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

Dear Mr. Rogers:

The Communist movement in China is a dynamic force in a nation which is politically bankrupt, ideologically confused and economically disrupted. It is on the offensive while other political forces are on the defensive. The remaining centers of resistance to the Communists are localized; there is no overall focus for effective resistance on a national scale.

No one knows what will happen in the long run to Communism in China or to China under Communism. The social setting of human and institutional characteristics, modes of behavior and response, and patterns of individual and group relations formed during the past three millenia in China is extremely complex, and this fact introduces a large element of unpredictability into the question of Communism's future in China - what forms it will ultimately take, what direction it will follow, whether it will last - in short, how it will influence and be influenced by the social setting. But these are questions for the future. The plain fact about the immediate present is that there is no other modern political force in China capable of competing against the Communists with any success. This fact must be understood if one is to comprehend the present situation in China. In a sense the Communists are filling a political vacuum, therefore, and the reactions of various Chinese groups to the Communists' assumption of power, the characteristics of Communist rule in the territory which they control, and the nature of social and political changes taking place in Communist China can only be understood in terms of the dynamic character of the Communist movement in China and the vacuum created by the static - or in some cases retrogressive - character of the other existing political forces in the country. Other political forces might have competed with the Communists if during recent years and months they had gone through a process of revitalization; instead they have gone through a process of deterioration and disintegration.

During the past half year that I lived under the Communist regime in Peiping, my opportunities for direct contact with the Communists were restricted almost to the point of non-existence, but I was able to observe and learn something of the impact of the Communists on the city, the way in which people and situations were handled, and the reactions of various sorts of people to the new regime. Peiping, a cultural and political center, is not typical of all Chinese cities,

but developments there can be generalized to a certain extent and at least give clues to some of the developments throughout Communist China.

The general population was a passive element in the struggle for control of Peiping, and the issue was decided by competing armies. The very fact that the population was for the most part passive, however, contributed to the success of the attacking Communists and the failure of the defending Nationalists. The direct cause of the transfer of power was, of course, the fact that the defending armies were caught in a militarily hopeless position, but an underlying contributing factor was the willingness of the general public to accept political change. The most prevalent attitude in Peiping was that a change in regime might improve conditions and probably wouldn't make them worse.

When the Communists took over Peiping, therefore, it was with popular acquiescence. This did not mean that the majority of people positively approved of a new Communist order but that negatively they did disapprove of the old order. In the acquiescence to Communist rule the attitude of many was a fatalistic acceptance of what seemed to be the inevitable, but people did hope that a new regime could restore order out of chaos, achieve economic stability and bring about peace. The Communists, therefore, were received by the majority of the population with a feeling of expectancy, mixed in cases of different people with either optimism or pessimism.

Some Kuomintang elements went underground when the Communists took over the city, but one of the first Communist moves was a campaign directed against them. Within a relatively short period of time the Communists seemed to have suppressed their activities. There is no way of knowing whether an underground still exists, and if so how large it is, but the Communists are extremely alert against "enemy agents" of all sorts, and if an underground exists it is now quiescent.

The question of how much active popular support the Communists have in Peiping is extremely difficult to answer. I found wide divergences of opinion on this point among both Chinese and foreigners on-the-spot. The Communists claim extravagantly that "all the people" support them, and it is difficult to know who doesn't, because the only active and vocal political elements in the city since the day of the Communists' arrival have been those on the Communist side. By far the large majority of people are not active or vocal politically, but it is true that all those who play any role in political life now are Communist or pro-Communist.

There are great contrasts between the Communists and the political groups which they have superceded - which of course means mainly the Kuomintang. The Communists have self-confidence, discipline, organizational skill and energy which other Chinese political groups have lacked. With these characteristics, they have been able to establish their rule firmly in Peiping.

