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Can China Unite by Mark Gayn.

# CAN CHINA UNITE?

BY MARK GAYN

**Touched off by some tough talk from the usually docile People's Political Council, clamor for reform rolls through China, voiced by businessmen, government and military leaders and the Communists. An authority reports on who is asking what**

ON a rainy morning a few months ago, somber men in dark gowns filed into a building in downtown Chungking. They shook the water off their oiled-paper umbrellas, gravely looked about, exchanged ceremonious bows with friends. These were the members of the People's Political Council, come for its third session in six years.

This time, as in its early days, the council held no power and enjoyed no privilege—save that to speak, question and recommend. But now disaster knocked urgently on China's door, and the council was no longer timid. It wanted action.

For two weeks, the council met. It listened to Chiang Kai-shek and some of his ministers. It received reports on the progress of the Communist-Kuomintang "peace talks." And it spoke itself, with bitterness and passion, with disregard for the feelings of those who held power, with an insistence that sent a shiver through Chungking.

Much of what was said in that small hall did not appear in public print. But by word of mouth, it became known that Finance Minister H. H. Kung had been handled roughly. Army leaders, too, had been assailed. "The report says we are going to

train crack troops. How many? How well? It says we are going to look after the well-being of the draftees. How? We want definite plans, not just vague promises!"

One after another, the delegates rose to make pointed attacks:

"Corruption of officials, especially of district officials, is staggering."

"To read the government reports is just like reading an old thesis submitted for the imperial examinations during the Manchu Dynasty. I am afraid that next year . . . the government will submit the same report. We usually talk big and do nothing."

Angrily, the men cited detail after detail: "Gasoline in Chungking is as precious as blood. Why is it wasted to provide transportation for the wives and girl friends of officials on shopping tours?"

"In ancient times we had a tradition of giving aid to the poor. Now the so-called New Life Movement (sponsored by General and Madame Chiang Kai-shek) has a center here; and the Kuomintang Youth Corps has just spent millions of dollars to build a Youth Hall. . . . But young men who took the college entrance examinations at Shapingpa recently died of hunger and exposure because they had no food and were forced to sleep in the open."

The men argued, accused, passed resolutions, made recommendations which no one expected to be heeded. But this time something did happen. The two men the council attacked most bitterly, Finance Minister Kung and War Minister Ho Ying-chin, were dropped a few weeks later. Some of the reforms the council urged became the basis of government-backed plans.

The explanation was simple. Greater pressures than the council were at work; the spec-

tacular Japanese gains, American influence, the growing Communist strength, the signs of dangerous dissidence in the south. But the council had done an uncommonly courageous and able job in voicing the necessity for change.

One task it had accomplished was to correct the distorted picture of China presented to the American public. In this picture, the Chinese political crisis was portrayed as a conflict solely between the Kuomintang and the Communists. The council helped to show that the opposition to Chungking was not confined to the Communists, that it was wide and vigorously democratic. By its stand, the council also made it possible to disclose much more of the truth about China, hitherto buried in the files of newspaper correspondents, government bureaus and business enterprises. It is such information that this report reveals, in many cases for the first time.

## A United Front for Reform

Reform was the battle cry of all the opposition groups. American-trained businessmen wanted the end of corruption, of unsound economic policy, of the disunity which foreshadowed future bloodshed. Professors and students, ever China's most articulate and politically conscious group, had long battled for democracy. For their pains, hundreds had been put in concentration camps, hundreds more had been forced to make long and dangerous trek to the Communist universities in the northwest. Generals who had fought for Nationalist revolution, and who now, with anger and heartache, watched the Japanese knife toward China's heart, cried for army reforms.

Within the Kuomintang itself, progressive

leaders like Doctor Sun Fo, the son of China's first president, and T. V. Soong, now Acting Premier and Foreign Minister, demanded a purge of the government, a union of all anti-Japanese elements, and democratic reforms which would give new energy to a weary and disheartened people.

In this chorus of reform, rightist voices harmonized with leftist, bankers sang the same tune as ragged, hungry students. In Chengtu, the so-called Nationalist Group (*Kuo Chia Chu Yu P'ai*), once a vigorous Red-baiter, now shouted such "Communist" slogans as "Let's end the Kuomintang dictatorship."

