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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

**To Return Home or “Return to Taiwan”:
Conflicts and Survival in the “Voluntary Repatriation” of Chinese POWs
in the Korean War**

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for
the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in

History

by

Cheng David Chang

Committee in charge:

Professor Joseph W. Esherick, Co-Chair
Professor Paul G. Pickowicz, Co-Chair
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Professor Weijing Lu
Professor Richard Madsen
Professor Sarah Schneewind

2011

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Co-Chair

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University of California, San Diego

2011

DEDICATION

TO THE 21,000 CHINESE PRISONERS OF WAR
WHO CHOSE CHINA OR TAIWAN,
AND
WHO PERISHED IN PRISON CAMPS IN KOREA

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This dissertation is dedicated to the approximately 21,000 Chinese prisoners of war who returned to China or went to Taiwan in 1953 and 1954, and those who perished in prison camps in Korea. I am fortunate to have met some of the survivors living in China, Taiwan, and the U.S. I am grateful for their trust and generosity. I am eternally indebted to them.

The genesis of this project can be traced back to the special connection between my late grandfather Chang Shouheng and the first Chinese prisoner of war I came to know, Zhang Zeshi. Both were graduates of Oberlin Shansi Memorial School (Mingxian 銘賢學校), although they attended the school some 10 years apart and had never met. The school had ceased to exist since 1950, but many Mingxian alumni have been actively sought to revive the school and its spirit since the 1980s, including both my grandfather and Zhang. As the second and third generation of the Mingxian alumni, my father Chang Qinlin and I joined their alumni meetings in China and the U.S. My father met Zhang Zeshi during U.S. alumni's annual meeting in 2003. In 2006, I visited Zhang in Beijing for the first time. That meeting kindled my interest in the Korean War POW issue, and also marked the beginning of our close collaboration.

It is no exaggeration to say that Zhang Zeshi has played a pivotal role in my research. Directly or indirectly through him, I met all my oral history interviewees in China. In Chengdu, Zhong Junhua welcomed me with open arms. In addition to answering my endless inquiries, he shared letters between his comrades and him. He also assisted me in finding other former prisoners in Sichuan, Yunnan, Shanghai, and Shanxi. I also thank Cai Pingsheng, He Rui, Tang Yao, and Lin Mocong.

In Shanxi province, Wu Yuezheng, the son of a former POW, accompanied me on my travels to various villages and cities to visit former POWs. I am also very grateful to Wu for taking me to my ancestral Yangqu village in Jiaocheng county, which I had heard numerous times from my grandfather since I was little but had never had a chance to visit. In addition, I thank former POWs in Shanxi province: Hao Zhigen, Wang Guanhu, Wang Chunsheng, and Shi Xinggui.

In Beijing, I am especially indebted to Wu Jinfeng, the former deputy chief editor of the *People's Liberation Army Literature and Arts*. His three-volume *Andeshe Notes* contains detailed interview transcripts and transcribed dossier documents of 440 repatriated POWs. As it has been impossible to have his study published, the 85-year-old Wu encouraged me to continue his unfinished task of uncovering the history of Chinese POWs in the Korean War and changing the Chinese government and public's attitude toward prisoners of war.

In San Francisco, thanks to UC Berkeley's East Asian librarian He Jianye's resourcefulness, I met former anti-Communist prisoner Gao Wenjun, who had emigrated to the U.S. from Taiwan in the 1970s. Mr. and Mrs. Gao kindly encouraged me and wrote an enthusiastic introduction letter to officials at the Veteran Affairs Commission in Taiwan.

In Taiwan, Veteran Affairs Commission official Mr. Chao Yu-hsin arranged interviews at the veterans' homes in Taipei county, where I interviewed more than 12 former POWs, including Jin Yuankui and Wang Beishan. Thanks to my friend Lin Hongyi's introduction, I also met Yu Rongfu, who was Gao's Whampoa colleague and also a fellow Manchurian. I was constantly amazed by how people are connected in miraculous ways. Sometimes I wonder, "It must be fate."

One of the first POWs I interviewed in Taiwan was Zhao Huilin. In summer 2008, my friend Zhao Minghao of Peiking University asked a stranger for directions near National Taiwan University. The stranger was Zhao Dongming, the son of Zhao Huilin. Dongming and I became friends, and I visited his father twice. Despite suffering from Parkinson's disease, Zhao Huilin's childlike humor and optimism was heartening. His recollection of the persecution that his family suffered in the hands of local Communists when he was only 13 still reminds me of the darker side of history. The saddest moment during my four years of research was the time when I attended Zhao Huilin's funeral in Taoyuan county.

In the last 12 months four former prisoners whom I had interviewed passed away. Tang Yao, the indomitable pro-Communist intellectual in prison, whom I had interviewed twice in Shanghai, died after years of fighting against cancer. Cai Derong, the brave bodyguard of the PLA 180th Division commander, had been bed-ridden and lost his speech ability when I first saw him in June 2010. In August, at the U.S. National Archives, I found his name on a list of severely wounded prisoners during the October 1, 1952 demonstration. I thought this document might help him to qualify for disabled veterans' benefit. He died in November last year. Another Shanxi native Xu Gongdu passed away in February 2011.

While the withering away of old soldiers is inevitable, it is saddening to see people whom I had just met disappearing. It gives me a greater sense of urgency to record their voices and stories. Although much of what I have learned from them could not be incorporated into my dissertation, it is my wish to recover and rescue their histories as much as possible. Three years ago, I told Zhang Zeshi that I would commit the next five to ten years on the research of POWs. Now it seems I will devote the full ten

years to this project. My greatest wish is to publish my research in Chinese, so I can present my book to the surviving prisoners. This is a work dedicated to them.

Intellectually, I owe the greatest debt to Joseph Esherick and Paul Pickowicz, my mentors at University of California, San Diego. The three years of coursework at UCSD were rigorous and demanding, but also the happiest time in my academic life. Esherick and Pickowicz are outstanding scholars, excellent teachers, and strict coaches. Their dedication to students is unparalleled. In particular, I thank Esherick for tolerating my frequent outrageous “reactionary” comments in class. My mentors’ intellectual rigor, dedication, and tolerance set very high standards, which I aspire to meet. They will constantly remind me of what a great scholar and person ought to be.

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At Stanford University, two professors were instrumental in my decision to apply to Ph.D. programs in history, when I was a master's student there and hoping to study political science. Matthew Sommer encouraged me to consider history when I first worked as his research assistant. Visiting Professor Lucien Bianco's course on Chinese peasant and revolution rekindled my interest in history. Thanks to their encouragement, I switched field and have been a happy student of history ever since.

In China, three noted historians Gao Hua, Shen Zhihua, and Yang Kuisong have been supportive of my research and provided important assistance. In Hong Kong, Xiong Jingming of Chinese University of Hong Kong has always been encouraging and resourceful. I owe them a special debt of gratitude.

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archival findings with me. She has made my research in Taiwan much more efficient and effective.

It would have been impossible to pursue this project with financial support. Research was supported by a Fulbright-IIE Fellowship, Pacific Rim Research Fellowship, and Center for Chinese Studies (ROC) fellowship. Writing was supported by a Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship from the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation. Academia Sinica awarded me Doctoral Student Fellowships, although I had to decline. I thank these institutions, award committee members, and recommenders for making this project possible. The wonderful people at the Fulbright Foundation in Taiwan provided excellent assistance during my stay in Taiwan. I am especially grateful to Dr. Wu Jing-Jyi, Cherry Yen, and Vivian Hsu. Staff at the Center for Chinese Studies also introduced to me two former prisoners, who had retired from the National Library.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

**To Return Home or “Return to Taiwan”:
Conflicts and Survival in the “Voluntary Repatriation” of Chinese POWs
in the Korean War**

by

Cheng David Chang

Doctor of Philosophy in History

University of California, San Diego, 2011

Professor Joseph W. Esherick, Co-Chair
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At the end of the Korean War, only one third of the approximately 21,000 Chinese prisoners of war were repatriated to Communist China; the remaining two thirds, or more than 14,300 prisoners, went to Nationalist Taiwan in a propaganda coup. These Chinese POWs were at the center of contention in the second half of the war. Utilizing previously untapped archival sources and oral history interviews in China, Taiwan, and the U.S., this study examines how Chinese prisoners, individually and collectively, made divergent decisions in the process of "voluntary repatriation."

This research demonstrates that the Chinese prisoners' decisions and actions in UN prisons were directly related to their divergent pre-Korean War experiences in China under both the Nationalist and Communist regimes. The mini-civil war between the pro-Communist and pro-Nationalist prisoners revealed much of the suppressed social

tension within China in 1949 and 1950, which exploded into life-and-death struggles in prison camps in Korea.

Second, conflicting U.S. policies and the lack of a coherent and consistent policy on Chinese prisoners created much uncertainty and confusion among the prisoners. Out of fear and anxiety, both pro- and anti-Communist prisoners took increasingly aggressive and violent actions against their opponents, and against the prison authorities in the case of the pro-Communist prisoners.

Third, while a small number of Nationalist interpreters and teachers hired by General MacArthur and his successors provided the vital communication channel between anti-Communist prisoners and Taipei, most fundamentally, the large number of prisoners controlled by a core of anti-Communist prisoners was a result of U.S. policy mistakes. By the time prisoner repatriation became an issue in armistice talks, the U.S. found itself riding a tiger that was impossible to dismount. In the end, only Chiang Kai-shek could tame the tiger by taking it to Taiwan in triumph.

To Return Home or “Return to Taiwan”: An Introduction to Chinese Prisoners in the Korean War

At 8:52 on the morning of January 20, 1954, the doors opened at the UN prison camps in Panmunjom, Korea. The first group of the 14,220 Chinese anti-Communist prisoners of war marched out, jubilantly waving blood-painted Nationalist flags and holding large portraits of Chiang Kai-shek and Sun Yat-sen. Dozens of smartly dressed Chinese Nationalist officers and military policemen greeted the prisoners, and presented them with a welcoming message from Chiang Kai-shek. Once the prisoners passed through the freshly decorated “Gate of Freedom,” they climbed onto trucks provided by the U.S. army. Under the escort of U.S. Eighth Army troops, large convoys of trucks began to roll down the winding road toward Inchon, where fifteen American landing ships awaited them. This scene was repeated for the next 18 hours until the last prisoner left camp at 2:45 the next day.¹

Reporting to Taipei, Nationalist Ambassador to Korea Wang Dongyuan declared “a decisive victory in this political battle” against the Chinese.² Chiang Kai-shek seemed to agree, and in his diaries he anticipated that the successful completion of the transfer of these anti-Communist prisoners to Taiwan would amount to “a major victory for the anti-Communist coalition.”³

¹ Lai Mingtang 賴名湯, *Fangong Yishi jieyun xiaozu baogao* 反共義士接運小組報告 [Report by the reception and transportation team for the “Anti-Communist Righteous Men”], Academia Historica 國史館, Taipei (hereafter quoted as TWGSG)/020-000021-0845A, 25.

² Telegram, Wang Dongyuan to the Foreign Ministry, 14:55, January 20, 1954, Archives of the Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica (hereafter TWJSS), 633.43/532805.

³ Chiang Kai-shek diary, January 20, 1954, Hoover Archives (hereafter Chiang Dairies).

By 7:05 a.m., January 21, when the last truck carrying prisoners arrived at Inchon, the first contingent of 4,692 men had finished boarding the first five ships, and embarked for Taiwan. By that evening, another ten ships had loaded the rest of the prisoners, except the 142 severely sick and wounded who were to be flown to Taipei.⁴ To prevent a possible Communist naval attack, warships of the U.S. Seventh Fleet flanked this prisoner transport and the Fifth Air Force provided air cover. As it turned out, the voyage was uneventful.

Probably comforted by the flow of good news, Chiang Kai-shek enjoyed “the soundest sleep in recent years,” a decent nine hours for this 67-year-old man who had been troubled by insomnia for quite some time.⁵ On the morning of January 24, Chiang Ching-kuo, the generalissimo’s son and the director of the Political Department in the Ministry of Defense, came to his father’s residence, and reported the safe arrival of the sick and wounded prisoners by air and the warm reception he had personally arranged for them. In the next two days, fifteen ships carrying 14,078 men completed their eighty-eight hour odyssey, and arrived at the port of Jilong.⁶ A rapturous homecoming was staged for these “Anti-Communist Righteous Men.” Leading the welcoming crowd, Chiang Ching-kuo was seen wiping tears from his eyes.⁷

Chiang Kai-shek noted in his diaries that the arrival of the “fourteen thousand righteous men” constituted a major victory in the struggle against Communism “in the

⁴ Telegram, Lai Mingtang to the Ministry of Defense, January 20, 1954, TWJSS 633.43/532821-532825.

⁵ Chiang Dairies, January 24, 1954.

⁶ Zhou Xiuhuan 周琇環 (Hsiu-huan Chou), ed. *Zhanhou waijiao shiliao huibian: Hanzhan yu fangong yishi pian* 1-3 戰後外交史料彙編：韓戰與反共義士篇1 [Collections of postwar foreign policy documents: Korean War and Anti-Communist Righteous Men, vol.1] (Taiwan: Academia Historica 國史館, 2005), 384.

⁷ Jay Taylor, *The Generalissimo's Son: Chiang Ching-Kuo and the Revolutions in China and Taiwan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 219.

past two years.”⁸ In his “reflections of the week,” Chiang upgraded his assessment to “a significant psychological victory in the struggle against the Russians in the last five years.”⁹ In a wire message to U.S. President Eisenhower, Chiang further elevated his claim:

The successful implementation of the principle of voluntary repatriation of the Chinese and Korean POWs, their timely return to civilian status, and their prompt dispatch to their respective chosen destinations represent the first significant victory of the democracies in their ten-year struggle against international Communism.¹⁰

Half a year later, during the general debate in the UN General Assembly on September 27, 1954, Nationalist Foreign Minister George K. C. Yeh proclaimed:

That 80 percent of the Chinese prisoners of war should have decided to choose freedom at the risk of their own lives and those of their families is the strongest attestation of how the puppet Communist regime in Peiping is repudiated by the Chinese people behind the Iron Curtain. This is the one battle the Communists did not win.¹¹

For Nationalist Taiwan, this large “defection” of Communist soldiers was a spectacular propaganda coup, purportedly demonstrating that if given a choice the vast majority of the people in China would reject Communism. Referring to these POWs as “fourteen thousand witnesses” of Communist tyranny, the Nationalist delegation to the UN repeatedly cited this episode to legitimize its representation in place of Communist China.

Combining the 14,220 men and a small number of prisoners who arrived in Taiwan before and after January 1951, the total number of Chinese POWs who went to

⁸ Chiang Dairies, January 24, 1954.

⁹ Chiang Dairies, January 23 or 24, 1954.

¹⁰ Telegram, Chiang Kai-shek to Eisenhower, JSS 633.43/532827.

¹¹ George K. C. Yeh’s statement in the general debate of the Ninth Session of the UN General Assembly, September 27, 1954, TWJSS/633.05/0006/445388. Yeh inflated the percentage of prisoners who chose Taiwan from 66.7 percent to 80 percent.

Taiwan reached 14,342 as of June 1954.¹² In contrast, a total of 7,110 Chinese prisoners were repatriated to China, including 1,030 sick and wounded prisoners exchanged during the “Little Switch” in April 1953, 5,640 exchanged during the “Big Switch” in summer 1953, and 440 original non-repatriates who changed their minds during the “explanation” process from October to December 1953 and in January 1954.¹³ Among the last group of 440 prisoners, 70 of them were supposedly anti-repatriation anti-Communists, but on January 20, 1954 they asked the Indian Custodian Forces to return them to China. On that day, 12 other prisoners chose to go to neutral nations.¹⁴

At the end of the two-year long ideological and military struggle over the repatriation of prisoners, the U.S. prevailed in upholding the “voluntary repatriation” policy, resulting in almost exactly two thirds (66.8 percent) of the Chinese prisoners going to Nationalist Taiwan and only one third (33.1 percent) returning to Communist China.

Few observers realized that of the more than 14,000 “anti-Communist righteous men” only two were of Taiwanese origin. In contrast, among the 7,110 repatriates to China, one was a Taiwan native. Why did these men “return” to a home that they had never been to? What did “home” mean to them? Did they actually have a free choice in this process?

Once the more than 7,000 Chinese prisoners returned to China, they came under a yearlong investigation, followed by a lifetime of stigma and persecution for nearly all the returnees. In comparison, their Taiwan-bound fellow prisoners did not suffer systematic persecution, but neither did they enjoy the promised freedom of choosing

¹² Chiang Ching-kuo 蔣經國, report to Chiang Kai-shek et al., June 1954, Republic of China Ministry of Defense Archives (hereafter TWGFB) document No. 0001238900090052w.

¹³ Walter G Hermes, *Truce Tent and Fighting Front: U.S. Army in the Korean War* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, U.S. Army, 2005), 514.

¹⁴ Lai Mingtang 賴名湯, *Fangong Yishi jieyun xiaozu baogao*, 25.

their profession on the island. Furthermore, they were separated from their families in China in the next thirty-five years. The consequences of these prisoners' choices were so grave that we are compelled to ask why these prisoners made such different choices.

Chinese POWs at the Center of the Second Half of the Korean War

While the Korean War lasted for three years, one month and two days, the armistice negotiations dragged on for more than two years of that period, from July 8, 1951 to July 27, 1953. After 575 meetings at the negotiation table, nearly 63,200 casualties on the UN side, and probably many more on the Communist side, the armistice line barely budged a few miles north or south from the battle line of July 1951, when negotiation commenced. Another 12,300 Americans were killed, and 45 percent of total American casualties were suffered during these two years.¹⁵ What prevented the reaching of an armistice agreement for so long was nothing other than the impasse over the repatriation of approximately 21,000 Chinese and more than 100,000 North Korean prisoners of war.

Half a year after the negotiations had begun, in a memorandum to President Truman dated February 8, 1952, Secretary of State Dean Acheson belatedly came to the conclusion that "It now appears likely that the prisoners of war issue will shortly become the sole remaining fundamental issue in the Korean armistice negotiation."¹⁶ Beginning in March 1952, the North Koreans no longer insisted on recovering all their prisoners, but Mao continued to demand the return of all Chinese prisoners, and Stalin supported Mao's hard-line position. From that point on, at the center of contention were the 21,000

¹⁵ Dean Acheson, *The Korean War* (New York: Norton, 1971), 129.

¹⁶ Memorandum, Acheson to President Truman, in National Defense Force History Research Institute, ed., *Records of the Policy Planning Staff of the Department of State: Country and Area Files: Korea II (1952-1954)* 美國務部政策企劃室文書. 韓國戰爭資料叢書 [Korean War Sources Series], vol. 5. (Seoul, Korea: National Defense Force History Research Institute 國防軍史研究所, 1997), 14.

Chinese POWs, or more precisely the approximately 14,000 to 15,000 anti-Communist Chinese prisoners who claimed that they would violently resist repatriation to China, demanding instead to go to Taiwan.

The Communist camp insisted on following the Geneva Convention Article 118, which stipulates, “Prisoners of war shall be released and repatriated without delay after the cessation of active hostilities.”¹⁷ While the Communists insisted on following the *letter* of the Geneva Conventions that required the return of all prisoners to the side of their origin, U.S. negotiators argued that “the *spirit* of the Geneva Conventions was to protect the best interests of prisoners,” and that the American policy of “voluntary repatriation” would do just that. Moreover, “[b]esides humanitarian considerations,” the UN’s chief negotiator Admiral C. Turner Joy later admitted, “the major objective of the Washington decision to insist on voluntary repatriation was to inflict upon the Communists a propaganda defeat.”¹⁸ Clearly, U.S. policy-making was driven by both humanitarian and utilitarian motives.

Initially the U.S. adopted the policy as bargaining position, and it was actually willing to abandon this position if the Communist side made some major concessions in other areas of the war. However, the policy soon became “final and irrevocable” as the moral prestige of the U.S. and President Harry S. Truman was closely tied to this policy. The U.S. found it morally impossible to retreat from the position of “voluntary repatriation.” At the same time, it became practically impossible to force the return of anti-Communist prisoners, whose dominance in prison camps was largely the result of U.S. indoctrination programs designed to “reorient” prisoners into anti-Communists.

¹⁷ “Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War.” Adopted on 12 August 1949 by the Diplomatic Conference for the Establishment of International Conventions for the Protection of Victims of War, held in Geneva from 21 April to 12 August, 1949. Entry into force 21 October 1950. Accessed on May 11, 2008, <http://www.unhcr.ch/html/menu3/b/91.htm>.

¹⁸ C. Turner Joy, *How Communists Negotiate* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1955), 152-153.

Morally and practically, the U.S. was hamstrung, so it had to persist in the policy of “voluntary repatriation.”

The UN side paid a steep price for this policy as the war continued. “Fifteen months were required to impose our principle of voluntary repatriation on the Communists,” Joy lamented. “It was a long year for Americans on the battle line in Korea. It must have been a painful year for Americans in Communist dungeons.”¹⁹ Clearly, this policy ran the risk of endangering the lives of some 12,000 UN prisoners under Communist custody, including more than 3,000 Americans. After all, the safe return of all U.S. prisoners was the top priority for the U.S. military and government. In a sense, the U.S. adopted a policy that promised freedom to Chinese prisoners but prevented the early return of its own prisoners, and an early conclusion of the war. This predicament was a result of poor policy foresight, planning, and coordination on behalf of the U.S. government and military. At a fundamental level, the U.S. had utterly failed to understand the deeply divided Chinese prisoner population. The Chinese POWs’ struggle in Korea was another Chinese civil war that the U.S. failed to predict, understand, and manage.

In this research, I will demonstrate that the Chinese prisoners’ decisions and actions in UN prisons were directly related to their divergent pre-Korean War experiences in China under both the Nationalist and Communist regimes. The struggle over POW repatriation was important not just for its humanitarian value. It was an ideological battle that the Chinese Communists lost, and it came on the heels of their seemingly unstoppable victories in China. The mini-civil war between the pro-Communist and pro-Nationalist prisoners revealed much of the suppressed social

¹⁹ Joy, *How Communists Negotiate*, 160.

tensions within China, which exploded into life-and-death struggles in UN prison camps in Korea.

Second, conflicting U.S. policies and the lack of a coherent policy on Chinese prisoners created much uncertainty and confusion among the prisoners. While the prison authorities tacitly tolerated anti-Communists' domination in prison camps, another separate military agency, the Civilian Information and Education Section (CIE) operated in prisons with an overt anti-Communist agenda. Under these favorable circumstances, a core of anti-Communist prisoners controlled the majority of Chinese prisoners through persuasion, coercion, and occasionally outright torture and murder. During the prisoners' entire captivity, however, the U.S. or UN never gave assurance to anti-Communist prisoners that the UN would not send them back to the hands of the Communists. Out of fear and anxiety, both Communist and anti-Communist prisoners took increasingly aggressive and violent actions against their opponents, and against the prison authorities in the case of the Communist prisoners.

Third, a small number of Nationalist interpreters and teachers hired by General MacArthur and his successors provided the vital communication channel between anti-Communist prisoners and Taipei. Well-informed of developments in UN prison camps, the Nationalist government mobilized a propaganda drive in the U.S. under the slogan "Save them so others may live!"²⁰ And it preempted the U.S. government at several key junctures so that the U.S. could not abandon its "voluntary repatriation" policy. That being said, all in all, the phenomenon of militant anti-Communist Chinese prisoners in Korea was mainly a reflection of social tensions in China in 1949 and 1950, when the country was undergoing violent consolidation after the Communist victory. And the large number of prisoners controlled by a core of anti-Communists was mainly a result of U.S.

²⁰ Zhou, ed., *hanzhan yu fangong yishi pian* 1, 209-210.

policy mistakes. In a sense, by the time prisoner repatriation had become an issue in armistice talks, the U.S. found itself riding a tiger that was impossible to dismount. In the end, only Chiang Kai-shek could tame the tiger by taking it to Taiwan in triumph.

Literature Review

Existing historical scholarship has largely failed to produce works commensurate with the importance of the POW issue in the Korean War, let alone account for the prisoners' different repatriation choices. While the prisoners' stories have been told in popular literature in China and the West since the late 1980s, scholars have largely ignored their experiences. Perhaps the scholarly negligence in the West has much to do with the fact that the Korean War was a limited war, and it had none of the glory and legitimacy of WWII. It was a war of stalemate, where soldiers "died for a tie." It was unpalatable not only to generals, but also to historians. Most of the scholarly attention has been focused on the origins of the war, which have invariably been treated at the geopolitical and ideological levels.²¹

Among the limited body of literature dealing with the second half of the war, the POW issue has been invariably identified as the central point of contention. In the 1950s, early works were patently ideological, even propagandist. Wilfred Burchett and Alan Winnington's *Koje Unscreened* was published by Beijing in 1953, serving as a scathing indictment of alleged American atrocities.²² U.S. prisoner indoctrination program official Kenneth K. Hansen published *Heroes Behind Barbed Wire* in 1957, celebrating the large number of Communist prisoner "defectors" as a triumph of liberal democracy

²¹ For example, Bruce Cumings, *Origins of the Korean War* (1981); Chen Jian, *China's Road to the Korean War* (1994).

²² Wilfred Burchett and Alan Winnington, *Koje Unscreened* (1953). Australian Wilfred Burchett and British Alan Winnington were left-wing journalists covering the armistice negotiation and war from Korea and China. They were highly critical of the Korean War and sympathetic to the new Chinese Communist government.

over totalitarianism.²³ Falsehoods, some apparently intentional, render both works unreliable.

Political scientist Allen S. Whiting was probably the first scholar to publish research on Chinese POWs. Five years before his best-known book *China Crosses the Yalu* (1960) was released, Whiting published an article entitled “The New Chinese Communist.” This research was based on interviews with two hundred former Chinese Communist Party and Youth League members, “selected on the basis of a 5 percent random sample of a group of four thousand Chinese ex-Communists” who went to Taiwan in 1954. Mainly concerned with the question of Communist party composition in China, Whiting arrived at a rather cultural deterministic conclusion that “the scale of values in contemporary China would appear to remain unchanged from the past, rating material benefits first, personal liberties a poor second, and political freedom at the very bottom.” While he noted that “[h]ighly organized pressures, both Communist and anti-Communist, limited the freedom of choice within the Korean PW compounds,” he did not examine the source and process of these “organized pressures.”²⁴ Apparently Whiting missed the significance of the POW struggle and its implications for understanding the Chinese Communist society.

Sociologist William Bradbury and political scientist Samuel Meyers had interviewed 45 Chinese prisoners as early as summer 1953, when their team was contracted by the U.S. military-affiliated Human Resources Research Office (HumRRO) to conduct research on Communist troops’ behavior patterns. The result of their work, *Mass Behavior in Battle and Captivity: the Communist Soldier in the Korean War*, was not published until 1968. Focusing on interpreting Chinese prisoners’ behavior patterns

²³ Kenneth K. Hansen, *Heroes Behind Barbed Wire* (Princeton, NJ: D. Van Nostrand Company, 1957).

²⁴ Allen S. Whiting, “The New Chinese Communist,” *World Politics: A Quarterly Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 7, No. 4 (July 1955): 592-593, 605.

in social scientific terms, Bradbury et al. did make many astute observations, but did not provide a coherent historical narrative of the prisoners' conflicts.

In the 1970s, with the release of U.S. Ambassador John J. Muccio's oral history in 1971 and Joy's diary in 1978, and especially the publication of Philip W. Manhard reports in *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS), 1952-1954*, Vol. XV in 1985, more details of the horrific struggles in prison emerged, and their violent aspects also became evident.²⁵ Utilizing newly available sources, especially *FRUS* and declassified documents at the U.S. National Archives, recent Korean War scholarship has been largely freed of ideological baggage.²⁶ Western scholarship has remained U.S.-centric, dwelling on the abovementioned official sources. Few scholars utilize newly published Russian documents.²⁷ Though POW memoirs are sporadically cited, few have ventured to conduct systematic interviews, and John Toland only interviewed two former POWs in Beijing in the late 1980s.²⁸ Moreover, nearly all of the recent works only cover the POW issue as a side element to geopolitical, diplomatic or military narratives. Still absent is a scholarly work focusing on the prisoners of war issue.

Most lamentably, this historical apathy occurred right in the face of resurging voices from surviving former POWs, who have published numerous articles and memoirs both in the PRC and Taiwan. Furthermore, journalists and novelists have written volumes. Novelist Ha Jin's fictional *War Trash*, whose events and details Ha claims to be "factual," literally translated numerous paragraphs of the memoirs written by former POWs Zhang Zeshi et al. The very fact that *War Trash* has appeared in a bibliography of

²⁵ The Philip Manhard reports are contained in *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS): 1952-1954*, Vol. XV: Korea (two parts) (1985).

²⁶ For example, Rosemary Foot, *A Substitute for Victory: The Politics of Peacemaking at the Korean Armistice Talks* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990).

²⁷ Shen Zhihua 沈志華, ed., *Chaoxian Zhanzheng: Eguo danganguan de jiemi wenjian* 朝鮮戰爭: 俄國檔案館的解密文件 [The Korean War: Declassified Documents from Archives in Russia] (Taipei: Institute of Modern History, Academia Sincia, 2003).

²⁸ John Toland, *In Mortal Combat* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1991).

historical works highlights the glaring lack of serious scholarship on Korean War POWs utilizing non-U.S. and non-official sources.²⁹

Historians in China face a different problem: the POW issue has remained off limits due to its political sensitivity. In Taiwan, where the 14,000 “Anti-Communists Righteous Men” from Korea have resided and been fading away, it has become a subject of a bygone era of Chiang Kai-shek. However, in the first decade of the new century, scholarly interest on the POW issue has grown in Taiwan. Archivist Zhou Xiuhuan of Academia Historica (Guoshiguan), or Taiwan’s National Archives, compiled a three-volume collection of POW related documents.³⁰ Two masters theses involving in-depth oral history interviews provide illuminating evidence on intra-camp struggles between the Nationalist and Communist prisoners.³¹ Ma Guozheng’s work was a particularly important contribution as he interviewed thirteen surviving anti-Communist prisoners, including his own father and his father’s friends in prison. These accounts were remarkably revealing because these men had participated in or witnessed some of the key incidents in 1952 and 1953.

Overall, despite the emergence of rich sources in the last decade, there has been no book-length scholarly work focusing on the Chinese POW issue. More importantly, there has been a lack of analytical or methodological breakthrough. This dissertation

²⁹ For example, *War Trash* is listed in the bibliography in David Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter: America and the Korean War* (NY: Hyperion, 2007).

³⁰ Zhou Xiuhuan, ed., *Zhanhou waijiao shiliao huibian: Hanzhan yu fangong yishi pian 1-3* 戰後外交史料彙編：韓戰與反共義士篇1-3 [Collections of postwar foreign policy documents: Korean War and Anti-Communist Righteous Men, vol.1-3] (Taiwan: Academia Historica 國史館, 2005).

³¹ Ma Guozheng (Ma Kuo-Cheng) 馬國正, *Fangong, konggong, kongguo? Hanzhan laitai Zhiyuanjun zhanfu wenti zhi yanjiu* 反共、恐共、恐國？韓戰來台志願軍戰俘問題之研究 [Anti-Communist, Communist-phobia, Nationalist-phobia? A study on the CPV prisoners who came to Taiwan] (master’s thesis, Jiayi, Taiwan: National Chung Cheng University 國立中正大學, 2008); Shen Xingyi 沈幸儀, *Yiwansiqian ge zhengren* 一萬四千個證人：韓戰時期「反共義士」之研究 [14,000 witnesses: a study on the “Anti-Communist Righteous Men” during the Korean War] (master’s thesis, Taipei: National Normal University 國立臺灣師範大學, 2008).

aims to overcome such deficiencies by debunking a number of specious explanations, myths, and ex post facto fallacies, and establishing a coherent, nuanced, and balanced narrative.

Specious Explanation, Myths, and Ex Post Facto Fallacy

To account for the lopsided outcome of repatriation choices that favored Chiang Kai-shek and the Nationalists in Taiwan, one common but specious explanation was that most of the Chinese prisoners were former Nationalist troops captured by the Communists and integrated into the People's Liberation Army during the Chinese Civil War. They were sent to Korea as Mao's cannon fodder. It has been claimed that naturally these former Nationalist soldiers would attempt to escape from Communism and their capture or surrender in Korea afforded such an opportunity. In fact, exactly two thirds (66.7 percent) of the Taiwan-bound prisoners had previously served in the Nationalist army, and one third had not.³² However, the composition of the China-bound prisoners was very similar. In June 1952, a U.S. State Department official obtained statistics on 3,200 pro-repatriation Chinese prisoners, which he considered a "fairly reliable majority sample" of all pro-repatriates. When compared to statistics of anti-repatriation Chinese prisoners, the most outstanding fact was "percentage similarity [in] almost every statistic."³³ In more precise terms, 59.3 percent of these pro-repatriation prisoners had served in the Nationalist military.³⁴ This ratio was very close to two thirds. Clearly,

³² William C. Bradbury, Samuel M. Meyers, and Albert D. Biderman, *Mass Behavior In Battle And Captivity: The Communist Soldier In The Korean War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 343. Also Chiang Ching-kuo, report to Chiang Kai-shek etc., June 1954, Republic of China Ministry of Defense Archives document No. 0001238900090057w.

³³ Philip W. Manhard, report enclosed in Muccio's telegram to Acheson, June 29, 1952, U.S. National Archives (hereafter as NARA)/RG 59/Decimal File 1950-1954/695A.0024/6-2952.

³⁴ Bradbury et al., *Mass Behavior*, 343. The authors noted, "Based on a survey conducted in Korea, June 1952, by an official of the State Department." Most likely the official was Manhard.

prisoners with similar experiences made divergent choices. Therefore, factors other than Nationalist military service history determined the prisoners' repatriation choice.

Another common explanation was that a large number of Nationalist agents infiltrated UN prison camps disguised as prisoners. This claim was initially made by repatriated Chinese prisoners, and the Communist government adopted this line to explain the lopsided repatriation outcome. Du Ping, the Political Department Director of the Chinese People's Volunteers Army, claimed, "The U.S. army asked Chiang Kai-shek for a large number of Nationalist agents from Taiwan. They entered the prison camps under the disguise of prisoners." Subsequently, these men created anti-Communist organizations, and they "forcibly tattooed Chinese prisoners and forced them to write petition letters in blood."³⁵ In fact, while it was true that 73 Nationalist interpreters were hired by MacArthur in 1951 to work for the UN Command in Korea and Tokyo, only some of these men went to Koje Island to work with the Chinese prisoners after May or June that year. In November approximately another 20 Nationalist teachers were hired to indoctrinate or "reorient" Chinese prisoners. They entered UN camps as Department of the Army Civilians, not as prisoners.

Most importantly, I have found all major anti-Communist prisoner leaders' interrogation records at the U.S. National Archives, which clearly indicated these prisoners' capture dates and locations in battle. As I will demonstrate in Chapter 5 and 6, the anti-Communist prisoners achieved their dominance over the Communists from the very beginning. Logically speaking, there was no need for additional Nationalist agents disguised as prisoners. Repatriated Communist prisoners made the claim of disguised Nationalist agents as a means to explain their own failure to counter the anti-Communist prisoners. By attributing their own failure to a grand conspiracy jointly plotted by the

³⁵ Du Ping 杜平, *Zai Zhiyuanjun zongbu* 在志愿军总部 [At the headquarters of the Chinese People's Volunteers Army] (Beijing: Jiefangjun chubanshe, 1989), 341.

U.S., Taiwan and anti-Communist prisoners, they sought to minimize their own guilt. Similarly, the anti-Communist prisoners claimed that core Communist prisoners were fake prisoners, who intentionally surrendered so they could lead prisoner struggles behind the enemy's line.³⁶ Following this logic, had the Communist government not planted these leaders to "mislead" naïve prisoners who yearned to return home, an even larger number of prisoners would have chosen Taiwan. However, no documentary evidence or oral history account reveals any case of "planted prisoners." Most likely such claims were myths utilized to explain one's own failure to win over more fellow prisoners.

The third common explanation for the lopsided repatriation outcome was that the U.S. had intended to retain a large number of prisoners and send them to Taiwan. For example, in repatriated prisoners' memoirs *Test* or *Kaoyan*, the editorial committee claimed that, "When the U.S. realized that prisoner repatriation was an effective bargaining chip in armistice talks and also a way to delay talks, it reinforced various measures to force more Chinese prisoners to reject repatriation."³⁷ Similarly in Taiwan and the West, it is often assumed that the U.S. wanted to retain more prisoners as a propaganda ploy, and naturally it would send them to its ally, Nationalist Taiwan. However, all such arguments suffer from ex post facto fallacies. Nationalist Taiwan (the Republic of China) and the U.S. signed a mutual defense treaty only in 1954, after the POW episode had come to a conclusion. Back in 1950 and 1951, the U.S. government, or more precisely the Truman-Acheson administration, remained vehemently opposed to

³⁶ Wang Pingling 王平陵 and Mu Qin 穆秦, "Jujidao hanzei bu liang li (xia)" 巨濟島漢賊不兩立 (下) [Struggles between the loyalists and traitors on Koje Island, Party 2], in *Fangong yishi fendoushi* 反共義士奮鬥史 [The history of the Anti-Communist Fighters' struggles] (Taipei: fangong yishi jiuye fudao chu 反共義士就業輔導處, 1955), 70-71.

³⁷ The editorial committee, introduction, in *Kaoyan* 考驗: 志愿军战俘美军集中营亲历记, ed. Zhang Zeshi (Beijing: Zhongguo wenshi chubanshe 中国文史出版社, 1998), 7.

any close contact with Nationalist Taiwan, not to mention conspiring with Chiang Kai-shek to prolong the war and to send Chinese prisoners to Taiwan.

That being said, certain elements in the U.S. military, especially the psychological warfare agency, did hope to keep more prisoners and send them to Taiwan. And General MacArthur did hire a small number of Nationalist interpreters, interrogators, propaganda personnel, and code breakers. However, MacArthur was fired by Truman months before anti-Communist Chinese prisoners dominated prison compounds and Chinese POWs became an issue at Panmunjom. To put all the blame on MacArthur for Washington's misguided policies is historically unsound.

In short, divergent repatriation choices were not predetermined by Nationalist military service history. Second, there is no evidence suggesting that Nationalist agents entered prisons in disguise as prisoners. But Nationalist interpreters and teachers provided the communication channels between anti-Communist prisoners and the Nationalist embassy. Third, while the U.S. army's psychological warfare unit implemented an anti-Communist indoctrination program, the U.S. government and military did not plan to retain prisoners and send them to Taiwan, especially before the screening in April 1952. The lopsided screening result presented the U.S. a *fait accompli* that it was compelled to follow through by sending the anti-repatriation prisoners to Taiwan in 1954.

Chapter Outline

In subsequent chapters of this dissertation, I will demonstrate that for the majority of Chinese prisoners, their repatriation choice largely followed the choice of their prison compound leaders. Their decisions were based on a number of factors, including conviction, interest calculation, coercion, and threat of retribution from their

leaders. In the two largest prison compounds controlled by anti-Communist prisoners, most prisoners eventually went to Taiwan. In compounds controlled by Communist prisoners, the majority returned to China. Therefore, the key to understanding prisoners' decisions and behaviors is to understand their leaders. To understand why certain individuals emerged as leaders and activists in prison, it is necessary to examine their pre-Korean War experiences under both the Nationalist and Communist regimes, and to assess how these experiences shaped their political outlook and honed their leadership skills.

Chapter 2 "Fleeing or Embracing the Communists: Divergent Civil War Experiences of Chinese Prisoners" examines a selected number of prisoners' experiences in the Chinese Civil War, including case studies of three Taiwanese boys who joined the Nationalist army and fought in the mainland, a Tsinghua student who became an underground Communist, two young men who fled Manchuria to attend the Central Military Academy in Chengdu, a Hubei student refugee fleeing from the Communists, and a forcibly conscripted Sichuanese who later became a proud People's Liberation Army soldier. In 1949 these individuals of vastly different backgrounds converged in Sichuan, either as Nationalist or Communist soldiers or guerrillas.

Chapter 3 is entitled "New Comrades in the PLA: Reformed Nationalist Personnel and New Recruits in 1950." It studies the reindoctrination experiences of Nationalist officers, Whampoa cadets, and enlisted men. Some of these former Nationalist personnel became anti-Communist leaders or activists in Korea, while others emerged as pro-Communist activists. In addition, this chapter studies the experiences of newly recruited young students who joined the PLA after the Communist victory. Many of these young people became pro-Communist activists in Korea. Finally, the histories of several veteran Communist officers are also discussed. Most of these men emerged as Communist

prisoner leaders, but one veteran Communist became an important anti-Communist leader.

In Chapter 4, “MacArthur and Chiang Kai-shek’s intelligence partnership and Taiwan’s Secret Entry into the Korean War,” the seed of intelligence collaboration was planted jointly by MacArthur and Chiang, and it grew even after MacArthur’s departure. The U.S. government and military’s dire lack of Chinese linguists necessitated the involvement of Nationalist Taiwan. The fragmented nature of the U.S. government and military in the Far East allowed Chiang Kai-shek the opportunity to enter the Korean War covertly. Most importantly, U.S. policymakers completely failed to foresee the negative consequences of their prisoner reorientation program. By the time prisoner repatriation had become an issue in armistice talks, the U.S. found itself with no way out but to stick to its professed policy of “voluntary repatriation.”

Chapter 5, “Capture, Surrender, and Defection of Chinese ‘Volunteers’ in Battles And the Rise of Anti-Communists in Prisons,” examines the capture, surrender, or defection of some of the prisoner leaders and activists. By the time the influx of Chinese prisoners arrived in prison camps on Kojima Island in summer 1951, they found that anti-Communist prisoners had become organized. Seeking to avoid interrogation, most Communist officers initially attempted to hide their officers’ rank and Communist party membership. When “traitors” exposed their officers’ identities and anti-Communist prisoners persecuted them relentlessly, they belatedly sought to organize and resist, but only to fight a losing battle. Communist prisoners remained the underdogs in the struggle for prison leadership until April 1952, when the UN Command screened prisoners’ repatriation wills.