The Communist rulers in Peiping have a number of other characteristics which make them different from past rulers. They have purpose and determination, and the leaders set up well-defined goals which party members work toward in an energetic, disciplined way, while most Chinese who oppose travelling the road toward Communism -- even via "New Democracy" -- don't have any clear idea of what they do want. The Communists are incorruptible to a degree unknown under other regimes in modern China. There are stories of minor corruption in Peiping, but they are the exception rather than the rule. It is too early to know whether party discipline in this respect will stand the test of time in a new urban environment, but to-date a higher level of incorruptibility has been maintained than under any other modern regime which has ruled Peiping. The Communists also seem to combine a certain flexibility with their basically doctrinaire attitude. They are doctrinaire about what they want and what they plan to achieve, but they are flexible in adjusting the means to achieve their ends. They are willing to learn and adapt in methods even though they are uncompromising in their goals and general political outlook.

In carrying out their rule in Peiping the Communists at present are using persuasion, organization and social pressure rather than physical force. Force is not absent, and the threat of force is always in the background to prevent opposition, but its use is restricted to a minimum. There have been arrests (including people I know) and imprisonments, but not on a mass scale. There is a secret police force constantly at work, but apparently it uses fewer strong-arm methods than the secret police under past regimes in Peiping, and so far its direct interference in the lives of ordinary people is not great. Even in the cases of people directly affected by the instruments of forceful rule, such as the police, the Communists' present policy seems to be to avoid the use of physical force as much as possible. They usually attempt to "reform" and reindoctrinate rather than eliminate or punish those who might oppose the regime. There are reports, for example, of a political prison in the city where ex-Kuomintang personnel is now being "taught New Democracy"; I wasn't able to confirm the reports, but I found them credible. Many former political enemies, including high-ranking persons, have been forgiven their past political "sins" on the basis of public recantation. Physical retribution has been reserved, mainly for those few persons carrying out active sabotage. (Reports of violence and brutality in rural areas still filter into Peiping, but the cases reported are apparently violations of current party policy and are not officially sanctioned.)

The minimal use of physical force (once the city was captured and cleared of Kuomintang troops) does not mean that the Communists do not use force in more subtle forms. Terrific social pressure is used and is felt by ordinary people to a degree most of them have never experienced before. A great many things which people are required to do are "voluntary" in theory but are forced by pressure of various sorts. Communist political workers exert pressure directly. "A meeting

will be held tomorrow, and we hope your household sends a representative." A representative is sent. "We would like contributions for the Street Government." The contributions are made. Direct pressure of this sort affects almost everyone to a certain degree. If there is a lack of cooperation a political worker may show up and spend hours, perhaps days, asking questions and trying to "reform" the persons with the uncooperative attitude. Political workers of this sort are usually polite, but they have the backing of the regime, they have stock answers to most objections and evasions, and they usually get results. Pressure is also exerted by organizational methods. The Communists' aim is to organize all recognizable occupational groups under centralized leadership and under the party's control or influence. Within such groups there is great pressure for complete solidarity and uniformity. Every effort is exerted to make the groups act as units in support of the regime. Indirect pressure is also exerted through propaganda and thought control. In Peiping all outlets for the expression of public opinion contrary to the Communists' propaganda line have been eliminated. As a result the weight and force of the propaganda is overwhelming.

The Communists are intolerant of all disagreement or opposition on questions which they consider important. There is only one "correct" line; all others are incorrect. Once the "correct" line on any question has been determined, furthermore, every possible means is used to prevent "deviations."

The Communists have evolved very effective techniques of achieving ideological conformity. Perhaps the most effective, which is used within the party and groups under its leadership or inspiration, might be called "collective auto-indoctrination." Large groups are subdivided into smaller groups of perhaps ten to thirty (or even smaller), which are the basis for constant study of Communist ideas and policies. The process is called "learning" but should be called indoctrination. A book, pamphlet or speech on party policy is usually the raw material which the group uses, and it is studied for days or weeks. Each member of the group must virtually memorize the contents. Every member must get up before the others and discuss it. He is criticized by the others and must also carry out public "self-criticism" in front of them. The purpose of this procedure is to guarantee that everyone achieves a "correct" understanding of the party's policy or viewpoint. The social pressure exerted within the group for complete orthodoxy is amazingly effective, and "individualism" is considered one of the cardinal sins. I have talked with persons participating in this "learning" process who were themselves surprised by what was happening to their thinking under steady and relentless social pressure. Only a minority of the population, of course, is exposed to high-pressure methods of this sort, but general methods, such as propaganda, touch everyone in varying degrees.