Across China, in the south, the influential Democratic League drew up its Principles, based partly on Anglo-U.S., partly on Soviet Russian ideas. The latest draft called for the elemental freedoms: of speech and press, of assembly and academic thought. But it also urged reforms in the system of landholding and the distribution of daily necessities. The opening sentence of the principles could have come out of the American Constitution: "In a democratic state, the people are the masters."

These are potent words in China. They were echoed at a mass rally in Chungking. The speaker was the picturesque, simplemannered General Feng Yu-hsiang, whose name can be found in every Chinese history book:

"One reason we suffered a setback in Honan is that our soldiers made themselves the enemies of our own people. We cannot draft army recruits and let them die of hunger if we know the true meaning of democracy. We have an old saying that good leaders must bear the hardships of their men. Our military leaders have all failed in this. Unless we make far-reaching reforms now, we will very soon see the disintegration of our country."

PHOTOGRAPHS BY EARL LEAF—FROM GUILLETTE



Chu Teh, Communist army commander shown here with a girl guerrilla fighter, was educated in Europe, probably knows guerrilla warfare better than any other Chinese



Mao Tse-tung, the Lenin of China, is most revered of leaders



Miss Yeh San-kwei is one of the guerrillas whom the Japs fear and hate



Mme. Mao Tse-tung left Shanghai stage to wed Communist leader

A candid Kuomintang official told an American friend that the resentment against the government was so widespread that if a free, universal election were held, four out of five would probably vote against it.

Except for the Communists, the resentment has been largely unorganized. Most of the minority parties have been driven underground. Public assembly is dangerous, unless sponsored by men too important to fear arrest. The press is rigidly censored, and critical speeches even by such eminent government leaders as Sun Fo are often suppressed.

But if the Communists are not the only opposition, they comprise its major element because they are strong and well-organized, and Communist sympathizers have come to include a spectacular variety of political hues. The Communists also offer a well-thought-out program, a tight and well-disciplined political machine, leadership and a huge army.

What goes on in Communist territory is no longer a secret. In the last seven months,

American military officers, officials and correspondents have visited the so-called Red Border Region, have studied the facts with deep and sometimes hostile interest and emerged with voluminous reports. Many of these have been striking; none has failed to point out the striking contrast between the picture in Chungking and in Communist territory.

"We have come to the mountains of North Shensi," said one correspondent, "to find the most modern place in China." An American officer summed up in a single word: "Exhilarating."

Communism in China was nurtured on battle. For eighteen years, the Communists have been at war with the Kuomintang, for nearly eight with Japan. "One cannot help coming to feel," said one observer, "that this movement is strong and successful, and that it has such drive behind it . . . that it will not be easily killed."

But in the growth from an underground party to a state within a state, the Communists have undergone a metamorphosis. They are no longer Red. Their program and objectives today find their closest U.S. parallel in our Farmer-Labor Party of the twenties.

Communist leaders now admit the errors of their infancy. Communism, they have discovered, cannot be planted in present-day China. Forces of history cannot be bucked. Therefore, they profess a readiness to go slow, to encourage private enterprise, to stimulate industry. They even talk warmly of American loans. The confiscation of land and its redistribution among the landless was left by the roadside years ago. Communist slogans have been toned down.

But in giving up their "Redness," the Communists did not abandon their old appeal to the masses. Shrewdly, they have wooed the people with rural reforms, with the beginnings of self-government, with a program of education and hygiene.

A foreigner reported that in eight months spent in peasant huts and at inns, he had not seen a single bedbug. This, he said, was the result of a Communist antipest campaign.

Properly the emphasis has been on rural reform. Especial attention was paid to the

three causes of the small farmers' distress: exorbitant land rents, exorbitant rates of interest, exorbitant taxes. Today land rent has been reduced to 25 per cent of the crop produced, compared with 50 per cent elsewhere in Free China. Taxes have been reduced, standardized and graduated, with the rich paying 30 per cent, the poor none. Interest has been kept down to 20 per cent, as contrasted with as much as 200 per cent and 300 per cent in the rest of China.

While income from land has been kept down, the landlords have been assured, by various local ordinances, of prompt payment. The Communists have not "liquidated" the big landlords, but have tried to create a sense of social responsibility.

