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Dear Mr. Rogers:

The highest point in Pa Chia Ts'un, or Eight Families Village, is a small building which is a part of the village Buddhist temple. By standing on the balcony of this building one can view much of the surrounding countryside. Other villages (including another Pa Chia Ts'un, for many years ago the village was split into Front and Rear sections which are now separate divisions), marked by a few scattered trees, dot the landscape and break the monotonous yellow-brown aspect of the flat land. The hazy purple of the Western Hills borders the plain a few miles away, and the hills are clearly visible. Visible too is the central building of the Summer Palace, the magnificent folly of the Empress-Dowager Tzu Hsi who built it with funds appropriated for the Chinese navy. It looks remote and unreal, which it is for the villagers of Pa Chia Ts'un. Peiping, which lies a few miles to the east, is not visible. To the north a tall smokestack rises from the plain about a half mile from Pa Chia Ts'un. It is a part of the textile factory, now manufacturing military supplies, in the town of Ch'ing Ho. Ch'ing Ho is the market town where the villagers of Pa Chia Ts'un buy and sell, and it is the economic focal point of the local area.

It was an unseasonably warm, Spring-like day when I stood on the temple balcony in Pa Chia Ts'un last week. The brown fields around the village were unplowed and devoid of any activity because Spring plowing and planting will not begin for about a month. The scene was one of complete calm and serenity. A young sociologist on the faculty of Yenching University was standing next to me. He raised his arm and pointed to the north. "Do you see that smokestack there?" he asked. "A half mile beyond that is Communist territory."

I had known that villages near to Peiping were in Communist hands, but the way in which he casually pointed to a place about a mile away and said "there they are" gave me somewhat of a shock. It would probably be correct to call the placid countryside north of Pa Chia Ts'un a "front" in China's civil war. Yet there were no signs of battle, no moving troops, no fortifications, in fact nothing to indicate even preparations for a military struggle.

From another front in China's civil war newspaper dispatches sent on the same day that I visited Pa Chia Ts'un described the situation as follows. "Fall of another 'outpost' of Mukden was

imminent today as thousands of Communist troops stormed into the coal-mining centre of Penki, forty miles south-east of Mukden, after a week-long siege....At the same time elaborate Communist preparations for an early attack on Sinmin, thirty miles west of Mukden, and Tiehling, forty miles to the north, are reported.... A sizeable Red Army is at present marching on Yingkow from the recently captured steel city of Anshan....Considerable uneasiness is said to prevail in Mukden as the Communist stranglehold on the metropolis tightens, with prices of commodities and vital necessities standing at dizzy heights."

The present civil war in China is bitter and violent. In Manchuria now it is often a war of mass battles, artillery attacks, and heavy casualties. In fact, current reports from Manchuria indicate that the military situation there is not only explosive but is actually exploding, and that the fate of the remaining Nationalist troops is highly uncertain. But civil war in a country as large as China means different things at different times and places - and to different people. For the present at least, the environs of Peiping enjoy an uneasy stability. There is very little offensive action initiated by either side, and both the Communists and the Nationalists are for the most part "sitting out" the present. Attrition is gradually undermining the Government position, however, and Nationalist leaders in Peiping have their eyes anxiously fixed on the Northeast, where the outcome of the fighting in Manchuria will inevitably affect Peiping's position. But the villagers of Pa Chia Ts'un have their eyes fixed primarily on their fields, for in about a month their real work will begin. They are not unaware of the civil war. It is affecting them in many ways. But their attention is still directed mainly toward their major and immediate problem, the problem of extracting the necessities of life from the brown North China soil.

Pa Chia Ts'un has a population of about three hundred and fifty persons. Perhaps as many as one third of these are refugees, virtually all of whom are either relatives or friends of local villagers, who have fled from active war areas. It is difficult to see where the people live, for one can walk the circumference of the village in a few minutes time.

It is a relatively prosperous village. Each family (which may include three or more generations) has a compound containing all the buildings and equipment necessary for a self-sustaining farm unit. Most of the buildings are substantial, and some of them compare favorably with city houses in Peiping. Although a large percentage of the land tilled by the villagers belongs to absentee owners in Peiping, those who till the land seem to have fared reasonably well in the past. But in many ways the villagers are hard hit by existing economic conditions. The prices of manufactured goods has risen more than the prices of agricultural goods, and as a consequence the purchasing power of the local people has slowly dwindled. Furthermore, payment of taxes and rent in kind tends to

eliminate advantages which might accrue to them from the rising prices of their products.