All these forms of social pressure create a reluctance to express open disagreement or criticism of the regime. The Communists themselves, constantly encourage "self-criticism," but such criticism is confined within the framework of principles and policies handed down from the top authorities. It is criticism of deviations from policy and ineffective implementation of policy rather than of policy itself. Those outside the party and its close allies do not make open criticism either. In the whole time I was in Peiping under the Communists I never heard or saw printed a single public criticism of any important Communist policy or principle. For a long time after the Communists took over even ordinary non-political citizens were reluctant to speak openly about aspects of the regime which they did not like. One reason for this is the Communists' clear-cut distinction between friend and foe. Even though they are mild in their treatment of political enemies they are not mild in their vitriolic verbal condemnation of opposition. Everyone not one hundred percent for the Communists is at least exposed to the risk of being classified as an opponent (if, that is, he takes any political stand at all) and labelled "reactionary" or perhaps even "enemy agent," terms which the Communists use frequently and loosely. In some cases this has produced more than a "reluctance" to criticize; it has created a real fear psychology and a refusal to express any opinions except conspiratorially.

Social pressure is one of the main techniques of Communist rule, but of course in addition they possess a complete monopoly of military and political power and a highly-centralized administration. Minor non-Communist parties do not weaken the Communists' monopoly of power but strengthen it, because they support the Communists completely and are tolerated for that reason. It is difficult to conceive of a real Opposition Party in the present atmosphere of Peiping. The Communists, in fact, state flatly that the theories embodied in New Democracy -- the Communists' current overall program -- must be accepted by everyone.

These are some of the factors which make it possible to say that the Communist regime in Peiping is firmly established. But the Communists' firm position does not rely solely on their monopoly of power and effective techniques of organizing people and exerting pressure. The Communists at present have a "monopoly of appeal," as well as a monopoly of power. To many people the Communists do represent hope for developing and improving China. To others they represent at least a groping in the right direction. And for the rest there is no practical superior alternative available, even if they don't like the Communists.

Although the Communists have always claimed to be democrats, however, many people now wonder to what extent they may be bureaucrats or autocrats as well. In actual fact they are probably all three. There is no doubt that they have a real concern for the underdog and a desire to improve his livelihood. Their democracy seems to be for

the people rather than of the people, however. Sometimes their general approach seems to be that of a doctor with a reluctant patient. "This medicine may be unpleasant, but by gad you're going to take it because it's good for you." They have introduced a cult of the common man which is new in China. The superior man in Peiping today does not have long fingernails and a silk gown, or a Columbia Ph.D and double-breasted suit. He wears drab, blue, cotton clothes like a North China peasant -- even if he whizzes about town in a 1948 Studebaker and makes decisions affecting millions of people. Ideally he should also subsist on a diet of millet gruel and get his hands dirty once in a while. Being proletarian is a fetish, and one which breaks violently with tradition. The Communists also recognize the political potential of the masses more than any other group in China. As a consequence, their efforts to organize and indoctrinate reach ordinary people more than ever in the past. They recruit from the masses and go to the masses; they don't operate as a party divorced from the masses. They are also bureaucrats, however. Red tape still flourishes in government bureaux, and for someone outside the party and its supporters it is as hard to get access to officials as ever before - perhaps harder. Although Communist political cadres work directly with the people, the higher levels of the bureaucracy operate in a stratosphere of their own. By far the majority of people in Peiping have never seen a high-ranking Communist and don't know where they are or what they do. They are a class by themselves. In some respects "the authorities" are even more remote than they used to be. Popular representation has never been effectively carried out in Peiping, but in the local government it is now abolished even in theory. There have been no moves toward, or even talk of, elections of any sort since the Communists took over the city - although, of course, they have not been in control for very long. Regulations emanate from the bureaucracy in the time-honored arbitrary way, and they are harder to evade than before. The bureaucracy, furthermore, has special privileges, and there are well-defined grades even among the super-proletarians. And top Communist leaders are the objects of political idolatry which surpasses anything in modern times in the memory of Peiping residents; it evokes dim memories of a Dragon Throne -- draped in blue cotton cloth and smeared with good earth and axle grease. It is a far cry from Yenan where, according to past reports, the mud caves of Communist leaders were open to all. On an ideological plane the communists are unquestionably autocrats. They are the arbiters of right and wrong, the "correct" and the incorrect.