Land scarcity has been partly met by reclamation. Since the Communists moved into China's barren northwest, they have reclaimed an acreage equal to the state of Wisconsin. This has been accomplished largely by a system of incentives. Farmers tilling new land pay no rent for the first three years, no taxes for five years, and they receive free seed.

#### A New Era for the Farmer

In eight years the average family plot has been increased from two acres to ten. Yields have also been increased through crop diversification, pest control, prevention of land erosion and relentless, day-in-and-day-out schooling.

Communist agronomists introduced new, hardier types of millet. Gradually, wheat became the second basic crop. Cotton acreage has been expanded. Patches of lettuce, potatoes, sugar beets have sprung up everywhere, engulfing even the grave mounds which are such an integral part of the Chinese landscape.

Next to the sword, the plowshare received top priority in the allocation of steel and iron. Improved farm implements, which are made in small arsenals, are being distributed on easy credit terms. Refugees from the hungry neighboring provinces are given free tools, seed and even land. The sparsely peopled northwest wants manpower.

It is in the use of labor that the Soviet influence comes to the fore. Urgent work like

spring planting and land reclamation is done by co-operative labor brigades. Where there are no collective farms of the Russian pattern, neighbors are encouraged to till their land co-operatively.

The outstanding workers become "heroes of labor," honored throughout the Communist territory.

Next to rural reform and self-government, the Communists placed self-defense. They took the farmers' impotent hate for the Japanese and gave it method and muscle. The farmers no longer have to take abuse and torture from the enemy. Man, woman and child, they have all been organized, trained and armed. Apart from a regular army of 475,000 claimed by the Communists, there is a people's militia of 2,200,000 men and, beneath that, a still larger layer of potential fighters.

Out of this mass of armed men came ceaseless pinpricks which have been a drain on Japan's strength. In defense, the Japanese built walls and dug deep moats along the railroads. They garrisoned North China with thousands of garrisoned pillboxes. They managed to limit the attacks, but they never stopped them.

Out of the ranks has come the Intelligence section of the Communist Command. Probably no better illustration of this can be given than the story of an American newspaperman who one night slipped past a Japanese-held pillbox in north China. Casually, his guerrilla guide told him the number of men in the pillbox, their names and their home towns.

This last bit of information was used to "angle" the propaganda aimed at that particular pillbox.

It is not easy for an American to grasp the fact that most of the fifteen Communist Regions lie behind the Japanese lines. This means heartbreaking problems in organization and supply, constant vigilance against a never-ending peril.

When the Japanese move into an area, the Chinese officials flee, and a vacuum results. Sooner or later, Communist agents filter through the enemy lines and begin their work of organization. The villagers are urged to

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Chou En-lai is Communists' "ambassador" to Chungking and world at large



Red Army soldiers listen to a lecture by Mao, who formed the first Red Army in China, led it successfully for years. No polished cosmopolite, he has the magnetism, sympathy, ruthlessness of a successful revolutionary

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form a government. The new village councils introduce rural reforms, combat usury, open schools. Young and old alike are drawn into self-defense organizations. Meetings are held, posters distributed, "wall newspapers" issued.

In about six months the village is ready for action. Men have been trained in the use of rifles, hand grenades and mines. Booby traps (that favorite guerrilla weapon) have been planted on all approaches. Patrols and spies have been sent out. Trenches and tunnels have been dug.

Then one night the spies report that the foe's vigilance has slackened. Quietly, a unit slips out, raids a pillbox, kills off its ten or twelve defenders and takes the weapons. The village has now had its baptism of victory. Morale soars.

When a Japanese punitive expedition arrives, the forewarned population vanishes with its belongings. The village may be burned down, but few lives are lost. When the enemy withdraws, the villagers return. If the enemy attacks during the spring planting or the autumn harvest, Communist army regulars go into action.

Guerrilla armament is meager. Small arsenals produce crude mines and hand grenades, and reload cartridges. Most of the rifles, machine guns and mortars are Japanese—either captured or bought from Japan's puppet troops. A foreigner reports that last summer only eighty cartridges were issued for each rifle and only three hundred for each machine gun. This of necessity puts a premium on superior intelligence work, on booby traps, on the thousand and one tricks of guerrilla trade.

