren't afraid to talk with foreigners.

Sincerely yours,

Doak Barnett

Doak Barnett