My impression after six months under the Communist regime is that the average citizen in Peiping probably hasn't finally made up his mind about the Communists. Much of what the Communists say and stand for strikes a responsive chord: eliminate the "oppressors" and "exploiters" who have milked the country, get rid of "foreign imperialism" and foreign privilege, improve the welfare of the people, industrialize and build up a strong, modern China. Much of what the

Communists do -- practice as contrasted with theory -- arouses resentment: taxes are too high, why don't they stop bothering me about going to meetings, they say everything's fine but business is terrible, Mao Tse-tung may be all right but why talk about him so much. A certain cynicism has already developed. It is exemplified by a current saying passed by word of mouth: "Mao Tse-tung is 'the people'; we're just the 'laopaihsing'." "Laopaihsing" is a Chinese colloquialism meaning the equivalent of "ordinary guys." Discontent in a vague form is also growing. It might be said that for the average Chinese political reactions are primarily gastronomical; if food is plentiful and cheap a regime is generally acceptable. Ideological issues have important indirect effects on the behavior of ordinary people, but their conscious responses are more a pragmatic reaction to the economic facts of life than a response to abstract ideas. The economic situation in Peiping, and in much of Communist territory, has deteriorated badly in the past few months. This has been accompanied by disillusionment. In Peiping within the past six weeks grumbling has become audibly widespread for the first time, really, since the Communists arrived.

There is one group which does not grumble, however. That group consists of the "ins" under the new regime and includes not only the Communists but the majority of intellectuals in the city as well as some others who have closely associated themselves with the Communists. I had no opportunity to get to know Communists themselves, but I did know students and others who were working to qualify for party membership. They had already caught the enthusiasm and spirit of dedication of the Communists. They had accepted Marxism and the idea of collective social action under Communist direction for public welfare and the idea that for success, disciplined struggle is required. They had been converted, and their attitudes can only be understood in terms of an analogy with religious fervor. They devote themselves completely to their new political religion and accept its credo unquestioningly. The sacred books: New Democracy and others. The prophets: Mao Tse-tung, Chu Teh, Marx, Engels, Lenin and the rest. The heathen and the heretics: imperialists and reactionaries. A brotherhood: the international proletariat. A promised land: ultimate Communism. Talking with people who accept all this one realizes how few "facts" are cold, abstract and unquestionable. The "facts" which they see and believe are conditioned by their whole political outlook. The faults and shortcomings of the regime which others dislike they either do not see, consciously overlook or consider "necessary."

On the fringes of this inner group, there are in Peiping a fairly large group of Chinese "liberals" - educators, writers, professional people, artists and the like. The majority of them seem to have accepted Communist leadership, and the present Communist program as embodied in New Democracy, with a good deal of enthusiasm. Generally, however, they do not go the whole way in accepting all Communist dogmas

or subjecting themselves to the discipline of party membership. They have reserved, to a limited extent at least, the right of independent judgment. Very few of them are exercising that "right" at the present time, however. Either out of enthusiasm for the possibilities of development under a Communist regime, or because they are anxious to establish themselves under the regime, they tend to overlook or excuse obvious shortcomings and mistakes. Many foreign observers in Peiping have been surprised to see these "liberals" go so far in accepting the Communists, and have begun to question whether or not they really are "liberals." That is the danger of transferring political terms from one society to another. They have shown they do not fit the Western conception of "liberals" - vague as it is - by their failure to take a stand on such issues as freedom of the press (again in the western sense), but they have not abdicated intellectual independence completely, and so they remain the closest thing to "liberals" now in existence in China. In talking with some of them I discovered that many never had given unqualified support to the western idea of a free press, to cite one example, although most foreigners had assumed they did.