### The Seat of Final Power

Each Border Region is run by its own government, but the decisions on policy—and the cementing power—repose in Yen-an, the heart of Communist China.

A small, shabby town lost in the loam hills of the northwest, Yen-an is a city of vivid contrasts, of immense vitality and great pride. Many of its 40,000 inhabitants live in caves, but next door to them are two of China's biggest universities. Its streets are filled with fine, thick dust, but they resound with the accents of every Chinese province, with vigorous political debate and the language of Marxism.

Visiting American officials were impressed by the lack of guards at Yen-an's approaches, or blockhouses on the surrounding hills. A casual eye will see no policemen, none of the bodyguards which are so much a part of the Chungking scene. There are few soldiers apart from an occasional group of men marching to the barracks—without an armed guard. There are no beggars or other signs of desperate poverty, no rumors of a bandit raid near by.

Simplicity is the keynote of clothing and living. Almost everyone—including women—wears the same plain semimilitary uniform of native cotton cloth. Women are treated as friendly equals, but familiarity is rebuffed. Much credit goes to the tough, competent, often brilliant men who lead Communist China.

One is Mao Tse-tung, the tall, shy, shaggy-haired Lenin of China. A peasant by birth, Mao is not learned or cosmopolitan. But during twenty-eight years of revolutionary work, he has studied the theory and practice of mass movements. Within him repose the spark of magnetism and sympathy for the little man. But next to them are the ruthlessness and obstinacy necessary to revolution-making.

A year before Chiang Kai-shek launched his historic drive north, Mao was organizing a peasant revolt in South China. In 1927, when Chiang broke with the Communists, Mao formed the first Red Army and led it successfully through many a bloody battle. In 1931 he was elected head of China's first Communist government.

His first wife was executed for Communist work. His second marched with him across China, in the epic 6,000-mile Long March to Yen-an. His third wife is a lovely, tired-looking woman who gave up a stage career in Shanghai to join other leftist intellectuals in a pilgrimage to Yen-an. She married Mao and moved into his damp cave.

Even better liked, but less venerated than Mao, is Chu Teh, a squat, cheerful man who has been called "China's best officer." Chu is Mao's complete antithesis. He comes of a rich land-owning family, in pre-Communist years held high posts, smoked opium and kept concubines.

Then, middle-aged, he went to the coast, tried to contact Communist leaders and, failing, proceeded to Germany. Here he studied at Goettingen, served as a typesetter on a Chinese newspaper, joined the Communist party. Expelled, he studied in Paris and Moscow, returned to China to serve the revolution.

When Chiang Kai-shek broke with the Reds, Chu was chief of police in Nanchang. He organized an open revolt, led an army on a zigzag, blood-spattered course through South China and finally joined up with Mao. When Mao became president of the

at Christmastime, 1936, Chou helped gain Chiang's release by his kidnapers in Sian.

Since then, Chou has been in and out of Chiang's capitals, fencing, effecting compromises, acting as a Communist spokesman. He knows all Kuomintang leaders intimately, and they fear and respect him. When Wendell Willkie was due in Chungking on his historic One World journey, Chiang Kai-shek made an attempt to persuade Chou to leave town. Chiang failed, and Willkie was as impressed with Chou as every other American has been.

Mao, Chu and Chou no longer have to remain in hiding or to keep constantly on the move. The territory they control now includes almost four complete provinces, plus large chunks of five others.

Still more important is the fact that this vast Red empire is steadily expanding. Last year's Japanese campaign created an im-



Chinese Soviet Republic, Chu became its commander in chief.

Chu is a friendly, quiet, ever-smiling man, who probably knows more about guerrilla warfare than any other man in China. It is from him that Colonel Evans Fordyce Carlson, USMC, learned many of the things he later taught to his famous Raiders of Makin and Guadalcanal fame. Carlson later said that Chu combined what was best in Robert E. Lee, U. S. Grant and Abraham Lincoln.

### Paralleling Chiang's Career

The third of the Red Big Three is Chou En-lai, the handsome and ascetic ambassador extraordinary of Communist China. Of a patrician family, Chou has given twenty-five years to revolution. Through this quarter of a century, his life has curiously followed the life pattern of his enemy Chiang Kai-shek.