Chapter 6 studies the screening process in April 1952 and analyzes how “voluntary repatriation” became violent in its implementation. Just as the armistice line

of 1953 changed little from the battle line of 1951, it is no exaggeration to say that the final breakdown of repatriation and non-repatriation was determined in the months leading up to the April 8, 1952 screening. Most importantly, the outcome of screening was largely pre-determined by the leadership of these prison camps. In sharp contrast to Compounds 72 and 86, in the newly established though much smaller Compound 71, which was controlled by the Communists, all 238 prisoners refused screening and collectively declared their wish of repatriation.³⁸

In Chapter 7 “Old China Hands on Kojima Island And Prison Incidents in POW Camps,” the conflicting and fragmented nature of U.S. policies and their implementation was on full display when a number of “old China hands” went to Kojima Island to tame the prisoners. General Boatner’s success was short-lived, if not superficial, and Communist prisoners’ anxiety and resentment continued to escalate. In Chapter 8, the deadly October 1, 1952 Incident on Cheju Island is examined. Was it a mass prison break or a massacre by the U.S. army? In retrospect, the pro-Communist Chinese prisoners on Cheju Island lived under a prison authority that required its guards to “shoot to kill” prisoners for *any and all* aggressive actions. They were confronted by an obsessively hostile officer Brooks. Equally dangerously, they were commanded by a group of Communist leaders who were seeking bloodshed in hope of scoring a propaganda coup. That was a combination too precarious, too deadly for any individual prisoner to survive unscathed.

Chapter 9 covers the final repatriation of the pro-Communist prisoners in summer 1953, and the explanation process for anti-Communists in the winter and their release to Taiwan in January 1954. Finally, the historical meaning of the struggle over

³⁸ Zhang Zeshi 张泽石, *Wo de Chaoxian Zhanzheng* 我的朝鲜战争 [My Korean War] (Beijing: Shishi chubanshe 时事出版社, 2000), 114.

POWs is discussed as it is related to Communist China, Nationalist Taiwan, the U.S., and the prisoners themselves.

Fleeing or Embracing the Communists: Divergent Civil War Experiences of Chinese Prisoners

If the prison conflict in Korea was a small civil war between pro- and anti-Communist prisoners, the seeds of conflict were planted during the Chinese Civil War, which raged from 1945 to 1949. During the course of the Civil War, the Chinese Communists won many converts and supporters, while the popularity of the Nationalists declined drastically. The Communists were particularly successful in attracting two groups of converts: “the poor and suffering people” (*qiongku renmin*) and idealistic students.¹ Despite the Nationalists’ eventual defeat on the mainland, some young people, especially children of the rich and conservatives, still identified with the old order and rejected Communist ideology and methods. In the face of advancing Communist forces, while some young people embraced the Communists, others fled until they had nowhere to escape. These young people’s divergent choices reflected their differing assessment of the Communists and of their own future under the new regime. Under the Communist regime, this divergence was suppressed under a surface of conformity. However, this suppressed tension would explode into life-and-death struggles in prison camps in Korea from 1951 to 1953.

Largely in chronological order, this chapter examines the Civil War experiences of a number of future prisoner leaders and activists. In 1949 these individuals of vastly different backgrounds converged in Sichuan, either as Nationalist or Communist soldiers or guerrillas. In 1950 they would all become soldiers of the PLA 60th and 12th Armies,

¹ *Qiongku remin* 窮苦人民.

which later suffered the heaviest casualties in Korea in spring 1951, resulting in the largest number of troops captured by the UN forces. Therefore this dissertation focuses on troops from these two armies.

To begin this study, we will follow the voyages of three Taiwanese soldiers, who later became the only three Taiwanese prisoners in Korea. Two of them returned to Taiwan in 1954. Chen Yonghua, probably one of the most publicized anti-Communist prisoners, became the symbol of the Nationalist rallying cry “Return to Taiwan.” In contrast, Wang Yingchang remained silent throughout his prison term. The third Taiwanese, Chen Qingbing, who became a Communist Party member on the mainland before the Korean War, chose to “return” to China. By no means were the three Taiwanese typical Chinese prisoners, but their final choices seem allegorical of the larger historical process.

1945-48. Three Taiwanese soldiers’ journeys to the “motherland”

In November 1945, only three months after the end of the fifty-year Japanese colonial rule in Taiwan, 16-year-old farm boy Chen Yanzhan volunteered to join the victorious Chinese Nationalist Army.² After graduating from elementary school, Chen, the youngest of four siblings in a poor family in Tainan, had been working on the farm, tending cattle and harvesting grass. When the Nationalist 62nd Army began recruiting local youths, Chen was attracted to its offer, which included a decent salary plus four *dou*

² Chen Yanzhan 陳燕盞 was Chen Ronghua 陳永華’s original name, see “Dongbei anye du xingjun” 東北暗夜獨行軍 [Nightly lone march in the northeast], interview by Lin Jintian 林金田, July 7, 1994, in *Shanghen xielei: zhanhou yuan taiji guojun koushu lishi*. 傷痕血淚—戰後原台籍國軍口述歷史 [Scars, blood, and tears: oral history accounts by Nationalist soldiers of Taiwanese origins in the post-WWII era], ed. Lin Jintian (Nantou: Guoshiguan Taiwan Wenxianguan 國史館臺灣文獻館, 2006), 242. And Chen Yung Hua 陳永華 (Chen Yonghua), Interrogation Report #3943, March 12, 1951, NARA/Record Group 554/Records of the Far East Command, 1950-52/Records of the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2, Far East Command/ATIS Interrogation Reports (hereafter ATIS), 1.

or about 28 kilograms of rice. “With this kind of benefit, my parents could live a less burdened life,” Chen calculated. Together with three other village boys, Chen decided to join the army. However, to register for the army, each recruit needed seals of approval from his father and two local officials, and Chen feared that his father would not approve. He secretly picked the lock on his father’s drawer with a piece of wire and found the seal. With his father’s “seal of approval,” Chen became a soldier in the 95th Division, 62nd Army.³

Enlisted Taiwanese like Chen were scattered in various units, with each squad receiving two or three. “Even though the officers did not treat us unfairly, initially the ‘Old Taro Mainlanders’ did give us a hard time,” Chen recalled. The biggest shock was mess culture. While the Taiwanese recruits ate at normal speed, the mainland soldiers “started with their first bowl of rice half-full, poured soup on top, then dumped it all down into their stomach.” Then they rushed to get the second bowl of rice, which was compressed hard and full to the rim. When the Taiwanese finished their first bowls, there was “not a single grain of rice left,” and they had to go hungry. After a few days, the Taiwanese learned the same trick. From then on, they did not “necessarily lose to the mainlanders” in this food race. Chen concluded, “Actually we can not put all the blame on old soldiers . . . Because officers embezzled money, soldiers ended up having not enough food, so they had to fight over food.”⁴ By no means were Chen and his fellow Taiwanese alone in experiencing this race-to-eat mess culture. The practice was commonplace in the Nationalist army, and it was a major source of discontent among the Nationalist troops.⁵

³ Chen Yonghua, in *Shanghen xielei*, 242.

⁴ Chen Yonghua, in *Shanghen xielei*, 243. In Taiwan, “Old Taros” refer to mainlanders who came to Taiwan post-WWII; “Yams” refer to local Taiwanese.

⁵ For example, He Rui 何瑞, *Bukanhuishou de huishou* 不堪回首的回首 [A past too sad to recall] (Unpublished memoir, 2001), 21.

In January 1946, Chen Qingbin of Yilan County in northeastern Taiwan enlisted in the Nationalist 70th Army based in Jilong.⁶ Wang Yingchang, a fisherman of Penghu Island, volunteered for the 70th Army at Gaoxiong.⁷ At the time of joining the army, they did not know that soon they were to be sent to the mainland to fight the civil war. Nor could they imagine they would be taken prisoner first by the Communists on the mainland and then by the Americans in Korea.

Chen Yanzhan and his unit guarded the Tainan airport for only two or three months, and then they were transferred to Taidong in eastern Taiwan for training. Rumors were rife that the unit was about to be transported to the war front on the mainland. Taiwanese recruits began to desert, including two village friends who had joined the army with Chen. However, Chen reasoned with another village friend: “If we go home, everybody will know us as deserters. It will be troublesome. Moreover, there are no jobs back home. After all, what is there to fear about going to the mainland?”⁸ So they stayed.

To deal with desertion, the army took a number of measures. Mainlander soldiers monitored Taiwanese recruits closely. Taiwanese were never assigned to sentry posts, lest they escape. Upon the completion of training at Taidong, Chen’s unit was reorganized at Hualian and Jilong, and then prepared for boarding ships to the mainland. At Jilong, controls on troops tightened further. “Without the company of one’s squad leader, there was no chance of leaving the barrack.” However, Chen’s squad leader

⁶ Ching, Chin Pin 陳慶濱 (Chen Qingbin), Interrogation Report KG 0443, August 31, 1951, ATIS, 1.

⁷ Wang Yingchang 王瀛昌, Interrogation Report KG 0781, October 20, 1951, ATIS, 1. Both Chen and Wang stated in the interrogation reports that they “volunteered” for the army.

⁸ Chen Yonghua, in *Shanghen xielei*, 243-244.

was very sympathetic to the Taiwanese. He asked Chen if he wanted to go home and offered him travel money. But Chen declined.⁹

In September 1946, troops of the 62nd Army, along with horses and artillery, boarded freight ships at Jilong.¹⁰ On the voyage to Qinhuangdao, Hebei province, the Army encountered Soviet ships on the sea. The commander ordered the troops to pull out all their weapons and get ready for battle. Fortunately, the two sides passed each other without a clash. When the ships approached Qinhuangdao, U.S. warplanes provided air cover for the landing operation.¹¹ After landing, the troops boarded trains and arrived at a large barrack south of Beiping (Beijing).¹² In less than a week after their arrival, Chen's unit moved to the frontline in central Hebei to "suppress Communist bandits."¹³ Immediately Chen was thrown into the vortex of the escalating civil war. The Soviet Union and the U.S. had loomed large on his journey to the mainland, and would continue to haunt him in the next eight years, in both China and Korea.

Soon after his arrival on the mainland, Chen Yanzhan changed his name to Chen Yonghua, which meant "forever Chinese." When he first joined the army, he could barely understand his mainland colleagues, because he had only learned Japanese in colonial schools. Without any formal language program for the Taiwanese enlisted men, Chen had to learn from fellow soldiers. He learned Chinese so well that he became a reconnaissance man in his unit.¹⁴ Later when he was impressed into the Communist forces, Chen continued to serve as a scout.¹⁵ Evidently Chen had overcome the language barrier rather quickly.

⁹ Chen Yonghua, in *Shanghen xielei*, 244.

¹⁰ Chen Yonghua, Interrogation Report #3943, ATIS, 1.

¹¹ Chen Yonghua, in *Shanghen xielei*, 244.

¹² *Ibid.*, 244. And Chen Yonghua, Interrogation Report #3943, ATIS, 1.

¹³ Chen Yonghua, in *Shanghen xielei*, 244.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 242-243.

¹⁵ Chen Yonghua, Interrogation Report KG 0443, August 31, 1951, ATIS, 1.

In early September 1946, at roughly the same time when Chen Yonghua's 62nd Army was transported from Jilong to Qinhuangdao, Chen Qingbin's unit of the 70th Army also departed from Jilong, but it landed in Shanghai. Immediately the troops boarded trains heading to Yutai in southwestern Shandong.¹⁶ A few months later, Wang Yingchang's 277th Regiment of the 139th Division, 70th Army followed. Wang's interrogation report after his capture in the Korean War recorded: "Jan 47, 277th Regt left Formosa and after a three-day cruise landed in Shanghai. Boarded train for Hsuchou, Chiangu Prov."¹⁷ Xuzhou (Hsuchou) in northern Jiangsu and its adjacent southwestern Shandong turned out to be the sites where some of the fiercest battles in the Chinese Civil War took place, culminating in the Huaihai Campaign (or Battle of Xubeng in Nationalist terminology) from November 1948 to January 1949. Wang Yingchang was captured by the Communists during this campaign. Chen Qingbin barely escaped.

However, back in 1946 and 1947 the balance of military power was in favor of the Nationalists, who were much better equipped than the Communists. Chen Yonghua recalled that his rifle could fire five bullets consecutively, while the Communists' could only fire one at a time. Initially the Communists "would flee immediately when they saw us." The Communists forces that Chen's unit engaged were guerrillas, who had dug a maze of tunnels under villages on the North China plain. To force the guerrillas out of tunnels, Chen and his men burned wheat straw at tunnel entrances in a village—only to see smoke wafting away out in a distant wheat field.¹⁸ In this cat and mouse game, the Nationalist forces could not fully exploit their weapon superiority.

¹⁶ Chen Qingbin, Interrogation Report KG 0443, August 31, 1951, ATIS, 1. Yutai 鱼台 County is located southwestern Shandong, and very close to Xuzhou, Jiangsu.

¹⁷ Wang Yingchang, Interrogation Report KG 0781, October 20, 1951, ATIS, 1.

¹⁸ Chen Yonghua, in *Shanghen xielei*, 244-245.

More frustrating than the army's failure to catch the enemy was Chen Yonghua's resentment at the way his superiors treated him. In early 1947, Chen's platoon leader assigned him to reconnoiter enemy positions in a small town surrounded by water on three sides. In order to infiltrate the town after dark, Chen had to hide in ice-cold water for several hours. It was in early spring when the ice was just beginning to thaw. When Chen finally emerged from water, his skin was bleeding from frostbite. After Chen successfully completed his mission, he returned to report to his unit. Just as he was about to fall sleep on a warm *kang* (heated brick bed), his leader ordered him to get up and posted him on sentry duty. Chen "could no longer bear with this type of abuse." He deserted that same night.¹⁹

According to Chen's oral history account told in Taiwan in 1994, he walked all night to run away from his unit, guided by the North Star. However, he ended up running into another unit of the 62nd Army. He was detained for three days. After his release, he was assigned to serve as an ammunition bearer, which was the most physically demanding work. To make the matter worse, in this predominately Cantonese unit, Chen could "hardly understand a single sentence spoken by the troops." Soon Chen found an opportunity to desert during his unit's transfer to another location. Then he joined the Nationalist 94th Army, working as a porter in the medical unit, which was an easy job. However, before long Chen had a spat with his new squad leader, and he deserted again. This time he wandered north, climbed onto a freight train carrying coal, and landed in Fushun, Liaoning province, where he volunteered for the Nationalist Youth Army 207th Division. Chen recalled that this occurred some time in 1948.²⁰ However, his claim of taking a train to Manchuria is most likely false, because by 1948 the railroad between Tianjin and Manchuria had been interrupted by the Communists.

¹⁹ Chen Yonghua, in *Shanghen xielei*, 246.

²⁰ Chen Yonghua, in *Shanghen xielei*, 246.

In addition, it would have made little sense for Chen to wander north to Manchuria where war raged, instead of going south toward Shanghai and Taiwan. Therefore, either Chen's memory was faulty, or he intentionally altered his chronology.

After Chen's surrender to the U.S. forces in Korea in 1951, his interrogation report reveals that in addition to multiple desertions, Chen was twice captured by the Chinese Communists, and twice escaped (the second escape occurred in Korea). His first capture and escape took place in Manchuria. According to this report, "Feb 47," Chen "deserted 95th Div in Peiping area but was apprehended and forced to join the CNA 43d Div in Tientsin." As early as August 1947, the 43rd Division moved to the Liao River area west of Shenyang to engage the Communist forces. In October, the 43rd Division surrendered to the PLA's 116th Division, 39th Army. However, on October 25, Chen Yonghua and "one other escaped from their captors at Hsinmin Hsien and made their way to Shenyang and joined CNA Youth Army, 207th Div 3 Nov 47." In January 1948, Chen's division arrived at Fushun for training.²¹ From this point and on, Chen's oral history and interrogation report matched.²²

Despite the discrepancies about Chen's experience in 1947, one fact that can be established is Chen's desertion from his original unit and capture by another Nationalist unit. Desertion and forcible conscription were the twin phenomena widespread in the Nationalist forces and they contributed to the Nationalist military's image as corrupt and ineffective. When soldiers deserted, commanding officers often continued to receive the same amount of overhead for the "ghost headcount," effectively embezzling funds. Consequently, the Nationalist units' strength was regularly inflated. However, before

²¹ Chen Yonghua, Interrogation Report #3943, ATIS, 1. Liao River 遼河's old name was Jülüuhe 巨流河. However, in the original text, it was written as 巨離河. Hsinmin (Xinmin) County 新民縣. CNA: Chinese Nationalist Army.

²² Chen Yonghua passed away in the late 1990s. It is impossible to verify the case with him. Most likely Chen's interrogation record in 1951 is more credible than his oral record made in 1994.

major military operations or inspections from above, various units would scramble to add recruits to fill the quota. During times of relative peace and order, the Nationalist armies' recruitment was more or less like job offers for youths. In times of turmoil and war, this process degenerated into outright forcible conscription. Chen Yonghua had experienced both, the former in Taiwan and the latter in Hebei.

In Manchuria in 1948, the enemy Chen faced was no longer the Communist guerrillas hiding in tunnels, but General Lin Biao's elite troops of the PLA Northeastern Field Army.²³ Before the Soviet occupation forces' withdrawal from Manchuria in the spring of 1946, they had transferred a large quantity of Japanese arms captured in Manchuria and Korea to the Chinese Communists. And the Soviet Union continued to provide the Chinese Communists with technical assistance, especially in railroad repairs.²⁴ After a series of battles, by early 1948 the Communist forces in Manchuria had expanded to nearly one million men strong, and they controlled 97 percent of the land, 86 percent of the population, and 95 percent of the railroads.²⁵ The Nationalist forces were isolated in three unconnected areas around Changchun, Shenyang, and Jinzhou.

In October 1947 Chen Yonghua escaped from his Communist captors and returned to the Nationalist army. Apparently he thought the Nationalists would prevail. In a year Chen would find out that he had made the wrong bet. Being a soldier with limited contact with the outside world, Chen was largely oblivious to the sea change taking place in China at the time. The Chinese Nationalists and the Communists' relative

²³ The Northeastern Field Army was renamed the Fourth Field Army in March 1949.

²⁴ Yang Kuisong 杨奎松, "Nanyi queding de duishou (1917-1949)" 难以确定的对手(1917-1949), in *Zhong Su guanxi shigang: 1917-1991 nian Zhong Su guanxi ruogan wenti zai tantao* 中苏关系史纲: 1917-1991 年中苏关系若干问题再探讨 [History of Sino-Soviet relations, 1917-1991], ed. Shen Zhihua (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe 社会科学文献出版社, 2011), 90.

²⁵ Wang Chaoguang 汪朝光, *Zhongguo jindai tongshi, di shi juan: Zhongguo mingyun de juezhan (1945-1949)* 中国近代通史, 第十卷: 中国命运的决战 (1945-1949) [General history of modern China, vol. 10, the final battle over China's fate] (Nanjing: Jiangsu renmin chubanshe 江苏人民出版社, 2009), 376.

strengths had reversed, not just militarily, but also in terms of popular support. Idealistic students and intellectuals were among those who changed their positions first.

1946-48. A Tsinghua student's journey from Sichuan to Beijing and back

At approximately the same time as Taiwanese teenagers Chen Yonghua and Chen Qingbin boarded sea ships in Jilong heading to the mainland in September 1946, Zhang Zeshi, a Sichuanese boy of the same age boarded a Minsheng Company steamship in Chongqing.²⁶ If the young Taiwanese were sailing into an unknown future in an unknown land, Zhang was embarking on a journey of anticipation toward his dream university: Tsinghua. In less than two years, Zhang was converted from an apolitical youth to an underground Communist agent. He quit university to join the revolution. Although few educated youths had the privilege to attend Tsinghua, Zhang's conversion is illustrative of the intellectual appeal of Communism, which promised to solve China's ills once and for all. His embrace of Communism reflects the Nationalists' overall loss of popularity among intellectuals, and his conversion experience also reveals the techniques and methods of the Communist underground.

In the September 4th issue of the *Chongqing Daily*, Zhang Zeshi's name appeared as one of two hundred students in Sichuan who received admission after passing Tsinghua's rigorous entrance examination. As an incoming student in the physics department of Tsinghua, which was often referred to as "China's MIT," Zhang felt the calling of Einstein. He even envisioned a horizon beyond Tsinghua: to study physics under Einstein in the United States.²⁷ A promising career in science appeared to be in Zhang's future.

²⁶ Zhang Zeshi 张泽石, *1949 wo buzai Qinghuayuan 1949 我不在清华园* [I was not on Tsinghua campus in 1949] (Beijing: dangdai zhongguo chubanshe 当代中国出版社), 10.

²⁷ Zhang Zeshi, *1949 wo buzai Qinghuayuan*, 11-12.

Unlike Chen Yonghua, who grew up in a poor peasant household in Taiwan, Zhang hailed from a well-educated middle-class family in Sichuan. His father had studied textile engineering at Beiping Industrial University in the early 1920s. When Zhang Zeshi was born in Shanghai in 1929, his father was working as an engineer and his mother was a medical student. He was nicknamed Husheng, which literally means “born in Shanghai.” In 1932, when Shanghai came under Japanese attack during the “January 28 Incident,” the Zhang family returned to their ancestral home in Guang’an, Sichuan, which was also the birthplace of Deng Xiaoping. In Guang’an, Zhang’s family inherited roughly 24 *mou* of hilly land, which could produce 120 *dan* or 6000 kg of grain annually. However, due to poor land quality, sometimes it was hard to collect rent, especially in bad years.²⁸ Fortunately, the Zhang family no longer relied on rent for income. His parents were modern professionals. They first taught school and practiced medicine in Chongqing. Later Zhang’s father secured a position as the general manager of a textile factory at Ya’an, the capital of Xikang province (West Khamb).²⁹ Financially they were secure.

In wartime Sichuan, Zhang’s father made sure that Zeshi received a good education. Zhang first attended an American missionary elementary school at Ya’an. Later he moved to Jintang near Chengdu and enrolled in Mingxian Middle School (Oberlin Shansi Memorial School), which had been established by Kong Xiangxi and Oberlin College to commemorate the thirteen missionaries slain in Shanxi during the Boxer Rebellion in 1900.³⁰ At Mingxian, Zhang received an American-style liberal education from American, Canadian, and Chinese teachers. Zhang became fascinated by

²⁸ Ibid., 48. *Mu*, a unit of area (=0.0667 hectares); *Dan*, a unit of weight (=50 kilograms).

²⁹ Ibid., 225.

³⁰ Mingxian School 铭贤学堂. To escape from the advancing Japanese army, from 1937 to 1939 Mingxian faculty and students marched from Shanxi to Sichuan.

physics, and he came to believe in “saving the nation through science.”³¹ Without a doubt, Tsinghua was the ideal place to begin such an endeavor.

Zhang’s trip to Beiping got off to a bad start. When he and his friends disembarked from the steamboat at Hankou and went to the train station to purchase a rail ticket to Beiping, he found that no long-distance ticket was available. He was told: “More than half of the Beiping-Hankou Railway is controlled by the Communists. There is little chance that service will be restored within three years.” Zhang had to reroute to Shanghai by boat first, hoping to reach Beiping via Tianjin by sea. Once they reached his birthplace Shanghai, Zhang found out that cruise tickets to Tianjin were sold out, and tickets were not available until the end of the next month. Desperate to go to Tsinghua University for new student orientation, Zhang and his friends had to put up with a British coal-freight ship heading to Qinhuangdao.³² Coincidentally, Chen Yonghua and the 62nd Army also landed in Qinhuangdao in September. Like Chen, Zhang also took the train from Qinhuangdao to Beiping via Tianjin. While the 62nd Army was stationed south of Beiping, Zhang Zeshi began his university life at Tsinghua in the northwest suburbs of Beiping.

In the winter of 1946, when Chen Yonghua was fighting Communist guerrillas on the North China plain, Zhang Zeshi was enjoying physics classes taught by China’s topmost scientist Zhou Peiyuan and Chinese literature lectures by noted writer Zhu Ziqing. Chen immersed himself in icy water during a reconnaissance mission; Zhang swam in an indoor pool at Tsinghua. Continuing his interest in singing developed in missionary schools, freshman Zhang joined the folk song ensemble.³³ Before Tsinghua, Zhang had studied and lived in missionary schools, a world sheltered from the poverty

³¹ Zhang Zeshi, *1949 wo buzai Qinghuayuan*, 11.

³² *Ibid.*, 20, 26.

³³ Zhang Zeshi, *1949 wo buzai Qinghuayuan*, 45, 57-62.

and warfare experienced by the common people. At Tsinghua, it appeared this kind of sheltered life would continue.

Only two months after Zhang began his studies in Beiping, however, he heard from his father that the textile factory he managed had just gone bankrupt, as a result of “the dumping of U.S. textile products.” His father had lost his job and his mother, who had quit work and become a housewife years ago, had to look for a job again. Zhang applied for financial aid at the university. When Tsinghua awarded him a generous stipend, he thought he could concentrate on studying from then on. The quiet Tsinghua campus, however, soon became a hotbed of protest and revolt.

The Christmas of 1946 was a turning point in Zhang Zeshi’s life and many other students’. On Christmas Eve, a Peiking University preparatory student, Shen Chong, was raped by two U.S. Marines in downtown Beiping. On December 26, protest posters began to appear in Tsinghua. On December 30, ten thousand students from all major universities in Beiping took to the street. Zhang and others marched from Tsinghua, through Xizhimen, to Tian’anmen. They shouted slogans and waved banners that read: “Get out, U.S. Army! Get back home! U.S. Army!” At the time, Zhang did not know this movement would change his life forever. Nor did he know that one of the junior high school protesters would become his wife ten years later.³⁴

Although the movement started as spontaneous student protests, it was quickly appropriated by the Communists. The Communist leadership in Yan’an welcomed it as an opportunity to mobilize anti-Nationalist and anti-American sentiments and to order all party branches to escalate the protests. But the leadership warned, “In order to win broader sympathy [to our movement], our propaganda should be in a sad and indignant

³⁴ Ibid., 72-75. Also Zhonggong Beijing shiwei dangshi yanjiushi 中共北京市党史研究室, *Kangyi Meijun zhuhua baoxing yundong ziliao huibian* 抗议美军驻华暴行运动资料汇编 [Collected sources on the movement protesting U.S. army’s atrocity in China] (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe 北京大学出版社, 1989), 700.

tone, not a happy one.”³⁵ More importantly, it directed its underground cells to expand during this movement: “As many new activists have emerged in this movement, our party should help these activists to organize as cores of sustained movement.”³⁶ Certainly Zhang Zeshi was one of these activists of whom the Communist underground had taken notice.

Soon after the protest, Zhang Zeshi’s class president invited him and several other active protesters to join their secretive “reading group,” which was the typical peripheral organization of the Communist underground. Their first reading assignments for the Chinese New Year holiday were two books: *Mother* by Russian revolutionary writer Maxim Gorky and *Philosophy for the Masses* by Chinese Communist philosopher Ai Siqi. When the reading group convened after the break, they held their discussion in the home of Tsinghua professor Wu Han. At the end of their discussion, Wu, a young history professor, pointedly compared the current state of China to the end of the Ming dynasty. Then he recommended *The Communist Manifesto* as the next reading.³⁷ On a spring day, members of the reading group gathered on the Fragrant Hill and discussed *The Communist Manifesto*. Their leader made an impassioned speech, detailing his intellectual journey from nationalism to Communism. To the 18-year-old Zhang Zeshi, it

³⁵ The CCP Center (*zhongyang*), “Zhongyang guanyu xiangying Beiping xuesheng fanmeijiang yundong de zhishi” 中央关于响应北平学生反美蒋运动的指示 [Directives on responding to Beiping students’ anti-American and anti-Chiang movement], January 5, 1947, in *Kangyi Meijun zhuhua baoxing yundong ziliao huibian*, 6.

³⁶ The CCP Center, “Directives on capitalizing on student movement in Beiping, Tianjin, Nanjing, and Shanghai to expand our party’s activities,” January 6, 1947, in *Kangyi Meijun zhuhua baoxing yundong ziliao huibian*, 8.

³⁷ Zhang Zeshi, *1949 wo buzai Qinghuayuan*, 86, 108-109. Although Professors Wu Han was openly known as a member of the China Democratic League (*Minmeng*), the third political party at the time, Wu’s home also served as a communication center for the Communist underground. He operated “effectively as a Communist underground agent,” and received some funds from the underground Communists. See Su Shuangbi and Wang Hongzhi, *Wu Han zhuan* 吴晗传 [Biography of Wu Han] (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe 北京出版社, 1984), 206-207. Wu Han formally joined the Chinese Communist Party in 1957. His party membership was apparently a reward for his active role in the Anti-Rightist Campaign. During the Cultural Revolution, which was heralded by Mao’s attack on Wu’s historical play *Hai Rui Dismissed from Office*, Wu was severely persecuted. In 1969 he died in prison under unclear circumstances.

was as if Marx's voice was ringing: "The genius of the communism is now hovering in your Asia!"[sic]³⁸ Clearly, in Zhang's case, the reading group succeeded in its designed purpose of attracting and screening potential party members.

As the civil war raged in Manchuria and North China, inflation soared. Students felt the impact of rising food prices directly. On May 20, 1947, Beiping and Tianjin students launched an "anti-hunger, anti-civil war" demonstration. At the end of the day, Zhang went to visit one of his best high school friends who was attending the Catholic Fujen University. He was shocked to learn that she had been a Communist party member for some time, and was leaving for the Communist areas the next day.³⁹ Now, it began to dawn on Zhang that in addition to several friends at Tsinghua, some of his old friends from Mingxian Middle School in Sichuan had already become party members. Another unexpected impetus pushing Zhang toward the Communists came in June. Zhang's eldest brother, who had volunteered to join the Chinese Expedition Army to fight the Japanese in Burma during WWII, deserted his unit when it was rumored that they were to fight the civil war. He wrote a letter to Zeshi asking for help to go into the Communist areas. Through an arrangement made by Professor Wu Han, his brother entered the "liberated areas" via Beiping.⁴⁰ Clearly the world around Zhang was pulling him irreversibly closer toward the Communists.

Before summer break in 1947, the Communist underground instructed Zhang Zeshi to organize student a dance troupe and drama company during the summer, so he declined his parents' offer to buy him a plane ticket to fly back to Sichuan. The students began to practice "progressive" repertoires from the Communist areas. In the meantime,

³⁸ Zhang Zeshi, *1949 wo buzai Qinghuayuan*, 111-113.

³⁹ Ibid., 130. Fujen University: 辅仁大学.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 130.

Zhang participated in a peasant literacy program.⁴¹ At the end of the summer, in August 1947, Zhang was accepted as a probationary member of the Chinese Communist Party. His introducer and the single-line contact person was his roommate Wu Jiayi.⁴² Apparently Wu had been secretly cultivating him for a year.

As the PLA continued to make headway in north China, the Communist leadership envisioned its advances in the south, where educated cadres would be in great demand. The Communist underground selected Zhang to receive training in “liberated areas” in central Hebei. On June 2, 1948, Tsinghua sophomore Zhang Zeshi assumed the identity of a shop apprentice and quietly bid farewell to his beloved university. After passing through several Nationalist checkpoints and taking various transportations, including trains, ferry boat, and donkey, Zhang arrived at his destination: Bo Township, Cang County, where the Chinese Communist North China Bureau personnel received him.⁴³

At Bo Township, Zhang and more than a dozen university students from Beiping and Tianjin received a four-week-long “training course for work behind enemy lines,” which entailed intensive political indoctrination and only two days of hands-on weapon training. Members of this course were prohibited from revealing their own identities to each other. In certain classes instructors taught behind cloth curtains and students wore masks.⁴⁴ At the end of the course, Zhang Zeshi was taken to Shijiazhuang, which was not far from the CCP Central Committee in Xibaipo. At the North China Revolutionary University, Zhang met Zhu De, the nominal Commander in Chief of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA), and General Nie Rongzhen, the commanding general of the PLA

⁴¹ Zhang Zeshi, *1949 wo buzai Qinghuayuan*, 133-134. Zhang’s father secured another textile factory manager job in Leshan soon after his factory in Ya’an went bankrupt. His family’s finance improved, apparently. See *ibid.*, 132.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 149-150.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 170-176.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 188-190.

in North China.⁴⁵ During Zhu's speech, Zhang noticed several hundred students of the Revolutionary University. He did not expect that one and a half years later in Sichuan some of these students would become his colleagues in the PLA 180th Division, 60th Army. Nor could he imagine that in two and a half years he and his unit would return to Bo Township, Cang County, as "strategic reserves" for the Korean War.

In early August, upon completion of his training, Zhang Zeshi returned to Beiping via a circuitous route. This time, he could not go back to Tsinghua. Instead he was hosted by Fu Dongju, the daughter of General Fu Zuoyi, who was the top commander of the Nationalist forces in Beiping. Fu Dongju had joined the Communist underground at the Southwestern Associated University (*Xi'an lianda*) during WWII. While staying at General Fu's mansion, Zhang found out that Fu Dongju was also an alumna of Mingxian School.⁴⁶ With Fu Dongju's aid, Zhang departed Beiping for Tianjin, where he boarded a China Merchant ship to Shanghai. From Shanghai, it took him another eight days on the Yangzi to reach Chongqing.⁴⁷ Zhang returned to Sichuan ostensibly to flee the war in the north, but in fact he was an underground Communist agent planted for the final "liberation" of Sichuan. He was instructed to lie low and wait for contact initiated by the Communist Southwestern Bureau.⁴⁸

In less than two years, Zhang Zeshi had transformed from a naïve 17-year-old college freshman to an idealistic Communist underground agent. Situated in Beiping, the boiling center of student movement, it was nearly impossible for any hot-blooded young man to stay away from protesting the government's corruption and ineptitude, which

⁴⁵ Zhang Zeshi, *1949 wo buzai Qinghuayuan*, 192-195. The North China Revolutionary University 华北革命军政大学.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 207-211. Fu Dongju attended Mingxian Middle School in Xi'an during its exodus from Shanxi to Sichuan. Also see Fu Dongju 傅冬菊, "Wo yu fuqin Fu Zuoyi: youguan Beiping jiefang de wangshi" 我与父亲傅作义—有关北平和平解放的往事, *Xinmin Wanbao* 新民晚报, February 7, 2009, accessed April 25, 2011, http://www.gmw.cn/content/2009-02/24/content_890744.htm.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 220.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 221.

were evident to the population. The most energetic and progressive student groups were often peripheral organizations of the Communist underground. In Zhang's case, being one of the youngest students in his class, he was eager to be accepted and recognized. Through the propaganda work in these student groups, Zhang found gratification and meaning. Intellectually and emotionally, Zhang's embrace of Communism was a love feast with fellow idealists.

While Zhang was rapidly moving toward Communism, his best friend, who happened to be a strong skeptic of the Communists, moved to Tianjin to attend Nankai University. This friend argued that the Sheng Chong rape case should be treated as an individual incident, not as a cause for an anti-American movement. In summer 1947, he told Zhang that his eldest brother had once been a Communist and had gone to study in the Soviet Union, but came back resolutely renouncing Communism. He warned Zhang that all revolutions would result in power struggle and dictatorship. "In the end, those destroyed by revolution were the naïve idealists obsessed with their dreams."⁴⁹ But to Zhang, it was too late. There was no turning back. Soon after, he became a Communist party member.

After Zhang's return to Sichuan in September 1948, he was surprised to learn from his father that his uncle had joined the Communists in Jiangxi Soviet after he returned from Japan. He was an officer in the Communist army when he was killed during the Resistance War. The most shocking revelation came from his father, who had joined the Socialist Youth League, a Communist student organization, during his student days in Beiping. But he had grown increasingly doubtful of the morality of class struggle, the central tenet of Communism. He told Zeshi the story of a former Red Army soldier who was stranded in Xikang during the Long March and later worked in his factory.

⁴⁹ Zhang Zeshi, *1949 wo buzai Qinghuayuan*, 221.

Before the Long March, the young man was a company political officer. In one incident during the land reform, the Poor Peasant Association sentenced the entire family of a landlord and “local tyrant” to death. When the family of seven was being buried alive, this Red Army officer jumped into the pit and rescued a suckling baby at the final moment. As a result of his sentimentalism, he was expelled from the party and demoted. Zhang’s father explained that this case exemplified the inherently violent tendency of Communist ideology. Zeshi countered that this type of extreme cruelty was not in accordance with “the party’s policy.” Shifting to his propagandist mode, he asserted, “History has proved that only Communism can awaken the masses to overthrow the Tsar’s dynasty and create a Soviet Republic, where exploitation and repression have been eradicated.” He declared, “History will prove that only Communism can ... enable the Chinese nation to realize its revival.”⁵⁰ Clearly Zhang was well versed in Communist propaganda.

Zhang’s belief in Communism was based largely on theory and imagination. His contact with the world outside the university campus was very limited. His visit to the “liberated areas” was very brief and tightly controlled. In many ways, the 19-year-old Zhang was still naïve. While Zhang embraced Communism as the panacea for all China’s ills, other young people fled from it in horror. Yu Rongfu and Gao Wenjun were two of those who first escaped from the Communists in Manchuria. But in early 1951 Yu, Gao, and Zhang became comrades in the PLA 180th Division, and a few months later all three were taken prisoner in Korea.

⁵⁰ Zhang Zeshi, *1949 wo buzai Qinghuayuan*, 225-227.

1945-48. Fleeing Manchuria to attend the Whampoa Academy in Sichuan

When Japan announced its surrender to the Allies on August 14, 1945, 18-year-old Yu Rongfu was a student in a vocational school in Dalian.⁵¹ The school was immediately disbanded, and public services collapsed. He went back to his home in Pulandian located 70 km north of Dalian. Soon the invading Soviet Red Army arrived in his town. Yu recalled, the Russians “burned, killed, pillaged, and raped. They removed all machinery from all factories. ... There was no evil deed that they did not perpetrate.”⁵² At the time 16-year-old Gao Wenjun lived on a farm in Xinchengzi near Shenyang. He recalled, the Russians forced Japanese women to serve as “Comfort Women,” and raped local Chinese. To prevent rape by the Russians, local Chinese women cut their hair like men, and wore men’s clothes. However, the Soviet soldiers groped people’s chests to check their gender. In wintertime, some good-looking men were taken away by mistake, and were still raped. Gao’s sisters and female relatives hid in their homes and did not step out for months.⁵³ Clearly, the Soviet Union that Yu and Gao came to know firsthand bore no resemblance to the repression-free Soviet Union that Zhang Zeshi had romanticized about.

At the heels of the Red Army, the Chinese Communists appeared. In fact, as early as mid-August 1945, Chinese Communist forces had begun entering Manchuria. In mid-September, a Soviet military plane transported top Communist leaders Peng Zhen and Chen Yun from Yan’an to Shanhai Pass. They went to Shenyang by train and stayed at the “Marshall’s Mansion,” which was owned by former Manchurian warlord Zhang

⁵¹ Yu Rongfu 于榮福, interview by author, July 4, 2010, Taipei. But according to his interrogation report, he was born in 1929, two years later than what he said in 2010.

⁵² Yu Rongfu, interview by author, July 4, 2010, Taipei.

⁵³ Gao Wenjun 高文俊, *Hanzhan yiwang: yuxue yusheng hua renquan* 韓戰憶往: 浴血餘生話人權 [Remembering the Korean War: Discussing human rights after surviving the bloodbath] (Taipei: Shengzhi wenhua 生智文化, 2000), 35-36.

Zuolin.⁵⁴ On September 18, Peng and Chen cabled Yan'an that the Soviet side had made its final decisions to "open wide the front door and leave all domestic business to us." In addition, the Soviet strongly urged the Chinese Communists to make the greatest resolve and immediately send its best forces from all other base areas to Manchuria. The CCP concurred. At the time, the Nationalist government did not have a single soldier there.⁵⁵ The Communists had won the first move advantage.

By the end of 1945, nearly 110,000 Communist troops had swarmed into Manchuria from Shaanxi, Shanxi, Suiyuan, Chaha'er, and Hebei by land, and from Shandong by sea. Combined with local recruits, the Communist forces swelled to more than a quarter million strong. More than 30,000 troops of the former New Fourth Army and 60,000 from Shandong Military District formed the bulk of the Communist forces in Manchuria.⁵⁶ Then 22-year-old Tan Xingdong was one of them. Tan was born in Guanyun County in northern Jiangsu in 1923. As early as 1941, he joined the local Communist forces. In 1942, his unit marched to Shandong and was integrated into the Communist 2nd Division. According to his interrogation report in 1951, "Sept 45 – May 46, The 2nd Division departed for Chilin (Kirin) Prov, Manchuria by RR for training and to receive new recruits."⁵⁷ Most likely, Tan's unit first crossed the Bo Sea by boat and arrived at the Liaodong Peninsula, then took a train to Jilin. Eventually his unit became the PLA 38th Army, which was referred to as the "Tiger Army," the best of the best in General Lin Biao's army.

⁵⁴ Zhonggong zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi 中共中央文献研究室, ed, *Chen Yun nianpu* 陈云年谱 [Chronological biography of Chen Yun], vol. 1 (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe 中央文献出版社, 2000), 425-426.

⁵⁵ Wang Chaoguang, *Zhongguo mingyun de juezhan (1945-1949)*, 54.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁵⁷ Tan Hsing Tung 譚興東 (Tan Xingdong), Interrogation Report No. 4649, April 11, 1951, ATIS, 1. Chilin: Jilin 吉林.

General Luo Ronghuan, the future right-hand man of Lin Biao, also arrived in Manchuria by sea. On November 8, Luo and his entourage took a steamboat and landed at Pikou north of Dalian. Before they caught a freight train heading to Shenyang the next day, they camped out at Pulandian overnight.⁵⁸ Of course, at the time, the young resident Yu Rongfu of Pulandian did not realize that some of the strangers passing through his town were to become leaders of the new Communist order in Manchuria.

On January 14, 1946, the Communist Northeastern Democratic United Army (*Dongbei minzhu lianjun*) was formally founded. This army of more than 270,000 men was under the command of General Lin Biao and Commissar Peng Zhen. With the support and acquiescence of the Soviet Union, the Chinese Communist forces quickly occupied nearly half of the counties in Manchuria.⁵⁹ Overcoming their lack of modern transport, the Communists had moved with great efficiency on foot or by boat. In contrast, the Nationalist forces transported by U.S. naval ships only made a forced landing at Qinhuangdao, Hebei in mid-October 1945, and they did not initiate attacks on the Chinese Communist forces in Liaoning until mid-November. However, once the U.S.-equipped and battle-trained Nationalist armies began the push north along the Bo Sea coast, Communists forces were driven out of major cities. On November 26, the Nationalist forces took over Jinzhou. Finally on January 15, 1946, they reached Shenyang.⁶⁰ Mainly based around three major cities, Shenyang, Jinzhou, and Changchun, the Nationalists forces were to fight a losing war in Manchuria in the next three years.

