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Dear Mr. Rogers:

The Chinese Communists' rise to power during the past twenty-eight years has been accomplished by a combination of military and political methods, and peasant armies have been the spearpoint of revolution.

In successful revolutions rabble and armies usually both play an important role. If it is possible to generalize, the most frequent pattern of mass revolutions seems to include two stages: an initial stage of uncoordinated revolt against existing conditions and the regime in power by angered masses, and a final stage of organized effort on the part of revolutionary armies. The initial stage has extended over a number of years in China and in recognizable form has been confined to a limited number of rural areas -- although discontent in various forms extended over much larger areas. The final stage has been in progress for a long time, and particularly since the end of the Sino-Japanese War the Chinese Communists have been extending their control by military operations. I know of no major Chinese city which has been won by internal Communist uprisings since the Communists began concentrating on cities approximately two years ago. Internal dry rot, decay and paralysis in Nationalist China have made it possible for the Communists to win militarily, but the Communist rise to power since the war has been based on army operations rather than armed, Communist-led uprisings. (I observed this process in only one place, Peiping, but the pattern seems to apply elsewhere.) The struggle in China, therefore, has had the characteristics of a civil war, a contest for power between established politico-military groups, as well as of a revolution. Consequently, the army and military leaders have played, and continue to play, a fundamental role in the whole Chinese Communist movement.

Chu Teh, the aging Communist Commander-in-Chief, is sanctified to a degree only slightly less extreme than Mao Tse-tung, and all the chief Communist military commanders -- Lin Piao, Yeh Chien-ying, Peng Teh-huai, Chen Yi, Liu Po-cheng, Nieh Jung-chen, Ho Lung -- are high-ranking leaders of the Communist movement and are regular members of the Communist Party's Central Committee.

The growth of the Chinese Red Army has been spectacular. It began to take form in 1927, when widely scattered military units under Communist leadership began guerilla warfare against the Kuomintang. (The Nanchang Uprising on August 1, 1927, is the official birthday observed by the army.) The first important force was one formed by Chu Teh at Chingkanshan. It was called the Fourth Red Army and had 10,000 men and 2,000 rifles. This grew until at the height of Communist-Kuomintang fighting in Kiangsi in the early 1930's Chu Teh's units included about 70,000 men, and the Communists' scattered forces may have totalled 150,000. The most phenomenal growth took place after the Long March to Shensi, however, and during the resistance against Japan. The Eighth Route Army in North and Northwest China and the New Fourth Army in Central China expanded until by 1945, according to foreign correspondents visiting Communist areas at that time, the former had 600,000 and the latter 300,000 troops, exclusive of militia. With this formidable army as its military arm, the Communists during the course of the post-war civil conflict continued to increase in numbers, while the Kuomintang, starting with a much larger army, was worn down by attrition, many of its men changing sides to swell the Communist forces. At the beginning of this year the Communists asserted that their armed forces contained three million men, and estimates now range as high as four million.

This army undoubtedly has been one of the most politically-conscious armies in history, and political indoctrination has been almost as important as military training. The recruits gathered from the countryside and absorbed from Kuomintang armies have been drilled in slogans as well as in fighting, and political commissars have been attached to every large army unit (theoretically the political commissars have a status equal to that of the military commanders to which they are attached.)

The strength of Chinese Communist armies is debatable, because they have never been tested by first class opposition. Military observers say they have made many mistakes which might have been disastrous if they had been facing a competent enemy. Some of their methods which have been successful in the fighting in China might have failed in a different military context. To cite one example of this a standard Communist procedure is to withdraw, if an attack of theirs has been repulsed, to sit down for a long pow-wow, sometimes lasting for days, in which everyone from privates to generals discusses what went wrong. They would be extremely vulnerable to counterattacks during these military bull sessions, but the Kuomintang armies have rarely counterattacked. Although their real strength is debatable, therefore, there is no doubt that Communist armies in China are vastly superior to their Kuomintang opposition.

A New China News Agency (Communist) editorial on August 1 of this year attributes the Communists' military superiority to three factors: Communist leadership, indoctrination with a revolutionary ideology and highly centralized discipline. Other factors might be mentioned. The Communists have evolved effective tactics of mobility and attack. They have accumulated excellent equipment from captured Japanese and Kuomintang stocks. Soldiers and their families have been well cared for. Deserting enemy troops have been rapidly absorbed and effectively reindoctrinated. Officers and men have had close contacts on a fairly equalitarian basis. The relations between soldiers and civilians have been strictly regulated. And so on. All of these factors help explain the success of the Communist armies -- and of the whole Communist movement.