At twenty, Chou was a political aide to Chiang at the famous Russian-supported Whampoa Military Academy. At twenty-seven, he led Shanghai's workers into the streets in an uprising which enabled Chiang to seize the city. But a few days later when Chiang broke with the Communists, Chou barely escaped with his life. Nine years later

mense political void, into which Communist agents are already moving, to organize, to teach, to arm. Even before the military debacle, the Communists claimed that ninety million people lived in their territory.

In skillful hands, people and area spell power. The Communists know it. Their demands now fall into three distinct groups:

(1) A drastic purge of the government, inclusion of non-Kuomintang officials, a prompt country-wide Conference on National Affairs, free speech and press, release of political prisoners, and the end of political terror.

(2) Complete lifting of the anti-Red blockade, a share of Allied military supplies, equipment for sixteen divisions, "recognition" of the vast masses of militiamen.

(3) Recognition by Chungking of the local self-governments established under Communist guidance in Japanese-invaded territory.

Thus far, Chungking has been willing to talk mainly of the military terms; the Communists of the political. The third set, which would call for Chungking's assent to its own suicide, has presumably been advanced by the Communist horse traders for bargaining purposes.

But actually the so-called "peace talks"

could hardly be called negotiations, for each side has tried to secure objectives which the other side considers fatal to itself. Neither can yield much; neither, in the long run, can be satisfied with little.

Persistently, the Communists have been raising their bid. But when Major General Patrick Hurley, the new ambassador, flew to Yen-an and brought Chou En-lai back with him to Chungking, Chou cooled his heels for a week before the government contacted him. He was luckier than one of the preceding envoys, who waited for five months to receive a summons.

General Hurley, like all other able American representatives in China, has been compelled to meddle in Chinese politics. They had no choice. It is naive to think that we can divorce war in Asia from politics. But no pressure General Hurley or Donald Nelson can exert could impel either protagonist in China to sign his own death warrant.

Nor does the American government wish to destroy the Nationalist regime, whatever its defects. Last September, Chiang Kai-shek was assured that the United States was anxious to see China emerge as the dominant power in Asia, with him at the head.

None in America can, or should, forget that it was Chiang and his government which stubbornly fought Japan, despite all disasters. Nor can America's conscience forget our failure to help China, when, during the years before Pearl Harbor, she cried for arms and industrial equipment. None should forget that Chiang has been called upon to cope with problems of physical exhaustion and spiritual despair which no man could possibly solve, or that even today Chiang's armies probably keep busy as many enemy divisions as faced General MacArthur in the Philippines.

### Opportunity for the Allies

But if there are urgent reasons both for co-operating with Chungking and for tempering our criticism, there are also good reasons why we should take advantage of the chance to co-operate with the Chinese Communists.

Not even our own specialized agencies, with their vast funds and elaborate equipment, have been as successful as the Communists in psychological warfare against the Japs. This work is done by a small army of 400 Japanese, many of them converted war prisoners, under the astute leadership of a top-ranking Communist named Susumu Okano.

Through leaflets and posters, through the use of loud-speakers and radio, these men have been able to do grave damage to enemy morale in north China. With American material aid, this hurt can be deepened.

No Allied Intelligence organization has been able to match the Communists in gathering up vital information. Some of this has come from captured Japanese documents. This precious information can be of inestimable use to the U. S. Army. Collaboration with the Communists, thus, has its reward.

The course has already been plotted. It calls for continued American efforts to reach, if not a genuine coalition, then at least a truce between Chungking and the Communists, and co-ordinated anti-Japanese activity by both factions. It calls for increased aid to Chungking, but, with it, continued pressure for democratic reform. This does not mean the overthrow of Chiang Kai-shek or the Kuomintang. Rather, it should follow the program outlined by Chiang in his New Year's message when he pledged a democratic constitution as soon as a counteroffensive can be launched which will give "a greater assurance of victory." Such reforms can regain for the Kuomintang the full measure of confidence and support they once enjoyed. Such reforms, too, and not punitive action or futile blockade, can offer them the best hope in the deadly tug of war with the Communists.

But these reforms cannot be imposed on China by her foreign friends. They must come from within China, perhaps from within the Kuomintang itself. Therein lies our greatest hope for a common victory and continued friendship between America and China.

THE END