As the Nationalist armies were largely confined to their city bases, the Communists controlled the majority of the land and population. Pulandian, Yu's

⁵⁸ Huang Yao 黄瑤, ed., *Luo Ronghuan nianpu* 罗荣桓年谱 (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe 人民出版社, 2002), 458-459.

⁵⁹ Wang Chaoguang, *Zhongguo mingyun de juezhan (1945-1949)*, 55.

⁶⁰ The Soviet Union had formally transferred Shenyang to the Nationalist government on December 27. However, the Nationalist army did not arrive until January 15, 1946. See Yang Kuisong, "Nanyi queding de duishou (1917-1949)", 86.

hometown, was one of the areas the Nationalist forces had never reached. The closest they came was 20 km north at Wafangdian. Therefore, Yu had never experienced Nationalist rule in his life before he fled to Shenyang in 1946. Instead the first Chinese government he encountered was a Communist one. Soon after the Japanese surrender, the Chinese Communists came in small numbers. Quickly they started class struggles in the name of “account-settling” (*qingsuan*). Rich families were ordered to attend mass meetings, where the poor denounced the rich for alleged crimes against the masses. After the meetings, crowd flocked into the homes of the denounced and removed their property. Yu recalled, “the mob were not all Communists, but local thugs and ruffians who were mobilized by the Communists.” These thugs took the lead in robbing rich people.⁶¹

Yu’s family owned a grocery store and was considered well-off in their town. The store was totally emptied by the mob. Anything of value was taken away; even his bicycle was not spared. Luckily, Yu’s family members were not beaten and they were allowed to stay in their house. The wealthiest families suffered more, as they were kicked out of their own homes. To exacerbate their miseries, the economy collapsed. The old currency became worthless, and people had to sell their valuables at fire sale prices to obtain the new currency issued by the Russians, the so-called “Red Army notes” (*hongjunpiao*). People also bartered with each other for essential goods.⁶² Yu’s family lost everything they had owned, and they also lost their livelihood.

Then in early 1946, two types of Communist “United Armies” (*lianjun*) appeared. One group did not speak Chinese, so they were presumably Korean, according to Yu. These armies began to conscript local youths. In desperation, Yu’s father took him, the eldest son, to escape to Shenyang, leaving behind his mother, three brothers, and two

⁶¹ Yu Rongfu, interview by author, July 4, 2010, Taipei, Taiwan. *Qingsuan* 清算.

⁶² Yu Rongfu, interview by author, July 4, 2010, Taipei. *Hongjunpiao* 紅軍票.

sisters.⁶³ Although Yu and his father had never lived under the Nationalist government before, apparently they believed that it was safer to live under the Nationalists than the Communists. Indeed, the Nationalist government had these political refugees in mind, and it had created a “Training and Education Center for Youths from Dalian and Port Arthur.” Yu Rongfu enrolled in this school, which offered classes on and off. In his words, he “just lived there and got fed” (*hunfan chi*).⁶⁴ Finally in 1947, Yu passed the entrance examination and was admitted to the Central Military Academy (Whampoa) in Chengdu. In September Yu became a cadet.⁶⁵

In contrast to Yu’s experience as a refugee, Gao Wenjun’s life in his hometown Xinchengzi in the outskirts of Shenyang was somewhat stable, at least for three years. Under the Soviet military occupation, although schools remained closed, teachers who were imprisoned by the Japanese for their anti-Japanese and anti-Manchukuo beliefs returned. They offered informal instruction to eager students. For half a year, Gao was taught and greatly influenced by these Chinese patriots. After the Nationalist army recovered Shenyang, schools were reopened and reorganized. Gao’s school merged with others and became Shenyang No. 1 Middle School. Gao moved to Shenyang and began boarding there. In his new school, Nationalist officials served as principals. Two teachers who had survived the dreaded Japanese Kempeitai prisons taught history and citizen courses.⁶⁶ This Chinese Nationalist education in Gao’s formative years had a lasting impact on him. To a large degree, this positive experience shaped Gao’s identity with the Nationalist government.

In June 1948, the Central Military Academy came to Shenyang to recruit new students for the second time. Out of the 6,000 applicants, 600 were admitted, including

⁶³ Yu Rongfu, interview by author, July 4, 2010, Taipei.

⁶⁴ Yu Rongfu, interview by author, July 4, 2010, Taipei. *Hunfan chi* 混饭吃.

⁶⁵ Yu, Jung Fu 于榮福 (Yu Rongfu), Interrogation Report KG 0169, July 30, 1951, ATIS, 1.

⁶⁶ Gao Wenjun, *Hanzhan yiwang*, 36-37.

Gao. Gao did not return home to inform his parents about his admission until a week before his planned departure to Chengdu. His parents were reluctant to let Gao leave home, as there was no other young male left in his family. At the time the Communist forces were closing in on Shenyang, and the rich and well-connected had begun fleeing south. Gao's family had been farmers for generations, and it was impossible to sell their land and run away.⁶⁷ The Whampoa admission presented an opportunity for their son to escape the war. At this point, two Nationalist artillery officers who were Whampoa graduates were stationed in their town. They persuaded Gao's parents that Wenjun could pursue a broad education at the Academy, where the curriculum had been reformed to include non-military courses. Wenjun's future would be "limitless," they said. After a discussion with family and clan members, Gao's parents made the difficult decision to let Wenjun go. One morning in August, they took Wenjun's hands and saw him off at the train station. That was Wenjun's last sight of his parents.⁶⁸

As the railroad had been disrupted by the Communists, Gao and other future cadets were flown from Shenyang to Jinzhou, where he saw the Nationalist troops busy building fortifications in preparation for the looming Communist attack. From Jinzhou they took a train to Qinhuangdao, and boarded ship for Shanghai. Then they took a riverboat upstream to Chongqing. On December 1, 1948 they formally enrolled at the Central Military Academy in Chengdu.⁶⁹ Here Yu Rongfu had been studying for a year.

In the same month that Gao Wenjun traveled to Chongqing on the Yangzi River, Zhang Zeshi, the Tsinghua dropout and newly trained Communist agent, also returned to Chongqing by boat. Zhang returned home to Sichuan with the express purpose of

⁶⁷ Decades after his departure from home, Gao heard that his family was classified as "rich peasant" by the Communists. Gao Wenjun, interview by author, January 10, 2010, San Francisco.

⁶⁸ Gao Wenjun, *Hanzhan yiwang*, 37. His parents passed away in the 1960s, and Gao Wenjun returned home for the first time in 1992. Gao, interview, January 10, 2010.

⁶⁹ Gao Wenjun, *Hanzhan yiwang*, 37-38. Yu Rongfu, Interrogation Report KG 0169, July 30, 1951, 1.

preparing for the planned “liberation” of Sichuan. Gao left home in Manchuria and came to Sichuan, partly as a way to escape the Communists. He did not anticipate that in a year he and other Whampoa cadets would become the final defenders of the Nationalist regime on the mainland, and prisoners of the new order.

1948-1949. Communist victories and the capture of three Taiwanese

As it turned out, Gao Wenjun left Shenyang just in time to escape the final collapse of the Nationalist defense in Manchuria. On September 12, 1948, the Communists launched the Liaoshen Campaign to eliminate Nationalist forces then isolated in Changchun, Jinzhou, and Shenyang areas. In late October when Gao Wenjun had just arrived in Chongqing, he learned that Changchun had fallen. Shenyang fell on November 2, one month before Gao’s formal enrollment at Whampoa. At the end of the 52-day Liaoshen Campaign, the Nationalist forces were totally crushed. In addition to 56,800 casualties, 324,300 men were captured, 90,900 defected (*qiyi*) or surrendered (*toucheng*). All together the Nationalists lost 470,200 men.⁷⁰

Among the 324,300 prisoners was the Taiwanese Chen Yonghua, who had escaped from Communist custody a year earlier. Actually Chen had barely missed the chance to escape. As the situation around Shenyang became desperate, the commander of the 207th division, General Luo Youlun, led the division to retreat toward Yingkou, where they could board Nationalist naval ships. However, the Communist cavalry cut the division in half west of Shenyang. General Luo and the front portion of the division made their way to Yingkou and were evacuated by sea. Unfortunately, Chen belonged to the

⁷⁰ Jiefangjun junshikexueyuan junshi lishi yanjiubu 解放军军事科学院军事历史研究部, *Zhongguo Renmin Jiefangjun quanguo jiefang zhanzhengshi* 中国人民解放军全国解放战争史 [The history of PLA's liberation of China], Vol. 4 (Beijing: Junshi kexue chubanshe 军事科学出版社, 1997), 215. Defected (*qiyi* 起義), surrendered (*toucheng* 投誠).

rear column, which was cut off and crushed.⁷¹ On October 29, a majority of the 207th Division surrendered to the Communist 39th Army. Chen and others hid for a few more days until they were finally captured on November 3, one day after the official conclusion of the Liaoshen Campaign.⁷²

Chen's captor was the same 116th Division, 39th Army, which had captured him a year earlier at Xinmin in northern Liaoning province. This time Chen had no chance of escaping again. Chen lamented, "By this time, all of Manchuria was under Communist control. Even the average people (*laobaixing*) were incorporated into their organizations. Therefore, the Communists were not afraid of prisoners running away. There was simply no place to go. Escapees were quickly apprehended and returned." After a brief period of imprisonment, Chen and other captives were released. In the ensuing two-week-long indoctrination course, political officers "brainwashed prisoners with Marxism, Leninism and Mao's Thought."⁷³ They were quickly integrated into the PLA 116th Division, and engaged in regular military training.

Chen Yonghua noticed one major difference between the Nationalist and Communist armies: "The PLA was better disciplined than the Nationalist army." While the Nationalist troops often robbed and harassed civilians, this kind of misconduct was "absolutely prohibited" in the PLA. When the Communist troops entered a village, they were sent to each household to help with household chores, such as carrying water from the well and sweeping the yard. Not surprisingly, "the PLA was much more popular than the Nationalist army." "As a result," Chen reasoned, "the PLA could easily mobilize a

⁷¹ Chen Yonghua, in *Shanghen xielei*, 247.

⁷² Chen Yonghua, Interrogation Report No. 3943, March 12, 1951, ATIS, 1.

⁷³ Chen Yonghua, in *Shanghen xielei*, 247.

large number of militia to assist with logistics or launch ‘human-wave attacks.’”⁷⁴ Clearly, Chen was impressed by the PLA in certain respects.

Soon after trouncing the Nationalists in Manchuria, General Lin Biao’s armies marched across the Great Wall in December, and encircled Beiping and Tianjin. Chen Yonghua’s 39th Army attacked and captured Tianjin. In January 1949, General Fu Zuoyi, the commanding general of the Nationalist army in Beiping, surrendered to the Communists without a fight. After decisively defeating the Nationalists in Liaoshen and Beijing-Tianjin Campaigns, Lin Biao’s Fourth Field Army swept southward. Chen Yonghua recalled, “We fought through Shandong, Anhui, Hubei, Hunan, Guizhou, Guangxi, and all the way to Zhennanguan” located on the Sino-Vietnamese border. Most impressively, they marched all the way from Manchuria to Guangxi, “all on foot!”⁷⁵ As a “liberated soldier” (*jiefang zhanshi*, a term for former Nationalist troops integrated into the PLA), Chen Yonghua literally “liberated” half of China.

While “liberated PLA soldier” Chen Yonghua was fighting, the idea that troops on the other side of the battlefield might be fellow Taiwanese probably crossed his mind. However, “there was absolutely no chance to think about this possibility,” Chen recalled. “If anyone hesitated when the order was issued, he would be arrested by other soldiers immediately.” Furthermore, every evening each small unit held “criticism sessions” to examine each individual’s actions and thoughts during the day. For those who wanted to join the Communist Party, daily performance was a key criterion. Those who performed poorly were segregated for reeducation. “Therefore,” Chen concluded, “everybody docilely followed orders and tried his best to perform, and dared not to think too

⁷⁴ Chen Yonghua, in *Shanghen xielei*, 248.

⁷⁵ Chen Yonghua, in *Shanghen xielei*, 248.

much.”⁷⁶ Evidently the difference between the Communist and Nationalist armies was not simply discipline of the body, but also of the mind.

As it turned out, most likely Chen Yonghua did not encounter Taiwanese troops on the Fourth Field Army’s sweep southward. The 62nd Army, in which Chen had initially served, was annihilated in Manchuria. The 70th Army, where many fellow Taiwanese, including Chen Qingbin and Wang Yingchang, served, was obliterated in the Huaihai Campaign. In this campaign that was launched immediately after the Liaoshen Campaign in Manchuria and lasted from November 6, 1948 to January 10, 1949, Communist forces commanded by Liu Bocheng, Deng Xiaoping, Chen Yi, and Su Yu, dealt a fatal blow to Chiang Kai-shek’s regime. The Nationalists lost 555,000 troops, including 320,000 captured, 35,000 surrendered, and 28,000 defected.⁷⁷

In January 1949, Wang Yingchang of the Nationalist 139th Division, 70th Army, was captured at Xuzhou, which was the center of the Huaihai Campaign. He was integrated into Chen Yi and Su Yu’s Third Field Army. In April the Communist forces crossed the Yangtze River and took over Nanjing on April 23. On May 27 Shanghai was captured. In June, presumably in an attempt to escape to Taiwan by sea, Wang “deserted but was captured in Shanghai.” He returned to his PLA unit, which continued to fight remaining Nationalist units in Zhejiang and Jiangsu provinces.⁷⁸

Chen Qingbin succeeded in escaping from the battle zone of the Huaihai Campaign. He made his way to Wu County west of Shanghai, where badly scattered 70th Army elements were reorganized in February 1949. He was reassigned to the Cavalry Company in the Nationalist 5th Army. By a strange stroke of fate, the 5th Army, minus the Cavalry Company, evacuated to Taiwan in May; the Cavalry Company and Chen were

⁷⁶ Chen Yonghua, in *Shanghen xielei*, 249.

⁷⁷ *Jiefang Zhanzheng Shi* 中国人民解放军全国解放战争史, 361.

⁷⁸ Wang Yingchang, Interrogation Report KG 0781, October 20, 1951, ATIS, 1.

transferred to Shangrao, Jiangxi, where he was taken prisoner by the PLA on June 20, 1949. After two weeks of Communist indoctrination, Chen Qingbin was assigned as a private in the Second Field Army.⁷⁹ His narrowly missed escape was almost like a replay of Chen Yonghua's misfortune in Shenyang in late 1948.

To the three Taiwanese soldiers, life was such a thin thread. What separated them from those who safely evacuated to Taiwan was a random unit assignment or troop formation. What lay between returning home and being taken prisoner was an accidental decision made by someone else. Fate seemed to take them farther and farther away from their homes. Now they were PLA soldiers in three different field armies heading in three directions in this unfamiliar "motherland." In fact, they were experiencing the greatest social upheaval in China's recent history. Their new leader, Mao Zedong, would dominate their lives for the next two years, and in Chen Qingbin's case, decades more.

1949. The PLA marches south and west: to flee or to join them?

On April 21, when the PLA was crossing the Yangzi River, Mao Zedong issued the "March to all China" order to all PLA troops and Communist guerrillas in the south. He commanded: "Charge ahead valiantly. Resolutely, completely, thoroughly, and totally annihilate all Nationalist reactionaries who dare to resist."⁸⁰ When the PLA had conquered Nanjing and was making its final attack on Shanghai, Mao mapped out plans for each of the four major field armies. The Third Field Army under Chen Yi and Su Yu should advance to Fujian along the coast. Lin Biao's Fourth Field Army should sweep south to take over Hubei, Hunan, Guangdong, and Guangxi. Once Shanghai was taken and if the U.S. did not intervene, the Second Field Army commanded by Liu Bocheng

⁷⁹ Chen Qingbin, Interrogation Report KG 0443, August 31, 1951, ATIS, 1.

⁸⁰ Mao Zedong and Zhu De's order to field armies and guerrillas, "Xiang quanguo jinjun de mingling" 向全国进军的命令, April 21, 1949, *Mao Zedong junshi wenji*, vol. 5, 548.

and Deng Xiaoping should depart from eastern China and advance west to capture Guizhou and Sichuan. Finally, the First Field Army should divide into two groups. Peng Dehuai should lead one group to take over the northwest, and He Long should lead another group to attack Sichuan from the north. Mao specifically instructed the Second Field Army to flank Sichuan from the south so as to cut off the escape route of Hu Zongnan's forces.⁸¹ Clearly, Sichuan was the final bastion of Nationalist resistance, and Mao planned to capture as many enemy troops as possible in Sichuan, lest they flee to the mountains in Yunnan and Tibet.

Mao was not simply a military strategist, but also a political visionary. As early as January 8, 1949, when the Communist forces had just defeated the Nationalists in Liaoshen and Huaihai Campaigns, Mao confidently predicted that from a military point of view, the Nationalist regime would be largely overthrown by spring 1949.⁸² He turned his attention from destroying the old order to building a new order, using the same tools: his party and his army. In February and March, Mao successively issued two orders, enjoining the PLA to “transform the army into work teams.”⁸³ He announced, “From now on, we will shift our work mode of ‘countryside first and city second’ to the reverse. The army is not only a fighting team, but also a work team. Military cadres should all learn to take over and manage cities.” However, the 53,000 cadres assigned to go south (*nanxia*) were “grossly insufficient” to govern “nine provinces and dozens of large cities.” Therefore, Mao declared, “The Army is a school, and the 2.1-million-strong field army is

⁸¹ Mao, order to field armies, May 23, 1949, *Mao Zedong junshi wenji*, vol. 5, 591-592.

⁸² Mao, “Current situation and the party's tasks in 1949,” January 8, 1949, *Mao Zedong junshi wenji* 毛泽东军事文集 [Collection of Mao Zedong's military papers], vol. 5 (Beijing: Junshi kexue chubanshe and Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1993), 471.

⁸³ Mao's order to field armies, “Ba jundui bianwei gongzuodui” 把军队变为工作队 [Transform the army into work teams], February 8, *Mao Zedong junshi wenji*, vol. 5, 495-496; and “Renmin Jiefangjun yongyuan shi yige zhandoudui youshi yige zongzuodui” 人民解放军永远是一个战斗队又是一个工作队 [The PLA will forever remain a fighting team and also a work team], March 5, 1949, *ibid.*, 513-516.

equivalent to thousands of universities and middle schools.” More importantly, “all cadres should be provided by the army itself.”⁸⁴ That is to say, the vast majority of government officials in the new regime would come from the military, and personnel in the Nationalist government would be made redundant. Under the new order, the main channel of upward social mobility would be through the army.

In Mao’s vision, military officers should also function as leaders of work teams; therefore they should learn to become “adept in mobilizing and organizing youths, uniting and training cadres in newly liberated areas.”⁸⁵ Many educated youths would be absorbed into the army, and they were to be trained as future cadres running the country. The Chinese Communist Party had a long tradition of training educated youths into cadres, either through a myriad of temporary training courses or schools such as the Political and Military Universities. As the Communists poised to take over south China, many youths looked forward to joining the ranks of the PLA, which was often seen as equivalent to the Communist government. While some sought to join the PLA as a career move, certainly some eager youths had already been Communist sympathizers even before the arrival of the Communist army. Then 21-year-old Tang Yao was one of them.

Tang was born into a small merchant family in the hilly Lanxi County in central Zhejiang.⁸⁶ During a Japanese aerial bombing in 1937, his father was so shocked that he developed a mental disorder. His grandfather, a *xiucai*-turned-merchant, wished Tang Yao to inherit the family business, a paper and firecracker store. However, Yao was never interested in business; instead he enjoyed learning. The Japanese invasion of Lanxi in 1942 interrupted his education, as the family went to hiding in the mountains for two years. When the war ended, Tang studied at home during the day and took evening

⁸⁴ Mao’s order to field armies, February 8, 1949, *Mao Zedong junshi wenji*, vol. 5, 495-496. *Nanxia* 南下: Communist cadres went south with the PLA to run government at all levels.

⁸⁵ Mao’s order to field armies, February 8, 1949, *Mao Zedong junshi wenji*, vol. 5, 495.

⁸⁶ Tang Yao 唐耀, interview by author, November 21, 2009, and May 26, 2010, Shanghai.

courses. In 1946, he became a clerk in the county government dealing with civil affairs. From a young age, Tang Yao had been greatly influenced by an uncle who went to Fudan University and became a writer, and was in fact an underground Communist. In March 1949, he induced Tang Yao to “join the revolution.” In May, Tang Yao served as a guide and led the PLA troops to “liberate” Lanxi. He joined the 12th Army and became a probational clerk in the Security Department, writing documents related to internal security and discipline. From July to December, Tang received training at the 12th Army’s cadres’ school. During the 12th Army’s campaign to take over Sichuan, Tang’s literary talent and prudent character were noticed by commanding officers at the army headquarters. Eventually he was promoted to the rank of platoon leader, working as the commanding generals’ secretary dealing with confidential materials (*jiyao mishu*).⁸⁷ It appeared that Tang was on the fast track to a promising career in the Communist system.

On October 1, 1949, standing on Tian’anmen, Mao proclaimed the founding of the People’s Republic of China. Mao’s top lieutenants, including Liu Bocheng and Deng Xiaoping, enjoyed this triumphant moment beside him. Soon after, Liu and Deng returned to their headquarters in Nanjing. On October 20, they launched the long-planned campaign to take over Sichuan. The Second Field Army marched west. A week earlier, the Nationalist government had relocated from Guangzhou to Chongqing. On November 14, Chiang Kai-shek flew from Taiwan to Chongqing with his son Chiang Ching-kuo. Apparently Chiang was hoping for another miraculous survival of his government in Sichuan, as it had outlasted the Japanese invaders in the War of Resistance from 1937 to 1945. However, this time Chiang’s idea proved to be wishful thinking. Half a million hastily assembled Nationalist troops were no match for the spirited Communist forces.

⁸⁷ Tang Yao, interview, November 21, 2009, Shanghai. *Jiyao mishu* 機要秘書.

In October, the PLA 12th Army, to which Zhejiang native Tang Yao and Taiwanese Chen Qingbin belonged, departed from its bases in Anhui and headed toward Chongqing through Hubei province.⁸⁸ The Nationalist defense in Hubei quickly crumbled. The Hubei provincial government, then temporarily based in western Hubei town Enshi, had to withdraw into Sichuan. In addition to government employees, there were more than two thousand student refugees, who had withdrawn from Wuhan to Enshi with the government in May. These students were mostly sons and daughters of landlords and the rich (*difu zidi*). Provincial Governor Zhu Dingqing hurriedly created a training regiment (*jiaodaotuan*) to incorporate half of the students into his hodgepodge Nationalist 3rd Army Group. The remaining one thousand students were led by officials to escape into Sichuan. Apparently, the governor was trying to replicate the epic march of student refugees during the war against Japan, when hundreds of thousands of students fled from advancing Japanese troops and walked to Sichuan, the safe haven of Free China. However, this time the mountains in western Hubei and eastern Sichuan could not stop the Communists.

Yan Tianzhi, a 15-year-old boy from the remote Xianfeng County in southwestern Hubei, was in Governor Zhu's student training regiment. Soon after starting his first year in senior high school, it was announced that the school would be evacuated west. Students were given two choices: go home or follow the army. Yao figured that it would be unsafe to travel nearly 100 km in mountains from Enshi to Xiangfeng. So he decided to follow the army. Yan remembered that the training regiment included several thousand students of elementary, junior and senior high school ages. By the time the unwieldy army of students embarked, the Communists had already occupied the main road to Sichuan. So they had to trek on mountain roads through circuitous routes in

⁸⁸ Chen Qingbin, Interrogation Report KG 0443, August 31, 1951, ATIS, 1.

western Hubei, and eastern and northern Sichuan. After wandering through half of Sichuan, passing through Da County, Yilong, and Guang'an, they finally reached Chengdu in November.⁸⁹ In Chengdu their exodus would come to an end.

On the morning of November 30, Chiang Kai-shek made a last-minute exit from Chongqing to Chengdu by plane. Hours later, the PLA Second Field Army took over Chongqing. The PLA continued to march west, rapidly outflanking Chengdu from south. In the meantime, Nationalist general Hu Zongnan's army groups belatedly began retreating from the Qinling Mountains toward Chengdu. Behind them the PLA 18th Army Group commanded by General He Long pursued them closely. The Communists forces were poised to encircle Nationalist troops in the Chengdu area and annihilate them. Facing the imminent fall of Chengdu, Chiang Kai-shek made final arrangements for the defense of Chengdu and more importantly, the escape of his best troops commanded by Hu Zongnan. During his final days in Chengdu, Chiang headquartered in the Whampoa Building on the campus of the Central Military Academy. Whampoa cadets were posted as sentries for him. Manchurian Yu Rongfu and Gao Wenjun both remembered that Chiang made roll calls and gave a speech to the cadets.⁹⁰ In theory, Chiang was the commandant (*xiaozhang*) of all Whampoa Cadets and he was known to trust and favor Whampoa graduates. This time Chiang designed an exit strategy for the nearly 20,000 cadets, but it turned out to be a fiasco.⁹¹

At 2 p.m., December 10, 1949, Chiang's plane took off in Chengdu and headed to Taiwan. It was his final day on mainland China. A week later, the Central Military

⁸⁹ Yan Tianzhi 嚴天秩, interview by author, May 5, 2010, Taipei. Xianfeng 咸豐.

⁹⁰ Yu Rongfu, interview, July 4, 2010, Taipei; Gao Wenjun, interview, January 10, 2010, San Francisco; Gao Wenjun, *Hanzhan yiwang*, 39-40.

⁹¹ Yu's estimate was 15,000 cadets; Gao's was more than 10,000. Other estimates go near 30,000, see Yao Guojun 姚國俊, "Wo yu junxiao Guan Linzheng he Zhang Yaoming" 我與軍校關麟征和張耀明 [My relationship with military academy's [presidents] Guan Linzheng and Zhang Yaoming], in *Sichuan wenshi ziliao xuanji* 四川文史資料選輯, vol. 19 (Chengdu, 1979), 177. *Xiaozhang*: 校長.

Academy abandoned its plans to defend Chengdu in street battles; instead more than 15,000 cadets evacuated toward Dayi County located west of Chengdu. Gao Wenjun's artillery column rolled out of Chengdu, and cadets took turns riding in vehicles. Other columns marched. Gao's semi-motorized column first arrived in the walled city of Dayi. After midnight it came under mortar attack. One mortar shell exploded in Gao's formation and killed a cadet instantly.⁹² The next morning Yu's column arrived at the gate of Dayi, and it was attacked by defected Nationalist troops. Apparently enemy snipers mainly aimed at officers dressed in khaki uniforms, while they spared cadets dressed in grey. Soon the defending cadets ran out of bullets, and they found that two commanding officers had been killed. Fortunately, these skirmishes did not escalate into all-out battle.⁹³ In the meantime, several other Whampoa units had declared defection to the Communists.⁹⁴ While being pressured by Communists forces from the north, the remaining loyal Nationalist troops found that their escape route to the west and south was cut off by defected Nationalist units. So they had to return west toward Chengdu.

At this critical moment, the director of the Academy Zhang Yaoming appeared before the cadets.⁹⁵ He encouraged them to fight on, and vowed to live and die along with them. Listening to his speech, Gao Wenjun was moved. The next morning, however, cadets found out that Zhang had abandoned them and flown to Taiwan.⁹⁶ In fact General Hu Zongnan, Chiang's favorite general, entrusted to lead the final battle in Chengdu, had

⁹² Gao Wenjun, *Hanzhan yiwang*, 39-41.

⁹³ Yu Rongfu, interview, July 4, 2010, Taipei; Gao Wenjun, interview, January 10, 2010, San Francisco; Gao Wenjun, *Hanzhan yiwang*, 38-39.

⁹⁴ Xu Youchang 徐幼常, "Guomindang lujun junguan xuexiao miwang qianhou jilue" 国民党陸軍軍官學校滅亡前後紀略 [Events before and after the final collapse of the KMT Military Academy], in *Sichuan wenshi ziliao xuanji* 四川文史資料選輯, vol. 19 (Chengdu, 1979), 183-185.

⁹⁵ Since Chiang was the Commandant (*xiaozhang*), the actual head was entitled Director (*zhuren*). But informally the director was often referred as *xiaozhang*.

⁹⁶ Gao Wenjun, *Hanzhan yiwang*, 41-42.

flown to Hainan Island one day earlier.⁹⁷ In desperation, Gao's column commander, Li Yunzhong, led cadets toward Xinjin Airport, hoping to catch a flight to Taiwan. When they approached the airport, Hu Zongnan's remaining troops, who were guarding the airport fired at the cadets. Their last hope of escape was dashed. The cadets abandoned their weapons and returned to their campus in Chengdu.⁹⁸

On December 25, Hu Zongnan's main units were annihilated west of Chengdu. The mayor of Chengdu announced the formation of a "temporary order-maintenance committee" to prepare for the arrival of the Communists.⁹⁹ On December 26, Hubei governor Zhu Dingqing and his ragtag Nationalist 3rd Army Group surrendered to the PLA 180th Division, 60th Army. Standing before young students of the training regiment, Zhu told them that there were no other options but to surrender. Facing such an outcome, many students wept, student soldier Yan Tianzhi recalled. Finally, on December 30, Gao Wenjun read the surrender announcement written by his column commander Li Yunzhong in a local newspaper. In shock, Gao and his fellow cadets broke down in tears.¹⁰⁰

Unmistakably Chiang Kai-shek's era had come to an end, and the Communists had won the civil war. For people like Gao Wenjun and Yan Tianzhi it was a tearful moment. Yet, for others, it was a moment of joy and hope.

1949. The homecoming of a "liberated soldier"

At 10 a.m., December 30, 1949, General He Long led more than 50,000 victorious troops of the PLA 18th Army Group parading into the city of Chengdu. Three hundred thousand residents poured into the streets along the 10 km long route.

⁹⁷ Wang Chaoguang, *Zhongguo mingyun de juezhuan (1945-1949)*, 513.

⁹⁸ Gao Wenjun, *Hanzhan yiwang*, 41-43.

⁹⁹ Chronology in *Sichuan wenshi ziliao xuanji* 四川文史資料選輯, vol. 18 (Chengdu, 19xx), 41.

¹⁰⁰ Gao Wenjun, *Hanzhan yiwang*, 41-43.

Representatives from the underground Communists, workers, and student organizations staged performances to welcome the troops. Amid the sound of firecrackers and people's cheers of "Long live Chairman Mao!" "Victory!" and "Liberation!", PLA units entered the city. At the very front of the column were tanks, and they were followed by formations of heavy artillery, infantry, and cavalry. All weapons looked well-maintained, and all soldiers appeared well-nourished and high-spirited. Exuberant troops sang revolutionary songs such as "The East is Red" and "The Sky in Liberated Areas is Bright," and student activists on two sides of the streets responded by joining the chorus.¹⁰¹

Standing in the crowd, Yu Rongfu, who was still dressed in his Whampoa cadet uniform, watched this grand display of Communist force. "The Nationalist regime had collapsed for sure." This recognition finally sank in. Yu conceded that he was impressed by the parade. But he believed that most of the modern weaponry was recently captured from General Hu Zongnan's army.¹⁰² Indeed many of the new weapons were captured. Moreover, some of the PLA troops were formerly Nationalist soldiers under Hu Zongnan. He Rui, a 17-year-old Sichuan native, was one of them. Just four months before in Shaanxi province He Rui had been captured by the PLA. The next day his captors handed him a rifle and he began fighting against the Nationalists. Today, He marched into Chengdu, the city where he had once worked as an unpaid apprentice. With his comrades and the crowd, he sang and shouted slogans.¹⁰³ To He, this return to Chengdu was a homecoming of the best kind. This was his moment.

He Rui sincerely believed that he was coming back to liberate his fellow "poor and suffering" people in Sichuan. Born into a moderately well-off family, He Rui's

¹⁰¹ Chengdushi zhengxie wenshi ziliao yanjiu weiyuanhui 成都市政協文史資料研究委員會, "Chengdushi renmin relie huanying Jiefangjun rucheng" 成都市人民熱烈歡迎解放軍入城 [People of Chengdu warmly welcomed the PLA to enter Chengdu], in *Sichuan wenshi ziliao xuanji* 四川文史資料選輯, vol. 18 (Chengdu, 1979), 195-198.

¹⁰² Yu Rongfu, interview, July 4, 2010, Taipei.

¹⁰³ He Rui 何瑞, interview by author, October 21, 2009, Chengdu, China.

experience of descending to a “poor and suffering” person illustrates the precarious life chances of the common people under the Nationalist regime. His conversion to a believer of the Communist agenda demonstrates the persuasive power of the Chinese Communist ideology and methods. He Rui grew up in a market town in Qingshen County in southwestern Sichuan. His father, a Big Brother in the local *Paoge* (Sichuan’s secret society), had accumulated a small fortune from the opium trade when he was young, then operated a restaurant and bought some land. He Rui enjoyed a worry-free childhood. When he was fourteen, however, his father died of illness and the family fortune declined rapidly. He went to Chengdu to work as an apprentice in machine shops. Apprentices were not paid and were sometimes beaten by their bosses. Moreover, He often went hungry. Finding these abuses unbearable, He decided to return home, only to find out that the local government was forcibly drafting young men.¹⁰⁴

After witnessing a neighbor cutting off his own index finger in a desperate attempt to avoid conscription, He Rui decided to prepare for the worst. When the local police and security men came to take him away, He pulled out a hammer hidden in his clothes and smacked the face of a policeman. But before he could escape, he was overpowered and arrested. In the next few months, in conscript training centers at various levels, He endured and witnessed some of the most dehumanizing treatment. To prevent desertion, draftees were under watch all the time, even when they went to the restroom. If caught, escapees were punished severely. One fellow draftee was struck with shoulder poles for an alleged escape attempt. Before forty strokes were completed, this poor man was almost dead. He was so terrified that he never thought of escape again.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ He Rui, *Bukanhuishou de huishou* 不堪回首的回首 [A past too sad to recall] (Unpublished memoir, 2001), 9-18.

¹⁰⁵ He Rui, *Bukanhuishou de huishou*, 19-23.

Just as Taiwanese Chen Yonghua had experienced in the Nationalist army stationed in Taiwan, food was also in perpetual short supply in He's case. To fill their stomachs, draftees had to race to their second bowl of rice. Meat dishes only appeared twice a month. Living conditions were horrendous. For several months, He Rui and his fellow conscripts were not allowed to take a bath. Fleas were rampant. "With each swat, I could catch one flea or two," He recalled. Less than ten days after the detention began, draftees contracted scabies. When they scratched, sores began to fester badly. Yet the authorities provided no treatment.¹⁰⁶ Evidently the conscripts' personal hygiene was of no concern to the officers, nor were their lives.

In winter 1948, He and other conscripts were handed to General Hu Zongnan's unit. Guarded by a dozen armed soldiers, 87 conscripts in He's company marched on foot from Chengdu to Baoji, Shaanxi. At the end of the twenty-nine-day trek, eight conscripts had died of hunger, disease or exhaustion. One day, He recalled, an 18-year-old draftee collapsed and died on the road. He was stripped of his uniform and tossed into a roadside ditch unburied. The company just marched on. To make up for the lost headcount, the guards captured random men aged from teens to forties, and at gunpoint dragged them into the ranks of conscripts. Finally, the company arrived in Shaanxi and He was assigned to the Nationalist 38th Army. In General Hu's regular "Central Army" (*zhongyangjun*), there was enough food to fill the stomach. However, life was no better. Only a few days later, He was beaten for misplacing the cap on a machine gun barrel. Prostrating on the ground, He endured eight strokes of wooden stick carried out by his squad leader. As if that was not enough, his platoon leader ordered that He was not allowed to eat lunch. That was his first taste of the regular Nationalist army.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ He Rui, interview by author, October 21, 2009, Chengdu, China.

¹⁰⁷ He Rui, *Bukanhuishou de huishou*, 22-24.

He's unit soon began a series of losing battles against the Communists. In summer 1949, the advancing PLA totally crushed He's unit. Along with other stragglers, He fled into the Qinling Mountain. Eventually He found his unit in Feng County, where he witnessed the random killing of a soldier by his officer. When a straggling soldier returned to his unit, the tempestuous commander fired two shots at him from behind. One bullet hit him in the back of the head; he fell, rolling on the ground with his mouth wide open.¹⁰⁸ This unwarranted killing once again convinced He of the wickedness of the Nationalist regime.

Two weeks later, while guarding their posts in the mountain, in broad daylight He's unit was overrun by the PLA. Hiding in a fortification, He heard the enemy troops calling for surrender: "We are the Chinese People's Liberation Army. We don't beat or insult people (*bu daren, bu maren*). Come out and surrender." Another said, "You are all sons of the working people. We are going to liberate all of China, so poor people will not suffer any more." For the first time, He heard a Communist speaking and he was quite touched. "I am here!" He yelled and jumped out of the trench. One PLA soldier warmly greeted He, "Hey, little guy (*xiaogui*), come over here. You have not eaten, right? Have some rations and water." Another PLA soldier patted his head and spoke as if knew him, "You have gone through a lot of hardships (*xinkule*). How old are you?" "Sixteen." "Great, we are going to liberate Sichuan and your hometown." Although at the time He did not understand the meaning of "liberate," he immediately felt affinity to these PLA soldiers speaking northern dialect. In the afternoon, the PLA company political officer asked He if he wanted to join the PLA. He eagerly agreed. He pulled off the Nationalist insignia on his cap, and became a PLA soldier.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ He Rui, interview by author, October 21, 2009, Chengdu, China.

¹⁰⁹ He Rui, *Bukanhuishou de huishou*, 26-27. He Rui, interview, October 21, 2009, Chengdu. *Bu daren, bu maren* 不 打 人 不 骂 人, *xiaogui* 小鬼; *xinkule* 辛苦了.

The next day, He's company commander handed him a Japanese-made rifle. In the same afternoon, He and his squad captured six Nationalist stragglers. In their evening group meeting, officers commended He effusively. In contrast to his experience in the Nationalist army, where he received nothing but verbal and physical abuse, 16-year-old He received proper recognition for the first time in his adult life. To He, the difference between the PLA and the Nationalist army was like night and day. In addition to the friendliness of the officers, food quality was another major improvement. Before their final invasion of Sichuan, the PLA troops enjoyed fantastic food: a different menu each day, four dishes and one soup each meal, meat dishes each meal [sic]. And Sundays were the dumpling days. When He had dumplings for the first time, he ate 120 of them!¹¹⁰ It seemed that everything went beyond He's wildest dreams.

To He Rui another major difference between the Nationalist and Communist armies was how discipline was enforced. In the PLA, "thought work" (*sixiang gongzuo*), or persuasion and indoctrination, was the main method; the Nationalist army relied on physical punishment and verbal abuse.¹¹¹ Three months after joining the PLA, He ran afoul of PLA regulations. In December 1949, He's unit marched south in pursuit of Hu Zongnan's army. One day during the march He spotted his former squad leader limping along other injured Nationalist prisoners. This particular man had viciously beaten He and other soldiers before. He jumped out of his line, pointed his finger at this man and shouted at him. Before he could strike him, his PLA squad leader stopped him and reminded him of the famous "Three Main Points of Discipline and Eight Items of Instructions of the PLA," which specifically prohibited mistreating prisoners. He's squad leader told him, "You broke discipline because you broke rank and you scolded the man."

¹¹⁰ He Rui, *Bukanhuishou de huishou*, 27-28.

¹¹¹ *Sixiang gongzuo* 思想工作.

In that evening's "squad affair meeting," He made self-criticism before fellow troops.¹¹² He came to realize that the PLA was serious about its regulations and its promise to protect civilians and prisoners.

He found group meetings, the hallmark Chinese Communist approach to disciplining soldiers, more civilized and effective than the Nationalists' crude methods of physical punishment. Even 60 years later, He still fondly remembered the "Three Major Democracies" practiced in the PLA: political, economic, and military democracies.¹¹³ Certainly, the meaning of "democracy" in the Chinese Communist terminology is fundamentally different from how democracy is understood in the West. The Chinese Communists often equate "Democracy" with "democratic [work] style" (*minzhu zuofeng*), i.e., allowing the masses to speak and participate in activities that are sanctioned and directed from above.¹¹⁴ It is premised on the denial of the rights of certain elements of the population, who are excluded from the body of "the people" or "the masses." However illiberal this kind of "democracy," for individuals like He Rui, who had never experienced respect in their lives, not to mention participation, the Communists invited them to be part of "the people," and encouraged them to speak up. Even if their participation was heavily guided, they felt empowered. The sense of ownership and solidarity as a member of "the poor and suffering people" was profoundly powerful. Six months later, He Rui would become a Communist Party member. A year later in Korea, he would lead suicide attacks on enemy tanks with hand grenades. No doubt, He was a true convert.

¹¹² He Rui, *Bukanhuishou de huishou*, 28-29.

¹¹³ He Rui, interview, October 21, 2009, Chengdu.

¹¹⁴ *Minzhu zuofeng* 民主作風.

Conclusion

If Zhang Zeshi's conversion to Communism was a classic example of the intellectual and emotional appeal of Communism to idealistic youths, He Rui was a textbook case of how the Chinese Communist Party and the People's Liberation Army attracted individuals among "the poor and suffering people" and converted them into highly disciplined and motivated Communist soldiers. His personal experience of family tragedy, economic hardship, forced conscription, and abuses in the army were common for many people during the final years of the Nationalist regime. That partly explains the popularity of the Communists.

Nevertheless, there were people who were more fortunate and they did not go through all the horrific experiences that He Rui went through. Even among the people who shared similar experiences, not all of them would necessarily attribute their suffering to the old regime. In addition, while He found the Communist "thought work" effective and "democratic," others found it hollow and unbearable.

Divergent responses to the Communist ideology and methods would continue to develop in 1950, when the Communists carried out thought reform on millions of former Nationalist personnel. Some of these men were converted like He Rui, yet others were not. Under the Communist regime, this divergence was suppressed under a surface of conformity. However, it would explode into life-and-death struggles in the prison camps in Korea.