For years, many areas under Communist control have been battlegrounds for Communist-Japanese and Communist-Kuomintang fighting, and in these areas the main instrument of Communist control and administration has been the army. The army was so completely a symbol of the Communist movement in North China during the Sino-Japanese War, for example, that all Communists were referred to as "Pa Lu" ("Eighth Routers").

The fact that Communist control of many areas has been essentially military rule by the army has been an almost inevitable result of the fact that the party's rise to power has been military as well as political. At present, with the struggle for power still in progress in some parts of the country and a transitional consolidation process still going on in other areas, the army continues to be an important governing as well as a fighting organization.

The overlapping of personnel at the top levels of army and party leadership, and the thorough political indoctrination of the army's rank and file, mean that the army and party are not separate entities to the degree that they are in some countries. In many respects the army is simply the military arm of the party. Nonetheless, the army and party organizations are distinct and separate, and their methods of working are different, so that it is necessary to distinguish between the two.

The highest body in the army's military chain of command is the Chinese People's Revolutionary Military Committee, the Chairman of which is Mao Tse-tung. This Committee has four Vice-Chairmen: Chu Teh, Commander-in-Chief of the People's Liberation Army; Liu Shao-ch'i; Chou En-lai; and P'eng Teh-huai, Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the People's Liberation Army. (Other top military leaders

include Yeh Chien-ying, Chief-of-Staff of the People's Liberation Army; and Nieh Jung-chen, Assistant Chief-of-Staff of the Revolutionary Military Committee.) Under the Revolutionary Military Committee, the country is divided into major military areas corresponding to the largest administrative divisions: East China under Ch'en Yi, Central China under Lin Piao, North China under Nieh Jung-chen, Northwest China under P'eng Teh-huai, and the Northeast. The military forces themselves have recently been amalgated and reorganized into four Field Armies: the First under P'eng Teh-huai, the second under Liu Po-ch'eng, the Third under Ch'en Yi, and the Fourth under Lin Piao.

In addition to the fact that the Communist military establishment under the overall hierarchy described above inevitably handles the takeover and control of military areas, it also carries out certain well-defined administrative functions which more normally would be carried out by Civil authorities. One of these is the governing of newly-acquired major cities. In each important city which the Communists capture or win over, a Military Control Commission is established with complete authority to rule the city during a transitional period. In every case, the chiefs of these Military Control Commissions are high-ranking Communist generals. It is still unclear how long this transitional period of military government will be in major cities. In Peiping, for example, although the civil Municipal Government is set up and functioning, and although it has been almost seven months since the city was occupied, the Military Control Commission still exists as the highest local authority, and it still issues orders and regulations. The fact that the Mayor of Peiping and the Chief of the Military Control Commission are one and the same person (Yeh Chien-ying) has made possible an easy transfer of functions from the Military Control Commission to the Municipal Government, but the transfer is not yet complete, and the Commission remains the highest local authority in the city.

On a nation-wide scale the Revolutionary Military Committee maintains direct control over certain fields of administration. Under the Committee, for example, are separate bureaux for the control of railways and tele-communications. Transport and communications are of great military importance, of course, and this fact, plus the lack of any Central Government in Communist territory, makes military control logical in the present situation.

The present position of importance of the army in Communist China is not surprising in view of the continuing civil warfare. A question of considerable importance for the future, however, is whether or not the Military will take a subordinate position once conditions become more stable, and whether the army will be transformed into a conventional national defense force or will remain a large military-political body with a strong influence on domestic politics, government and administration. Under the Kuomintang, the army has never been eliminated from the political scene for various reasons: the almost uninterrupted warfare in the country, the importance of military vested interests, the persistence of the "military mind", the association of military forces with local and personal interests, the failure to achieve complete unification of the armed forces, and so on.