The allegiance of these intellectuals to the Communist cause indicates the ideological vacuum which the Communists are filling. Probably a majority of intellectuals of the sort I have been describing have tried, unsuccessfully, to follow a "middle road" in China. Long ago the majority of them lost faith in the ideology of Sun Yat-sen, which the Kuomintang accepted, not only because it was a hodge-podge of ideas but perhaps mainly because the regime associated with the ideology had been discredited by corruption and inefficiency. The neo-Confucianism of the Kuomintang right wing was an intellectual throwback which appealed to very few. This left two modern ideologies competing for their loyalties: the Soviet form of Marxism and Western democratic ideas. The former has been represented by a well-organized party and program in China; the latter has influenced many people but has never found expression in an organized movement of significance. The "liberal" intellectuals have generally tried to combine the two into a sort of middle way combining Marxian economics with the Western conception of civil liberties, but they have floundered and been ineffective between the two great parties struggling for power. Disillusioned with the group in power they have drifted steadily to the left, drawn by the Communists' vitality, their definite program, their relative lack of corruption, and their success. It was not too big a leap to offer their full support once the Communists took control of Peiping. Now they are doing their best to prove their acceptability to the Communists, and those who have done so have been put to work by the Communists on innumerable committees -- studying everything from educational reform to land tenure and a new alphabetized Chinese language -- and they feel they are now doing something constructive for the country. The alternative

to this is an attempt to continue in a middle position - a role most of them are sick of - and risk being considered "reactionaries." Few have chosen this course.

The Communists call intellectuals "the wavering class," which must follow the lead of the proletariat, but they make every effort to get their support nonetheless. Intellectuals - in the broadest sense of those motivated by definite political ideas, by an ideology - are the prime movers behind the Communist movement, and Communist leaders know this. Discontented masses provide the stuff out of which mass movements have been made (especially in the country where agrarian reform has been a powerful political weapon and tangible rewards in the form of land have been offered peasants for their support), but initiative, leadership and organizing skill have been provided by people motivated by a well-defined ideology. In China there is no strong middle class, or managerial class, to play a significant political role in opposition to Marxism, and for all the various reasons mentioned, large numbers of people who have been politically-conscious have been drawn to the Left. Today, in Peiping, those who have not thrown in their lot with the Communists are not playing any political role.

In Peiping at the present time, therefore, there are two groups. There are the "ins" which include the Communists and all who accept their leadership. They are the only ones who, in a political sense, are doing anything or going anywhere. Numerically they are a minority, but they are the only active political force. Everyone else belongs to the "outs." They are just there; they aren't prime movers in the situation. A few of them are intimidated by the new regime, by the threats in its propaganda and the intolerance of disagreement and obstruction. The majority, however, seem to be neither for nor against the Communists in any positive way, but react to specific events and situations according to how they affect them personally. A slow general disillusionment has taken place, though, mainly on the basis of continuing economic deterioration. In spite of increasing grumbling, however, there is nothing which can be called an Opposition to the regime. An Opposition requires an organizational basis and ideological focus, and both are completely lacking. Unless some group can develop power on the basis of these two things, even scattered uprisings and banditry in Communist territory, such as those recently reported in the official press, cannot have much significance in relation to the durability of the Communist regime. Disorganized opposition may, however, affect the character of the Communist regime. The Communists might react to it by modifying some of their policies. On the other hand they might increase the use of physical force in their rule to ram their program through; they have used violence before and may again, despite their present inclination to avoid it as far as possible.

The Communists are not likely to allow the development of a serious organized Opposition, if they can prevent it, in the territory which they control. Whether or not it develops will probably depend to a large extent on what Communist rule in China will be like and whether or not it is successful in solving basic economic questions and bringing order out of chaos. If it develops, it will probably follow traditional patterns: passive resistance, secret organization, and underground subversion -- methods which the Communists themselves have employed. Its success would depend on effective leadership and organization, and an ideology which can compete with Communism. In Peiping I saw no evidence that any of the basic prerequisites for an Opposition now exists. The Communists, for the present at least, have successfully established their rule there on a firm basis.

Sincerely yours,

A. Doak Barnett

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