**New Comrades in the PLA:
Reformed Nationalist Troops and New Recruits in 1950**

In the Southwest, our task for 1950 could be summed up in several figures: 900,000, 900,000, 60,000,000, and 600,000. The first 900,000 is the number of Nationalist troops who have defected, surrendered, and those who were captured. How to digest, place, reform, and educate them is a major issue. Another 900,000 is the number of bandits, who must be eliminated . . . 60,000,000 is the number of the basic masses, accounting for 90 percent of the total population. [We] need to mobilize them to implement land reforms. Finally we need to improve the quality of the 600,000 troops of the PLA.

—Deng Xiaoping, *January 17, 1950, Chongqing*.¹

By the end of the Southwest Campaign, which culminated in the capture of Chengdu on December 27, 1949, the PLA had captured approximately 400,000 Nationalist troops. Combined with 532,000 troops in defected units, the total number of ex-Nationalist troops under Communist control totaled 932,600, which amounted to the largest number during the entire civil war. Moreover, they belonged to a bewildering assortment of units, which numbered more than 100.² Certainly both the size and composition of these Nationalist troops presented a daunting challenge to the Communists.

¹ Deng Xiaoping, *Deng Xiaoping zishu* 邓小平自述 [In Deng Xiaoping's own words] (Beijing: Jiefangjun chubanshe 解放军出版社, 2005), 128-131; Zhonggong Chongqing shiwei dangshi yanjiushi 中共重庆市委党史研究室, *Deng Xiaoping yu Daxianan 1949-1952* 邓小平与大西南: 1949-1952 [Deng Xiaoping and the Greater Southwest] (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe 中央文献出版社, 2000), 466.

² Wang Xinting 王新亭, *Wang Xinting huiyilu* 王新亭回忆录 [The memoirs of Wang Xinting], 2nd edition (Beijing: Jiefangjun chubanshe 解放军出版社, 2008), 436, 447. Wang was the Deputy Commander of the PLA 18th Army Group.

By the end of the reindoctrination period in late 1950, captured former Nationalist personnel seemed to have completely surrendered to their captors, physically, emotionally, and for some, intellectually. The Communists seemed to have successfully reformed former Nationalist personnel and young students. However, while the Communist ideology and methods won some converts, others remain unconvinced. Deep-rooted dissent continued to develop among certain individuals, although suppressed under a surface of complete submission. A year later in prison camps in Korea, divergent ideological beliefs compounded by personal hatred exploded into life-and-death factional struggles. In this mini-civil war, both the Communist and anti-Communist prisoners built similar organizations and employed similar methods of control and struggle. In a sense, before the Korean War, these future prisoner leaders shared similar experiences and developed similar skills, but they had formed divergent assessments of the Communist rule.

This chapter examines the reindoctrination experiences of Nationalist officers, Whampoa cadets, and enlisted men. Some of these former Nationalist personnel became anti-Communist leaders or activists in Korea, while others emerged as pro-Communist activists. In addition, this chapter studies the experiences of newly recruited young students who joined the PLA after the Communist victory. Many of these young people became pro-Communist activists in Korea. Finally, the histories of several veteran Communist officers are also discussed. Most of these men emerged as Communist prisoner leaders, but one veteran Communist became an important anti-Communist leader.

In 1949 and 1950 these individuals of vastly different backgrounds converged in Sichuan, and they became soldiers of the PLA 60th and 12th Armies, which suffered the heaviest casualties in Korea in spring 1951, resulting in the largest number of troops

captured by UN forces. Therefore this study focuses on prisoners from these two armies, especially reindoctrinated ex-Nationalist personnel and new recruits in 1950.

1949-1950. Reforming former Nationalist troops: Mao and Deng's policies

How to reform and digest nearly one million former enemy troops was an extremely complex and politically sensitive task. Deng Xiaoping, then the top leader in the southwest, warned his officers that the “battle” was not over yet, and the burden was still very heavy. Deng announced that the basic guideline was to follow Chairman Mao’s “take them all” (*baoxialai*) approach, which entailed “centralized reorganization, careful reform, differential targeting, and step-by-step disposal.” This solution could ensure the proper placement of former Nationalist troops, “lest they disband in four directions and become Chiang Kai-shek’s bandits.”³

Mao had outlined policies regarding reforming Nationalist troops as early as March 1949, soon after winning three major campaigns in the north. While the PLA annihilated the enemy in battle in Tianjin, Mao predicted that peaceful surrenders like the Beiping case would become prevalent. The Beiping solution required the PLA “through peaceful means to force enemy troops to follow our system and reorganize into the People’s Liberation Army, rapidly and thoroughly.” Mao recognized the fact that “in terms of quickly cleansing counterrevolutionary vestiges and influences,” the Beiping solution was not as effective as outright battle. However, he enjoined his generals, “This is a way of struggle, a bloodless struggle. It is not a solution without struggle.” The third model was the Suiyuan model, in which the PLA would allow defected Nationalist units to remain largely intact for several months before undergoing thorough reorganization. Although the third model allowed “counter-revolutionary vestiges and influences to

³ Wang Xinting, *Wang Xinting huiyilu*, 435-436. *Baoxialai* 包下來.

remain longer,” Mao declared, “there is no doubt, they will be cleansed in the end.” Mao emphasized:

We should not think that once the counterrevolutionaries submit to us, they will become revolutionaries, and their counterrevolutionary thoughts and ambitions will be gone. That is absolutely not the case. Many of them will be reformed; some of them will be made redundant; and some committed counterrevolutionaries will be suppressed.⁴

In essence, regardless of which model was applied, in the end all former Nationalist personnel would be subject to reforms carried out by the PLA. All reactionary thoughts and influences had to be cleansed; all recalcitrant resisters had to be suppressed, or physically eliminated. Under this overarching principle, however, in practice the Communists took a more nuanced approach.

In accordance with Mao’s policy guidelines, the Southwest Military Region, the highest military authorities during the immediate post-civil war period, differentiated defected (*qiyi*) and surrendered (*toucheng*) Nationalist troops into four categories and treated them differently. (1) Regional armies controlled by strongmen Liu Wenhui, Deng Xihou, and Lu Han, would be allowed to keep their original units temporarily, but PLA work teams would direct their reorganization. (2) Units with direct ties to Chiang Kai-shek, or the so-called Central Army, which “had the largest number of troops and were most influenced by counterrevolutionary education,” would be merged into the PLA immediately, and their officers would be reeducated at centralized training institutions. (3) Troops in units that were hastily assembled during the final turmoil in 1949 would be screened. The old, weak, and peasants were to be sent home. Officers would be reformed in special schools, and the rest integrated into the PLA, including “hooligans” (*liumang fenzi*). (4) Local armed forces and guerrillas were to be transferred to other locations for reeducation. Peasants would be sent home and officers would be reformed in special

⁴ Mao, “The PLA will always be a fighting team and a work team,” speech to the CCP Central Committee, March 5, 1949, in *Mao Zedong junshi wenji* 毛泽东军事文集, vol. 5, 513-514.

schools. A small number of good performers would be absorbed into the local militia. But vagrants (*youmin fenzi*) would be integrated into the regular army for further reform. Finally, the fifth category was captured troops. Soldiers would be integrated into the PLA, and officers sent to Officer Prisoners' Unit for further reform.⁵

Three features stand out in the Communists' approach. First, irrespective of which category a Nationalist unit fell into, the inevitable final outcome involved careful screening, thorough reindoctrination and complete integration into the PLA. The only difference was only a matter of schedule. Second, for the Nationalist personnel, the PLA's policy in a nutshell was: "soldiers were to be integrated into the PLA, and officers were to be educated in special schools."⁶ The officers would be segregated from their units and they had to undergo reeducation in institutions such as the Officer Prisoners' Unit or Military and Political Universities. Upon completion of their indoctrination courses, few high-ranking officers were allowed to return to the army, and mid- and low-ranking officers were mostly demoted to serve in the PLA.

Third, the Communists took pains to keep the undesirables, such as hooligans and vagrants, within the PLA, instead of letting them loose. The Communists had probably learned a lesson from the Nationalists' failure in Manchuria in 1946, when the Nationalist government neglected former Manchukuo troops and many jobless soldiers ended up joining the Communists or bandits. Apparently the Communists believed it was better to keep these undesirables under watch in the PLA than to allow them the opportunity to join the insurgents. However, a year later when PLA units embedded with these undesirable elements went to Korea, some of these men would take the first

⁵ Wang Xinting, *Wang Xinting huiyilu*, 437-438. *Liumang fenzi* 流氓分子, *Youmin fenzi* 游民分子.

⁶ Chengdu difangzhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 成都市地方志編纂委員會, ed., *Chengdushi zhi: junshi zhi* 成都市志·軍事志 [Chengdu gazetteer: military gazetteer] (Chengdu: Sichuan daxue chubanshe, 1997), 239.

opportunity to surrender to UN forces. In UN prison camps some emerged as anti-Communist leaders. Back in late 1949 and early 1950, perhaps few Communist leaders in the Southwest could have predicted China's participation in a foreign war, not to mention such a policy outcome.

1950. Reorganization and indoctrination methods: the case of the 95th Army

Following Mao and Deng's guidelines, the Southwest Military Region dispatched four work teams under the name of "military representatives groups" to various large Nationalist units. In addition, each sub-military region also sent its own work teams to Nationalist units that had surrendered locally. The Western Sichuan Military Region, which was operated by the PLA 60th Army, inherited the heaviest workload. It had to reorganize 88 units.⁷ The largest and most important one was the Nationalist 95th Army, which was formerly controlled by Sichuan strongman Deng Xihou and had 1,531 officers, 11,189 soldiers, and 1,685 family dependents to be integrated.⁸ Following the Communist categorization of different types of Nationalist units, the 95th Army belonged to the regional army group and was treated accordingly. The integration and reindoctrination process of the 95th Army clearly illustrates the standard Communist approaches and methods for reforming Nationalist troops, especially the enlisted men.

After the 95th Army's defection to the Communists on December 11, 1949, it remained intact initially.⁹ Its designation was not changed until June 1950. From December 1949, as an element of the PLA, the 95th Army fought against Nationalist

⁷ Wang Xinting, *Wang Xinting huiyilu*, 439.

⁸ *Chengdushi zhi: junshi zhi*, 240.

⁹ Liu Wenhui, Deng Xihou, and Pan Wenhua declared their "uprising" on 11, but in their declaration they backdated the event to 9. See Wang Chaoguang, *Zhongguo mingyun de juezhuan (1945-1949)*, 511.

guerrillas in “bandit-suppression campaigns” in western Sichuan.¹⁰ Then on March 12, 1950 a PLA “military representatives group” consisting of 30 Communist officers entered the 95th Army, and soon another 250 officers joined them. First, the Communist work teams created “military committees” at all levels to replace the old the chain of command. Soon, the 95th Army was totally restructured and its personnel completely reshuffled. Top generals were mostly transferred to outside positions. Company-level officers and above were all centralized to one location to undergo “education on the situation and the future.” Officers’ dependents were organized to undergo “education through study, production, and labor.”¹¹ Clearly, the Communists aimed to completely demolish the old power structure by removing the officers from their positions.

To the Nationalist rank and file, the Communist program seemed refreshing. The PLA work teams implemented “Three Democracies,” which involved political, economic, and military “democracies.” They announced a number of measures popular among the troops. Beating and scolding of soldiers were no longer allowed. Embezzlement over “ghost headcount” was outlawed. Soldiers’ living standards improved. In the meantime, work teams launched the movement to compare the Nationalist and Communist armies. They mobilized soldiers to “air grievances” (*suku*) against the old society and the old army. They also taught soldiers Communist class theory to raise their class-consciousness.¹² These reform measures and indoctrination programs quickly produced the desired result. General Wang Xinting, a top PLA general in western Sichuan, claimed: “The vast majority of the soldiers rapidly developed class awareness. They enthusiastically requested to be rid of their Nationalist hats and unit names as early as

¹⁰ Lo, Shih Ch’ing (Luo Shiqing) 羅世清, Interrogation Report KG 0565, September 15, 1951, U.S. National Archives/Record Group 554/Records of the Far East Command, 1950-52/Records of the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2, Far East Command/ATIS Interrogation Reports (hereafter ATIS), 1.

¹¹ *Chengdushi zhi: junshi zhi*, 239-240.

¹² *Ibid.*, 239. *Suku* 訴苦.

possible, so they could become proud PLA soldiers.”¹³ By the end of September 1950, all defected Nationalist units had been reformed and integrated into the PLA.¹⁴

However, shedding Nationalist uniforms and becoming PLA soldiers was not the end of thought reform, but the beginning of more indoctrination. In contrast to the Nationalist army’s crude and often abusive disciplinary methods, the Communist approach was remarkably nonviolent, yet it was unrelenting and effective. It was largely nonviolent because outright force was unnecessary when desired results could be achieved through thought control, with the threat of violence looming large in the far background. The primary mechanisms of thought control were group meetings, self-criticism and mutual criticism.

To former Nationalist troops, the most striking feature of the Communist methods was the extraordinary number of meetings and discussions they had to go through in their daily lives. In these meetings, they had to perform self-criticism and mutual criticism repeatedly. Luo Shiqing, a former clerk at the rank of Second Lieutenant in the 95th Army, now a Cultural Instructor at the rank equivalent to a platoon leader in the PLA 60 Army, described the myriad of meetings in his new unit. First of all, there were daily lectures by Political Instructors, who were the company and battalion level political counterparts to the commanding officers. “[H]alf-hour lectures were occasionally given after breakfast by Political Instructors on such topics as ‘the Relationship between Troops and Civilians,’ ‘Conduct toward Civilians,’ and ‘Support the Government and Love the People.’” After supper each squad held discussions on these lectures.¹⁵

¹³ Wang Xinting, *Wang Xinting huiyilu*, 440.

¹⁴ *Chengdushi zhi: junshi zhi*, 239.

¹⁵ Lo, Shih Ch’ing 羅世清 (Luo Shiqing), Interrogation Report KG 0565, September 15, 1951, ATIS, 10.

Instead of military training, the majority of the time was devoted to political meetings at various levels, from the sub-squad Small Groups and up. The Small Group was one the three sub-divisions of a squad. It was composed of non-party squad members and a leader who was usually a Party member or a member of the Youth League. Luo reported, “Small Group Discussion Meetings were frequently held for five to 30 minutes when there was spare time. Such meetings were sometimes held four or five times a day.”¹⁶

At the squad level, “Mutual Criticism Meetings were held every night for approximately 20 minutes after supper.” At these meetings, “there was a review of work done by the squad during the day, discussions as to who in the squad took an active part in the work and who did not, and discussions as to how ‘misconduct’ among squad members might be corrected.” The troops were expected to make self-criticism and mutual criticism in these meetings. All issues and complaints were to be raised in these meetings. The Political Instructor told the troops not to talk “behind the backs” of other squad members.¹⁷

In addition to the daily mutual criticism meetings, each week for one or two hours Squad Affair Meetings were held “to give individuals an opportunity to confess mistakes in their conduct during the week.” If anyone failed to confess or attempted to conceal a “mistake,” other squad members were expected to reveal it and criticize the person. “If a man failed to mend his way after being criticized three times at Squad Affairs Meetings, he was subject to public criticism at the Platoon Affairs Meetings,” which was also held once a week, but was attended by the entire platoon. At the Platoon Affairs Meetings, the same review of work, public self-criticism, and mutual criticism

¹⁶ Lo, Shih Ch'ing, Interrogation Report KG 0565, September 15, 1951, ATIS, 9. Military abbreviations were spelled out in full. Small Group Discussion Meetings 小組討論會.

¹⁷ Ibid., 10. Mutual Criticism Meetings 生活檢討會 [sic]. While the interrogator's translation is not literal, it is an accurate description of meeting.

were performed all over again. Luo observed, “It was seldom necessary to bring anyone before the Platoon Meetings for public criticism because criticism in the Squad Affairs Meeting usually produced the necessary result.”¹⁸ Certainly, such repeated self-denigration and public humiliation created psychological pressure and fatigue so intense that few could resist. These intense and pervasive psychological control methods produced their designed result: conformity and participation.

However, these methods had side effects. “The incessant meetings and discussions sharply annoyed many men and ‘made them mad’ (sic),” Luo reported. There were simply too many meetings and “they took up practically all their leisure time.” Luo also pointed out that non-Party or Youth League members, and those who were shy, disliked these meetings. The Party and Youth League members, on the other hand, “liked these meetings because it gave them an opportunity to display their abilities.” Luo concluded that these meetings produced very few converts to Communism. Instead, “[a] few became obstinate non-believers but the majority were either indifferent or pretended to believe what they were taught.”¹⁹ Since Luo gave his assessment to his interrogators in Korea, readers may take his evaluation with a grain of salt. Indeed, it is always difficult to evaluate the efficacy of psychological control and political indoctrination. It is nearly impossible to distinguish true conversion from feigned compliance.

Regardless of the troops’ sincerity, the Communists obtained uncontested control over former Nationalist troops. But ideological conversion was much harder to obtain. Mao had warned that after the counterrevolutionaries submitted to the Communists, their counterrevolutionary thoughts and ambitions remained to be cleansed. Therefore, thought reform was a never-ending process. In addition, it also served the purpose of

¹⁸ Ibid., 10. Squad Affair Meetings 班務會; Platoon Affair Meetings 排務會.

¹⁹ Lo, Shih Ch’ing, Interrogation Report KG 0565, September 15, 1951, ATIS, 10.

identifying resisters, or the so-called “committed counterrevolutionaries,” who were to be “suppressed.”

The Communists evidently believed that the most likely diehard counterrevolutionaries were among former Nationalist officers, especially those in units with close ties with Chiang Kai-shek. Therefore, separate institutions and more intense thought reform programs were required for them.

1950. Reforming officers and cadets at the Military and Political Universities

Other than Nationalist officers, cadets of the Central Military Academy were also considered close to Chiang. Troops in Military Police units were also looked upon with great suspicion, because the Communists often considered the Military Police a secret police organization. To reform these men who were most “heavily poisoned” by Chiang’s reactionary ideology, the Communists removed them from their original units and segregated them in centralized institutions. In addition to various training units for Nationalist officers created in large PLA units, the most important institution for reforming Nationalist officers was the Southwest Military and Political University (*Xi’nan junzheng daxue*). The PLA Military and Political Universities had originated in the Anti-Japanese Military and Political University in Yan’an, and were designed to train Communist cadres and newly recruited students and intellectuals.²⁰ The Southwest branch evolved from the Military and Political University of the 2nd Field Army, which was established in Nanjing in April 1949 and moved to Chongqing along with the field army. After the PLA’s victory in Sichuan, the University established several branches in Sichuan. The Western Sichuan Branch of the Southwest Military and Political University

²⁰ *Xi’nan junzheng daxue* 西南軍政大學. There were a number of regional Military and Political Universities in the northeast, northwest, north, east China, etc.

was established to reform the cadets of the Central Military Academy (Whampoa) and Nationalist officers captured in the Chengdu area.

While the programs in Military and Political Universities shared many of the same features as those for soldiers, they were significantly different in three respects. First, these were dedicated political indoctrination programs with no military component. Second, the indoctrination was more strenuous in terms of intellectual and psychological intensity, involving greater organizational control. Third, the programs lasted much longer. In this section, the cases of the Western Sichuan Branch of the Southwest Military and Political University and two other similar Universities exhibit these features prominently.

The Western Sichuan Branch was established in Xindu near Chengdu in January 1950. One former Whampoa cadet reported that students consisted of approximately 8,000 ex-Nationalist personnel and civilians, including 15 general grade and 985 field grade officers (faculty staff of the Central Military Academy), 3,500 company grade officers and cadets (military academy graduates and cadets), 800 officers and enlisted men of the 1st Army, some from the Military Police, and 1,5000 civilians, such as merchants and farmers.²¹ Another cadet provided slightly different figures, claiming that 7,000 Whampoa cadets were organized into seven battalions. The 8th Battalion was composed of 1,000 ex-Military Police. The 9th was made of 1,000 students who had completed at least two years of senior high school and passed the entrance examination. In addition, about 100 girl students were also admitted and formed a female student

²¹ K'ou, Wei Ch'eng 寇惟誠, Interrogation Report KG 0336, August 23, 1951, ATIS, 4.

company.²² A third cadet reported that each of the nine battalions had about 700 students in each.²³ Despite small discrepancies these estimates are reasonably close.

The Communists carefully selected the instructors for this difficult task of reforming Nationalist officers. Probably the best teachers were those who themselves were successful reform cases. Many of the 30 instructors at the University were “educated” Nationalist defectors who became PLA officers, student Guang Chongfu observed.²⁴ Former cadet Gao Wenjun’s new company commander was a defected Whampoa graduate of the 14th class.²⁵ The Communists hoped these good models could assure students of a good future under the new regime, provided that they followed the indoctrination program.

While ex-Nationalist rank-and-file troops went through thought reform, they also engaged in regular military training and operations. For example, the 95th Army engaged in “bandit suppression” campaigns soon after its defection. In contrast, the curriculum of the Military and Political University was entirely political. One student reported, “No military tactical training or field training was given since graduates were all scheduled for assignment to rear echelon units.” And he reasoned that was because “they were not trusted to supervise or command front line units.” Their so-called military training consisted of lectures on the history of the PLA, military discipline, administrative standard operating procedures, etc.²⁶ Clearly the Communists did not envision these officers as commanding officers in the PLA.

Similar to the experience of the 95th Army, political indoctrination consisted mainly of lectures and discussions. Lectures were given in the morning. All lectures were

²² Kuo, Ya Tung 郭亞東, Interrogation Report KG 0094, July 18, 1951, ATIS, 4.

²³ Kuan, Ch’ung Fu 關崇富 (Guan Chongfu), Interrogation Report 0355, August 22, 1951, ATIS, 6.

²⁴ Kuan, Ch’ung Fu 關崇富, Interrogation Report 0355, August 22, 1951, ATIS, 6.

²⁵ Gao Wenjun, *Hanzhan yiwang*, 45.

²⁶ Kuan, Ch’ung Fu 關崇富, Interrogation Report 0355, August 22, 1951, ATIS, 7.

given outdoors to the entire battalion of about 700 men. Without the aid of any broadcast equipment, “students had difficulty in hearing them and took copious notes.” Textbooks included works of Mao, Chen Boda, and Ai Siqi, etc. Sample titles included “The History of Social Development” and “Basic History of Chinese People’s Revolution.” In the afternoon, students in each squad met for supervised debates on subjects chosen by the instructors. Typical subjects included “Pro and cons of partnership with the Soviet Union,” “Reason for Anti-U.S. feeling in China,” and “Opinions of Chiang Kai-shek.” Under the instructors’ attentive watch, “[n]aturally participants in the debates usually hid their feelings, spoke evil of capitalism and praised communism,” recalled a student.²⁷ Apparently the Nationalist officers learned as quickly as enlisted men that they had to act and speak properly under their Communist captors.

Although the lectures and discussions of officers and Whampoa cadets’ involved a higher level of intellectual indoctrination, their daily schedule was similar to that of the soldiers. The following is a detailed schedule of the Liangshan branch of the Southwest Military and Political University. It was provided by Wang Zunming, an ex-Nationalist officer under General Hu Zongnan.²⁸ His description best captures the psychological intensity of the Communist indoctrination programs.

- 5:00 A.M. Get out of bed, and immediately divide into small groups of four or five persons to resolve good behavior for the day—for example, “We must work hard and study hard. We must not let our heads nod in class.”
- 5:20 Twenty-minute rest period
- 5:40 Breakfast
- 6:00 Big Class. A two-hour lecture on the current subject matter. Students must take voluminous notes.
- 8:00 Twenty-minute rest period

²⁷ Kuan, Ch’ung Fu 關崇富, Interrogation Report 0355, August 22, 1951, ATIS, 7.

²⁸ Wang Tsun-ming (Wang Zunming), interview by Lloyd E. Ohlin and Richard P. Harris, *Mass Behavior*, 138. Liangshan 梁山 was the old name of Liangping 梁平, located approximately 200 km northeast of Chongqing.

8:20	Small Class. Students in small groups read their notes from the Big Class and discuss the topic for three and a half hours. Everyone participates actively.
12:00	Lunch
12:15 P.M.	Fifteen-minute rest period
12:30	Small group discussion. Questions asked about aspects of the current topic that are still not understood.
1:00	Big Class
3:00	Small Class
5:00	Supper
5:15	Folk dance. Everyone participates.
5:45	Thirty-minute rest period
6:15	Small Cell discussion. Four or five students report to each instructor. Personal criticism and the leader indicates where improvement can be or has been made. Sample topic: how to become eligible for the Communist Party.
6:45	Ten-minute rest period
7:00	Small Class. Three cells with a total of twelve persons. Criticism of daily behavior—for example, “You carried only forty sacks of rice.”
7:30	Singing session. All songs have an ideological content.
8:30	Roll call. As names are called, the leader gives praise or blame to the student for his behavior during the day.

Wang remarked, “We were always kept busy, and everyone was under great pressure to participate actively.”²⁹ Clearly, there was virtually no personal time or space allowed under such a regimen. Wang and his fellow former Nationalist officers were university students in name, but prisoners in effect. They had to comply, but also participate actively. This kind of forced participation and performance was Mao’s hallmark invention.

Another distinct Communist method was the dossier system, which included detailed autobiographies, confessions, self-criticism statements, and responses to accusations. In contrast to the Nationalist Party, which did not carefully check the background or social network of its party members, the Communists had perfected its dossier system in Yan’an during the dreaded “cadre investigation” and “purge of counterrevolutionaries” campaigns. Now they used the same technique on Nationalist

²⁹ Wang Tsun-ming, interview, in Bradbury et al., *Mass Behavior*, 137-138.

officers. Permanent dossiers were created for them and would haunt them throughout their lives.

Certainly this dossier system was not unique to Sichuan. It was used across China. At the Military and Political University in Beijing, there was a three-week period devoted to “scrutiny of ideology,” which consisted of each student writing a detailed personal history and an account of past actions “from the time he was six years old.”³⁰ In addition, students were required to write what they thought of the Nationalist and the Communist Parties. At the Western Sichuan Branch, each month students were required to give their opinions on Communist ideas.³¹ Of course, the instructors enjoined the students not to hide anything, and ensured them that the Communist government would forgive their past mistakes if they came clean. However, students were keenly aware of the fact that all these statements were collected into their ever-growing dossier files. If one made a confession, he effectively dug a bigger hole for himself. If one person tried to hide certain past deeds, other students might still betray him in their criticism statements. Then he would have to defend himself or confess more. Basically it was a trap with no way out. While normally the instructors did not use explicit threats to force students to confess, in the end many men cracked and confessed. With a person’s past wrongdoings or “crimes” on record, he was completely at the mercy of the system.

At the time, few at the Military and Political Universities knew that the process they were undergoing had been experienced by some of the Communists a few years ago. During the Yan’an Rectification Campaign (1942-1944), Mao and his Party had perfected their thought reform methods, which noted historian Gao Hua describes as follows:

What was new in Mao[’s methods] was the combined use of indoctrination and the threat of violence, which were backed by forceful organizational measures. It created a powerful pressure field for party

³⁰ Ch’ien, Shun Kuei 錢順貴, Interrogation Report No. 5107, ATIS, 102.

³¹ Li, Ku Hua 李谷華, Interrogation Report KG 0331, ATIS, 4.

members, especially intellectual party members, forcing them to shed their “old selves” and adopting all-new souls through repeated shock.³²

Now in 1950 the Communists applied the same methods to Nationalist officers and cadets. Just as in Yan’an, the system was extremely effective in subjugating its targets. The initially headstrong Wang Zunming soon caved in, confessed his “crimes,” and vowed to become a “new man.” He later remarked, “In this way they could kill without having the victim’s blood on their hands.”³³ Indeed, true to Mao’s instruction on winning a “bloodless struggle,” the Communists subdued these former Nationalists without relying on overt violence, although violence always lurked in the background.

Submission, however, did not necessarily mean change of heart, as Mao had astutely pointed out. While Communist indoctrination produced near total submission, ideological conversion was much harder to come by. Perhaps the Communists did not really expect ideological conversion. The Military and Political Universities had fulfilled their purpose of subjugating ex-Nationalist officers and cadets. As long as their dossiers were in place, these men were under the firm control of the system. And thought reform would continue in other places throughout their lifetime. Therefore, once the Communists had broken the ex-Nationalists’ psychological resistance and their social network and rendered them atomized and powerless, students could “graduate.”

The length of study at the Western Sichuan branch averaged about eight months, depending on individual progress. However, their training period could “be extended indefinitely at the discretion of instructors.”³⁴ Early graduation was granted to about 1,000 “over-aged (over 30) and physically weak students,” and they were dismissed in May 1950. After eight months of indoctrination, approximately three thousand students

³² Gao Hua 高華, *Hong taiyang shi zenyang shengqi de: Yan'an zhengfeng yundong de lailong qumai* 紅太陽是怎樣升起的 (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2000), 423.

³³ Wang Tsun-ming, interview, in Bradbury et al., *Mass Behavior*, 141.

³⁴ Li, Ku Hua 李谷華, Interrogation Report KG 0331, ATIS, 4.

were deployed to build the railway linking Chengdu and Chongqing from August to November.³⁵ However, the outbreak of the Korean War and Mao's decision to enter the war accelerated the graduation schedule.

In November, while the other seven student battalions remained in Xindu, the entire 3rd Training Battalion, consisting of roughly 700 former Whampoa cadets, was assigned to the PLA 60th Army and set out for Hebei province, where the 60th Army held "strategic maneuvers" in preparation for the war in Korea.³⁶ The majority of the graduates were assigned as cultural instructors, whose job was to teach illiterate soldiers to read and sing. Yu Rongfu and Gao Wenjun, the two Liaoning natives, were among them. A small number of the other cadets, apparently more trusted by the Communists, were assigned as staff officers, artillery or signal specialists, depending on their prior technical training. Communication majors Yang Wenhua and Zhang Wenrong became radio operators at the headquarters of the 180th Division, 60th Army.

1950. Reforming Whampoa cadets: converts and non-converts

The fateful assignment of the 3rd Training Battalion allowed a number of former cadets to defect to the UN side half a year later in Korea, while some others were captured. The UN Command treated defected and captured Chinese troops the same and interned them together as prisoners of war. Eventually in 1954, 51 Whampoa graduates and cadets went to Taiwan, including Gao Wenjun and Yu Rongfu.³⁷ However, the exact breakdown of the number of graduates versus cadets, which included cadets of the 22nd, 23rd, and 24th classes, is not available. Moreover, a small number of cadets

³⁵ K'ou, Wei Ch'eng, Interrogation Report KG 0336, August 23, 1951, ATIS, 5.

³⁶ Kuan, Ch'ung Fu 關崇富, Interrogation Report 0355, August 22, 1951, ATIS, 8.

³⁷ Chiang Ching-kuo, report to Chiang Kai-shek et al., June 1954, Republic of China Ministry of Defense Archives document No. 0001238900090058w. Not all of 51 students were members of the final three classes, 22nd, 23rd, and 24th, of Whampoa, who were indoctrinated in the Military and Political University. However, probably the majority of them were.

was drafted by the U.S. to engage in spy work in North Korea, and some of them were captured and executed by the Communists. On the other hand, the exact number of cadets who returned to China is also unavailable. In memoirs written by repatriated cadets, twelve cadets are clearly described as pro-repatriation and pro-Communist. However, there seemed to be other unnamed cadets who also returned to China.³⁸ Assuming that these cadet prisoners' final repatriation choices reflected their attitude toward the Communists, their choices could serve as a proxy for the degree of ideological conversion. Without sufficient data it is impossible to calculate the ratio of repatriates versus anti-repatriates, or to estimate the degree of ideological conversion.

Nevertheless, there were anecdotal reports on the efficacy of indoctrination. Kou Weicheng, an ex-cadet at the Western Sichuan Branch of the Southwest Military and Political University, claimed that most students remained loyal to the Nationalists. And he “believed approximately 20% of graduates were converted” to the Communist cause.³⁹ Again, it is difficult to verify this claim.

Logically speaking, however, the conversion of a former Nationalist was determined by two experiences: his family background and life experience under the Nationalists, and his indoctrination experience under the Communists. The degree of his ideological conversion and his views of the Communists in turn influenced his repatriation choice. Judging from available evidence, which is anecdotal and incomplete, a cadet's view of the Communists had much to do with his class background. The three best-known pro-Communist cadet prisoners in Korea were from poor families.

³⁸ Wu Chunsheng 吴春生 and Zhao Guoxi 赵国玺, “Shututonggui: zhanfuying li de huangpu junxiaosheng” 殊途同归: 战俘营里的黄埔军校生 [Different paths, same destination: Whampoa cadets in POW camps], in *Kaoyan* 考验: 志愿军战俘美军集中营亲历记, ed. Zhang Zeshi (中国文史出版社, 1998), 313-323. Both authors were ex-Whampoa cadets. They did not provide any data, but mentioned the names of twelve pro-Communist cadets.

³⁹ K'ou, Wei Ch'eng 寇惟誠 (Kou Weicheng), Interrogation Report KG 0336, August 23, 1951, ATIS, 5. No documentary evidence shows Kou's final repatriation destination.

Yang Wenhua, who was brutally murdered by an anti-Communist cadet in April 1952, was born into a small merchant family in Shaanxi. He grew up with his mother, as his father ran business in distant places. When he was only fifteen, due to poverty, he quit middle school and joined the Nationalist army. Later he passed the examination and entered the Central Military Academy. Upon graduation, he was assigned to the 95th Army as a radio operator. During the PLA's reorganization of the 95th Army, Yang was one of the first former Nationalist troops to join the Youth League. After the merger, Yang continued to serve as a radio operator at the headquarters of the PLA 180th Division.⁴⁰ Apparently Yang had performed well during the indoctrination and the Communists trusted Yang, so he was entrusted with confidential tasks.

Another Shaanxi native, Zhao Guoxi, also enlisted in the army after he quit school due to financial difficulties. After serving in a Military Police unit for some time, he entered Whampoa Academy in 1949 as a cadet of the 24th class, also the last class on the mainland.⁴¹ Guo Naijian, a cadet of the 23rd class, was born into a peasant family in Fushun, Liaoning. After finishing elementary school he began working as an apprentice in a grocery store.⁴² Presumably Guo's family was not rich. Although there is no information on their families' experiences after 1949, it is reasonable to assume their families, like most poor people, welcomed the social changes brought by the Communists, or the *fanshen*. Yang, Zhao, and Guo might or might not have had contact with their families during their reindoctrination in Sichuan, but they had good reason to believe that their families had benefited from the revolution. In addition, their poor

⁴⁰ Zhang Chengyuan 张成垣 and Jiang RuiPu 姜瑞溥, "Yang Wenhua numuyuanzheng" 阳文华怒目圆睁: "人民早晚要惩罚你们!" [Yang Wenhua's anger: "The People will punish you sooner or later"], in *Kaoyan*, 334.

⁴¹ Zhao Guoxi 赵国玺, interview by Wu Jinfeng, October 20, 1983, in *Andeshe Biji* 安德舍笔记—归国战俘自述集 [Andeshe notes: statements by repatriated POWs], vol. 2. (unpublished manuscript, 1986), 237. And Wu Chunsheng and Zhao Guoxi, in *Kaoyan*, 316.

⁴² Guo Naijian 郭乃坚, interview by Wu Jinfeng, July 6, 1983, in *Andeshe Biji*, vol. 2, 160.

family background also enhanced their standing among the students in the Military and Political University. They were more likely to emerge as activists. That was the case for Youth League member Yang Wenhua, to be sure.

On the other hand, cadets from richer families, like Gao Wenjun and Yu Rongfu, most likely had the opposite experience. Being members of the exploiter class, they became the target of frequent and intense criticism. Naturally this type of psychological pressure caused resentment and resistance, which in turn would bring more criticism. How could Communist indoctrination break this vicious cycle of criticism and resistance? Gao and Yu's experiences demonstrate the near impossibility of ideological conversion. Despite their surface yielding, they were hardly convinced by Communist indoctrination, and instead were embittered by the whole process. We should examine their experiences in detail.

During the final collapse of the Nationalists in Sichuan in late December 1949, several units of the Central Military Academy declared defection to the Communists, while others just disbanded. Cadets Yu Rongfu and Gao Wenjun returned to their campus in Beijiaocheng in Chengdu, only to find that their campus had been looted by mobs. For two weeks, it was in a state of anarchy. The faculty and officers had either disappeared or did not take charge had they stayed.⁴³ While the Sichuan natives returned home, people like Gao and Yu had nowhere to go. Gao and Yu could not speak the Sichuan dialect, so it was nearly impossible to hide in the local population, not to mention travel far. According to Yu, a small number of daring cadets did flee. One group went to Chongqing and took riverboats down east, and eventually managed to get to Hong Kong through circuitous routes. Another group fled into the mountains in Xikang and Yunnan, and finally made its way to Vietnam and joined the Nationalist troops

⁴³ Gao Wenjun, *Hanzhan yiwang*, 43-44.

there.⁴⁴ Gao and Yu, although they did not know each other then, both decided to wait and see.

Soon, a former officer of the Academy led a small group of PLA officers to campus. They came to assure the cadets that there was nothing to fear because everybody was Chinese. Although they all appeared very friendly, Gao found their frequent use of the title “*tongzhi*” (comrades) distasteful, “giving me goosebumps.” Two weeks later, two PLA “military representatives” arrived, claiming to be ex-Nationalist officers under Yan Xishan in Shanxi province. They took inventory of the remaining weapons and created rosters of all cadets on campus. Once the weapons problem was peacefully taken care of, the “representatives” immediately began to issue orders to cadets, and “bargaining was no longer permitted.” Then a full contingent of PLA officers arrived. All Whampoa cadets were totally reshuffled into new units, and all former officers were removed to another location.⁴⁵ From March to November 1950, cadets went through the indoctrination program at the Military and Political University in Xindu.⁴⁶

While many Whampoa cadets noticed that some of the Communist instructors were actually less educated than themselves, Gao found his company Political Instructor (*zhidaoyuan*) particularly uneducated. However, this man was responsible for giving two-hour political lectures. He frequently enjoined the students to “make a clean break with the Nationalists” and “work hard to redeem past crimes.” Gao simply could not find any crime he had committed before. Obviously he did not think being a cadet of the Central Military Academy was a crime. His commander also often spoke of Chiang Kai-shek as the man who only fought the Communists but not the Japanese, and the Soviet

⁴⁴ Yu Rongfu, interview, July 4, 2010, Taipei. Yu met some of these cadets later in Taiwan. More than one hundred men in the first group eventually arrived in Taiwan via Hong Kong. Only one or two made their way to Taiwan through Vietnam.

⁴⁵ Gao Wenjun, *Hanzhan yiwang*, 43-44.

⁴⁶ Gao Wenjun (Kao, Wen Chun), Interrogation Report KG 0482, September 3, 1951, ATIS, 8.

Union as China's "Big Brother."⁴⁷ As a native of Shenyang who had witnessed Soviet atrocities, Gao was appalled by such propaganda. However, he could not argue openly. In the meantime he was pressured to explain why he had fled Manchuria just before the "liberation" and joined Chiang Kai-shek's military academy.⁴⁸

While Communist ideology did not appeal to Gao, its methods alienated him even further. Gao summarized the method as a three-step strategy. First, the Communists divided students into three groups: the active elements, the middle elements, and the backward elements. Then the party would follow the policy of "fully utilizing the active elements, uniting with the middle elements, and isolating and rescuing the backward elements." If the "backward elements" tried to resist "rescue" or "help," the party would mobilize other members to attack them ruthlessly.⁴⁹

In practice, initially the Communist would encourage everyone to speak freely. Activists were instructed to take the lead in the "speak honestly" movement. Everyone was required to speak publicly about his family history from generations ago. During the meeting Communist cadres observed all students carefully and took copious notes. Then each individual was assigned a "family origin" (*jiating chengfen*) label. Now, in addition to being a "counterrevolutionary" (as an ex-cadet), Gao's second crime was his family origin from the "exploiter class."⁵⁰ Gao had no choice but to accept this label. Quickly Gao and fellow students learned to perform properly and play the game as the instructors expected. However, deep inside, Gao always resented these programs and hated the Communists. Gao recalled that this hatred lasted for years until he was converted to Catholicism later in Taiwan.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Gao Wenjun, *Hanzhan yiwang*, 47-48. *Zhidaoyuan* 指導員.

⁴⁸ Gao Wenjun, interview by author, January 6, 2010, San Francisco.

⁴⁹ Gao Wenjun, *Hanzhan yiwang*, 51-52.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 51-52.

⁵¹ Gao Wenjun, interview, September 8, 2009, San Francisco.

Like Gao, Yu Rongfu learned the game quickly. During the indoctrination period, students held their daily criticism meetings every evening after dinner. “Each was closely watched by the instructors and fellow classmates; even one’s facial expressions could not escape their notice.” Each made self-criticism; then others criticized his wrong conduct or wrong words during the day. Yu found that “the truly smart people acted dumb.” While the instructor liked people who spoke the right way, “talkative people often got into trouble” for speaking improperly. Yu actually liked talking, but he knew he could only talk about minor things more or less freely. For example, he commented on food matters. Despite his participation, Yu concluded, “it was impossible to reform people’s minds. What people said and what people thought were entirely different.”⁵² Under the surface of conformity, Yu was far from being converted.

Even though the eight months at the Military and Political University was decidedly unpleasant, both Gao and Yu survived largely unscathed. A few others were less fortunate. Gao reports that three Whampoa cadets of his class, the 23rd class, were executed in Xindu.⁵³ Yu, of the 22nd class, remembers no executions, but knew of people who just disappeared, presumably taken to labor camps.⁵⁴ Since most of the Whampoa cadets were still very young, their alleged “crimes” were either of birth (as sons of the exploiter class) or association (as students of Chiang Kai-shek). They were too young to have “the people’s blood,” especially the Communists’ blood, on their hands. However, that was not the case for many Nationalist officers. They had served in the Nationalist military longer and more likely they had killed Communists in combat. Strictly speaking, these men were the true enemies of the Communists. Not surprisingly, their reform

⁵² Yu Rongfu, interview, July 4, 2010, Taipei.

⁵³ Gao Wenjun, *Hanzhan yiwang*, 52.

⁵⁴ Yu Rongfu, interview, July 4, 2010, Taipei.

process was even more thorough, intense, and even life-threatening. Former Nationalist First Lieutenant Wang Zunming lived under such precarious situations for nine months.