Some Chinese I have talked with assert that the Communist military leaders are "different" from the type of army commanders which have played such a large role in Nationalist China during the past few decades. The Communists, they say, are not "militarists" but are political reformers forced to use military methods. Chu Teh, in a speech to the Preparatory Committee of the Political Consultative Conference, said: "One of the special characteristics of the Chinese Revolution is 'armed revolution against armed counter-revolution'. This does not mean that revolutionists are particularly fond of guns. It is due to the fact that if we did not take up guns the revolutionary force could not exist." Whether or not these claims are correct remains to be seen. It is certainly true that many Communist army commanders have been politically-minded and have been leaders in a political as well as a military sense. For example, the first wartime Liberated Area set up in the Wu T'ai Mountain region of Shansi was established by General Nieh Jung-chen, and the administration formed there became the model for Communist expansion throughout North China. It is also true that many Communist military leaders seem to be equally capable in civilian as well as army jobs. Two outstanding examples of this fact are Chou En-lai and Yeh Chien-ying, both of whom are high-ranking generals, but both of whom are often thought of as civilian leaders because they have occupied so many positions of a political rather than military importance in recent years. Nonetheless, it is hard to believe that "military vested interests" and "the military mind" have not developed to a certain extent among Communist officers, and that this has not had considerable influence on the party. Many Communists have spent their entire adult lives in army life and in active fighting, and for many of them it will probably be difficult to make a transition to civil life or to accept the subordination of the army.

There are several questions, now unanswerable, which have a direct bearing on how important the army will be in national life in the future. One of these questions is the degree of unity which can be achieved and maintained in the Communists' military organization. There seems to be a good deal of evidence that the Communists have already eliminated so-called warlord elements from their army to a greater degree than has been the case with any other large army in modern China. Army units and commanders have been shifted from place to place, and in the Communist army, regional armies attached to certain localities and local leaders seem to have been eliminated for the most part, except perhaps in the case of small guerilla forces. One reason for Chiang K'ai-shek's vulnerability, militarily speaking, was the fact that he was only able to tie together the armies under him by alliance rather than by complete unification. The Communist forces seem to have been integrated more successfully under a unified command. It is not well known, however, to what degree personal loyalty to military commanders has been a factor in the Communist army, and there is some evidence to suggest that it has not been eliminated. This personal element in army organization has a long-standing history in China and has been one of the main obstacles to building a united national army. If Communist units are tied by strong personal loyalty to their commanders, the possibility of military influence in political matters remains strong.

Another question mark is the degree to which real or imagined threats within the country will lead the Communists to use force in administering their rule. On this, it is premature to pass judgement, but there are indications that military force will be a continuing sanction to back up the party's will. Communist propaganda exhibits a fear of "secret agents" which is almost psychopathic. It is difficult to know whether the basis for this is real, imagined or invented for political purposes, but Communist publications constantly warn "against the wrecking and subversive activities of foreign imperialists and their running dogs, the Chinese reactionaries", and call for "vigilance to suppress their activities" (this quotation was picked at random from the press; it could be duplicated almost every day). In some areas which have been under their control for a long time the Communists have recently renewed efforts to organize local militia against "counter-revolutionary" and "reactionary" elements (the regular army forces are almost all in Central and South China). Living in Peiping, it is almost impossible for a person to know if there is any organized opposition to the Communists in the areas where they have consolidated their control, but the local Communist press has reported

several local insurrections recently, several of them led by old-time secret societies. If there is any real internal opposition in organized form to the Communists, the importance of armed force supporting party and government policy will undoubtedly continue to be significant, and the army's influence on political life will be larger than otherwise would be the case.

The degree of tension in international relations will also be a factor determining the extent to which the Chinese Communists stress the importance of the army in the future, and this undoubtedly will have a relationship to the army's influence within the country. At present the Chinese Communists' propaganda and public statements assert that the "Western capitalistic and imperialistic countries," and especially the United States, are "enemies" actively attempting to defeat them. Mao Tse-tung went so far as to state, in a speech before the Preparatory Committee of the Political Consultative Conference on June 15, that the so-called imperialists "will not take their defeat in this land of China lying down", and he warned that "the sending of part of their armed forces to encroach on China's frontiers is not an impossibility." There are many indications that the Chinese Communists, on the basis of the kind of psychology illustrated by the above quotation and on the basis of a fear of external as well as internal threats, will continue to maintain a strong army even if they are able to eliminate Nationalist opposition and end the civil war.