Various village economic activities have deteriorated. The principal non-agricultural industry is a family-owned weaving establishment equipped with simple human-operated machinery which fabricates cloth from thread purchased in the city. I was told that at one time the family hired a number of laborers and operated on a scale unusually large for a village the size of Pa Chia Ts'un. Now operations are done by family members, and when I was there only one small loom was being run. A respected old farmer, with a wonderful face which looks as if someone accidentally had applied the plow to it, formerly raised ducks in large numbers to supply the discriminating palate of Peiping. He is still known locally as the "Duck King", but at present he has only twelve ducks. In spite of the fact that ducks are bringing excellent prices in Peiping, the cost of grain to feed them is out of his price range. These are merely examples of ways in which the villagers are affected by the civil war and its consequences, even though their village remains quiet and is certainly prosperous compared to many other villages, including some close-by.

Part of the quietness which I encountered in Pa Chia Ts'un was, of course, merely a seasonal phenomenon. Although some villagers go every day to work in the textile factory at Ch'ing Ho, this is still the slack season for most of the farmers. Virtually the only work I observed during my visit was being done by women and children. A small boy was operating the loom which I mentioned. Two healthy young women were supervising a blind-folded donkey as he made his circuit around a grindstone, converting corn into flour. And various other women were busying themselves with small jobs. The men I saw seemed to be enjoying an afternoon of leisure and had time for a cup of tea and polite conversation. Children were most in evidence in the streets, or rather the areas between compounds, for the village school, which normally gathers the children of several villages into the Pa Chia Ts'un temple, was still closed for the protracted Chinese New Year holiday. They interrupted their games and kite-flying to troop along with the visiting strangers and obligingly preceded us to silence the mongrels which serve as watchdogs in every household.

After visiting several farmers we visited a non-farmer of considerable local prestige. Although he lives comfortably he is not rich, but his prestige seems to derive in part from the fact that his ancestors were landowners. In addition, he is a doctor of sorts and in the past has held political positions in the area. At his home we met the local census representative of the Peiping Municipal Government (which has jurisdiction over Pa Chia Ts'un), a well-dressed and polite young soldier. He was making his daily rounds. Every day he visits the half a dozen or so villages in his

territory to check on any new arrivals to or departures from the village, and to see what the general situation is. And every night, according to the villagers, Communists from "across the way" come into the village, also to see what the situation is. All of which makes it a rather peculiar situation.

Pa Chia Ts'un itself isn't important politically. Although there are "Chia" chiefs resident there, the "Pao" and "Chu" headquarters of the region are in other villages. This helps to explain why it lacks the uniformed and other official people which in many places (such as in Peiping) constantly remind one of the war in progress. As it was, apart from the visiting census representative, I did not see a single person in uniform nor any other evidence of war. In fact, I was impressed, rightly or wrongly, by a curious air of unconcern and relaxation.

Whether or not the existing peace and calm in Pa Chia Ts'un will continue probably will be determined by factors which the local villagers cannot control and may not be able to fully understand. At present, however, they are living quietly and peacefully and are waiting for Spring.

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My short visit to Pa Chia Ts'un, a few miles from Peiping, grew out of conversations I had been having with Professor Yen Ching-yueh, a sociologist who is now Acting Dean of the College of Public Affairs at Yenching University. The Yenching Department of Sociology has been making a study of this village for some years. Sociology students are assigned different aspects of village life and concentrate their research in that way. They have been extremely successful in winning the confidence of the villagers and participating in village life, by teaching in the school and so on, without disrupting the normal pattern of life there. The information which they have gathered makes an extremely interesting and valuable case study of a village. I learned a great deal about village life in general and about Pa Chia Ts'un in particular from talking with Professor Yen (and other Peiping professors such as Fei Hsiao-tung of Tsinghua University), and when he offered to take me on a conducted tour I jumped at the chance.

I am still planning to begin my own personal village study project when I leave Peiping. My present tentative time-schedule calls for starting that project about the first of April. It is not easy, however, to make definite arrangements, even with the contacts I have made here. Educated Chinese are reluctant to undertake projects of this sort not for fear of being suspected of subversive political activities (the Pa Chia Ts'un work is well enough established to avoid real suspicion), so it looks as if it won't be feasible to have a Chinese student work with me - unless

I decide to settle in Pa Chia Ts'un. One of the students on that project is investigating whether or not a place could be found for me there, but it is greatly overcrowded. Furthermore, although there would be definite advantages in working with Yenching students who have a sociological training I am inclined to think that it would be wise for me to move into and become acquainted with a new region. I am corresponding with friends about possible arrangements in three other areas - Honan, North Kiangsu, and Central China. Several factors complicate what might seem to be a simple problem. One is the overcrowding in villages from the influx of war refugees. Another is the general political uneasiness and the consequent reluctance to incur any suspicion or official disapproval which might be associated with harboring an outsider whose motives are only vaguely known. I am confident that I will be able to make the necessary arrangements to start about the beginning of April, but my choice of locale may be limited by factors of expediency.

Sincerely yours,

Doak Barnett

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