1950. The indoctrination of future anti-Communist leader Wang Zunming

When a group of American social scientists interviewed Wang Zunming in Korea in 1953, he was described as a natural leader: “a vigorous man of action; he is also unusually lucid and articulate. He is tall, with an impressive military bearing, and speaks with an air of authority and conviction.”⁵⁵ Indeed, at the time of his interview Wang had long established himself as one of the top anti-Communist prisoner leaders. At the peak of his power, he controlled more than 8,000 prisoners in Compound 86. It is hard to imagine that three years earlier in Sichuan Wang had been a subdued and humiliated prisoner of the Chinese Communists. Despite his submission in 1950, Wang was not totally crushed. Instead, he “developed a bitter-end will for revenge.”⁵⁶ Wang’s emergence as an anti-Communist leader had a great deal to do with his experiences under the Nationalists and the Communists.

Wang was born in Shenmu County on the northern tip of Shaanxi province, or about 260 km north of Yan’an, in 1926. His father was the personnel chief of the county government and his eldest brother a local police chief. His family owned a small clothes shop and one hundred *mou* of land (about sixteen acres). Clearly Wang came from a wealthy landlord family, which had close ties with the Nationalist government. In 1938, the Communist army came to Shenmu and ousted the local government. Many rich families sent their sons to Nationalist army schools. Although Wang was too young for military schools, his parents asked a Nationalist officer who was also a family friend to

⁵⁵ These social scientists were contracted by the Human Resources Research Office (HumRRO) to study Communist soldiers’ behavior. Bradbury, et al., *Mass Behavior*, xx, 121. HumRRO was affiliated with the U.S. Department of Defense.

⁵⁶ Bradbury et al., *Mass Behavior*, 121.

take him away. The 12-year-old Wang left home. In the next few turbulent years during the War of Resistance, Wang traveled over much of North China along with this army officer.⁵⁷ A few years later in Korea, Wang's extensive travel experience became a major asset in prison camps, enabling him to associate with prisoners from various native places and to win their support.⁵⁸

When the Japanese surrendered in 1945, Wang had studied for two years at a senior high school run by the Nationalist army. Soon the government stopped funding the school and Wang volunteered to join the military. He passed an examination to become a Warrant Officer in the Civilian Service Team of the Ministry of Defense, which was responsible for military-civilian liaison work and organizing anti-Communist security groups among local populations. After four months of political training, Wang was posted as a Political Indoctrinator to villages in Jiangsu and Shandong, where the Communists and the Nationalists were mired in seesaw battles over territory. In this job Wang became intimately familiar with Communist methods of social control and mobilization. His description of account-settling struggle sessions was strikingly similar to Yu Rongfu's experience in Manchuria.⁵⁹ As a fairly well-educated officer with some political training, Wang saw beyond the emotional trauma brought by these struggles. He claimed that he saw through the Communists' good discipline and "love the people" act, beneath which was their master plan to totally destroy "traditional loyalties and moral code." He concluded that Communists sought to substitute the loyalty to Mao and his party for traditional sentiments, including loyalty to one's family.⁶⁰ Two years before

⁵⁷ Wang Tsun-ming (Wang Zunming), interview, in Bradbury et al., *Mass Behavior*, 123-124. Wang's Interrogation Report KG 0562, September 15, 1951, ATIS, 1. While his interview offers more details, the chronologies in both interviews and interrogation report are consistent. The biography of Wang is based on both accounts.

⁵⁸ Wang Beishan 王北山, interview by author, April 22, 2010, Taoyuan, Taiwan.

⁵⁹ Yu Rongfu, interview by author, July 4, 2010, Taipei.

⁶⁰ Wang Tsun-ming, interview, in *Mass Behavior*, 125-133.

his own capture by the Communists, Wang had learned of the potency and cruelty of Communists methods.

Wang joined the Nationalist youth league in 1947 and he was selected to receive further political training in Nanjing in early 1948. Upon graduation, he requested to serve in the regular army unit in his native Shaanxi province. He became a company-level political officer in the 90th Army, which was General Hu Zongnan's crack force. His unit was stationed in Pucheng, located 90 km northeast of Xi'an and 450 km south of his hometown Shenmu. However, Wang could not return to his home, which was occupied by the Communists. Since he departed home in 1938, he only received one letter in 1940 and had no further word ever since. In revenge for his family's supposed sufferings, Wang "thoroughly enjoyed fighting the Communists" as the 90th Army initially enjoyed military superiority over the Communists. Soon the balance of power shifted to the PLA's favor, and Wang's 181st Regiment was annihilated in October 1948. Wang was among the few who escaped from encirclement. For his daring escape, he received commendation, thirty silver dollars, and a promotion to captain. In 1949 Wang became a full member of the Nationalist Party and was promoted to an infantry company commander.⁶¹ By the time Wang joined the party, the Nationalist regime had shown signs of imminent collapse, but he chose to fight as its final defender.

When the Communist forces finally defeated General Hu Zongnan's troops in the Chengdu area in late December 1949, the 90th Army was one of the last units to surrender. Finally on December 27 the commander of the 90th Army ordered all his units to surrender. Wang claimed, he refused to follow orders and led his men to break out. But soon he was captured by defected Sichuan regional armies. Even after he was taken prisoner, he made several attempts to lead his men to escape. He was arrested and

⁶¹ Wang Tsun-ming, interview, in *Mass Behavior*, 124, 133-134.

locked up for “seven days and nights in a dark room.”⁶² In Wang’s own description, he was certainly more staunchly anti-Communist than his commanders. The Communists took notice of this “die-hard reactionary,” and his reeducation was destined to be more intense than others’.

In January 1950, Wang’s unit was transferred to Liangshan (today’s Liangping) near Chongqing. Wang and forty other officers were segregated but stayed not far away from their troops. What the troops experienced was similar to the reform of the Nationalist 95th Army. Initially the unit was not disbanded; only a small team of PLA representatives came to give lectures. The most comforting fact was that the food was excellent, with “meat everyday—even better than the Communist Army” had. Quietly the PLA officers conducted individual interviews with soldiers. In two months, the Communists had obtained thorough knowledge of each man and organization. Then the grievance-airing campaign started and a few targets were struggled against, followed by a systematic weeding out of “reactionary elements.”⁶³

Officers like Wang were transferred to a Military and Political University near Liangshan in March. Some of the University students were Communist party members, but most of them were captured Nationalist officers. In the first two weeks, students were surprised as they were “given complete freedom.” They conducted their own elections and disciplined themselves. And there was “no coercion and no indoctrination.” Many of the students had had little education before, and “they thought now they would get a college education.” Even the hardcore anti-Communist Wang was impressed, and he was “ready to give them the benefit of the doubt and make the best of it.” Two weeks later, however, students were divided up into smaller classes and the real indoctrination

⁶² Wang Tsun-ming, interview, in *Mass Behavior*, 134. In his Interrogation Report KG 0562, no such breakout attempts were mentioned. The Sichuan army was probably the 95th Army.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 135-136.

program began. After the first few weeks of theory lectures and discussion, there was the grievance-airing movement, and students were required to make self- and mutual criticism. Then they were required to write detailed personal histories repeatedly. They also had to write responses to others' accusations and criticism.⁶⁴ All these writings went into one's dossier, and would follow him like his criminal record.

Initially Wang tried to hide certain aspects of his past, especially regarding the question "How many Communists have you killed?" Wang remembered bayoneting several Communists in battle, but he never mentioned it in his statements. He claimed that he did not know if he had killed anyone because all fighting had been at long range. Instead, he chose to grossly exaggerate the number of prostitutes he had visited and invented incidences of rape. That was necessary because Wang noticed that, "the Communists believed that all Nationalist had committed rape." Under pressure he even fabricated cases of homosexual acts. In addition, officers always confessed killing chickens and other animals. Their instructors knew many of these confessions were false, but "they didn't mind because it went on the record and it could be used against a man in the future."⁶⁵ Clearly, the officers' small tricks could not fool their Communist captors.

Wang's psychological defense finally cracked in April. One day four soldiers claiming to be from Shaanxi came to the University and demanded that he return to his hometown and face land reform struggles, which he knew was equivalent to a death sentence. Wang remembered his reaction: "I was struck with a great fear. This was the first time I really realized the danger I was in." He desperately looked for a way out. He begged the four soldiers from Shaanxi and his instructors to give him a second chance at the University, and asked classmates to speak on his behalf. What eventually saved him, however, was a letter he wrote to the soldiers in his old unit, whom he had led to escape

⁶⁴ Wang Tsun-ming, interview, in *Mass Behavior*, *Ibid.*, 136-137.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 139-143.

before. Now he told them he had totally given up all old thoughts and vowed to become a new man under the Communist system. He urged them to do the same. Wang was fully aware of the consequences of this move. He would lose all his credibility among his men, and he could never organize any resistance again.⁶⁶ He had no choice. He had to preserve his own life first.

From this experience, Wang concluded that the Communists were “diabolically clever,” as he believed that “the school authorities engineered this whole thing.” By breaking down the resistance of commanding officers, the Communists would in turn use their willingness to cooperate “to educate others in the school and among the troops back in their old units.” Soon his troops began criticizing him ruthlessly, and some even made false charges.⁶⁷ Wang felt he had fallen into a death trap:

[T]hey wanted physical and mental liquidation of oneself by oneself, so that no one could say they had done it, but rather the person had brought it upon himself by the nature of his previous actions. In this way they could kill without having the victim’s blood on their hands.⁶⁸

It appeared as if Wang was on the verge of death.

In June, Wang and the other officers were sent to another indoctrination unit in Wanxian, where they engaged in hard labor. No matter how hard Wang worked, the instructors withheld praise for him, while everyone else had been praised. Wang became very scared, as he knew that the praise was “an insurance that you are secure.” In a desperate attempt to rescue himself, instead of carrying his usual load of 50 pounds, he ventured to carry the heaviest rice bags, weighing over 150 pounds, up the slope, until he collapsed and spit blood. Finally his instructor praised him, “Today you demonstrated the true spirit of the proletariat.” Finally he had “won evidence of security,” so he was relieved. Furthermore, Wang finally confessed that he had killed one Communist soldier

⁶⁶ Wang Tsun-ming, interview, in *Mass Behavior*, 141-142.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 139-140.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 141.

in battle. The instructors accepted this as “showing improvement and progressiveness.”⁶⁹ However, that was not enough. At the end of the three-month indoctrination at Wanxian, while 100 prisoners were released because of age, Wang was sent to another location near Chongqing for three more months of thought reform.⁷⁰

If the indoctrination was so unbearable, one may wonder why Wang did not attempt to escape during the nine months. None of the three schools Wang attended was walled or fenced, but guards were posted at four corners and students were not supposed to leave. The only occasions they were allowed to go outside were to attend public trials of class enemies. Even if they escaped, they had too little money to travel far. Their monthly stipend could only afford half a pound of local tobacco. Wang knew of three students that escaped in Liangshan and were never found. He believed they would have been killed if they had been caught.⁷¹ As the Communists tightly controlled the entire society, most interned students knew that they could not run far before being captured.

One striking feature of the Communist indoctrination process was the absence of physical abuse, which was common in the Nationalist army. Such practices were unnecessary since discipline was largely maintained by mutual criticism and surveillance. However, that is not to say the Communists did not use outright violence. In fact, it always loomed large in the background and occasionally struck hard publicly. Early on in Liangshan, Wang had to witness the execution of his former regiment and battalion commanders. When they were put on trial before the entire school, all students had to acknowledge the correctness of the charges and vote for their execution. On the day of the final sentence, the Communist leaders asked all who voted yes to raise their hands. Wang recalled, “Gradually the hands were raised higher and higher as the leaders

⁶⁹ Wang Tsun-ming, interview, in *Mass Behavior*, 148-150.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 152. Wang’s Interrogation Report KG 0562, September 15, 1951, ATIS, 2.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 146.

on the platform closely watched the actions of everybody. Everyone knew they were condemning their friends to death, but they had no alternative.” Then the Communist leaders announced, “You voted their execution.” The two men were shot down right in front of everybody, yet Wang and the other men had to “hold back the tears and to smile” during the entire process. The bodies were buried next to the students’ quarters “under only six inches of earth.” That night it rained. “One of the men tried to clear the water from the grave with a cup. I will never forget this picture,” Wang recalled.⁷²

Throughout his indoctrination experience, especially the last two schools, Wang described his feeling as “one of constant physical and mental exhaustion.” There was “never time for relaxed conversation” with anyone, as no one could be trusted. Some men committed suicide, and some went insane. When one of the students in an adjoining class lost his sanity under the strain, the instructor asserted the reason was that “he did not reveal everything in his reactionary past.” Despite the nerve-wracking pressure, Wang survived. He claimed, “I fortified myself with an old historical story that gave me faith in the future, that made me believe that I could preserve myself, escape Communism, and eventually get revenge.”⁷³

Indeed, Wang preserved himself and survived nine months of mentally brutal indoctrination. In December 1950, Wang and many of the students were assigned to the PLA 12th Army, while others were sent to Xinjiang to open up the frontier. He became a drill instructor with the rank equivalent to a platoon leader. On March 25, 1951, the 12th Army crossed the Yalu and entered Korea. On the front line Wang read a UN pamphlet

⁷² Wang Tsun-ming, interview, in *Mass Behavior*, 144-145.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 153, 146. Wang did not specify which story.

promising safety upon surrender. At the first opportunity he went to the UN side. On May 29, Wang finally escaped Communism.⁷⁴

In UN prison camps on Kojé Island, Wang quickly emerged as the top leader of Compound 86, where he controlled more than 8,000 prisoners with an elaborate system of coercion and psychological control. If physical abuse was a Nationalist legacy, psychological control and indoctrination meetings were what Wang had learned from the Communists. Wang “used Communist methods to control the Communists” in prison. In the end, less than 20 percent of the prisoners escaped his command and returned to China. Moreover, several pro-Communists in Compound 86 were murdered under his reign. In a sense, Wang Zunming got his revenge.

Perhaps the experience of Wang was only representative of a small minority of former Nationalist personnel. Wang had all of the most undesirable hats in a Communist society: a reactionary for being a son of a landlord and a Nationalist government official, a counterrevolutionary for being an army officer with the blood of Communists on his hands, and a moral derelict for his rapist and homosexual past (although confessed under duress). In the meantime, there were many other former Nationalist personnel, especially the enlisted men, who had fewer hats, or even some good hats. Some had good family origins, such as poor peasants, craftsmen and workers, or the urban poor. Some were too junior to have killed any Communists or have become the “oppressors” of the masses. Their experiences under the Communists were decidedly different. As the PLA called these former Nationalist troops “liberated soldiers,” some of these men truly felt liberated under the Communists, such as He Rui in Chapter 2.

⁷⁴ Wang Tsun-ming, Interrogation Report KG 0562, September 15, 1951, ATIS, 2. However, in *Mass Behavior*, 159, the date of surrender was May 21.

1950. Reforming the 95th Army: converts and non-converts

What truly impressed the former Nationalist soldiers was not Marxist social theory, but the tangible differences between the Communists and the Nationalists. The discipline of the PLA was vastly superior, as were military-civilian relations. Corrupt practices common in the old army were eliminated. Food quality and quantity improved. More importantly, the Communist army also seemed “democratic” in a Communist sense. Although the practice of “Three Democracies” was strictly guided and carefully choreographed by experienced PLA officers, most soldiers for the first time in their military life, if not their adult life, were encouraged to speak up and participate in public affairs. In sharp contrast to the Nationalist army’s rigid hierarchy, in the PLA officers and soldiers seemed to be equal. Officers and soldiers wore the same kind of uniform and they addressed each other as “comrades.” Most noticeably, officers did not beat or scold their men. For troops who were used to physical and verbal abuse from their superiors, this single feature of the PLA won many hearts. Many were genuinely impressed and felt empowered by the Communists.

The 19-year-old Ding Xianwen was one of the new converts. Ding was a native of Mianyang, Sichuan. His father joined the Nationalist 95th Army during the war with Japan. When he was decommissioned from the army as a Lieutenant Colonel, he returned home scarred, injured, and poor.⁷⁵ After Ding Xianwen completed ten years of schooling, he taught elementary school for a year. In September 1949, through his

⁷⁵ Ding Xianwen 丁先文’s petition letter, circa 1982, in Zhang Chengyuan 张城垣 and Gao Yansai 高延赛, *Chongwei: Zhiyuanjun 180 shi daizhengwei Wu Chengde yu zhanyoumen* 重围: 志愿军180师代政委吴成德与战友们 [Layers of siege: The People’s Volunteer Army 180th Division Acting Commissar Wu Chengde and his comrades] (Beijing: Zhongguo wenshi chubanshe 中国文史出版社, 2001), 306-314. Also in Yu Jing 于劲, *Eyun* 厄运 [Nightmare] (Nanjing: Jiangsu wenyi chubanshe 江苏文艺出版社, 1988), 199-200.

father's connections Ding found a clerk position in his father's old unit.⁷⁶ Three months later, the 95th Army defected to the PLA. Before the PLA work team came to take over Ding's regiment in May 1950, he was greatly influenced by an old officer, who claimed to be both non-Nationalist and anti-Communist, and advocated a *Water Margin*-style brotherhood in the mountains. Quite a number of soldiers of poor family backgrounds, including Ding, were attracted to him and joined his secret organization. According to Ding's petition letter written circa 1982, after joining this secret group he "blindly hated the Communists, tore down Communist posters, and put out reactionary slogans."⁷⁷ Evidently Ding's description was honest, as he told his American captors the same thing in 1951. In his interrogation report, it was recorded: "He disliked Communism intensely when he was in the CNA, but changed his attitude after indoctrination because he was favorably impressed by what he saw in the CCF."⁷⁸ While his interrogation report did not detail how this dramatic turnaround occurred, Ding explained his conversion in his letter.

When Ding first came into contact with the Communists, he was surprised to see the unassuming manner of the PLA representative with the last name Wang, who later became his regiment commander. Wang dressed plainly and spoke in a friendly manner, so that Ding first mistakenly thought he was a cook. When the kitchen personnel followed the usual Nationalist practice of welcoming the new boss with a banquet, they seized chickens from the local peasants. Wang criticized the cooks and went to apologize to the peasants in person. He ate with the soldiers, squatting on the ground with a rice bowl in his hand. Wang's act came as a major shock to the Nationalist troops and they

⁷⁶ Ting, Hsien Wen 丁先文 (Ding Xianwen), Interrogation Report KG 0899, December 21, 1951, ATIS, 1. And Yu Jing, 199.

⁷⁷ Ding Xianwen's petition letter, in *Chongwei*, 307.

⁷⁸ Ding Xianwen, Interrogation Report KG 0899, December 21, 1951, ATIS, 1. CCF: Chinese Communist Forces; CNA: Chinese Nationalist Army.

kept talking about it. Wang frequently mingled with the soldiers, especially Ding. Soon Ding began to doubt the validity of his anti-Communist sentiment. When the brotherhood group plotted to murder Wang in a mutiny, Ding informed him and the plot was foiled. Ding was invited to speak before the entire regiment as a model reformed soldier.⁷⁹ When Ding's old unit was fully integrated into the 539th Regiment, 180th Division, 60th Army in July 1950, he was assigned to the Propaganda and Education Section at the regiment headquarters as a mimeograph machine operator.⁸⁰ Apparently, when Ding made a clean break with his Nationalist past, he won the trust of the Communists.

During the bandit-suppression campaign, Ding was greatly impressed by the quality of Regiment Commander Wang and Secretary Su, his leader in the propaganda section. In battles these two leaders always charged at the head of the troops. During marches Wang always yielded his horse to injured or young soldiers, and Secretary Su always carried an extra load for his men. Once a "liberated soldier" was killed in a battle and Commander Wang personally carried his body down the mountains. This was inconceivable in the old army. Many former Nationalist soldiers were so moved that they "cried and shed bitter tears." In January 1951, when the 60th Army passed through Ding's hometown in Mianyang en route to Korea, Secretary Su accompanied him to visit his parents. When Su learned of the family's economic hardship, he first donated his own salary, and then secured more money, clothes and shoes from the regiment.⁸¹ Moreover, Su notified the local government to provide more assistance to Ding's family.⁸² In Ding's eyes, these repeated acts of "revolutionary warmth" proved that the Communists were truly superior to the Nationalists.

⁷⁹ Ding Xianwen's petition letter, in *Chongwei*, 308.

⁸⁰ Ding Xianwen, Interrogation Report KG 0899, December 21, 1951, ATIS, 1.

⁸¹ Ding Xianwen's petition letter, in *Chongwei*, 308.

⁸² Yu Jing, 202.

However, not all Communists left a good impression on Ding. The first PLA representative, who came before Wang, acted condescendingly to Ding. When Regiment Commander Wang recommended Ding to join the Youth League, the political instructor in Ding's unit strongly opposed it, arguing that Ding was from the old army and had been a member of a reactionary organization, the secret brotherhood.⁸³ However, Wang prevailed and Ding became a member of the Youth League. In Ding's own words, "This was the starting point of my life as a conscious revolutionary."⁸⁴

Ding Xianwen's case demonstrates that while the vastly superior troop discipline and officer-soldier relations in the PLA certainly impressed many former Nationalist troops, to win their hearts and minds it required meticulous work by exemplary Communist officers. In reality, not all Communists were of the caliber of Wang or Su. As discussed in earlier sections, Whampoa cadet Gao Wenjun was appalled by his poorly educated leader. Naturally, not all former Nationalist soldiers were converted like Ding was. Nevertheless, even if the former Nationalists were not necessarily converted to the cause of revolution, some of them were sufficiently attracted to the Communists. Again, social class had much to do with their assessment of the Communist regime. People of poor, neglected, or "oppressed" family background tended to identify with the new order.

Dai Yushu, a future pro-Communist prisoner leader in Korea, was born into a cobbler's family in Chengdu in 1924. When he was very young, his mother died and he started learning his father's trade. Dai did not go to school. Among his poor friends in the neighborhood, Dai emerged as a natural leader who often risked his own life to defend his "brothers" against bullies. In 1941, he was conscripted to join the Nationalist 95th army. Dai was a squad leader when his unit defected to the Communists. After two

⁸³ At the time it was called Youth League of New Democracy, and was renamed The Communist Youth League in 1957. For simplicity's sake, Youth League is used in this paper.

⁸⁴ Ding Xianwen's petition letter, in *Chongwei*, 307-308.

months of reindoctrination, Dai retained his rank.⁸⁵ Although there is no information on his indoctrination experience, presumably Dai's experience was largely positive. Once in prison camps in Korea, Dai was among the first prisoners stepping out to resist the anti-Communists. He and his brotherhood organization in prison collaborated with and protected Communist prisoners, who were hiding in the background initially. Evidently non-party member Dai was a pro-Communist.

Wang Jiati, another officer in the 95th Army, was also a Chengdu native. Wang was born in 1922. He graduated from senior high school in 1940 and entered the Central Military Academy's Xi'an branch majoring in artillery. By 1949 Wang had achieved the rank of Major in the 95th Army. When the 95th Army was integrated into the PLA 60th Army in July 1951, Wang was assigned as an Assistant Battery Commander in the 75mm Mountain Gun Battalion, 180th Division, 60th Army. Clearly the Communists were still wary of former Nationalist officers. Wang was sent to reindoctrination programs twice after his new assignment. The first time Wang, together with 50 former Nationalist officers, received indoctrination for three weeks, and the second time 110 ex-Nationalists were trained for four months.⁸⁶

Although there is no information available other than Wang's interrogation report, several inferences can be made. Judging from the years of education Wang had obtained, most likely he hailed from a wealthier family than Dai Yushu's. Therefore he had a bad class label. However, unlike Wang Zunming who was a political officer in the Nationalist army and had little to offer to the Communists, apparently Wang Jiati's technical expertise was highly valued by the Communists, so he was utilized in the

⁸⁵ Dai Yushu 戴玉书, interview by Wu Jinfeng, June 3, 198r, in *Andeshe Biji: Hongse zhanfu huiyilu* 安德舍笔记—红色战俘回忆录 [Andeshe notes: memoirs of red POWs], 87. And Shi Zhankui 时占魁 and Zhao Mingzhi 赵明智, "jianzhenbuqu de Dai Yushu" 坚贞不屈的戴玉书 [The unyielding Dai Yushu], in *Kaoyan*, 360.

⁸⁶ Wang, Chia T'i 王家梯 (Wang Jiati), Interrogation Report KG 0283, August 11, 1951, ATIS, 1.

artillery unit. Despite his background, presumably Wang performed satisfactorily during indoctrination, so he was reassigned as an officer with the rank of an assistant company commander. However, a few months later Wang voluntarily surrendered to the UN forces in Korea. And soon he emerged as one of the anti-Communist prisoner leaders. On behalf of 85 former Whampoa cadets and graduates, Wang drafted the first petition letter addressed to General Wan Yaohuang, the former provost of Whampoa, appealing to the Nationalist government in Taiwan for rescue.⁸⁷ Evidently, Wang Jiati remained a loyal Nationalist.

Wang Jiati was not the only one who feigned conformity and deceived the Communists. Another Whampoa graduate in the 95th Army Liu Yuru pitilessly duped them. Liu was born in Guizhou province in 1925 and completed senior high school in Jiangxi. Between 1944 and 1946 he studied artillery at the Central Military Academy. Upon graduation he received commission in the 95th Army and he rose to the rank of captain in 1948. From December 1949 to July 1950 Liu received indoctrination. Subsequently, like most former low-ranking Nationalist officers, Liu was assigned as cultural officer in the 179th Division, 60th Army. However, in January 1951, Liu was reassigned to the 536 Regiment as an Artillery Staff Officer. In February, as one of the only twenty men selected from the entire 60th Army, Liu went to Beijing to receive a 10-day training in the use of Russian weapons.⁸⁸ Apparently the Communists placed great trust in Liu, and they hoped to rely on his artillery expertise in Korea. However, once in Korea Liu surrendered to the UN forces at the first opportunity. In prison, Liu quickly emerged as one of the most important anti-Communist propagandists, actively organizing political indoctrination sessions and writing petition letters to the Western

⁸⁷ Zhou Xiuhuan, ed., *Hanzhan yu fangong yishi pian 1*, 186-189.

⁸⁸ Liu, Ju Yu 劉儒裕 (Liu Yuru), Interrogation Report KG 0608, September 20, 1951, ATIS, 1, 7.

world. After his arrival in Taiwan in 1954, the Nationalist government published a book titled *Bleed Until Dawn*, apparently written by Liu but under an alias, denouncing the evils of Communism and lauding the heroism of the “14,000 Anti-Communists Righteous Men.”⁸⁹ No doubt Liu had deceived the Communists.

It seemed that Mao had a point. Former Nationalist officers, especially those with close ties to Chiang Kai-shek, were the most contaminated by “counterrevolutionary ideas” by virtue of their extended service in the Nationalist army. In contrast, young students were less exposed and they were more likely to be transformed into future Communist cadres. Mao also believed “the army is a school,” which could turn “fighting teams” into work teams.⁹⁰ When the PLA became the primary channel for social mobility, naturally many youths were attracted to the army, which was also a school.

1950. New recruits of the PLA

The experience of another Chengdu native, Zhong Junhua, was a classic example of how young people from poor families were profoundly attracted to the Communists and happily joined the army. Born in the outskirts of Chengdu in 1953 and abandoned by his derelict father, Zhong and his younger brother were single-handedly raised by his mother who earned a meager income working as a seamstress and laundress for the wealthy. Zhong’s memory of childhood was marked by hunger. Each day the family of three “had only two meals, which consisted of rice porridge and bean curd dregs cooked with wild herbs.” When he was eleven years old, he began working as an apprentice in various shops. In 1949 Nationalist Central Army units arrived in Chengdu and began conscripting young men. Zhong went into hiding in the barrack of his cousin who was an

⁸⁹ The book was published under an alias. Liu Lang 刘朗, *Liuxue dao tianming* 流血到天明 [Bleed Until Dawn] (Hong Kong: Yazhou chuban youxian gongsi 亚洲出版有限公司, 1955).

⁹⁰ Mao, order to field armies, February 8, 1949, *Mao Zedong junshi wenji*, vol. 5, 495-496.

officer in the Sichuanese 95th Army. In early 1950 when the 95th Army was reorganized, a PLA representative asked Zhong if he would like to work in the medical team. He gladly accepted. In the old society an opportunity to learn professional skills was inconceivable for poor youths like Zhong.

Zhong described his days as a paramedic trainee as “fantastic” (*anyidehen*). When his mother came to take him home, he declined. Soon he became a Youth League member. In November 1950 Zhong was decorated with a Special-class Merit (*tedenggong*) for his outstanding service in tending smallpox patients. As if blessings came in pairs, at home, Zhong’s mother was appointed as the director of the local Residential Committee. “That period was the most gratifying time in my mother’s entire life,” Zhong remarked. For the first time in his life, Zhong felt he and his family were “treated like human beings,” and he attributed all these positive changes to the new government.⁹¹ No doubt Zhong wholeheartedly identified with the Communists. After his capture in Korea, the then 17-year-old Zhong was one of the youngest prisoners but became one of the first prisoners to fight the anti-Communist prisoners.

The circumstances of Zhong’s induction into the PLA were rather unusual, as youths with little education were not the typical recruits joining the army in early 1950. Since the Communists were already saddled with nearly one million former Nationalist troops, who were mostly uneducated and unreliable, the ideal candidates for the new army were educated youths, whom the Communists planned to train as future cadres to govern the country. However, youths with good education were mostly from middle- or upper-class families. Therefore, political indoctrination became a top priority in their training. Military and Political Universities were established precisely for this purpose, but in Sichuan these Universities were largely filled by former Nationalist officers and

⁹¹ Zhong Junhua 钟俊骅, interview by author, September 13, 2007, Chengdu, Sichuan. *Anyidehen* 安逸得很, *tedenggong* 特等功.

Whampoa cadets. Another institution, the Attached School to Western Sichuan Military Region, was created in Chengdu immediately after the Communist victory. Twelve hundred students aged between 14 and 30 enrolled in this school. Their prior education ranged from junior high school to college. Except for a small number of students from Hubei and Shaanxi, most were from the Chengdu area. The program was supposed to last for three years. However, after the outbreak of the Korean War, in July 1950 all students “graduated” and were assigned to various units in the 60th Army. Most served as cultural instructors, whose main responsibility was to eliminate illiteracy among the troops.⁹² In Korea a number of the graduates were taken prisoner. In the struggle between pro- and anti-Communist prisoners, while several Attached School graduates emerged as anti-Communists, others became pro-Communist activists and played important roles in communication and propaganda works. Cai Pingsheng and Lin Mocong were two of the pro-Communist activists.

Cai Pingsheng was born in Beiping in 1932; therefore he was named Pingsheng. His father was a painter-craftsman and his mother a Manchu. Growing up in war, Cai’s childhood was marked by family separation and endless fleeing. The family first moved from Beiping to Jiangxi, then to Hankou. Cai’s younger brother was born on the boat between Hankou and Yichang, and therefore was named Zhousheng. At the port of Yichang, his father got off the boat to buy food for the newborn child, but the boat departed before his return. The family remained separated for years until the end of the war with Japan. Pingsheng and Zhousheng were raised by their mother working as a seamstress, first in Xi’an, then in Baoji and Hanzhong. Pingsheng attended school, but

⁹² Bai Juntao 白钧陶 et al., “‘Suixiao’—rencai yaolan: Chuanxi Junqu Suiying Xuexiao pianduan huiyi” “随校”—人才摇篮: 川西军区随营学校片段回忆, in *Fengyan Rensheng* 烽烟人生 [Lives in War], vol. 3 (Chengdu: unofficial publication, 2007), 494, 498.

after school he worked as a peddler at the train station. After the Japanese surrender, the family finally reunited in Chengdu.⁹³

A few days after the “liberation” of Chengdu on December 27, 1949, without telling his parents, Cai went to apply to the Attached School of the PLA, which offered a tuition-free three-year program. The PLA officer sized up the skinny Cai and warned him, “Ours is a military school, and it is very tough. Probably we will go to the frontline, and there will be casualties. Now it is not too late to change your mind.” “I have thought it over already, and I will not back down,” Cai replied. Two months after his enrollment, Cai was inducted into the Youth League, thanks to his proletarian family background and his own diligence. And soon he became the class leader.⁹⁴ The 18-year-old Cai, for the first time in his life, felt that his future would be “smooth sailing” and “a walk in the clouds.”⁹⁵ After he was captured in Korea in 1951, he was forcibly tattooed and brutally tortured by anti-Communist prisoners, including a former Attached School classmate. Risking his life, Cai still insisted on returning home. Apparently Cai had faith in the Communists. He believed that once he returned home, his life would return to normal.

While Cai Pingsheng could rightly claim a proletarian family origin, which was considered the most desirable family origin under the Communists, Lin Mocong’s family history was complicated. Lin’s father Lin Chunhua was one of China’s pioneers in stenography. Lin Chunhua worked for Sun Yat-sen as a quickhand specialist during the Nationalist Party’s First National Congress held in Guangzhou in 1924. Soon Chiang Kai-shek selected Lin to be his aide and arranged for his enrollment in the 3rd class of

⁹³ Cai Pingsheng 蔡平生, “wo de yisheng,” in *Fengyan Rensheng*, vol. 1 (2003), 354-355.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 355.

⁹⁵ Cai Pingsheng, interview by author, September 2007, Chengdu, Sichuan. *Pingbuqingyun* 平步青云; *yifanfengshun* 一帆风顺.

Whampoa Academy. Lin accompanied Chiang for years until 1931.⁹⁶ After Lin left Chiang's office of aide-de-camp, Lin served as an instructor at Whampoa until his death in 1946. Lin Mocong was born in Nanjing in 1934, and his childhood was also marked by endless flight, first from Nanjing to his ancestral home in Xinhui, Guangdong, then to Macau, and finally to Chengdu in 1940. When Lin was in Chengdu, he came to know some of the important Nationalist military and intelligence figures, such as Deng Wenyi and Kang Ze, who had served as Chiang Kai-shek's aides-de-camp along with his father. However, Lin clearly remembered that his father loathed spymaster Dai Li, describing him as a ruthless man who "ate people without spitting out a bone." As far as Lin Mocong could remember, his father was not an enthusiastic supporter of the regime.⁹⁷

After his father's death in 1946, Lin's entire family had to rely on his elder sister's income as a teacher at the Whampoa High School, which was attached to the military academy. Lin attended the same high school, and he was influenced by leftist teachers, who were probably underground Communists. More importantly, Lin was appalled by the corruption and violence of the Nationalist regime. When he was only six, on his journey from Guangdong to Sichuan he witnessed an officer beating an ill soldier to death. In high school, he saw the Nationalist army executing a runaway draftee on his high school campus. Lin concluded, "What the Nationalists practiced was exactly opposite to what they preached. Not just me, but most people in my family lost confidence in the Nationalists."⁹⁸

In the aftermath of the Communist victory in Chengdu, Lin's elder sister went to the Military and Political University for indoctrination, and the family lost its income.

⁹⁶ Lin Chunhua co-edited several Chiang's speech collections, for example, Deng Wenyi 鄧文儀, Lin Chunhua 林春華, and Shao Lizi 邵力子. *Jiang Zongsiling yanlunji. er* 蔣總司令言論集. 二 [Generalissimo Chiang's speech collection, vol 2.]. Nanjing: Xunlian zongjianbu zhengzhi xunlianchu 訓練總監部政治訓練處, 1931.

⁹⁷ Lin Mocong 林模丛, interview by author, November 1-2, 2007, Kunming.

⁹⁸ Lin Mocong 林模丛, interview by author, November 1-2, 2007, Kunming.

Partly for economic reasons, both Lin and his younger sister decided to join the PLA. However, Lin Mocong could not sing, so he was rejected by the Attached School in Chengdu. He was undaunted and went to another Attached School based in Xindu. There the propaganda team leader reluctantly accepted him on a probationary basis. His younger sister was admitted to the girls' company, but soon transferred to the medical team. Lin Mocong quickly learned various musical instruments and even dabbled in composing. When his elder sister completed her indoctrination and received a good job placement, she tried to take him and his younger sister home. They both refused. Lin said, "Life here is like that of the immortals! Why should I go home?"⁹⁹ Evidently Lin, who was from an insider family of the Nationalist regime, approved of the Communists and loved what they offered.

After witnessing the Nationalists' rigid hierarchy firsthand, Lin was greatly impressed by the Communists' egalitarianism. He especially enjoyed the democratic atmosphere in the attached school, where "everything had to go through democratic discussion." However, he did notice the limitation of this "democracy." Like other students, he submitted his application to join the Youth League. His company held a meeting to discuss nominations. The leader told students to nominate a particular student, claiming "that is the intent of the upper-level. We should be of one heart with the party." Lin felt "very uncomfortable," and thought, "What kind of democracy is this?" However unwillingly, he still raised his hand to support that nomination. Lin also sensed a gradual tightening of control in the Communist army. After running into a series of small troubles, he learned to be "wiser" (*xueguai*). Despite these minor disappointments, overall Lin still believed in the superiority of the Communists over the Nationalists.¹⁰⁰ As

⁹⁹ Lin Mocong 林模丛, interview by author, November 1-2, 2007, Kunming.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. *Xueguai* 学乖.

a result of this belief, Lin became one of the youngest and toughest pro-Communist prisoners in Korea.

Like Lin Mocong's sister, many girls joined the PLA's propaganda or medical teams. Yang Yuhua, later the only known Chinese female prisoner in Korea, joined the PLA paramedic school in early 1950. Yang was born in Wenjiang Country. She grew up with her grandmother, who worked as a domestic helper for a landlord family but made sure that Yang received an education. Just like Cai Pingsheng who joined the army without telling his parents, Yang just disappeared from home and applied to the paramedic school. Only three days later, she was transferred to the medical team attached to the headquarters of the 180th Division.¹⁰¹ There is no information on her experience in the army, but Yang was well known for her steadfast pro-Communist stance in the UN prison. Sometime between mid-1951 to mid-1952, Yang was interrogated by a Nationalist officer hired by General MacArthur. This interrogator remembered Yang in such terms: "She had been poisoned by Communist propaganda since she was little (*ziyou*), and showed no sign of awakening."¹⁰² Probably this Nationalist officer was wrong in claiming that Yang had been influenced by the Communists since she was little. However, it was clear that her one-year training in the PLA had shaped Yang's identification with the Communists.

The experiences of Ding Xianwen, Dai Yushu, Zhong Junhua, Cai Pingsheng, Lin Mocong, and Yang Yuhua clearly demonstrate the powerful political and emotional appeal of the Communists, especially for people who were disadvantaged, neglected, or oppressed under the Nationalist regime. They were not necessarily all from the working class, but they shared similar sufferings, such as economic hardship, social

¹⁰¹ Yu Jing, 39.

¹⁰² Gao Qingchen 高慶辰, *Kongzhan fei yingxiong* 空戰非英雄 [Air fight non-hero] (Taipei: Maitian Chuban, 2000), 242.

discrimination, or government oppression. Probably not by pure coincidence, all of the individuals mentioned above grew up in broken families. They suffered the loss or absence of one or both parents, and they suffered the resultant social discrimination. In a sense, the Communist government was an ideal fatherly figure that provided order, discipline, care, and purpose. During their imprisonment in Korea, their emotional attachment to family and home were fused with their identification with the Communist government. All these emotions were merged and transformed into an intense fighting spirit in their struggle against the anti-Communist prisoners and the UN prison authorities. This strong emotional identification with the Communists provided the necessary condition to become a pro-Communist activist in prison.

Certainly not all prisoners were from poor and suffering families. New recruits also came from well-to-do families. Although they did not personally experience the pain of the under-class in the “old society,” they could sympathize with the poor people. Most importantly, they could intellectually identify with the Communists, believing only the Communists could solve China’s problems once and for all. Zhang Zeshi was one of them. In 1948 Zhang, a second year student at Tsinghua University and a new underground Communist, received orders to leave school and return to his home province Sichuan. He first engaged in the student movement at Sichuan University and then joined guerrilla forces in western Sichuan. After the Communist victory, the party asked Zhang to join the army and continue the revolution, as educated cadres were needed in the land reform and “bandit suppression” campaigns. Therefore, instead of fulfilling his dream of resuming his studies at Tsinghua, Zhang became a PLA propaganda officer, along with his girlfriend who was a fellow college student-turned-guerrilla. In a twist of fate, the couple belatedly learned that they were not allowed to marry, as marriage was an entitlement exclusively enjoyed by battalion-level officers and above in the PLA.

Nevertheless, they held an engagement banquet, promising a prompt wedding immediately after the end of military operations.¹⁰³ Certainly they did not anticipate the outbreak of the Korean War and China's participation, not to mention Zhang's capture and imprisonment.

All cases studied in this section involved educated youths voluntarily joining the Communist army. "It was fashionable to join the army. It was cool. People cried when they were rejected by the army," Lin Mocong remarked.¹⁰⁴ Educated youths joined the army for a number of reasons in addition to the high-minded desire to participate in the revolution. Some wanted to continue their education in Attached Schools; others wanted to learn practical skills. Some considered joining the army as finding a job, just like in the old Nationalist army. Most importantly, many realized that under the Communists, the army was the only channel for upward social mobility.

Even though most recruits understood there were certain risks involved in joining the army, they were used to the idea of the Communists forces claiming victory after victory. Few could anticipate fighting an enemy as strong as the U.S. in a war as brutal as the Korean War. It was true they volunteered to join the army, but they did so before the outbreak of the Korean War. Would they still have joined the army had they known they were to fight in Korea? This hypothetical question is impossible to answer. However, certain individuals did volunteer for the army hoping to go to Korea, because they found this dangerous path the only way out of their miseries under the Communists. Several of them were future anti-Communist prisoner leaders.

¹⁰³ Zhang Zeshi, *1949 Wo bu zai Qinghuayuan*, 368.

¹⁰⁴ Lin Mocong 林模丛, interview by author, November 1-2, 2007, Kunming.