Within the past few months, the People's Liberation Army (the present title of the Red Army) has been consolidating many separate guerilla and other forces under its command into a unified organization and has carried out a "movement for unifying and regularizing the army". With great fanfare, on June 15, army headquarters announced the adoption of an official army flag and emblem. (The flag: a red field with a yellow star and the numbers "8" and "1", standing for August 1st, in the upper left-hand corner.) The North China Military Area Command responded to this step, symbolic of the transition to a regular army, with a statement which said, "...the People's Liberation Army is the protector of the People's Democratic Republic; it is the symbol of its powerful strength. This demands that the People's Liberation Army energetically proceed to regularize and modernize itself, always to stand alertly at its fighting post, and to make itself the reliable guarantee of the protection of the Motherland's independence....." The Communist army is undergoing a transition from a revolutionary army into a national army (it is building up a navy and air force, for the first time, with the few ships and planes captured from the Central Government or voluntarily brought over by troops "returning to righteousness", in the Communists' phraseology), and this is taking place in an atmosphere of virulent nationalism and strained international relations which make it seem unlikely that the army will be relegated to an unimportant position.

Although the Communist armies in China have already grown to the point where they have a clear superiority, both quantitatively and qualitatively, over the armies under the National Government, expansion of the army still seems to be continuing. As far as I know, there has been no serious consideration of the future problem of demobilization; I have seen no discussion of the problem in Communist literature. There is no doubt that it will be one of the major problems facing the Communists once their military campaigns have been completed (and it can only be a matter of time before the main Nationalist forces have been largely defeated, unless international complications alter the Chinese situation completely). It has been said that "no large army has been successfully demobilized in modern China". In a general way that is probably true. Armies have disintegrated, been destroyed, shifted allegiance or broken up into rabble, but I know of no successful, planned and systematic demobilization of a large army in the period of domestic strife since 1911. Social disorder has usually been the result of army disintegration (really the closest thing to demobilization which has taken place), and often many ex-soldiers have turned to banditry for a livelihood. Once the Communists extend their control over most of the country, they will have a tremendous number of soldiers, Kuomintang as well as Communist, on their hands. The Communist land law promises land for these soldiers, but it is difficult to see how it will be provided when land is scarce already. It is difficult, in fact, to see where in China's disrupted and disorganized economy of scarcity these soldiers can be absorbed into non-military occupations in any systematic way. If they are not returned to productive peacetime employment they will continue to be a heavy economic drain on the country, but the difficulties of demobilization are enormous, and the army may continue to be an oversized organization for a long time in the future. The dilemma facing any regime with large armies in China is that once relative peace is achieved it is almost impossible to support the armies or to demobilize them. A large army, without combat functions, will influence the domestic political situation in numerous ways.

One long term trend which has taken place in modern China is a spectacular elevation in social status of military men. In traditional China, the soldier was classified as the bottom of the social scale, which was one reason China acquired the reputation of being a "peace-loving" nation despite the repeated wars and internal military struggles in Chinese history. In recent years, however, military men have acquired a new prestige. This development was accelerated during the Sino-Japanese War and applied particularly to officers. The prestige of military personnel, including ordinary soldiers, has risen even higher in Communist China. The Communists with their

desire to divide people into classes have, in fact, invented a new class of "revolutionary military men." The praise for these men is loud and continual, and they are not only granted many special privileges but are given a special political status as well. The families of soldiers in Communist villages are the compulsory wards of all the people remaining in the villages, and Communist political workers see that such families are well cared for. The families of army casualties are supported by the government. Soldiers are accepted into the party after the shortest possible probationary period. Soldiers of "exploiting families" (rich farmers, landlords, and so on) may change their class status (to "revolutionary military men") in two years, a much shorter time than is ordinarily required for such persons to "change class". These are just a few examples of how soldiers are given special treatment. In addition, the army is given special representation in all representative bodies established as part of the government. The increased prestige on the part of the army may well have some significance regarding the future role of the military organization and of individual military leaders in the political life of the country.

Although it is too early to predict with certainty whether or not the present importance of the army in Communist China will continue, there are reasons for believing that the army and army men will have a continuing influence in the fields of politics and government which will be significant. Whether or not the army will continue to exercise direct control over certain areas and participate in the field of government administration it is too early to say, but it is certainly possible that party, army and government will continue to be a triumvirate jointly exercising the powers of government under a Communist regime in China.

Sincerely yours,

A. Doak Barnett

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