Future anti-Communist prisoner leaders

In November 1950, 22-year-old Cheng Liren “had no alternative but to volunteer” for the PLA, as he told his interrogators in Korea. A native of Si’nan County in eastern Guizhou province, Cheng completed senior high school at Guiyang, then graduated from a police training school in Chongqing. He had worked as a Nationalist police officer in a county in Guizhou for only three months before the Communist takeover. Cheng returned to his hometown, joined a guerrilla unit, and fought the Communists sporadically for several months. In July 1950 the guerrilla leader was captured and executed. The unit disbanded and Cheng returned home. Finally in November Cheng joined the PLA, and became an ammunition bearer in the 12th Army.¹⁰⁵

Although there is no additional information available on Cheng’s family background, presumably his family was well-off enough to support him through high school and the police school. As the Communists gradually tightened their control on local society everywhere, people with a “counterrevolutionary” past were destined to suffer increasing scrutiny and retribution. Apparently out of desperation, Cheng “volunteered” to join the army. Probably he did not know if the unit was going to Korea, but by joining the army, at the minimum an individual like Cheng could escape local persecution, and if he was lucky, he might have a chance to redeem himself through good service. As it turned out, the 12th Army went to Korea in March 1951. In May Cheng escaped from his unit and surrendered to the UN side. Soon he became one of the anti-Communist prisoner leaders.¹⁰⁶ By joining the Communist army, Cheng found a way out of fear and persecution under Communism.

¹⁰⁵ Ch’eng, Li Jen 程立人 (Cheng Liren), Interrogation Report KG 0633, September 24, 1951, ATIS, 1.

¹⁰⁶ Interestingly, in 1954 instead of going to Taiwan, Cheng chose neutral nations. Eventually he became a successful businessman in Argentina. See Gao Wenjun, *Hanzhan yiwang*, 344.

One month after Cheng Liren “volunteered” to join the PLA, Yin Ruliang of Wanxian, Sichuan did the same, after hiding at home for eight months. Yin was born in 1923 and had seven years of education. From 1942 to 1944, he attended a Nationalist military academy in Hechuan, Sichuan. Upon graduation Yin was assigned as a political officer in the New 1st Army, then based in India. Under the command of the legendary General Sun Liren, the New 1st Army defeated the Japanese in Burma, then in Guangxi, and received the Japanese surrender in Guangzhou. During the civil war, Yin was wounded in October 1948 and sent to an army hospital near Shanghai, where he was captured by the Communists in May 1949. Yin recovered in August and returned home to Wanxian. A month later, Yin took up arms and rejoined the Nationalist army. He was captured by the PLA in Chengdu, but he escaped home. In December 1950, Yin “volunteered for service” with the PLA and became a truck driver. Two months later, Yin was sent to Andong.¹⁰⁷ In April 1951, without stopping at the designated location, Yin drove his truck south toward the UN lines. Then he abandoned his truck and proceeded on foot to Kaesong, where he surrendered to UN forces.¹⁰⁸

As a Nationalist military academy graduate and a soldier of the elite New 1st Army, Yin was evidently a proud Nationalist. When he was hiding at home in Wanxian, most likely he knew the Communists were closing in on counterrevolutionaries like him and his life was in danger. It is not clear if the Wanxian local government and the truck unit were fully aware of Yin’s complicated history, especially his repeated escapes from the Communists. As the PLA desperately needed truck drivers, probably it did not check drivers’ histories thoroughly or it had decided to utilize unreliable men regardless. At this narrow window of opportunity, Yin escaped again. Once in UN prison camps, Yin

¹⁰⁷ Yin, Ju Liang 印汝亮 (Yin Ruliang), Interrogation Report KG 0495, September 5, 1951, ATIS, 1.

¹⁰⁸ Yin, Ju-liang, Interrogation Report KT 0351, April 17, 1951, ATIS, unpaginated.

became a leader of anti-Communist prisoners. He was one of the founding leaders of the first anti-Communist organization, the “Anti-Communist National Salvation Youth League.”¹⁰⁹ Certainly the Communists had underestimated this truck driver.

Coincidentally, another founding leader of the anti-Communist Youth League was also a truck driver. Li Da’an, who later became the most notorious anti-Communist prisoner in Korea, had little choice but to serve in the Communist army in February 1951. Li was born in Andong, Liaoning province in 1927. After four and a half years of elementary school, he started working as a truck driver in 1943. When the Communists took over Andong in 1945, Li joined the local anti-Communist guerrilla unit. In 1946 the Nationalist army drove the Communists away and occupied the Andong area. Again Li worked as a chauffeur and truck driver.¹¹⁰ In summer 1947, the Nationalists withdrew from Andong and Li followed the troops to Shenyang. However, Li’s wife and daughter still lived in Andong, so he decided to return home to live with his family. Although he received Nationalist assignment as an underground agent, he never initiated any contact in Andong. But in July 1948, he was arrested. Initially he confessed and received no beating. However, soon his captors charged him with hiding a gun. He was “suspended in mid-air and tortured.” He was “beaten half dead” (*siquhuolai*) several times. He asked his wife to bring him poison to end his own life, but his wife refused. Then he tried to hang himself with his belt, but another inmate stopped him. After his suicide attempts, he was sent to another prison, where for six months he “never ate his fill.” All he had was vegetables and soybean cake (*doubing*), which was a byproduct of oil press and used as animal fodder. He was subject to frequent corporal punishment for frivolous infractions,

¹⁰⁹ Chen Jiying 陳紀澄, “Juji dao han zei bu liang li “巨濟島漢賊不兩立 (上) [Struggles between the loyalists and traitors on Koje Island, Party One], in *Fangong yishi fendou shi* 反共義士奮鬥史 [The history of the Anti-Communist Righteous Men’s struggles] (Taipei: fangong yishi jiuye fudao chu 反共義士就業輔導處, 1955), 34.

¹¹⁰ Li, Ta An 李大安 (Li Da’an), Interrogation Report KG 0486, September 3, 1951, ATIS, 1.

such as taking too long to relieve himself or not speaking loudly enough to wardens. After two years in prison, he was finally released in September 1950, but remained jobless. In February 1951, Li was drafted by the army to drive trucks to the frontline in Korea. Li crossed the Yalu River on February 27, and on March 24 he surrendered to the UN side.¹¹¹

In UN prison camps on Koje Island, Li Da'an and Yin Ruliang founded the first anti-Communist organization, and they were the first prisoners to write blood letters to Chiang Kai-shek. Chiang recorded in his diary on October 18, 1951, "After reading the blood letter written by Yin Liangwen [Yin Ruliang], Li Da'an and more than one thousand former troops of mine, I feel even more ashamed and uneasy (*canhuang*)."¹¹² This was the first time that Chinese prisoners of war in Korea appeared in Chiang Kai-shek's diaries. It also marked the beginning of Chiang's effort to bring them to Taiwan.

However, most common prisoners remembered Li Da'an as the most violent anti-Communist leader. He initiated the campaign to tattoo prisoners with anti-Communist slogans. Li and his henchmen tortured those who refused. His violence culminated in the brutal torture and killing of several pro-repatriation prisoners in April 1952. One victim was Whampo cadet Yang Wenhua, whose background was discussed earlier in this paper.

While Li Da'an was notorious for his violence, he was also known as an unsophisticated bully. His leadership position among the anti-Communist prisoners was soon taken by Wang Shunqing, who was a much better educated former Nationalist

¹¹¹ Yu Jing, 76. When Li Da'an was a U.N. prisoner of war in Korea, he was drafted by the U.S. military to engage in spy missions in North Korea. In 1953 after Li parachuted into North Korea, he was captured and sent to China. He was sentenced to death in 1958. PLA writer Yu Jing read Li's confession statement, in which the basic outline of events matches U.S. Interrogation Report KG 0486. The details are based on a combination of two sources. *Siquhuolai* 死去活來, *doubing* 豆餅.

¹¹² Chiang Dairies, October 18, 1951. *Canhuang* 慚惶. 印亮文 was probably a mistaken writing of 印汝亮, as there was no other known leader named 印亮文.

officer and a shrewd leader. In June 1950, 24-year-old Wang Shunqing, a battalion commander in the Nationalist 63rd Army, was captured by the PLA on Hainan Island.¹¹³ He was assigned as a medic in the PLA 40th Army. Only four months later, his unit crossed the Yalu on October 19, 1950. Just a month later, Wang surrendered to the UN side and brought back three American prisoners along with him. His surrender was recorded as follows:

On November 24, the 1st Bn, 354th Regt engaged a US Force at an unknown place. PW, a medic, was left to care for 3 US soldiers (2 wounded) captured during the engagement . . . PW decided to desert the CCF, and with 4 CCF soldiers (who did not know the PWs intention of surrendering), brought the 3 wounded soldiers through CCF lines and surrendered to an unknown US Force.¹¹⁴

This unbelievable episode was apparently true, as the three rescued U.S. prisoners made a request to “extend the best treatment possible” to Wang “in gratitude for his service.” Wang’s uncanny ability to coax four other Communist soldiers to bring the three wounded American soldiers to the UN side demonstrated his leadership skills.

Equally unusual was Wang’s English ability, as “part of the interrogation was performed in English.” This probably had to do with his twelve years of education in Qingdao. However, after his capture on Hainan Island, Wang “concealed his ability to speak English from the Communists and consequently was not called to perform any duties requiring its use.” Probably he concealed his rank as well. Apparently the Communists considered him a harmless man. He proved them wrong.

Once surrendered to the U.S. forces, at the outset Wang claimed that he was a devout Christian and an anti-Communist. He reported that his mother and two brothers

¹¹³ Wong, Shun Ching 王順清 (Wang Shunqing), Interrogation Report 164-MISDI-1276, December 1, 1950, ATIS, 1. His rank is based on Du Ping 杜平, *Zai Zhiyuanjun zongbu* 在志愿军总部 (Beijing: Jiefangjun chubanshe, 1989), 341. Following details are from Interrogation Report.

¹¹⁴ Wang Shunqing, Interrogation Report 164-MISDI-1276, December 1, 1950, ATIS, 2. PW: prisoner of war; Bn: battalion; Regt: Regiment.

had been killed by the Communists during the land reform in 1948.¹¹⁵ Most likely Wang's family owned land in Shandong, where the Communists carried out land reform early. If the alleged murders of his family were true, it was not surprising that Wang bore hatred toward the Communists. From his capture in Hainan in June to his surrender in November, Wang lived the shortest time under the Communists compared to the other prisoners. But his hatred was no less intense. In UN prison camps, Wang quickly emerged as the undisputed leader of Compound 72. In a U.S. army's internal report, Wang is described as having "exercised a personal monarchy over eight thousand PW's, exacting subservience and personal privileges and indulging in personal violence on a scale not reported in any other compound."¹¹⁶ The violence reached its climax before the screening of prisoners in April 1952, and several pro-Communist prisoners were murdered and many were tortured and mutilated in Compound 72. However, Wang Shunqing normally refrained from personally engaging in violence. Instead he let men like Li Da'an carry out most of the dirty work.

While Wang Shunqing presided over Compound 72, Wang Zunming, the Shaanxi native who went through indoctrination in Chongqing, controlled Compound 86. Together the two Wangs ruled more than 16,000 Chinese prisoners with intense psychological control and physical violence. When the UN prison authorities screened Chinese prisoners in April 1952, less than 20 percent of the prisoners in these two compounds declared their desire to return to China. The majority of the prisoners rejected repatriation to China, and they became the bulk of the "14,000 anti-Communist Righteous Men" who eventually went to Taiwan in January 1954.

Under the two Wangs' reign, the Communist prisoners in Compounds 72 and 86 were individually isolated, constantly monitored, and frequently tortured. The

¹¹⁵ Wang Shunqing, Interrogation Report 164-MISDI-1276, December 1, 1950, ATIS, 1.

¹¹⁶ U.S. military report, quoted in *Mass Behavior*, 329.

Communists never managed to pose meaningful threats to the anti-Communists' control in these two compounds. Who were the Communist leaders and why couldn't they compete with the anti-Communists?

Communist officers: a traitor and the faithful

Unlike the anti-Communist prisoner leaders who came from very diverse backgrounds, the majority of the Communist officer prisoners were from the PLA 180th Division, 60th Army. They were captured when the division was completely encircled and crushed by UN forces during the second phase of the Fifth Campaign in late May 1951. Counting a small number of officers from other units, all together there were one division commissar, five regiment-level officers, and more than 30 battalion-level officers under UN custody.¹¹⁷ They were the high-ranking officers in UN prisons.

Prior to the screening in April 1952, most Communist officers initially tried to hide their officer identity in order to avoid attention and interrogation. When they were identified and persecuted by anti-Communist prisoners, they belatedly attempted to organize resistance, but they remained the underdogs. Only after the screening, when pro-repatriation and pro-Communist prisoners were separated from the anti-repatriates and anti-Communists, did the Communist officers establish themselves as the leaders in the pro-repatriation camp. Unlike the anti-Communists who had to compete for leadership positions, after the screening in April 1952 the Communist hierarchy was largely based on their previous ranks in the army. Since the Acting Commissar of the 180th Division Wu Chengde was segregated in Pusan and had no contact with other

¹¹⁷ The editorial committee, "Chaoxian Zhanzheng zhong zai meifang de zhongguo zhanfu jizhongying qingkuang zongshu" 朝鲜战争中在美方的中国战俘集中营情况综述 [An overview of the U.S. concentration camps for Chinese POWs during the Korean War], in *Kaoyan*, 1.

prisoners, the next highest ranking officer, the Commissar of the 538th Regiment of the 180th Division, became the top leader of all Communist and pro-repatriation prisoners.

After the end of the war, the majority of these high-ranking Communist officers returned to China, except a few battalion-level officers who went to Taiwan. While the anti-Communist prisoner leaders were determined to go to Taiwan, most Communist officers were equally determined to return to China. The Communist officers, especially the high-ranking ones, had fought the Nationalists for many years and finally defeated them in 1949. In prison camps in Korea, however, the balance of power reversed. The anti-Communist prisoners took revenge on Communist officers, humiliating and persecuting them ruthlessly. The Communist leaders had no reason and no incentive to defect to Taiwan.

While most high-ranking Communist officers remained faithful, there was a major exception. Tan Xingdong, a veteran Communist who joined the revolution in 1941, defected and became a well-known anti-Communist leader. Tan was born in Guanyun county in northern Jiangsu in 1923. He joined the local Communist forces in 1941, but soon deserted. Half a year later he “was picked up” by the Communists and reassigned to another unit. In 1942, his unit marched to Shandong and was integrated into the Communist 2nd Division. In September 1945, Tan’s unit departed for Jilin province in Manchuria and received new recruits. Eventually the unit became the PLA 38th Army and it swept from Manchuria all the way to Guangxi province. In August 1950, Tan was promoted to Assistant Battalion Commander.¹¹⁸ Apparently Tan had performed well in the 38th army, which was often referred to as the “Tiger Army,” the best of the best in General Lin Biao’s army. His future looked bright.

¹¹⁸ Tan, Hsing Tung 譚興東 (Tan Xingdong), Interrogation Report No. 4649, April 11, 1951, ATIS, 1.

Tan, however, had a track record of “thought problems,” which first manifested in his desertion between 1941 and 1942. Between June and July 1946, Tan was “given a special indoctrination lecture because of hostile attitude toward Communist doctrine.” On August 9, 1950, Assistant Battalion Commander Tan “went AWOL, after receiving news his rich parents were killed by the Communists.” In September he was captured at home and sent to Manchuria under guard. By the time he returned to Manchuria, his unit had crossed the Yalu. “Still under guard,” Tan crossed the Yalu and “headed south to catch up with his outfit.” After passing through Pyongyang and Seoul, finally in February 1951 he rejoined his unit. But he was demoted to Assistant Platoon Leader. On March 12, 1951, Tan led three of his men to surrender to UN forces near Seoul.¹¹⁹

Once in prison camps, Tan quickly joined the anti-Communists, and he earned their trust by informing on fellow Communist prisoners. Due to his efforts, several Communist prisoners’ cells were uncovered and destroyed by the anti-Communist prisoners and the prison authorities. More importantly, Tan became one of the most persuasive anti-Communist lecturers. Speaking before hundreds of prisoners, Tan used his own experience to demonstrate the deviousness and cruelty of the Communists. As someone whose parents were killed by the Communists, his story resonated with many prisoners of bad family origins. As a former Assistant Battalion Commander and an insider of the Communist system, his argument on Communist persecution was especially convincing to Communist party members. Many chose Taiwan instead of China because they feared persecution by the Communists once they returned to China. Tan was a living proof.

Ding Xianwen, the former clerk of the Nationalist 95th Army, remembered Tan’s lectures. Tan was evidently well-versed in party history. He talked about the purge of the

¹¹⁹ Tan, Hsing Tung, Interrogation Report No. 4649, April 11, 1951, ATIS, 1-2. AWOL: absent from one's post but without intent to desert.

AB Regiment and numerous intra-party struggles. He warned his listeners about their dossiers, which recorded everything about their past. He challenged those pro-Communists of bad family origins, “Do you know at this moment, the Communists are struggling against your parents at home! Have you thought of this cruel scene? Do you understand what class struggle is?” Tan’s question was like a rude awakening to many prisoners in the audience, and some cried in pain. Before the troops departed China to enter Korea, some prisoners of bad family origins probably had heard of their families’ persecution, others had not. However, Tan’s example was very powerful and his logic very convincing. In a sense, Tan’s words were more effective than torture and hunger in deterring prisoners from choosing repatriation.¹²⁰

Tan spent much time working on fellow Communist officer Sun Zhenguan. However, he failed to persuade Sun to abandon his Communist stance. Sun was born into a merchant family in Ningbo, Zhejiang province in 1928. When he was fifteen, he joined the Communist underground in his middle school. In 1944, he became a clerk in the Eastern Zhejiang Guerrilla Columns under the New Fourth Army. Eventually Sun’s unit became the PLA 20th Army. The 20th Army engaged in various campaigns in East China, and Sun rose to the rank of Battalion Commissar. In mid November 1950, the 20th Army entered Korea. Sun was captured on December 8, 1950 during the Battle of Chosin Reservoir.¹²¹ Sun was the highest-ranking Chinese prisoner until the capture of regiment-level officers like Zhao Zuoduan and Du Gang in May 1951. In the eyes of anti-Communist prisoners, Sun was remembered as a die-hard Communist and a graduate of

¹²⁰ Tan’s lectures and effectiveness are discussed in Yu Jing, 214-218.

¹²¹ Sun Zhenguan, interview by Wu Jinfeng, July 13, 1983, in *Andeshe Biji*, vol. 1, 30. In his report, Sun “Claims to have surrendered to US 1st Marine at Kotori.” See Sun, Chin Kuan 孫振冠, Interrogation Report No. 4773, February 25, 1951, ATIS, 9-10. Most likely Sun was captured. Chosin Reservoir 長津湖.

the Yan'an Red Army University.¹²² Certainly the description of his education was inaccurate, but it was a good indication of Sun's Communist credentials. Unlike Tan Xingdong who had run afoul of Communist discipline, Sun had no such record.

After the end of the second phase of the Fifth Campaign in May 1951, a large influx of prisoners arrived in UN prison camps. With the arrival of higher-ranking prisoners, Sun Zhenguan deferred to them. All four regimental-level officers were from the 180th Division, 60th Army. Zhao Zuoduan was the Commissar and Du Gang was the Chief of Staff of the 538th Regiment. Wei Lin was the Deputy Chief of Staff of the 539th Regiment. Guo Zhaolin was the Artillery Director at the division headquarters. After the screening of prisoners in April 1952, Zhao Zuoduan became the top leader, with Du Gang, Wei Lin, Guo Zhaolin, and Sun Zhenguan serving as his deputies. They formed the core of Communist leadership in the pro-repatriation camp.

All officers of the 180th Division hailed from Shanxi province, where the unit originated from Communist guerrilla forces during the War of Resistance. Many of the officers joined the guerrilla during this period. Zhao Zuoduan was born into a rich peasant family in 1918. In 1937, during his third year in high school, he quit school and volunteered for the Sacrifice Alliance (*Xisheng Jiuguo Tongmenghui*), which was an anti-Japanese paramilitary organization founded by Shanxi strongman Yan Xishan but operated by Communist Bo Yibo. In December 1939, Bo Yibo led troops to break away from Yan Xishan. Zhao Zuoduan followed the Communists and became a cultural instructor in a guerrilla unit. In 1945 Zhao became a Communist party member.¹²³ He rose in the ranks, but mostly served as a political officer in headquarters, and had limited combat experience. After the Communists took over Chengdu, Zhao also served as the

¹²² Chen Jiying, in *Fangong yishi fendou shi*, 29.

¹²³ Chao, Tso Tuan 趙佐端 (Zhao Zuoduan), Interrogation Report KG 0537, September 11, 1951, ATIS, 1. *Xisheng Jiuguo Tongmenghui* 牺牲救国同盟会.

director of an Attached School. When the 60th Army left Sichuan for Korea, some of his colleagues were selected to remain in Sichuan on garrison duties, and he was ordered to “go down” to the 538th Regiment.¹²⁴ Zhao became a commissar of a combat unit.

It is worth noting that many of the Communist officers, especially those with middle school or higher education, were from the landlord and rich peasant classes. How did they become Communists and remain faithful? Zhao’s experience is very instructive of the Communist method to ensure loyalty. In the mid-1930s, in the face of Japanese aggression, many educated youths became ardent patriots, but they had to choose between the Nationalists and the Communists. Zhao initially chose the Communists simply because he felt that the Nationalists were a party for the rich and powerful. In the meantime, a close friend of Zhao joined the Nationalists. Two years later, when both men had become important figures in their respective parties locally, Zhao received an order to entrap his close friend and execute him. Zhao’s initial thought was “Why me?” Nevertheless Zhao went to lure his friend out of his house and had him captured. Somehow that friend escaped. The first thing he did was to set fire to Zhao’s house. After that, “on the road of revolution, there was not turning back for Zhao Zuoduan.”¹²⁵ Zhao’s story reveals one of the fundamental features of the Communist system: the absence of an exit option. Once a man joined the Communist party, there was simply no way out. One had to remain faithful, unless one decides to become a traitor and join the enemy. There was nothing in between. In Korea, while Tan Xingdong became a “traitor,” Zhao remained faithful. Actually Zhao had no other choice but to remain faithful. In fact, out of revenge the anti-Communists prisoners frequently tortured Zhao. Submission to them would only bring more humiliation. For Zhao, there was no turning back.

¹²⁴ Zhao Zuoduan 赵佐端, “Chuqiu nantian wangbei gui” 楚囚南天望北归 [Imprisoned in the south, yearning for returning north], in *Kaoyan*, 175.

¹²⁵ Yu Jing, 128.

In early 1950, 33 former Whampoa cadets were distributed to the 538th Regiment. Like most ex-cadets, Gao Wenjun became a cultural instructor. Commissar Zhao Zuoduan spoke to the group, “This is a great opportunity for you to redeem your past crimes against the people. You must be honest to the people, and the people are very lenient.” Gao found Zhao a typical condescending Communist bureaucrat. Without even asking about the cadets’ family situations, Zhao made a hollow declaration, “Your duty is important and glorious. Our government will take good care of your families back home.” Obviously Gao was unimpressed by Zhao. However, when Gao later became an artillery staff officer, he found that Du Gang, the Deputy Chief of Staff, was a good officer. Despite his peasant background, Du was also very articulate. In his North China peasant style, Du often squatted on a stool and spoke freely. Du was also very courteous to soldiers. Most importantly, Gao respected Du as a very competent officer.¹²⁶ Gao conceded that certain Communist cadres worked really hard, harder than everyone else. “Probably that’s because they were idealistic,” Gao remarked. “They were indeed loyal, perhaps blindly loyal.”¹²⁷ Such a comment by an anti-Communist was indeed a compliment to Communists like Du Gang.

Overall, all of the Communist prisoner leaders were long-time Communist party members. Many of them were fairly well-educated. Some were evidently very competent. After their initial attempt to hide their identities failed, they had no choice but to fight back against the anti-Communist prisoners. To compromise or to defect was not an option, unless one was willing to forsake his family and career in China. Certain officers had previously suffered severe Communist disciplinary punishment, and/or their families had been persecuted by the Communists in various political campaigns. Their

¹²⁶ Gao Wenjun, interview by author, January 6, 2010, San Francisco.

¹²⁷ Gao Wenjun, interview by author, September 8, 2009, San Francisco.

experience as a prisoner of war would only compound their troubles in China. These men felt they had no future in China; therefore, to defect was a way out.

Final Discussion: Nationalist Past, Class, or Assessment of One's Future?

It was certainly true that the Chinese People's Volunteer Army consisted of a large number of former Nationalist troops. For example, Zhao Zuoduan, Commissar of the 538th Regiment, 180th Division, reported that 60 to 70 percent of the men in his unit were former Nationalist troops.¹²⁸ Similarly, Wang Shunqing, the anti-Communist prisoner leader, claimed the percentage was as high as 80 percent in his unit, the 354th Regiment of the 40th Army.¹²⁹ However, as demonstrated earlier, it was also evident that past affiliation with the Nationalist army did not dictate a prisoner's repatriation choice. While many former Nationalist officers, such as Wang Shunqing and Wang Zunming, remained anti-Communists throughout their indoctrination, others such as Dai Yushu and Ding Xianwen became pro-Communists. Similarly, former Whampoa cadets made divergent choices. While many Nationalist troops, especially those of poor family backgrounds, were attracted to the Communists, other remained unmoved and some became embittered.

In fact, divergence in attitude toward the Communist regime was common in other groups of PLA troops as well. Many educated youths were attracted to the Communists because of their discipline, purposefulness, and efficiency; others were appalled by thought control and the gradual loss of individual freedom. While most Communist officers had no choice but to remain faithful to the party, a small number of them became disillusioned and looked for escape.

¹²⁸ Zhao Zuoduan, in *Kaoyan*, 175.

¹²⁹ Wong, Shun Ching, Interrogation Report 164-MISDI-1276, December 1, 1950, ATIS, 1.

Other than Nationalist affiliation, class was another plausible explanation. It was certainly true that class was a major factor influencing one's attitude toward the regime. Rich peasants, landlords, and capitalists were more likely to suffer retribution under the Communists. People of the "exploiter class" and "counterrevolutionaries" were the first to suffer persecution. Although service in the Communist army did provide some protection for the individual soldier, it did not prevent one's family from being struggled against at home. If a soldier or officer's family were persecuted and family members killed in land reforms or other political campaigns, naturally a man would develop resentment and doubt, if not hatred of the Communists. The cases of Wang Shunqing and Wang Zunming were the most extreme examples.

In practice, the Communists carried out land reforms and other political campaigns in various locations on different schedules. Before the troops went to Korea in 1950 and 1951, some landlord families, especially those in the south, had not suffered severe persecutions. Even if they had, news would not reach their sons in the army quickly and easily. For example, Yan Tianzhi, a Hubei refugee student who was forced to join the 180th Division, had lost contact with his landlord family in southwestern Hubei since late 1949. However, as a PLA soldier, he was sent to the villages in Sichuan to assist with land reform. As a clerk, he witnessed numerous tortures and executions of landlords and their family members. He knew in his heart the same thing was happening to his family back home.¹³⁰ Once captured in Korea, he decided not to return to Communist China.

Certain violent methods employed by the Communists did not only alienate people of the "exploiter class," but also some in the "exploited class." Jin Yuankui of Shaoxing, Zhejiang province fit the ideal description of a rural proletarian. Both of his

¹³⁰ Yan Tianzhi, interview by author, April 5, 2010, Taipei.

parents died during the War of Resistance. As an orphaned boy Jin raised his little sister. At the age of ten he started working for a landlord tending cattle. When he was seventeen, he became a long-term farmhand (*changgong*). After the Communist “liberation,” Jin was asked to join the militia. He had to stand guard during struggle meetings, which often ended in executions. In one instance, Jin recalled, “The PLA soldiers shot a so-called ‘local tyrant’ from behind in close range. His head just exploded.” When he went home, he was so sickened that he could not eat. He was also scared. “Although the Communists treated me well, I was disgusted by their killings. I disagreed with this, but I dared not to speak.” After the outbreak of the Korean War, he was drafted to fight in Korea.¹³¹ While the Communists did not forcibly draft men as the Nationalists did, people like Jin had no alternative but to obey.

After he was captured in Korea, Jin chose not to return to China. During the final “explanation” in late 1953, Jin met the Communist representatives, who appeared to be “extremely warm and friendly.” After a lengthy talk by the representatives, Jin flatly said, “I want to go to Taiwan.” The Communists tried to intimidate him, “You cannot go to Taiwan. Taiwan cannot even save itself now. How can they take you there? You are being lied to.” “Then I’d rather kill myself,” Jin replied.¹³² Soon Jin went to Taiwan in January 1954. Jin’s case demonstrates that an individual’s judgment of the Communists was not necessarily dictated by one’s class, as class itself was a constructed concept that required much indoctrination to take hold. In a sense, Jin saw the diabolic side of the Communists, so he wished to escape. That was probably true for many anti-Communists prisoners.

Therefore, in addition to landlords, rich peasants, and “counterrevolutionaries,” who were the early victims of class struggle or political suppression, individuals of other

¹³¹ Jin Yuankui, interview by author, February 8, 2010, Taipei.

¹³² Jin Yuankui, interview by author, February 8, 2010, Taipei.

class backgrounds might also become alienated by Communist programs or methods. They did not identify with the Communists and they wished to escape. The Korean War gave them such an opportunity. When they became prisoners in Korea, they chose not to return to China.

However, having lived under the Communists only for a year, most young people had not yet experienced or witnessed the dark side of the Communist system. Naturally, they saw the Communists very differently. To young people of poor family backgrounds such as Zhong Junhua and Cai Pingsheng, Communism meant that poor people could finally enjoy dignity, respect, and opportunities. To idealistic youths like Zhang Zeshi, Communism promised a stronger China. To propaganda soldier Li Mocong, Communism was songs, plays, and music. They had seen mostly the best side of the Communists. They saw their future in China. When captured in Korea, they fought hard to return home. They became the pro-Communist prisoner activists.

MacArthur and Chiang Kai-shek's Intelligence Partnership and Taiwan's Secret Entry into the Korean War

By the end of 1949, all provinces in the mainland had fallen, except two tenuously held bases in Xichang and Tibet. A state of anarchy befell our government, military, Party, and society. On the diplomatic front, the situation was even more precarious, especially after the Indians and the British had recognized the Chinese Communists in early 1950. It appeared the U.S. was to follow suit. [If that happens,] the Chinese Communists would join the UN unconditionally, and our representatives would be expelled from the international community. That outcome seemed to have been decided (*yidingzhiju*).

—Chiang Kai-shek, “Reflections on 1950,” circa December 30, 1950.¹

The United States has no predatory designs on Formosa, or on any other Chinese territory. The United States has no desire to obtain special rights or privileges, or to establish military bases on Formosa at this time. Nor does it have any intention of utilizing its Armed Forces to interfere in the present situation. The United States Government will not pursue a course which will lead to involvement in the civil conflict in China. Similarly, the United States Government will not provide military aid or advice to Chinese forces on Formosa. In the view of the United States Government, the resources on Formosa are adequate to enable them to obtain the items which they might consider necessary for the defense of the island. The United States Government proposes to continue under existing legislative authority the present ECA program of economic assistance.

—U.S. President Harry S. Truman, January 5, 1950.²

¹ Chiang Kai-shek, “Reflections on work in 1950,” December 31, 1950, in Chiang’s diaries, Hoover Archives (Chiang’s diaries hereafter quoted as Chiang Diaries). *Yidingzhiju* 已定之局. Xichang is a small city in southwestern Sichuan.

² John T. Woolley and Gerhard Peters, *The American Presidency Project* [online] (Santa Barbara, CA), accessed June 14, 2011, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=13678>. ECA: Economic Cooperation Administration.

On December 10, 1949, Chiang Kai-shek and his entourage left his temporary headquarters in the Whampoa Building at the Central Military Academy in Chengdu. Leaving behind more than 900,000 Nationalist troops in Sichuan, including more than 10,000 Whampoa cadets, Chiang boarded a plane for Taiwan. Without radio guidance, the pilot managed to fly the plane to Taiwan by “dead reckoning.”³ Under a dark cloud, Chiang saw vast territory below that had been taken over by the Communists: Sichuan, Guizhou, Hunan, Guangdong, and Fujian. Soon Chengdu fell on December 27, and the Nationalists’ final bastion of resistance on the mainland collapsed. On December 30, watching the triumphant PLA’s parade into Chengdu, Whampoa cadet Yu Rongfu somberly came to the realization that “Chiang Kai-shek’s era was truly over.”

“Taiwan’s fate sealed”

Certainly, Yu Rongfu was not alone in sensing the end of Chiang’s era; the U.S. government was also ready to write Chiang off as a thing of the past. On January 5, 1950, U.S. President Harry S. Truman formally announced the U.S. government’s hands-off policy on Taiwan, and stated that the U.S. “will not provide military aid or advice to Chinese forces on Formosa.”⁴ On the same day, Secretary of State Dean Acheson rebuffed U.S. Senator William F. Knowland’s suggestion to aid Taiwan’s defense, maintaining that, “Formosa was not of vital importance from a strategic standpoint.” Hurling insult in the form of charity, Acheson said the U.S. would “continue to supply the needs of the island for fertilizer and to carry on the rural rehabilitation program,” but “anything further than that by way of increased military assistance or military advice is

³ Jay Taylor, *The Generalissimo's Son: Chiang Ching-Kuo and the Revolutions in China and Taiwan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 185.

⁴ United State Department of State and Service Congressional Information, *Foreign Relations of the United States* (hereafter quoted as *FRUS*), 1950, Vol. VI: *East Asia and the Pacific* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1976), 264.

regarded as unnecessary on our part and would be defeative of the principles of non-intervention.”⁵ The next day, the British government declared its recognition of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) as the *de jure* government of China and made clear its readiness to establish diplomatic relations with it.⁶

Truman’s announcement came as no surprise to Chiang. He saw it as simply another concrete step taken by the Truman-Acheson administration to “destroy Chiang and sell out China [to the Russians]” (*hui Jiang mai hua*), a theme that dominated his diary entries in the tumultuous years between 1946 and 1954. His most vehement resentment was reserved for General George C. Marshall. Chiang painfully recalled that in spring 1946, when Nationalist elite forces were poised to crush Communist general Lin Biao’s troops near Ha’erbin, yet Marshall demanded an immediate ceasefire and threatened to end American aid if Chiang failed to comply.⁷ In Chiang’s mind, that had been the final opportunity to defeat the Communists militarily.

To achieve desired political changes in Chiang’s government, the U.S. had repeatedly threatened the Nationalists with arms embargo and the end of economic aid. As it turned out, the U.S. often succeeded in pressuring Chiang to back down, at least temporarily, but it never achieved any of its major policy objectives, including the wishful goal of forging a united government including both the Nationalists and Communists. Following a series of Nationalist military debacles, American pressure to depose Chiang ratcheted up. “Chiang Kai-shek or American aid” was the constant refrain. In January 1949 Chiang Kai-shek stepped down from the presidency, relinquishing the position to Vice President Li Zongren. But Chiang retained *de facto* control over the

⁵ Memorandum of conversation with Knowland by Acheson, January 5, 1950, *FRUS, 1950, Vol. VI*, 261.

⁶ Footnote, *FRUS, 1950, Vol. VI*, 258.

⁷ Chiang’s criticism of Marshall mediation occurred repeatedly in his diaries. For example, Chiang Diaries, June 10, 1952.

military and the Nationalist Party. Acting President Li's peace appeals went unheeded by the victorious Communists. In April the PLA crossed the Yangzi River largely unopposed. Nanjing and Shanghai fell, and the Nationalist government made Guangzhou its provisional center. Curiously, unlike the Soviet Union, which moved its embassy to Guangzhou with the Nationalist government, U.S. Ambassador John Leighton Stuart stayed in Nanjing for another four months until August. Apparently the U.S. was trying to establish ties with the Communists while preparing to abandon the Nationalists.

Sensing China's imminent fall to the Communists, Truman and Acheson authorized the compilation of *The China White Paper, August 1949*, an attempt to counter the Republican Party's criticism by arguing that the fall was in no way attributable to U.S. policy. One year earlier Marshall had rejected the very idea of issuing a white paper on the grounds that it would amount to a *coup de grace* for Chiang, but now Acheson proceeded to sound the death knell: "The unfortunate but inescapable fact is that the ominous result of the civil war in China was beyond the control of the government of the United States."⁸ Acknowledging the Soviet Union's influence, Acheson asserted, "In this case, however, the foreign domination has been masked behind the façade of a vast crusading movement which apparently has seemed to many Chinese to be wholly indigenous and national." Therefore, the fall of China to communism "was the product of internal Chinese forces, forces which this country tried to influence but could not."⁹ Acheson concluded, "The Nationalist armies did not have to be defeated; they disintegrated. History has proved again and again that a regime without faith in itself

⁸ Marshall's decision is described in Walter Mills, ed., *The Forrestal Diaries* (New York: Viking, 1951), 534, quoted in Lyman P. Van Slyke, "Introduction," in United States Dept. of State, *The China White Paper, August 1949* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1967), page 4 of the "Introduction" that is not paginated. Dean Acheson, "Letter of Transmittal," in *The China White Paper, August 1949*, XVI.

⁹ Dean Acheson, letter of transmittal, in *The China White Paper, August 1949*, XVI.

and an army without morale cannot survive the test of battle.”¹⁰ By making such claims the U.S. government apparently attempted to wash its hands of the Nationalist defeat and put all the blame on Chiang Kai-shek, who was to be remembered as “the man who lost China.”

As *The White Paper* had predicted and perhaps precipitated, soon the entire mainland fell to the Communists. In November 1949 Acting-President Li fled to the U.S. for “medical treatment.” On December 10 Chiang Kai-shek and Chiang Ching-kuo flew to Taipei from Chengdu, just as the PLA was advancing rapidly to encircle the city. From his safe haven in Taiwan, the situation was similarly despairing. Chiang recalled, “A state of anarchy befell our government, military, Party, and society.”¹¹ Against this backdrop, Chiang resumed the presidency on March 1, 1950, and took a number of measures to reform the Nationalist party and government.

However, Chiang’s formal return to power did not win friends or influence in Washington. On March 7, 1950 Acheson wrote to Secretary of Defense Louis A. Johnson to interdict the shipment of 25 M-4 Sherman tanks and 25 F-80 fighter jets to Taiwan. Despite the fact that the jets would be paid for by the Nationalist government with its own funds, Acheson offered a rather tenuous rationale, citing British concern about “the possibility that such equipment might fall into the hands of the Chinese Communists through defection or capture and thus be available for use ... against Hong Kong.”¹² It was as if the British had the will to put up a fight to defend Hong Kong. But its WWII record of surrender after surrender to the Japanese, from Hong Kong to Malaya, Singapore, and Burma, suggests the contrary. As John Foster Dulles, the Republican then serving as a special adviser to the State Department, later observed, the British had

¹⁰ Acheson, in *The China White Paper, August 1949*, XIV.

¹¹ Chiang Diaries, “Reflections on work in 1950,” December 31, 1950.

¹² Memorandum by Acheson to Johnson, March 7, 1950, *FRUS, 1950, Vol. VI*, 316.

“its tongue in its cheek,” but “appeared to feel that their position in Hong Kong was immune so long as they could persuade the Chinese Communists that they were trying to get Formosa back for them.”¹³ Clearly, in the tradition of Munich, the British were ready to please.

According to U.S. intelligence reports, the situation in Taiwan continued to deteriorate. Although the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) did not rule out the possibility of a “somewhat longer survival” of the Nationalist regime, its March 1950 appraisal concluded that the fall of Taiwan before the end of 1950 “still seems the most likely course of future developments.”¹⁴ In late April, in the face of an overpowering PLA invasion Nationalist forces abandoned Hainan Island.¹⁵ “[E]ach mainlander now believes the days of Taiwan are numbered, that loss ... of Taiwan is matter of time,” U.S. Chargé d’Affaires in Taiwan Robert C. Strong reported to Washington. In mid-May, Chiang Ching-kuo administered a well-planned and orderly retreat from the Zhoushan Archipelago off the coast of Zhejiang Province. This move took the Communists by surprise and effectively reduced Taiwan’s defensive exposure to attacks. However, Strong saw it differently: “Taiwan’s fate sealed, Communist attack can occur between June 15 and end July.”¹⁶ Two days later, the State Department decided to issue an evacuation notice to American citizens in Taiwan by registered mail.¹⁷ Charles M. Cooke, retired U.S. Admiral and Chiang Kai-shek’s private adviser, received his evacuation notice dated May 22, sent by Chargé Strong. It read,

In view of the now increased possibility that hostilities in this area may result in the disruption of means of egress, all Americans who do not intend to remain on the island regardless of possible developments are

¹³ Dulles’s remarks, November 14, 1950, *FRUS, 1950, Vol. VI, East Asia and the Pacific*, 561.

¹⁴ Cited in memorandum by Rusk to Acheson, April 17, 1950, *FRUS, 1950, Vol. VI*, 330.

¹⁵ Future anti-Communist prisoner leader Wang Shunqing was captured on Hainan and impressed into the PLA.

¹⁶ Telegram, Strong to Acheson, May 17, 1950, in *FRUS, 1950, Vol. VI*, 340.

¹⁷ Telegram, Webb (Acting Secretary of State) to the Embassy in Taipei, May 19, 1950, in *FRUS, 1950, Vol. VI*, 342-343.

now strongly advised to withdraw as soon as possible. There can be no assurance that the United States Government will be able to provide transportation facilities in any emergency that may arise.¹⁸

While the Americans were making their exit, the U.S. did not forget its old friend. “It will not leave a good taste if we allow our political problems to be solved by the extermination of our war allies,” reasoned Dean Rusk, the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs. “That was the Russian solution of General Bor’s Polish Army,” Rusk quipped, referring to the German crackdown on a Polish uprising staged by non-Communist resistance fighters in Warsaw in 1944, during which Stalin’s troops stood by and watched the carnage from outside.¹⁹ Certainly the U.S. did not relish the thought of seeing Chiang captured by the Communists. But instead of allowing Chiang to seek refuge in the U.S., the State Department sounded out the Philippines. President Quirino flatly said that Chiang would not be welcome. And his foreign minister added that if Chiang came to the Philippines he would be given 24 hours to get out.²⁰ What options were left? After lengthy discussions among State Department officials, the preferred solution was UN trusteeship. “The Gimo [Generalissimo] would be approached, probably by Dulles in the course of his trip to Japan on June 15, with the word that (a) the fall of Formosa in the present circumstances was inevitable, (b) the US would do nothing to assist Gimo in preventing this, (c) the only course open to the Gimo to prevent the bloodshed of his people was to request UN trusteeship.”²¹ In a nutshell, “Chiang Kai-shek or American aid” was the only choice, once again. Chiang’s fate seemed sealed.

Dulles flew to Tokyo, but he never made the proposed ultimatum-delivery trip to Taiwan. The trip was canceled because North Korea attacked the South on June 25, 1950.

¹⁸ Letter, Strong to U.S. citizens in Taiwan, May 22, 1950, in Cooke Papers, Hoover Archives.

¹⁹ Memorandum by Rusk to Acheson, May 30, 1950, *FRUS, 1950, Vol. VI*, 351.

²⁰ Footnote, *FRUS, 1950, Vol. VI*, 346.

²¹ Memorandum by Howe (the Deputy Special Assistant for Intelligence) to W. Park Armstrong (Special Assistant to the Secretary of State for Intelligence and Research) to, May 31, 1950, *FRUS, 1950, Vol. VI*, 348-349.

God-sent Korean War and General MacArthur

Hours after the outbreak of the war, the UN Security Council unanimously passed Resolution 82 condemning the North Korean aggression. This result was fortuitously facilitated by the Soviet representative's decision to boycott the voting over the Chinese Nationalists' seat in the UN. On June 27 Truman announced military intervention in Korea under the aegis of the UN, effectively declaring war without congressional approval. He also called for the "neutralization" of Taiwan.

I have ordered the Seventh Fleet to prevent any attack on Formosa. As a corollary of this action I am calling on the Chinese Government on Formosa to cease all air and sea operations against the mainland. The Seventh Fleet will see that is done. The determination of the future status of Formosa must await the restoration of the security in the Pacific, a peace settlement with Japan, or consideration by the United Nations.²²

While pro-Nationalist U.S. officials, including Secretary of Defense Johnson, lauded the deployment of the Seventh Fleet to protect Taiwan, the Nationalists' reaction to Truman's policy was mixed. There were misgivings about the restrictions on Nationalist military actions against the mainland. More importantly, Truman's reference to "the future status" of Taiwan amounted to a glaring affront to the Nationalist government's claim of sovereignty over Taiwan.²³ Wellington Koo (Gu Weijun), the Nationalist Ambassador to the U.S, noted in his diary, "The language regarding Taiwan was crude, even overbearing." He remarked, "To treat a friendly country with such language in an official announcement is truly out of the ordinary."²⁴ Even Dulles conceded to Koo, "the language used was blunt and discourteous."²⁵ Historian Chang Su-ya observes, "The abrupt language in the statement and the manner in which the policy

²² *FRUS, 1950, Vol. VI*, 367. Also in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the US: Harry S. Truman, 1950*, 492.

²³ This language would eventually serve as the quasi-legal grounds for the Taiwan independence movement.

²⁴ Gu Weijun 顾维钧, *Gu Weijun Huiyilu* 顾维钧回忆录 [Wellington Koo's Memoirs], Vol. 7 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1988), 7.

²⁵ Note of a conversation between Koo and Dulles, July 25, 1950, Archives of the Ministry of Defense, ROC (Hereafter quoted as TWGFB) doc No. 0004170100420308w.

was conveyed to the Nationalists further demonstrated that the interests of the Chinese people, or specifically, of the Nationalists, were the least of the policymakers' concerns . . . The new policy in fact denied the legitimacy of Nationalists' reign in Taiwan."²⁶ Indeed, even at the outbreak of a war in Korea, Truman and Acheson did not forget the idea of getting rid of Chiang, although they intended to retain the island of Taiwan.

Nevertheless, Koo advised Chiang to focus on the positive changes and to not raise the issue regarding Truman's wording for the present time. Apparently Chiang acquiesced. Nationalist Foreign Minister George Yeh (Ye Gongchao) issued a statement on June 28, announcing that, "the Chinese Government has accepted the U.S. proposal regarding the defense of Taiwan in principle, and has ordered its navy and air force to suspend attacks on the mainland." However, this statement also added that Truman's announcement should have no effect on China's sovereignty over Taiwan.²⁷ Without directly confronting the U.S. regarding Taiwan's status, Chiang nevertheless made public his displeasure.

In Chiang's diaries, however, outrage was the dominant theme. After receiving the U.S. government's memorandum delivered by Chargé Strong on July 27, Chiang wrote in his diaries, "The U.S. government disregards our sovereignty over Taiwan, and it prohibits our military from attacking our mainland territories occupied by the Communist bandits. We are treated even worse than a colony. This is a most painful humiliation."²⁸ On top of this diplomatic insult, another incident only vindicated Chiang's suspicion of the U.S.'s ill intentions. Air sirens blared in the morning of July 28 when Chiang had just completed his morning prayers. Government officials, presumably

²⁶ Chang Su-Ya 張淑雅, *Pragmatism and Opportunism: Truman's Policy toward Taiwan, 1949-1952* (Unpublished dissertation: The Pennsylvania State University, 1988), 77-78.

²⁷ *Zhonghua Minguo shishi jiyao* 中華民國史事紀要 [Chronology of main events of the Republic of China in 1950] (Taipei: Guoshiguan 國史館, 1994), 912.

²⁸ Chiang Diaries, June 28, 1950.

including Chiang, had to run to shelter for safety. Assuming it was a Communist attack, the Nationalist air force dispatched fighters to intercept the invading planes. But soon it was discovered these were U.S. reconnaissance planes, and the situation was relieved.²⁹ Chiang remarked in his diaries, “The U.S. Navy and Air Force entered Taiwan’s sea or airspaces without notifying us. The U.S. treats us not only as a conquered territory, but also as an enemy!”³⁰

After communicating with General MacArthur’s headquarters in Tokyo, Taiwan authorities found out that the 28 planes had been sent by the Seventh Fleet to conduct a survey of military installations in Taiwan. Tokyo had sent orders to the Naval Attaché in Taipei to inform Taiwan about this operation. The Naval Attaché, however, had gone out to the golf course for the day. So the telegram from Tokyo sat on his desk and had not been opened until he returned in the evening after the incident in the air had taken place.³¹ This bizarre incident vividly reveals the inadequacy of existing communication channels between Taipei and Tokyo. At a time of war in the region, the U.S. Naval Attaché went golfing for an entire day, and there was no one else to take over his duties at the embassy.

As MacArthur was authorized to command U.S. forces in the Far East and the Seventh Fleet was ordered to protect Taiwan, it was logical to establish direct military liaison links between Taipei and Tokyo. Acheson and the State Department, however, abhorred such contact. Chiang noted in his diaries, “Today, the U.S.’s defense and military policy toward Korea, Taiwan, and the Pacific has changed fundamentally. However, in various public announcements the State Department continued to insult us in the most extreme fashion. Its evil intention of agitating the Taiwanese to oppose our

²⁹ Note of a conversation between Koo and Dulles, July 25, 1950, TWGFB No. 0004170100420308w. Koo did not say if Chiang was among the officials who ran to shelters.

³⁰ Chiang Diaries, June 28, 1950.

³¹ Note of a conversation between Koo and Dulles, TWGFB No. 0004170100420308w.

government remains unchanged.” Chiang fulminated against Acheson, “Why did God create this bad egg (*huaidan*) so he could harm us China to such a degree!”³²

Had Chiang known what actually transpired at the two Blair House meetings attended by Truman, Acheson, and other top military officers on June 25 and 26, he probably would have been even more furious, and perhaps fearful. Although Acheson first proposed neutralization of the Taiwan Strait on the evening of June 25, he also emphasized that the U.S. “should not tie up with the Generalissimo.” Truman agreed and said, “we were not going to give the Chinese ‘a nickel’ for any purpose whatever.” To make his point, he added flippantly, “All the money we had given them is now invested in United States real estate.” Perhaps the most consequential suggestion Acheson made was that the future status of Formosa might be determined by the UN. “Or by the Japanese Peace Treaty,” Truman interjected. Truman even suggested “taking Formosa back as part of Japan and putting it under MacArthur's Command.” He reckoned that “the Generalissimo might step out if MacArthur were put in.”³³ With the deployment of the Seventh Fleet, Taiwan, or Formosa as U.S. policymakers preferred to call it, became secure from Communist attacks. Chiang Kai-shek, however, was in greater danger of being deposed by his former ally, the U.S. Without having inside information on the U.S. policymaking process, Chiang’s visceral perception that the U.S. was treating him like an enemy turned out to be ominously accurate.

It was true that the U.S. had abandoned its hands-off policy toward Taiwan and its new policy was to deny Taiwan to the Chinese Communists, but by no means was the U.S. willing to get “tied up” with Chiang. In order to reconcile the U.S.’s policy objective of retaining Taiwan and their wish to depose Chiang, Truman and Acheson came close to the novel solutions of a military coup from within or an outright U.S. invasion from

³² Chiang Diaries, June 28, 1950. *Huaidan* 壞蛋.

³³ Memorandums of Conversation, June 25 and 26, 1950, *FRUS, 1950, Vol. VII*, 158, 179-180.

without. At the time of a new war breaking out in Korea, the U.S. policymakers' first reactions included plans to eliminate a former ally in another country, as if the U.S. had too many spare forces and too few enemies. It seems that Truman and Acheson's personal loathing of Chiang had taken U.S. policies to an absurd extreme.

Truman's policy shift only represented a change of policy toward Taiwan island, but not a change of heart toward Chiang. Acheson followed up to make sure that this point was well understood by U.S. diplomats. Four days after the June 27 announcement, Acheson reminded his men that the neutralization should be "taken as immediate security measure to preserve peace in Pacific and without prejudice to pol[itical] questions affecting Chi[nese] Govt." He emphasized, "No change anticipated in relations" between the U.S. and Taiwan.³⁴ The famed American architect of the Cold War, George Kennan, shared Acheson's distrust of Chiang and his contempt for the Chinese: "The Nationalist forces on the island must, in view of their national temperament, their past experiences and their unfortunate leadership, be regarded as wholly unreliable."³⁵ Not surprisingly, the Nationalist government's offer to provide 33,000 troops to fight in Korea was declined.³⁶ Clearly, in no way did Truman and Acheson want to take Chiang Kai-shek back into the embrace of the U.S.

If the mere outbreak of the Korean War did not save Chiang's tottering regime, there was General Douglas MacArthur coming to the rescue. To some, MacArthur's bursting on the Taiwan scene was as enigmatic as the man himself. "Before 1950 General MacArthur had neither shown nor expressed interest in Formosa," Acheson recalled correctly and sourly, citing a *New York Times* report on March 1, 1949, in which the general excluded Taiwan from his discussion of "our line of defense ... against Asiatic

³⁴ Telegram from the Secretary of State to all Diplomatic and certain consular offices, in *FRUS, 1950, vol. VI, East Asia and the Pacific*, 368-369.

³⁵ Memorandum by Kennan to Acheson, July 17, 1950, *FRUS, 1950, Vol. VI*, 380-381.

³⁶ Aide-Memoire by Acheson to Koo, July 1, 1950, *FRUS, 1950, Vol. VII*, 276-277.

aggression.”³⁷ But that was 1949; this was 1950. After the fall of China, the situation had changed.

In the first Blair House meeting on June 25, Secretary of Defense Johnson jumped the gun by asking Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) chairman Omar Bradley to read a memorandum Bradley had brought back from MacArthur in Tokyo. In this memorandum entitled “On Formosa” dated June 14, 1950, MacArthur highlighted the strategic importance of Taiwan: “Formosa in the hands of the Communists can be compared to an unsinkable aircraft carrier and submarine tender ideally located to accomplish Soviet offensive strategy and at the same time checkmate counteroffensive operations by United States Forces based on Okinawa and the Philippines.” He concluded, “I strongly believe that the Commander-in-Chief Far East should be authorized and directed to initiate without delay a survey of the military, economic and political requirements to prevent the domination of Formosa by a Communist power.”³⁸ Clearly MacArthur had long planned to visit Taiwan. However, unlike what Truman and Acheson had wished, MacArthur’s plan did not include a removal of Chiang or a U.S. takeover of Taiwan. Perhaps more consequentially, as it turned out, Chiang and MacArthur seemed to like each other, and both shared their loathing of Truman and Acheson.

On July 31 General MacArthur, the Supreme Commander of Allied Powers in Japan (SCAP) and Commander of the Far Eastern Command (FEC), landed in Taiwan for a two-day visit. On what was purportedly a survey mission to assess Taiwan’s defense capabilities and requirements, MacArthur brought to Taipei nearly the entire top echelon of military officers in the Far East, including his top lieutenant Major General Edward M.

³⁷ Acheson, *The Korean War* (New York: Norton, 1971), 42.

³⁸ Memorandum by MacArthur, June 14, 1950, *FRUS, 1950, Vol. VII*, 162-165. Also in Acheson, *Present at the Creation*, 405-406.

Almond, intelligence chief Major General Charles A. Willoughby, Commander of the Seventh Fleet Vice Admiral Arthur D. Struble, U.S. navy commander in the Far East Vice Admiral Charles Turner Joy, and U.S. Air Force commander in the Far East Lt. General George E. Stratemeyer.³⁹ Evidently, this star-studded delegation was more than a simple survey team. Intentionally or inadvertently MacArthur threw his and the U.S. military's prestige behind Chiang Kai-shek.

The Generalissimo and Madame Chiang warmly welcomed MacArthur and his party at the airport, and the Taiwan media effusively praised the meeting of the “two great men.” Huang Tiancai, a reporter who covered MacArthur's arrival at the airport, later recalled, “I believe at the time in Taiwan the seven to eight million people's affection and admiration for General MacArthur was unrivaled.”⁴⁰ While MacArthur was busy parleying with the Chiangs and Nationalist generals, he left American diplomats completely in the dark and out in the cold. Chargé Strong complained to Acheson, “Absolutely no information given . . . on talks or on decisions made.” To his dismay, Strong noted that the visit became a major morale booster for the Nationalists. “Press looking forward to large military mission from SCAP, demanding military aid as a right, and predicted early world war and return to mainland.” To the disgust of Acheson's men in Taipei, Chiang's regime seemed to “feel situation well cared for in hands of MacArthur, who will straighten out US policy . . . Formosa seems to be on verge of joining close cooperation to north.”⁴¹ By using the term “north,” a notion normally reserved for the Communist adversaries, to refer to Tokyo, Strong's language underscored the deep animosity between the State Department and MacArthur.

³⁹ List of MacArthur's party, July 31, 1950, TWGFB No. 0000050300010012w.

⁴⁰ Huang Tiancai (Hwang Tien-tsai) 黃天才, *Wo zai 38 du xian de huiyi* 我在38度線的回憶 [My memories at the 38th parallel (Taipei: Ink Book, 2010), 58.

⁴¹ Telegram, Strong to Acheson, August 3, 1950, *FRUS, 1950, Vol. VI*, 410-411.

A horrified Truman immediately dispatched a confidant, Ambassador W. Averell Harriman, to Tokyo to check up on MacArthur. In two sessions of consultation on August 6 and 8, Harriman “explained in great detail why Chiang was a liability,” and suggested that “[p]erhaps the best way would be through the medium of the UN to establish an independent government.” MacArthur concurred with Harriman that Chiang’s ambition to retake the mainland could not be fulfilled. Perhaps jokingly he offered a novel solution: “it might be a good idea to let him land and get rid of him that way.” Nevertheless, MacArthur showed some faith in Chiang, and believed the situation could be improved, both politically and economically. “Should the Chinese Communists be so foolhardy as to make such an attempt [to invade Taiwan], it would be the bloodiest victory in Far Eastern history.” Finally MacArthur turned the tables, admonishing those “kicking Chiang around,” and expressing hope that “the President would do something to relieve the strain that existed between the State Department and the Generalissimo.”⁴² It appeared that MacArthur had become a defender of Chiang.

“In an extension of his famous ‘divide and rule’ tactics, the Generalissimo is playing the Tokyo end of the United States Government for all it is worth,” former Chargé Strong claimed in a report following his return to Washington. Noting that Chinese officials frequently visited Tokyo without informing the U.S. Embassy in Taipei, Strong indicted Chiang’s accomplice: “Encouragement to the Generalissimo in this game has been given unwittingly by General MacArthur, who has played a lone hand with the National Government to the complete exclusion of the Embassy in Taipei.”⁴³ Strong had sensed MacArthur’s deep aversion to U.S. diplomats, including himself.

⁴² Extracts of a memorandum of conversations between W. Averell Harriman and MacArthur in Tokyo, August 6 and 8, 1950, *FRUS, 1950, Vol. VI*, 428-430.

⁴³ Memorandum by Strong (Office of Chinese Affairs) to Clubb (Director of the Office of Chinese Affairs), September 6, 1950, *FRUS, 1950, Vol. VI*, 486.

If MacArthur had single-handedly protected Taiwan in the Far East, the U.S. also played a lone hand in the UN defending its naval intervention in the Taiwan Strait. In sharp contrast to the U.S. fear of seeing Taiwan fall to communism, America's allies in the UN, "[t]he Canadian and, to a lesser extent, the UK delegation seemed to assume that there was only one possible answer . . . namely, the handing over of Formosa unconditionally to Communist China."⁴⁴ On the question of UN representation, while the U.S. officially "opposes the seating of Chi Commie reps in the UN," it was actually ready to "accept the normal parliamentary majorities in internal bodies on this matter and will accept the result if a majority decides to seat the reps of Peiping."⁴⁵

While the U.S.'s allies were hard enough to accommodate, Acheson also felt compelled to placate a fuming Beijing. In a secret telegram to the U.S. embassy in India dated August 3, 1950, intended for relay to Kavalam Panikkar, the Indian Ambassador in Beijing and the conduit between Beijing and Washington, Acheson wrote, "you may in [yo]ur discussion point out that obvious lack of preparation on part of So[uth] Korean army and US armed forces for war in Korea must in itself constitute clear evidence to the Chi[nese] auth[oritie]s in Peiping that US has no aggressive intentions in Asia."⁴⁶ It appeared as if the U.S. was begging China for understanding.

MacArthur exploded against Acheson's line of thinking, sending an open letter to the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Convention in Chicago on August 26. While best known for his "unsinkable aircraft carrier" analogy for Taiwan, on this occasion MacArthur made a thinly veiled attack on Acheson's approach, deriding it as "the hypocrisy and the sophistry which has confused and deluded so many people distant from the actual scene." "Nothing could be more fallacious than the threadbare argument

⁴⁴ Memorandum of conversation by John M. Allison (adviser to the U.S. delegation to the UN General Assembly), October 23, 1950, *FRUS, 1950, Vol. VI*, 534.

⁴⁵ Telegram, Acheson to the Embassy in Taipei, August 14, 1950, *FRUS, 1950, Vol. VI*, 437.

⁴⁶ Telegram, Acheson to the Embassy in India, August 3, 1950, *FRUS, 1950, Vol. VI*, 416.

by those who advocate appeasement and defeatism in the Pacific [that] if we defend Formosa we alienate continental Asia.” He went on, “Those who speak thus do not understand the Orient.” He argued that “it is in the pattern of the Oriental psychology to respect and follow aggressive, resolute and dynamic leadership—to quickly turn on a leadership characterized by timidity or vacillation.”⁴⁷

MacArthur’s outburst lit a political firestorm in Washington. Acheson cried out “Who is the President of the United States?”⁴⁸ Truman’s order to MacArthur requiring him to withdraw the statement did not stop it from reaching the public. Truman summoned Secretary of Defense Johnson to discuss ways for the relief of MacArthur “as Korean commander,” but the conclusion was not to do anything “at that time.”⁴⁹ However, before the dust settled in Washington, MacArthur’s brilliant amphibious landing in Inchon on September 15 eclipsed the need for an immediate settling of accounts.

“The Chinese Would Not Attack . . . We Had Won the War”

The Inchon landing precipitated a total collapse of North Korean forces. Within a month, approximately 130,000 North Korean prisoners were captured, and among them 30 percent carried “psychological warfare leaflets” promising them safety if they surrendered.⁵⁰ On September 29, Seoul was restored as the capital of the Republic of Korea. And on the same day, Truman approved MacArthur’s plan to advance into North Korea, and UN Command (UNC) and ROK armies approached the 38th parallel. Two

⁴⁷ Cited in telegram, Acheson to certain diplomatic offices, August 26, 1950, *FRUS, 1950, Vol. VI*, 452-453.

⁴⁸ Memorandum for the Record of the Events of August 26, 1950, *FRUS, 1950, Vol. VI*, 454.

⁴⁹ Johnson revealed this in testimony before the Joint Senate Investigating Committee on June 14, 1951, in Charles Andrew Willoughby and John Chamberlain, *MacArthur, 1941-1951* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1954), 420.

⁵⁰ Willoughby, *MacArthur*, 375.

days later, ROK troops crossed the line, and the other UN troops followed a few days later.

At 12:30 midnight on October 3, Chinese Premier and concurrently Foreign Minister Zhou Enlai summoned Indian Ambassador Panikkar, and issued a warning to be relayed through Indian Prime Minister Nehru to the U.S. and U.K. The message was that if the U.S. army were to cross the 38th parallel, China “will not simply sit and watch.” Over the next two days, at an enlarged Politburo meeting, Mao prevailed over his reluctant generals, and the Communists decided to enter the war. On October 8, Mao issued the order to assemble the Chinese People’s Volunteer Army, and the only general who supported Mao’s belligerent stance, Peng Dehuai, was named the commander. In the meantime, Zhou’s warning via India went unheeded in Washington, London, Tokyo, and New York. On October 7, the UN General Assembly passed a resolution allowing UN forces to cross the 38th parallel. While MacArthur’s troops were racing toward the Yalu, Zhou Enlai conferred with Stalin on October 10 and 11 at a resort in the Crimea, haggling over how many armaments and how much air cover the Soviets would provide to the Chinese ground forces once they were in Korea.

Ominously, most of the intense diplomatic and military maneuverings on the Chinese and Russian side went unnoticed by American intelligence for a very simple and incredible reason. “We were not reading Red Chinese radio traffic at all,” recalled the Far Eastern General Headquarters intelligence officer, Colonel James H. Polk. “One reason was that they employed the Mandarin dialect. We had no Mandarin linguists.”⁵¹

According to General Willoughby, MacArthur’s intelligence chief of staff (G-2) and right

⁵¹ Clay Blair, *The Forgotten War: America in Korea, 1950–1953* (New York: Random House, 1987), 337. This total unpreparedness for Chinese intervention was an awful replay of the disaster four months earlier. When North Korea attacked in June, there were only two Korean linguists on MacArthur’s intelligence staff G-2. In John Patrick Finnegan, *Military Intelligence* (Washington, D. C.: Center of Military History, United States Army, 1998), 115.

hand man, “the whole linguist units had been previously deactivated” in the post-WWII retrenchment, so “valuable intelligence on Manchurian, Chinese and Soviet participation may never be recovered.”⁵² Now Chiang Kai-shek came to the rescue. The Nationalists in Taiwan were reading the traffic, and shared intelligence with the U.S. military attaché and MacArthur’s liaison officers posted in Taipei. As early as August 27, a G-2 intelligence summary contained a “miscellany of highly suggestive and completely ominous reports from Chinese Nationalist channels.” It was reported that a high level meeting was held in Beijing; Chinese Communists were ordered by the Soviets to assist North Korea; Soviet officers were to command combined Communist forces; Taiwan and Indo-China were to be invaded.⁵³ The report also hedged its bet with the plausible observation that “Chinese Communists [were] reluctant to undertake further adventures.” However, Taiwan’s alarmist intelligence, which frequently predicted the advent of WWIII, found no receptive audience in either Tokyo or Washington. Polk remarked, “no one trusted what they produced because it was invariably biased or self-serving.” When he tried to bring some Nationalist specialists to Korea to work under American code breakers, the Pentagon refused permission.⁵⁴

Another source of intelligence came from prisoner interrogations, which again required linguistic expertise. With few Korean-English but many Japanese-English translators in service, G-2 instituted “a tedious system where Korean documents were translated into Japanese and then into English.” To deal with an enormous number of prisoners, rapid and accurate interrogation became nearly impossible. “A three-man system was set up whereby questions by an English-Japanese speaking interrogator were

⁵² Charles A. Willoughby, “Intelligence in War: A Brief History of MacArthur’s Intelligence service 1941-1951,” in Reel 918, Record Group 23 (Paper of Major General Charles A. Willoughby), General Douglas MacArthur memorial archives and library collection. (Norfolk, VA: MacArthur Memorial Archives, 2006), 23-24.

⁵³ Willoughby, *MacArthur*, 381. Also contained in Reel 926, Record Group 23, General Douglas MacArthur memorial archives and library collection.

⁵⁴ Blair, *The Forgotten War*, 337.

related to the informant through a Japanese-Korean speaking medium.”⁵⁵ In the Chinese case, one might expect that the large Chinese population in the U.S. would provide a wealth of linguists. However, most Chinese-Americans GIs spoke Cantonese, and they did not understand Mandarin well, not to mention various nearly incomprehensible dialects. Initially, UN forces had to rely on Chinese-speaking Koreans and Japanese who had lived in China during the Japanese occupation. Of course, not until the U.S. forces actually engaged Chinese troops in October 1950 could the U.S. obtain intelligence from Chinese prisoners.

Equipped with severely handicapped intelligence, on October 15 MacArthur went to Wake Island in the middle of the Pacific to meet President Truman, who flew “14,404 [miles] ... to reach an understanding face to face” with MacArthur on a host of issues in the aftermath of the Veterans of Foreign Wars affair and the Inchon landing.⁵⁶ For the first and last time, Truman saw his “Great General,” who “cordially” greeted the President at the airport, “with his shirt unbuttoned, wearing a greasy ham and eggs cap that evidently had been in use for twenty years.” MacArthur assured Truman that “the Chinese would not attack, that we had won the war and that we would send a Division to Europe from Korea January 1951.”⁵⁷ At that moment, MacArthur’s confidence, if not arrogance, seemed warranted. Four days later, UN forces took Pyongyang and continued their simultaneous advances on both coasts toward the China-North Korea border in a “pincer” formation. At the time three full-strength Chinese armies had begun their crossing of the Yalu River into Korea. But MacArthur’s intelligence system failed to detect this crucial development.

⁵⁵ Willoughby, “Intelligence in War,” 20.

⁵⁶ Harry S. Truman, Robert H. Ferrell, ed., *Off The Record: The Private Paper of Harry S. Truman* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), 210.

⁵⁷ Truman, *Off The Record*, 200.

“We Face an Entirely New War”

On October 25, the Chinese 40th Army attacked the ROK's Sixth Division, marking the formal entry of Communist China into the Korean War. The 40th Army was one of the four full-strength armies, including the 38th, 39th, 40th, and 42nd Armies, which had begun entering Korea on October 19. Before this date, a number of reconnaissance units had entered Korea. For example, the 370th Regiment of the 124th Division, 42nd Army had crossed the Yalu River from Ji'an, Jilin province as early as October 16. This is the earliest date of entry mentioned in official Chinese military history.⁵⁸ In fact, however, Chinese troops had started entering Korea even before October 16. On October 8, Wang Futian of the 372nd Regiment of the 42nd Army deserted his unit and surrendered to the U.S. troops. He reported that his division had crossed the Yalu and entered Korea on September 15. Wang was among the first eleven Chinese prisoners who were captured or surrendered in October 1950.⁵⁹ Although Wang's claim on his division's entry into Korea in September could not be verified, his capture date on October 8 was a clear indication of the Chinese forces' involvement in Korea. This was two weeks before the Chinese launched their first attack.

Li Xinlin, a 33-year-old Hunanese, was another early deserter. According to his interrogation report dated October 28, Li deserted the 40th Army on October 25 before the army attacked UN troops. Li had heard a rumor that Chinese Nationalist Forces were in Korea, and he wished to rejoin them. Formerly an eleven-year veteran in the Nationalist army before he was captured and impressed into the PLA, Li claimed that approximately 60% of the 30,000 men in the 40th Army were former Chinese

⁵⁸ Junshi kexueyuan junshi lishi yanjiubu 军事科学院军事历史研究部, *Kangmei Yuanchao Zhanzheng shi* 抗美援朝战争史, vol. 1 (Beijing, junshi kexue chubanshe, 2000), 201.

⁵⁹ Wang, Fu Tien 王福田 (Wang Futian), Interrogation Report No. 4614, December 28, 1950, ATIS, 2. And Bradbury et al., *Mass Behavior*, 48, 214.

Nationalist troops, and that morale was low.⁶⁰ As Chinese deserters and prisoners continued to trickle in and were interrogated, the gravity of the situation began to emerge.

The U.S. Eighth Army on the west coast and X Corps on the east continued to capture more Chinese prisoners, and some of them “candidly boasted” that the Chinese forces had “massively intervened in North Korea.” Despite mounting evidence, G-2 chief Willoughby disbelieved much of the early interrogation results, and dismissed an October 27 report as “unconfirmed and thereby unaccepted.” One U.S. regiment commander recalled, “We had interrogators who were part Chinese, who spoke Chinese. There was absolutely no question that these prisoners were Chinese . . . But nobody back at division, or higher echelons, believed they were Chinese.”⁶¹ On October 29, X Corps Commander Ned Almond personally interviewed the 16 Chinese POWs captured by his troops and alerted MacArthur by personal message. Willoughby could no longer deny they were Chinese, but he casually dismissed them as “stragglers” or “volunteers” of no real significance.⁶² U.S. Ambassador to Korea John Muccio later remarked, “Willoughby had a disdain of the capability of the Chinese, of all classes, and his appraisal of Chinese capabilities was based on the little that he knew about China years prior to the advent of the Communists.” Because he was the intelligence chief, Willoughby’s willful neglect filtered down throughout the intelligence apparatus, thus “prevent[ing] MacArthur from getting the intelligence that he had to have in order to make the right decisions.”⁶³

After the initial contact on October 25, the Chinese forces mysteriously disappeared from major engagement for a month. This eerie lull contrasted with a

⁶⁰ Lee, Shin Lin 李新林 (Li Xinlin), Interrogation Report No. 164-MISDI-1166, October 28, 1950, ATIS, 1.

⁶¹ Blair, *The Forgotten War*, 370, 377.

⁶² Blair, *The Forgotten War*, 377.

⁶³ John J. Muccio, *Oral History Interview with John J. Muccio* (Harry S. Truman Library, 1971), 72, 74.

continual inflow of interrogation reports that suggested the overwhelming strength of Chinese forces. MacArthur and his field commanders became increasingly concerned. “Applying his wise theory that ‘you can’t fight ‘em if can’t see ‘em,’” MacArthur flew with his top brass “in an unarmed plane along the entire length of the Yalu River to observe for himself.” The adventurous flight ran over the much-dreaded airspace later known as the “Mig Corridor,” but returned to the base unscathed. In Willoughby’s hagiographic account of MacArthur, “The air has never seen a more daring flight.” However, MacArthur found no military concentration south of the river.⁶⁴ Confident of his firsthand eyewitness intelligence, MacArthur told Muccio on November 17 that he was sure “the Chinese Communists had sent 25,000 and certainly no more than 30,000 soldiers across the border . . . If they had moved in the open, they would have been detected by our Air Force and Intelligence.”⁶⁵

In fact, not until November 21 did MacArthur order the air force to conduct intensive reconnaissance of the mountainous area between the two coasts. By then, most of the Chinese forces had already stealthily assumed attack positions.⁶⁶ MacArthur thought that the Chinese Communists “could not possibly have got more over with the surreptitiously covert means used.”⁶⁷ But in fact they did. In Li Xinlin’s G-2 interrogation record compiled three weeks earlier, he clearly stated that the entire 40th Army of 30,000 men had crossed the Yalu on October 18, and “arrived at a point in North Korea approx[imately] 55 km south of Sinuiju on 25 Oct 50.”⁶⁸ And that was only one of four armies that had moved into Korea. MacArthur either did not see this report or dismissed

⁶⁴ Willoughby, *MacArthur*, 390-391.

⁶⁵ James F. Schnabel and Robert J. Watson, *History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff: The Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Policy*, Vol. III, *The Korean War*, Part 1 (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1979), 308-309.

⁶⁶ Robert F. Futrell, *The United States Air Force in Korea: 1950-1953* (Washington: Office of Air Force History, 1983), 217.

⁶⁷ Schnabel and Watson, *History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, The Korean War*, Part 1, 308-309.

⁶⁸ Intelligence Reports 1950-51, Box 11, Record Group 554, NARA. Sinuiju is located on North Korea’s border to China.

this crucial information. He ordered his troops to “mop up” North Korean territories, so they could return home for Christmas.

Chinese forces poured out of the mountains, beginning on November 25 in the west and November 27 in the east, and attacked UN troops in overwhelming strength. On November 28 MacArthur sent a desperate message to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, “We face an entirely new war.” Interrogation reports and other intelligence had established enemy strength near 200,000. In an about-face from his earlier dismissive view of the intention and capability of the Chinese, MacArthur asserted, “Their ultimate objective was undoubtedly a decisive effort aimed at the complete destruction of all UN forces.” He kicked the ball back to Washington by stating that “[t]his command has done everything humanly possible within its capacities but is now faced with conditions beyond its control and its strength.”⁶⁹ The next day, MacArthur reported that “the Chinese Nationalist armies on Formosa represented the only source of potential trained reinforcement available for early commitment to the war in Korea,” and they could be combat ready within fourteen days. He trusted his friend Chiang so much that he assured Washington that “much larger forces than had been previously offered would undoubtedly be made available if desired.” Therefore, he “strongly recommended” that he be authorized to negotiate directly with the Nationalist government regarding the incorporation of its units under the UN Command.⁷⁰

In Washington, however, the very notion of re-engaging that “old crooked Chiang Kai-shek” was almost more horrifying than losing the war in Korea.⁷¹ At a National Security Council meeting held at the White House, the new Secretary of State George C. Marshall advocated a limited war. Although it was clear to him that “the Chinese

⁶⁹ Telegram, MacArthur to the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), November 28, 1950, *FRUS, 1950, Vol. VII*, 1237-1238.

⁷⁰ Telegram, JCS to MacArthur, November 29, 1950, *FRUS, 1950, Vol. VII*, 1253.

⁷¹ Truman used this epithet in a letter written in 1958, in Truman, *Off The Record*, 368.

Communist action is dictated in large measure by the [Soviet] Politburo,” the U.S. should not “publicly hold the USSR responsible now.” Instead, the U.S. “should use all available political, economic and psychological action to limit the war.” Emphatically, Marshall stressed, “We should not go into Chinese Communist territory and we should not use Chinese Nationalist forces. To do either of these things would increase the danger of war with the Chinese Communists.”⁷² Marshall spoke as if those who were pounding U.S. troops were not the Chinese. Adding insult to injury, on November 29, Chinese Communist General Wu Xiuquan harangued the U.S. at the UN Security Council in New York, accusing the U.S. of aggression against China.

Contrary to Marshall’s contention that it was “possible to hold a line,” UN forces were driven south toward the 38th parallel in a hasty retreat.⁷³ In Washington, China’s entry into the Korean War caused much political chaos. On November 30, when pressed by reporters, an exasperated Truman uttered, “There has always been active consideration” of the use of atomic bombs, though he did not want to see them used. A clarification was issued on the same day: “by law, only the President can authorize the use of the atom bomb, and no such authorization has been given.”⁷⁴ To stop MacArthur’s talk of naval blockade and aerial bombing on China, Acheson asked Truman to order “censorship in the Far Eastern Command immediately,” and he mentioned Willoughby in particular.⁷⁵

Confusing talk about using nuclear bombs did not deter Chinese forces from sweeping south. The seven severely battered U.S. divisions were vastly outnumbered and overrun by twenty-six Chinese divisions, which MacArthur described as “fresh,

⁷² Memorandum of conversation of the National Security Council (NSC) meeting, November 28, 1950, *FRUS, 1950, Vol. VII*, 1243.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ Editorial note, *FRUS, 1950, Vol. VII*, 1262.

⁷⁵ Memorandum of conversation of a White House meeting, December 3, 1950, *FRUS, 1950, Vol. VII*, 1337.

completely organized, splendidly trained and equipped and apparently in peak condition for actual operations.” On December 3, MacArthur again pleaded for reinforcements in this “entirely new war against an entirely new power of great military strength and under entirely new conditions.”⁷⁶ Finally Marshall came to the realization that the “situation looked very bad indeed,” and Bradley concluded that, “not more than 48 to 72 hours would elapse before it reached a crash state.”⁷⁷

Both Tokyo and Washington were devising an exit from Korea and weighing its consequences. At the moment the debate on retreat was not so much on whether to cut and run but how. The question was whether the U.S. should take along South Korean troops in the proposed retreat. In a meeting at the Pentagon regarding a planned retreat from Inchon, Acheson came to terms with the possibility of the U.S. being driven out of the Far East: “There is danger of our becoming the greatest appeasers of all time if we abandon the Koreans and they are slaughtered; if there is a Dunkirk and we are forced out it is a disaster but not a disgraceful one.”⁷⁸ Bradley believed that after Korea the U.S. “would lose Indochina and Formosa.” In Europe, the Germans “are already saying we have proved that we are weak. Appeasement is gaining.”⁷⁹ The situation looked bleak.

In the critical 48 to 72 hours after Bradley spoke of “a crash state,” the U.S. administration was obliged to entertain British Prime Minister Clement Attlee for two days. Attlee was alarmed by the talk of nuclear attacks. While Truman, Acheson and company were allegedly “appeasers” in the eye of Republicans, in contrast to Attlee they appeared unmistakably hawkish. In a State Department preparation meeting George Kennan advocated a hard-line policy, “[W]e owe China nothing but a lesson.”⁸⁰ During

⁷⁶ Telegram, MacArthur to JCS, December 3, 1950, *FRUS, 1950, Vol. VII*, 1321.

⁷⁷ Memorandum of conversation by Jessup, December 3, 1950, *FRUS, 1950, Vol. VII*, 1312.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 1324-1325.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 1326.

⁸⁰ Memorandum of conversation, December 5, 1950, *FRUS, 1950, Vol. VII*, 1385.

the meeting between Truman and Attlee, Truman stated, “The only way to meet communism is to eliminate it,” as if borrowing a line directly from his nemesis MacArthur. Attlee, however, saw it differently, suggesting that by handing over Chiang Kai-shek to the Communists the Korean problem would disappear. Acheson countered, “It is hard to believe that . . . if we give them Formosa and make other concessions, they would then become calm and peaceful.” Truman tried to draw Attlee’s attention to the danger to British assets in Asia: “After Korea, it would be Indochina, then Hong Kong, then Malaya.”⁸¹

In his defense of American policy on Taiwan, Marshall inadvertently defended Chiang Kai-shek, whose regime Attlee deemed “rotten and corrupt” and one who should be “take[n] off.”⁸² Marshall said that he “held Chiang free from personal corruption but his followers and party were corrupt. Chiang was well-intentioned and was not personally getting rich but was the victim of his associates with whom he would not or could not break.” When Marshall remarked that he could not contemplate a Taiwan without Chiang, Truman suggested “a UN Trusteeship.”⁸³ Apparently Truman was still obsessed with the idea of getting rid of Chiang Kai-shek.

While UN soldiers were running for their lives in Korea, the two-day marathon meeting at the White House lapsed into an academic discussion on whether Mao and his men were Communists or nationalists. Attlee asked, “when is it that you scratch a Communist and find a nationalist[?]” Truman deferred to Marshall on this question. Marshall recalled several meetings he had with Mao and many more with Zhou Enlai when he was mediating the Chinese civil war in 1946. He remembered Zhou “saying to

⁸¹ Minutes of meeting of Truman and Attlee, December 4, 1950, *FRUS, 1950, Vol. VII*, 1367-1368.

⁸² Minutes of meeting of Truman and Attlee, December 5, 1950, *FRUS, 1950, Vol. VII*, 1397, 1407.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 1406-1407.

Mrs. Marshall at the dinner table with great emphasis that there was no doubt they were Marxist Communists and he resented people referring to them as merely agrarian reformists. They made not the slightest attempt to conceal their Moscow affiliations. They regarded the Russians as co-religionists.” Attlee retorted, “Tito was also a full Communist.”⁸⁴ Clearly Attlee still thought that Mao was another Tito, and the West could drive a wedge between Mao and Stalin.

Possibly alarmed by Marshall’s softness on Chiang Kai-shek, on December 5 Acheson wrote to Marshall. After some boilerplate language of deference, Acheson made his point clear about the ongoing reconsideration of deploying Nationalist troops in Korea, “unless I hear from you to the contrary, the [State] Department will continue along existing lines.”⁸⁵ In a memorandum to American diplomats around the world, Acheson defended his China policy while acknowledging observers’ fear of “extremist demands of Amer[ican] supporters of Chiang Kai-shek.”⁸⁶ Perhaps those extremist demands included MacArthur’s repeated requests to use Nationalist troops in Korea, and to lift restrictions on aerial bombing and naval blockade of China. MacArthur told Army Chief of Staff Lawton Collins on December 7, “If these restrictions were withdrawn, and if he could use 50,000-60,000 Chinese Nationalist troops from Formosa,” he could hold a line across Korea. Otherwise, the UN forces must abandon Korea.⁸⁷

In Korea, UN and ROK troops retreated to south of the 38th parallel on December 16, and on the same day Truman declared a state of emergency in the U.S. On December 21, MacArthur asked for all U.S. National Guard divisions to be sent to the Far

⁸⁴ Minutes of meeting of Truman and Attlee, December 4, 1950, *FRUS, 1950, Vol. VII*, 1367-1369.

⁸⁵ Memorandum by Acheson to Marshall, December 5, 1950, *FRUS, 1950, Vol. VII*, 1411-1412.

⁸⁶ Telegram, Acheson to certain diplomatic missions, December 2, 1950, *FRUS, 1950, Vol. VII*, 1532.

⁸⁷ Footnote, *ibid.*, 1469.

East. But his request was denied the next day.⁸⁸ On December 30, he made the desperate appeal again for using Chinese Nationalist troops.⁸⁹ However, on December 27, the CIA provided a negative assessment of the use of Chiang's troops in Korea.⁹⁰ The next day, the Joint Chiefs of Staff concluded, "[T]he time had come for withdrawal."⁹¹ A week later, Seoul fell into the hands of advancing Chinese and North Korean troops. At a time of desperation, few in the U.S. military realized that the Chinese had reached the end of their offensive capacity and that the tide was about to shift in the UN forces' favor.

MacArthur "going home" and Chiang going alone

Contrary to the dire predictions of total collapse made in December 1950, Mao's campaign to "drive the Americans into the Pacific Ocean" ground to a halt soon after Communist forces took Seoul in early January 1951. As the Chinese army advanced south, its supply line became so overextended that its archaic logistics system, which consisted mainly of animal and human packs, could no longer sustain any meaningful offensive. In late October 1950 Li Xinlin had reported that each Chinese soldier carried a food supply that could last only four days.⁹² In retrospect, had American generals taken their cue from the reports of Chinese prisoners, much of the panic in December 1950 could have been avoided.

Soon after General Matthew Ridgway took over the command of the Eighth Army in late December 1950, he discovered the Achilles' heel of his enemy. Accordingly he devised a new tactic to counter the Chinese. Ironically Ridgway's tactics bore a resemblance to Mao's famous dictum that "when the enemy attacks, we retreat; when the

⁸⁸ Memorandum by Rusk, December 21, 1950, *ibid.*, 1588.

⁸⁹ Telegram, MacArthur to the Department of the Army, December 30, 1950, *ibid.*, 1630.

⁹⁰ Memorandum by the CIA, *ibid.*, 1606.

⁹¹ Memorandum of Conversation between Acheson and Lovett, December 28, 1950, *ibid.*, 1615.

⁹² Li Xinlin 李新林, Interrogation Report No. 164-MISDI-1166, October 28, 1950, ATIS, 2.

enemy retreats, we attack.” When facing Communist offensives, the UN forces avoided major direct contact and retreated as planned. Ridgway paced motorized UN units slightly ahead of the pursuing Communist forces, who were marching on foot, luring them further and further south without meeting any major resistance. As the Chinese troops began to flag toward the end of their “week-long offensive,” UN forces quickly outflanked the Chinese and cut off their retreat route, creating a “meat grinder” with overwhelming firepower. Before long, the Chinese suffered losses and had to retreat north. On March 14, Seoul was recaptured by UN forces, and would remain untouched by the Communists throughout the remainder of the war.

Although much of the turnaround in Korea was probably the result of Ridgway’s leadership, MacArthur was “standing at the peak of a great career,” as Ridgway politely put it.⁹³ Truman’s dismissal of MacArthur on April 11 came as a shock, but not a complete surprise. Washington insiders knew that Truman had long brooded over the idea of removing MacArthur. On April 5, MacArthur dropped a “political bomb,” when Joseph Martin, the Republican minority leader in the House of Representatives, read a private letter from MacArthur on the House floor.⁹⁴ Concurring with Martin’s view, MacArthur repeated his argument that the use of Chinese Nationalist forces was “in conflict with neither logic nor this tradition” of meeting force with maximum counter force. Similar to the criticism he had made in his letter to the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) convention, MacArthur took a swipe at Truman’s and Acheson’s Euro-centrism: “It seems strangely difficult for some to realize that here in Asia is where the Communist conspirators have elected to make their play for global conquest.” He concluded with his

⁹³ Matthew B. Ridgway, *Soldier: The Memoirs of Matthew B. Ridgway, as Told to Harold H. Martin* (New York: Harper, 1956), 223.

⁹⁴ Truman, *Off The Record*, 210-211.

hallmark one-liner, “There is no substitute for victory.”⁹⁵ To Truman, this was the “last straw.”⁹⁶ MacArthur was fired by a president whom he had met only for an hour on Wake Island for defending another president he only met for two days in Taipei.

As if a bitter revenge to the Veteran of Foreign Wars affair when Truman learned of MacArthur’s letter through hostile newspapers, “which had been *accidentally* sent” to his pressroom, this time around Truman went on radio to make the announcement lest leaks reach MacArthur before his messenger did.⁹⁷ MacArthur heard of his sacking on the radio in Tokyo. When he finally received the official confirmation, MacArthur turned to his wife and said, “Jean, we are going home at last.”⁹⁸ His successor Ridgway flew to Tokyo from Korea and saw his former boss “entirely being himself—composed, quiet, temperate, friendly.” And he reported that he saw “no trace of bitterness or anger” in MacArthur’s tone.⁹⁹ MacArthur’s era had come to an end in the Far East.

Although Ridgway respected MacArthur, he expressed different views “on the point that was at the core of the dispute—the advisability of our driving the Chinese across the Yalu.”¹⁰⁰ Ridgway was no fan of Chiang Kai-shek, nor did he have much confidence in Chiang’s troops. The discussion about utilizing Nationalist troops disappeared along with MacArthur’s departure. During Ridgway’s tenure as the commander of the UN Command in the following twelve months, he did not bother to pay a visit to Taiwan. Before leaving for Europe to succeed General Eisenhower as the commander of NATO forces in April 1952, Ridgway raised a touchy issue with the chief of the Chinese Mission in Japan: was there any other alternative to Chiang as Taiwan’s leader, and were there any outstanding military commanders? In Chiang’s view, Ridgway

⁹⁵ Letter, MacArthur to Joseph W. Martin, March 20, 1951, *FRUS, 1951, Vol. VII*, 299.

⁹⁶ Truman, *Off The Record*, 210.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 210.

⁹⁸ Willoughby, *MacArthur*, 423.

⁹⁹ Ridgway, *Soldier*, 223.

¹⁰⁰ Ridgway, *Soldier*, 223.

belonged to the Marshall faction, whose deep-rooted bias against Chiang and desire to depose him remained unchanged.¹⁰¹

In the immediate aftermath of MacArthur's dismissal, Chiang and his men were "feeling extremely low," observed U.S. Ambassador Karl Rankin. To make matters worse for Chiang, the impending arrival of Major General William C. Chase as the head of the newly established Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) reminded him of the traumatic relationship he had with General Stilwell during WWII.¹⁰² U.S. Naval Attaché Jarret believed that the "Gimo, who is sensitive as ever regarding sovereignty, feels that subject of advisory group should have been discussed with him prior to ordering."¹⁰³ In the meantime, Chiang closely followed events unfolding in Washington. From May to June, the U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services and Foreign Relations held hearings on the military situation in the Far East and the circumstances surrounding General MacArthur's recall. The hearings lapsed into a rancorous partisan debate over China policy. When Marshall was attacked by "Chiang Kai-shek Republicans," Truman called one of them an "official mudslinger and Goebbels liar . . . trying another Nazi-Communist trick."¹⁰⁴ With equally intense emotion, Chiang Kai-shek followed the hearings in the U.S. Congress, especially when "Acheson was put on trial."¹⁰⁵ Reading transcripts of Acheson's testimony, Chiang bitterly re-lived the betrayal and slight he had suffered between 1946 and 1949 on the mainland. Adding to the pain, in June 1951 the U.S. and the British reached agreement with the Japanese on the San Francisco peace

¹⁰¹ Chiang Diaries, May 7, 1952.

¹⁰² Telegram, Jarrett (Naval Attaché at Taipei) to Martin (Commander, Seventh Fleet), April 11, 1951, *FRUS, 1951, Vol. VII*, 1627.

¹⁰³ Telegram, Jarrett (Naval Attaché at Taipei) to Ridgway, April 11, 1951, *ibid.*, 1630.

¹⁰⁴ Truman diaries, June 21, 1951, *Off The Record*, 210.

¹⁰⁵ Chiang Diaries, June 2, 9, 1952.

treaty, and they excluded Nationalist China from the negotiations. Chiang fulminated, “If God truly believes in love, why were idiots like Acheson and Truman created?”¹⁰⁶

For Chiang, the summer of 1951 was extremely frustrating. One early morning in June, Chiang heard his wife “crying bitterly” while sleeping, apparently having a nightmare. Madame Chiang recalled that in her dream her sister, Madame Sun, who had stayed on the mainland, bade farewell to her. She was “very worried that her sister might have been murdered.”¹⁰⁷ Chiang Kai-shek himself was suffering from an increasingly severe case of insomnia. By early August, the situation became more painful than what he had gone through between late 1948 and early 1949, when he was forced to resign from the presidency.¹⁰⁸

One thing keeping Chiang awake at night was the rapid developments in Korea. Chiang was not concerned about the battlefield, but rather the “peace offensive” launched by the Communists. After the Chinese Communist forces ended their disastrous Fifth Campaign and retreated to the north of the 38th parallel in late May, Soviet Ambassador to the UN Yakov Malik waved the truce flag on June 23. Jumping at this peace offer, the U.S. responded positively. On July 10, the armistice negotiations began in Kaesong near the 38th parallel. It appeared that the war might come to an end any time soon. Chiang’s wish for World War III became even more elusive. Once again, the specter of the “orphan of Asia” loomed large over Taiwan.

Unlike in 1950 when heaven-sent General MacArthur came to Chiang’s rescue, in 1951 there was no outside help coming from the U.S. Here the lessons offered by Dulles in May 1950 were instructive. Lecturing visiting Nationalist officials, Dulles spoke of the “very complete loss of confidence in the will of the Nationalist forces to fight” in U.S.

¹⁰⁶ Chiang Diaries, June 18, 1952.

¹⁰⁷ Chiang Diaries, June 4, 1952.

¹⁰⁸ Chiang Diaries, August 9, 1952.

official quarters and among the general public. He recalled Madame Chiang's 1943 speech in the U.S. Congress pronouncing that "God helps those who help themselves." He said pointedly that it was "a very good time for the Nationalist forces to take that to heart."¹⁰⁹ One year later, Chiang arrived at the same conclusion on the importance of being independent. At the end of July 1951, Chiang reflected in his diaries: events of the previous months had "fundamentally altered my views on the world, the nation, and particularly the U.S. Freeing myself from the views I held in the last forty years was like awakening from a nightmare." He blamed himself for having "shallow knowledge and short sight." And he confessed that he had failed the nation and the people so much that "even his death ten thousand times" could not bring him redemption. Finally, he made a vow to become independent, as he reasoned that "If we can not stand independently, the country and nation have no chance of survival in the world."¹¹⁰

After the departure of MacArthur, Chiang once again became the lonely anti-Communist crusader confined on the island of Taiwan. Anxiety, fear, and anger would haunt him for another 10 months, until he won an unexpected victory in May 1952, when more than 15,000 Chinese prisoners of war in Korea declared their opposition to repatriation, and expressed their will to join the Nationalists in Taiwan. In 1950, few could have imagined such a psychological victory. Yet, the seed of this success had been planted inadvertently by MacArthur and Chiang back in late 1950 and early 1951.

Taiwan's covert entry into the Korean War: the first 73 interpreters

At the end of December 1950, when the U.S. was bracing for catastrophe in Korea, Chiang Kai-shek saw hope in Taiwan. In his "Reflection on the Year," Chiang thanked

¹⁰⁹ Memorandum of conversation by Dulles with Hollington Tong, May 25, 1950, *FRUS, 1950, Vol. VI*, 343.

¹¹⁰ Chiang Diaries, July 31, 1952.

God for “(1) bringing harvests to Taiwan so that the economy did not collapse; (2) making the Communist bandits jump into the trap of the Korean War; (3) making the U.S. uphold justice and resist Communism, and not abandon the Far East, thus turning around the whole situation.”¹¹¹ When Chiang wrote “U.S.,” most likely he had MacArthur in mind, but not his foes in the State Department. In addition to MacArthur, some of the American top brass now agreed with Chiang’s positive assessment of Taiwan’s situation. Referring to G-2 reports, Army Chief of Staff Lawton Collins told officials from the State and Defense Departments, “I have the impression that the situation there is quite good and that the men are well trained.”¹¹² Brushing aside the State Department’s insistence on a unified military representation through the attachés in the U.S. embassy, the Department of Defense adopted MacArthur’s proposal for a separate chain of command, in the form of a Military Assistance Advisory Group. To the horror of the diplomats, MacArthur’s proposal amounted to a contingent of 500 U.S. personnel, and one of their planned roles would involve the training of the Nationalist Navy, Air Force, and Army “down to the battalion level.”¹¹³ In this bureaucratic tug of war, MacArthur got his way for once, probably because of the battlefield victories he had at the time.

However, Assistant Secretary of State Rusk saw the situation in Taiwan very differently. He asserted, “the situation top-side is bad.” He argued that Chiang’s leadership was “not the best that could be provided,” and his sons were in positions for which they were not qualified.¹¹⁴ Rusk’s negative view of Chiang Ching-kuo was undoubtedly influenced by a series of scathing reports written by former Chargé Strong after his return to Washington in July 1950. One report claimed that Ching-kuo was

¹¹¹ Chiang Diaries, December 31, 1950.

¹¹² Memorandum of discussion of a State Department-JCS meeting, January 30, 1951, *FRUS, 1951, Vol. VII*, 1540.

¹¹³ Memorandum by Richard E. Johnson (Office of Chinese Affairs) to Clubb (Director of the Office of Chinese Affairs), March 8, 1951, *FRUS, 1951, Vol. VII*, 1593.

¹¹⁴ Memorandum of discussion of a State Department-JCS meeting, January 30, 1951, *ibid.*, 1540,

presiding over “a reign of terror, more silken than in other countries or in other times, but nevertheless in progress.”¹¹⁵ While Chiang’s younger son Wei-kuo served as the commander of the Armored Forces, the elder son Ching-kuo was widely considered the heir apparent, holding great power in the party, military and secret police. More specifically, Ching-kuo was the intelligence chief.

Perhaps Rusk had underestimated Chiang Ching-kuo. It was hard not to. Chiang’s outward appearance was affable and low-key. Although a high-ranking general, Ching-kuo seldom wore his uniform.¹¹⁶ When he attended meetings, he normally sat in the back or on the side.¹¹⁷ But there was no question about his power. Once Chiang Kai-shek resumed the presidency on March 1, 1950, Ching-kuo took the position of the director of the Political Department in the Ministry of Defense, and began his effort to restructure the military, which was reinforced by a system of political officers, akin to the commissars in the Communist army. In July, Chiang Kai-shek abolished the clique-ridden Central Executive Committee of 286 members, and appointed a 16-man Central Reform Committee as the highest decision-making body, with Ching-kuo as a member.

After the outbreak of the Korean War, Ching-kuo sprang into action as the intelligence chief. Through the direct channels established after MacArthur’s visit, the Nationalists provided Tokyo with valuable if not entirely trusted intelligence. While Chiang Kai-shek’s troop offer was repeatedly rejected by Washington, a small corps of Nationalists began to trickle into the UN forces in Tokyo and Korea. These one hundred to two hundred seemingly benign code-breakers, translators, interrogators, teachers, and painters would later prove to be more effective than regular armies, and would alter the

¹¹⁵ Memorandum by Strong (Office of Chinese Affairs) to Clubb, September 6, 1950, *FRUS*, 1950, Vol. VI, 486.

¹¹⁶ Jay Taylor, *The Generalissimo's Son: Chiang Ching-Kuo and the Revolutions in China and Taiwan* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2000), 216.

¹¹⁷ Chu Songqiu, *Chu Songqiu xiansheng fangwen jilu: lanjin cangsang bashi nian* [Records of interviews with Mr. Chu Songqiu: Eighty years of life] (Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo, 2001), 228.

course of the Korean War. Although information on the secret collaboration between MacArthur and the Nationalists remains fragmentary to this day, it has become possible to piece together a picture based on new sources from the U.S. and Taiwan.

There were three areas in which the U.S. military and the Nationalists collaborated: intelligence gathering, psychological warfare, and prisoner handling and exploitation. Due to Washington's deep aversion to open collaboration with Chiang Kai-shek, all Nationalist personnel serving in the UN Command were hired on an individual basis, not dispatched by Chiang as a contingent. Theoretically they were individual employees of the UN Command, mostly as Department of the Army Civilians (DACs). However, most likely some of these men were carefully selected by the Nationalist government, and some went through training directed by Chiang Ching-kuo. Some of these Nationalist employees serving in various units of the UN forces managed to establish contact with the Nationalist mission in Tokyo and the embassy in Korea, transmitting valuable intelligence back and forth between Tokyo, Korea, and Taipei. Thus, it is no exaggeration to consider some of these men as agents, though not in the "James Bond" sense. And even those who were not affiliated with the Nationalist intelligence agencies were naturally partial to Nationalist Taiwan, especially in their dealings with the Chinese prisoners. Not surprisingly, they tended to sympathize with anti-Communist prisoners and encouraged them to resist repatriation to China.

In terms of intelligence gathering, Washington's initial reluctance to hire code-breakers from Taiwan prolonged the UN force's intelligence woes. When Ridgway took command of the Eighth Army in late December 1950, all his intelligence staff could show him was "a big red goose egg out in front of us, with '174,000' scrawled in the middle of it." Evidently, extremely detailed intelligence reports provided by hundreds of Chinese prisoners captured thus far were still dismissed by staff officers of the Eighth Army.

Following MacArthur's example, Ridgway and General Partridge, Commander of the Fifth Air Force flew a two-seat trainer plane twenty miles into enemy territory to gather intelligence on their own. Again, they saw "no sign of life or movement. No smoke came from the chimneys, and nothing moved either on or off the roads, neither vehicles, men nor animal."¹¹⁸ Not surprisingly, this type of eyeball air reconnaissance yielded little insight into Chinese forces.

To remedy the shortage of Chinese linguists, the U.S. military began teaching airmen Chinese through a program at Yale University. Obviously such an effort was too little, too late. Eventually, the Armed Forces Security Agency, the precursor of the National Security Agency, hired a "limited" number of Nationalists from Taiwan as Department of the Army Civilians to help with radio interception and translation. Once they worked out the differences in military vocabulary between the Communists and the Nationalists, the communications intelligence operations were praised by the UNC for providing "an outstanding intel[ligence] source . . . for MacArthur and Ridgway."¹¹⁹

While code-breakers played a role during war, psychological warfare personnel and prisoner interrogators, interpreters, and teachers literally changed the course of war. No one could have predicted this outcome in 1950. U.S. psychological warfare in Korea came under the authority of MacArthur's G-2 man, Willoughby, who boasted that the first UN leaflets were airdropped in Korea on June 28, just twenty-four hours after US military aid to Korea was ordered. On the battlefield, portable ground loudspeakers and powerful airborne amplifiers supplemented leaflets in disseminating propaganda to enemy troops.¹²⁰ The most widely distributed product was the so-called MacArthur Safety Pass, which promised Communist soldiers food, clothing and fair treatment, and

¹¹⁸ Ridgway, *Soldier*, 205, 216.

¹¹⁹ David A. Hatch and Robert Louis Benson, *The Korean War: The SIGINT Background* (Center for Cryptology History, National Security Agency, 2000), 11.

¹²⁰ Willoughby, "Intelligence in War," 21.

gave detailed instructions on how to surrender safely. Just as deserter Li Xinlin reported, some Chinese soldiers surrendered under the false impression that Nationalist troops were fighting on the other side. In former Whampoa cadet Gao Wenjun's case, before his desertion in late May 1951, he claimed that he had read leaflets that "falsely stated that three divisions of the Nationalist Army were fighting in South Korea with the UNC."¹²¹ Most of the early leaflets were mass-produced by the South Koreans, with a Chinese version translated by Chinese-speaking Koreans, so the language often appeared awkward. This situation was rectified with the arrival of Chinese psychological warfare specialists from Taiwan.

According to Chu Songqiu, who was then Chiang Ching-kuo's assistant in the Political Department of the Ministry of Defense and later became Chiang Kai-shek's secretary after the Korean War, as early as November 1950, Ching-kuo had already received requests from Tokyo asking for psychological warfare personnel to deal with Chinese Communist intervention.¹²² Nationalist Air Force officer and WWII-pilot Gao Qingchen reported that, responding to General Willoughby's request for Chinese linguists, in late December the Nationalist government decided to send 22 men to the UN Command. The Ministry of Defense's Second Bureau, or the intelligence bureau, was responsible for selecting candidates. In early February U.S. military attachés in Taipei interviewed 26 candidates. Gao recalled that the interview was basically a conversation to assess a candidate's English skills. Eighteen men were finally selected, including 11 from the army, three from the navy, two from the air force, and two from the Foreign Ministry. Because their hiring was a decision made by General MacArthur in

¹²¹ Gao Wenjun, *Hanzhan yiwang*, 148.

¹²² Chu Songqiu 楚崧秋, Lu Fangshang 呂方上, and Huang Kewu 黃克武, *Chu Songqiu xiansheng fangwen jilu: lanjin cangsang bashi nian* 楚崧秋先生訪問紀錄: 覽盡滄桑八十年 [Records of interviews with Mr. Chu Songqiu: Eighty years of life] (Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo, 2001), 54.

contravention of U.S. government policy in the Far East, their mission was highly secret.¹²³

On February 11, Nationalist Deputy Chief of Staff Guo Jiqiao and Director of the Second Bureau Lai Mingtang summoned the 18 men and gave them instructions (*xunhua*).¹²⁴ Although Gao did not divulge the content of the briefings, most likely the two generals instructed the men to gather intelligence for the Nationalist government while working for the UN Command. The next day in the presence of U.S. military attachés, the 18 men were sworn in as U.S. Department of Army Civilians, promising not to reveal their old identities or make any contact with the Nationalist government during their service. From then on, they were supposed to appear as if they were American citizens hired by the U.S. Army. At the moment, Gao “deeply felt the burden of his dual missions.” On one hand, he had to perform well for the UNC, so that Nationalist China’s importance could be recognized. On the other hand, he wanted to take this opportunity to learn about the U.S. forces, and gather intelligence for his government. “How can I reconcile these two somewhat conflicting missions and overcome difficulties?” Gao concluded, “It will be a matter of making decisions on the spot.”¹²⁵ The dilemma Gao faced was common to all Nationalist employees of the UN Command. Being employed by the UN or U.S. did not lead one to shed his loyalty to the Nationalist government, especially if he strongly identified with it. There is little doubt that the 18 men were loyal Nationalists.

At 10:30 p.m., February 12, the first 18 Nationalist linguists boarded a DC-4 plane and departed for Tokyo in winter darkness. After their arrival in Tokyo at 4:30 a.m. the next day, a U.S. military shuttle came to pick them up on the tarmac, and they

¹²³ Gao Qingchen 高慶辰, *Kongzhan fei yingxiong* 空戰非英雄 [Air fight non-hero] (Taipei: Maitian Chuban, 2000), 231.

¹²⁴ Gao Qingchen, 232.

¹²⁵ Gao Qingchen, 232.

entered Japan without going through any border or custom check. In Tokyo, the 18 men found out their unit was called the Allied Translator and Interpreter Section (ATIS), which was a unit under the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2, Far East Command. ATIS's responsibilities included translating enemy intelligence and interrogating prisoners. Six Nationalist interpreters were retained at the ATIS headquarters in Tokyo, and the other 12 were assigned to ATIS units in Korea. They were issued Department of the Army (DAC) uniforms, which had no insignia of rank. Instead, the brass letters "U.S." adorned their collar and cap. While they looked no different from other Chinese-American DACs, these 18 men had many ties with the Nationalist personnel in Tokyo. Soon after their arrival, they telephoned their friends in the Chinese Mission in Tokyo. Although initially their U.S. leader prevented them from going out, eventually they were allowed to visit the Chinese Mission. And they treated their American leader at a local Chinese restaurant.¹²⁶

Obviously, the U.S.'s prohibition on contact with the Nationalist government was impossible to enforce. It was not unusual for these men to have old friends or colleagues working in the Chinese Mission in Tokyo or the embassy in Korea. Even if they did not have previous connections, the U.S. army had no authority to prohibit its civilian employees from visiting Chinese embassies, just as it could not forbid them from going to Chinese restaurants. The U.S. army simply could not control the private lives of its employees the way the Communists controlled their men. Granted, most contact between the interpreters and the Nationalist embassies was not intelligence-related, but these DACs had ample opportunities to transmit intelligence through the embassies if they chose to do so. Soon this interpreter-embassy link would become the crucial communication channel between anti-Communist prisoners and Taipei.

¹²⁶ Gao Qingchen, 235.

The 12 Nationalist interpreters arrived in Korea's war time capital, Pusan, on February 22, one week after the Chinese Communist forces had ended the first phase of the Fourth Campaign and been forced to retreat to the north of the Han River. The UN forces had captured a number of Chinese prisoners and documents. The Eighth Army made an urgent request to ATIS, asking to "borrow" half of the Chinese interpreters. Gao Qingchen and eight other men were dispatched to the headquarters of the Eighth Army in Taegu on February 25. Gao translated captured enemy documents. Two weeks later, the second batch of Nationalist interpreters arrived at Taegu. Gao returned to his ATIS unit in Pusan and served as a prisoner interrogator.¹²⁷

According to Gao, after the Eighth Army heard that the ATIS had hired Chinese interpreters in Taiwan, it asked the U.S. Far East Logistic Command to do the same for its own needs in Korea. Following the same procedure for the first batch of interpreters, the Ministry of Defense in Taipei selected the second, third, and fourth batches. The total number of interpreters in the last three batches reached 55. Half of them were army and air force officers, and the other half were university graduates who had served as military interpreters.¹²⁸ Gao's information was evidently accurate. In a memorandum prepared by the Presidential Office, read and signed by Chiang Kai-shek, it was stated that in January 1951 the UN Command requested Taiwan to selected 55 interpreters in addition to the first 18.¹²⁹ Apparently Chiang was personally aware of this intelligence collaboration between the UNC and Taiwan, though perhaps he did not expect much from these interpreters.

Among the 55 new interpreters, Huang Tiancai was a civilian news reporter but had served as an army interpreter twice before. In January 1945, Huang was one of the

¹²⁷ Gao Qingchen, 237-238.

¹²⁸ Gao Qingchen, 237-238.

¹²⁹ Reply note by the Presidential Office 總統府 to the Ministry of Defense, February 21, 1951, TWGFB doc No. 0004279800020013w.

many young college students who volunteered for the Chinese Expedition Army to India and Burma. He served as an English interpreter in armored vehicles and transportation units.¹³⁰ After the war ended, Huang returned to the National Chengchi University (Political University), which was based in Chongqing and later returned to Nanjing. Upon graduation in 1947, Huang served as an interpreter for the U.S. Military Advisory Group based in Fengshan, Taiwan until its withdrawal in the spring of 1949. After a brief period of unemployment Huang became a journalist for a small news outlet in Taipei. In February 1950, he received an official letter that invited former army interpreters to be interviewed for assignment. Out of more than 100 applicants, 20 plus were selected in Huang's batch. On March 9, Huang and his group departed for Tokyo. A few days later, they arrived in Taegu, Korea. Soon another group of ten plus interpreters arrived in Taegu as well.¹³¹

Apparently Huang's report of two batches of Nationalist interpreters fits into the last two batches of the four batches reported by Gao. The first batch was Gao's group of 18 that departed from Taipei on February 12, and the second batch was the group that arrived in Taegu on March 8. Then Huang Tiancai's group, which left Taipei on March 8 was the third batch, and the fourth batch arrived in Taegu soon after. Therefore, the total number of Nationalist interpreters hired in early 1951 was 73 (18 plus 55). Most likely these 73 men were the 75 "Chiang Kai-shek's Gestapos" to whom the U.S. Ambassador to Korea John Muccio referred. In an oral history interview in 1971, Muccio recalled, "Willoughby sent down to Taipei and got some seventy-five camp guards, or whatever terms you want to use. There's no doubt in my mind that those men were all, what's the

¹³⁰ Huang Tiancai 黃天才, interview by author, July 3, 2010, Taipei. Fengshan 鳳山; National Chengchi University 國立政治大學.

¹³¹ Huang Tiancai (Hwang Tien-tsai) 黃天才, *Wo zai 38 du xian de huiyi* 我在38度線的回憶 [My memories at the 38th parallel (Taipei: Ink Book, 2010), 11-12, 23, 39-45.

name of the Chiang Kai-shek's Gestapos?"¹³² Clearly, Muccio had only heard of the existence of MacArthur-Chiang intelligence collaboration, but had no exact information. Muccio's negative view of MacArthur was consistent with the State Department's. In February 1951, when MacArthur requested another 55 interpreters from Taiwan, the State Department got wind of the move and warned that they "would assuredly be in the service of the KMT secret police."¹³³ This was probably the origin of the "Gestapo" analogy.

However, Muccio's claim that these men served as "camp guards" was false. As this chapter has demonstrated, the U.N. forces had a genuine need for Chinese linguists, and the Nationalist interpreters were hired for their language abilities. Most importantly, the 73 men had arrived in Korea and Tokyo in February and March of 1951, before the influx of Chinese prisoners arrived in late May 1951, when the Chinese suffered their biggest losses in the second phase of the Fifth Campaign. From the time when Willoughby made his request to Taiwan in late 1950 until early 1951, the Chinese prisoners' population was very still small, and it was not an issue for U.S. authorities. Therefore there was no need for "camp guards" from Taiwan. Of course, it is possible Muccio was referring to a different group of 75 men who actually served as "camp guards." But that was implausible, because Willoughby left the Far East soon after MacArthur's dismissal in April 1951. That is to say, during the period of MacArthur and Willoughby, Chinese prisoners of war had not become an issue for the U.S. authorities. Evidently Muccio attributed later events to the doings of MacArthur, who had become an easy scapegoat for all policy failures in the Far East.

¹³² John J. Muccio, interview by Jerry N. Hess, February 18, 1971 (The Harry S. Truman Library), accessed January 1, 2009, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/muccio2.htm>.

¹³³ Rosemary Foot, *A Substitute for Victory* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990), 115.

Regardless of Muccio's prejudice, one fact that can be established is that the first 73 interpreters arrived in Korea and Tokyo in February and March 1951, before the Chinese prisoner population exploded during the Communist Fifth Campaign in May.

POWs become the nexus of U.S.-Taiwan intelligence collaboration

The 73 interpreters were the first Nationalist personnel to arrive in Tokyo and Korea, but not the last. No one seems to have a complete tally of all the Nationalist personnel working for the UN Command. Huang Tiancai provided a very rough estimate, "The number of interpreters and prisoner interrogators hired by the U.S. Army to work in Korea was probably between one to two hundred."¹³⁴ Huang's estimate probably included interrogators, interpreters, and teachers in prison camps, and it may include personnel in Tokyo. It was too rough and too vague.

Other than serving as interpreters and interrogators, Nationalist linguists also worked in psychological warfare units. More than half a year after Chu Songqiu first heard from Chiang Ching-kuo about his potential assignment to the UN Command, he was hired by the UN Command as an "information specialist" in Tokyo in June 1951. The director of Nationalist military news service and a famous painter were also hired in this batch. Chu reported that the "information specialists" wrote radio scripts for Voice of the UN and designed propaganda leaflets.¹³⁵ However, Chu's duty was not so simple.

Before Chu and another colleague left Taiwan, Chiang Ching-kuo instructed them to call on Chen Jianzhong, the deputy director of the Sixth Section of the Nationalist Party Central Committee, which was in charge of counter-intelligence against the Communists. Known as a Communist specialist, Chen was an important figure in the Nationalist intelligence apparatus. Once a leftist youth, Chen had been imprisoned along

¹³⁴ Huang Tiancai, *38 du xian*, 5.

¹³⁵ Chu, *Chu Songqiu xiansheng fangwen jilu*, 54-55.

with his friend Xi Zhongxun by General Feng Yuxiang for three years, from 1927 to 1930. Upon their release, Xi went up north to join the Communists and Chen went to Nanjing to join the Nationalists. As a Nationalist intelligence *zhongtong* specialist, Chen interviewed captured CCP General Secretary Qu Qiubai before his execution in Fujian in 1935.¹³⁶ The meeting between Chen and Chu was not a formal briefing, and “nothing substantive was discussed.” When Chu was departing for Japan, he was surprised to see Chen at the airport to see him off. Because of this “friendship” they began exchanging correspondence. Chu stated, “In these letters, besides briefly describing my work situations, I asked Chen for information and advice on my duties.”¹³⁷ Apparently Chu was gathering intelligence for Chen. In an interview with Chiang Ching-kuo biographer Jay Taylor, Chu revealed that Taiwan liaison officers like him “received daily intelligence briefings on the war and on developments on mainland China.”¹³⁸ Clearly, intelligence was transmitted regularly between Tokyo and Taipei. And this occurred under the reign of Ridgway after the departure of MacArthur.

While Chinese linguists were needed in three areas, namely intelligence gathering, psychological warfare, and prisoner handling and exploitation, the greatest demand for linguists was prisoner-related, especially after the surge in Chinese prisoner population in spring 1951. The number of Chinese prisoners did not increase substantially until Communist forces launched their disastrous Fifth Campaign in spring 1951. In a period of three months, approximately 15,000 Chinese prisoners were taken. Before the armistice talks began in July 1951, 85 percent of the final total number of Chinese

¹³⁶ Chen Jianzhong 陳建中, interview by Chen Sanjing 陳三井, undated, interview transcripts stored at the Modern History Institute, Academia Sinica, Taipei.

¹³⁷ Chu Songqiu 楚松秋, “Yu Huaipu xiong qinggaixiangjiao zhi le” 與懷璞兄傾蓋相交之樂 [My friendship with Mr. Chen Jianzhong], in *Caihui rensheng bashi nian—Chen Jianzhong xiansheng bazhihuan wenji* 彩繪人生八十年: 陳建中先生八秩華誕文集 [Eighty years of colorful life—essay collections in celebration of the eightieth birthday of Mr. Chen Jianzhong] (Taipei: Riben yanjiu zazhishe, 1992), 66.

¹³⁸ Taylor, *The Generalissimo's Son*, 202.

prisoners, 21,074, had been captured.¹³⁹ Once the armistice talks began, prisoner repatriation quickly emerged as a major point of contention. Consequently, there was even greater demand for Chinese linguists to handle these prisoners.

Before prisoner repatriation became a political issue, prisoner handling mostly involved straightforward intelligence gathering. Both Gao Qingchen and Huang Tiancai served as prisoner interrogators, and described their work flow in detail. Their descriptions match with prisoners' accounts. When an enemy soldier surrendered or was captured, UN troops first conducted a body search to confiscate all written materials, such as letters, maps, currency, and documents. These materials were sealed and numbered, and followed the prisoners to the rear areas. A prisoner's first interrogation was conducted at the regiment level, and it focused on Level One intelligence, or information directly related to the local battle. Subsequently the prisoner was transported to the division, corps or army levels, where interrogators in the Military Intelligence Service Detachment (MISD) questioned him on both Level One (battle) and Level Two (tactical) intelligence. Huang Tiancai served for 11 months in the 163d Military Intelligence Service Detachment (163 MISD) under the U.S. Marine 1st Division. Gao Qingcheng was on loan to the 164th MISD for two weeks initially. At this level, prisoners were held in a temporary POW stockade guarded by military police. Normally they stayed between one to seven days. Once the stockade had a sufficient number of prisoners, they were transferred to permanent compounds for prisoners in the rear, where they were registered, photographed, fingerprinted, and assigned a permanent POW number. Sick and wounded prisoners were first treated in field hospitals. Upon their recovery, they went through the same registration procedure.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁹ Bradbury et al., *Mass Behavior*, 214-215.

¹⁴⁰ Huang Tiancai, *38 duxian*, 65-66. Gao Qingchen, 238-239.

The next level of intelligence was Level Three, or strategic intelligence. Gao described the selection criteria for an interrogation candidate: “He should have average knowledge [education], broad experiences, good memory, and be honest and intelligent.” Consequently, the majority of Chinese prisoners who were illiterate were excluded from Level Three interrogations. According to Gao, a strategic intelligence interrogation normally took one or two weeks, and a prisoner was interrogated seven to eight hours daily. At the end of the day, the interrogator informed the military police if this particular prisoner should return for further questioning the next day. If not, the prisoner was sent back to his original prison compound on Kojima Island. The final product of an interrogation was a report normally 70 to 80 pages long. During Gao’s tenure from March 15, 1951 to February 8, 1952, he interrogated 877 prisoners, and completed 795 Level One intelligence reports, one Level Two report, 14 Level Three reports, and a number of special reports. And he was just one of the more than one thousand intelligence officers under the Far East Command G-2.¹⁴¹

Certainly Gao and G-2 had produced a huge volume of intelligence. But how reliable was it? If a prisoner was interrogated for seven to eight hours a day, six days a week, for two weeks, it would be very difficult to lie. Interrogators such as Gao Qingchen were very intelligent and had an intimate knowledge of the army and China. In terms of methodology, interrogators followed the *Manual for Level Three Interrogation*, which consisted of more than 1,000 pages. This highly structured procedure had been developed from the U.S. army’s WWII experience of interrogating Japanese POWs. Prisoners could hardly outsmart both the system and interrogator. Although the

¹⁴¹ Gao Qingchen, *Kongzhan*, 239-241. This dissertation utilizes some of the interrogation reports stored at the U.S. National Archives, College Park, Maryland. Without firm documentary support, I infer that the report number prefaced by MISDI stood for reports done by Military Intelligence Service Detachment (MISD), and KT for tactical and KG for strategic intelligence. Judging from declassified interrogation reports stored at the U.S. National Archives, the normal length is between 10 to 20 pages. Perhaps reports were not preserved in their entirety at the National Archives. Or the type of reports Gao mentioned was a different kind. Or he exaggerated.

interrogation procedure involved no torture—as no prisoner had ever recounted coercion during the interrogation process—prisoners would find it difficult to lie. And probably more importantly, they would have no reason to lie, especially during the Level Three intelligence interrogation, which dealt with non-military issues, such as political and sociological aspects of Communist China. Prisoners probably felt less guilty divulging such information.

One prisoner recalled, “We were treated with cigarettes and fruits, and told not be afraid.” As the interrogators recorded everything, the prisoner said, “You cannot make false statement. If you do, they will ask you again, and tell you that you are lying.”¹⁴² When a large number of prisoners had been interrogated, the interrogators had already obtained very detailed information on all aspects of Communist society and military. They could easily spot false information. Therefore, while a prisoner could refuse to cooperate, as the only Chinese female prisoner Yang Yuhua did, if one chose to cooperate during interrogation, one’s account would probably be largely reliable.

The second-highest ranking Communist prisoner, regiment commissar Zhao Zuoduan, cooperated during his two-week interrogation, during which “no intimidation” was involved. He found that being interrogated in Pusan was safer than living in Compound 72 on Koje Island where he was constantly persecuted by anti-Communist prisoners. He decided to cooperate to the extent that he would “tell public information, but no secrets.”¹⁴³ In his 15-page interrogation report, he divulged much information on the Chinese government and society. More critically, he provided detailed information on the Communist military, including his unit, replete with organizational chart, names

¹⁴² Ma Shoubin 馬守斌, interview by Republic of China Veterans Affairs Commission 行政院國軍退除役官兵輔導委員會, August 6, 2006, Taipei, accessed June 19, 2011, <http://lov.vac.gov.tw/Oralhistory/Person.aspx?Para=102>.

¹⁴³ Zhao Zuoduan, interview by Wu Jinfeng, June, 1983, in *Andeshe Biji*, vol. 2, 20-21.

of commanding officers, and their code names.¹⁴⁴ Was this public information? Of course not, especially in Communist China, where few things were not secret. Others tried to distort certain information. Wei Lin, a regimental level deputy Chief of Staff, reported his rank as battalion commander, which was a nearly negligible distortion.¹⁴⁵ When so many other prisoners had volunteered to offer information, there seemed to be no point for anyone to provide false information.

Nevertheless, there were exceptions. Zhao's subordinate, Battalion Commander Ma Xingwang, stood out as the most extraordinary prisoner Gao Qingchen had encountered. Although Ma adopted a pseudonym, Li Yan, Gao found out his real name and identity. Still Ma remained "headstrong." Gao remarked, "Ma was a typical Communist cadre." Another pro-Communist prisoner Gao remembered was Yang Yuhua, the only Chinese female prisoner. Gao described her as an incorrigible Communist.¹⁴⁶ In a sense, Gao's remarks were badges of honor for the two Communists.

Regardless of the prisoners' attitude toward interrogation, in retrospect, these interrogation reports did not have much impact on the Korean War. Since the U.S. did not intend to recover North Korea, military intelligence became less important. The strategic intelligence on China seemed to have served little purpose, judging by the absence of any policy research based on these reports.

While the prisoners' intelligence reports had little impact on the war, their repatriation choice dominated the armistice negotiations in Panmunjom and prolonged the war for nearly two years. No one had anticipated this outcome, not MacArthur, not Chiang Kai-shek, not Truman. Even Huang Tiancai, who interrogated many prisoners who actually surrendered voluntarily and asked to go to Taiwan, did not realize the

¹⁴⁴ Chao, Tso Tuan 趙佐端, Interrogation Report KG 0537, September 11, 1951, ATIS, 1-15.

¹⁴⁵ Wei Lin 魏林, Interrogation Report KG 0287, August 11, 1951, ATIS, 1.

¹⁴⁶ Gao Qingchen, 241.

significance of such a phenomenon. Presumably during the Fifth Campaign, Huang interrogated a newly captured Sichuanese prisoner. In order to make the prisoner relax, Huang spoke with the Sichuanese accent, which he had picked up during WWII. A few minutes into their interview, the prisoner suddenly asked Huang in a lowered voice, “Sir, you are from Taiwan?” Huang was taken aback, and then replied, “We are the U.S. Army.” However, the prisoner was not convinced. He went on to tell Huang that he was a former Nationalist soldier, but had to surrender when his unit defected to the Communists. He did not like the Communists, but there was no place to go. He was happy to come to Korea, so he could rejoin the Nationalist army. This prisoner emphatically said that he had defected, and he was not a captured prisoner.¹⁴⁷ However, the U.S. army made no distinction between the two: all surrendered and captured Chinese were interned together as prisoners of war.

At the frontline, Huang processed many former Nationalist troops who asked to go to Taiwan to rejoin the Nationalist army, as they saw that as “their only way out” (*weiyi de shenglu*). They claimed that if they returned to China, they would be subject to endless confession meetings, struggles, and account settling. They reported to Huang that old Communist cadres and young students who had joined the army recently were less likely to defect or surrender. If these men could return home unscathed, they would be treated as “heroes.” However, Huang saw exceptions. Some young prisoners who had no Nationalist service record also expressed their loathing of the Communists, and they asked for help so they could go to Taiwan.¹⁴⁸ As discussed in Chapter 3, Hubei student Yan Tianzhi was probably one of these young students wishing to go to Taiwan.

Even though Huang Tiancai sympathized with the prisoners’ plight, bound by the U.S. Army’s regulations and his own conscience, he could not reveal his own identity or

¹⁴⁷ Huang Tiancai, *38 duxian*, 72-73.

¹⁴⁸ Huang Tiancai, *38 duxian*, 76-78. *Weiyi de shenglu* 唯一的生路.

give prisoners any unrealistic hopes. Huang reasoned that since Taiwan was not a participant in the Korean War, it had no authority to take prisoners to Taiwan. Moreover, at the time no one knew if the Nationalist government would accept these prisoners. He concluded that until the international community accepted the principle of “voluntary repatriation,” these prisoners’ fate was impossible to predict.¹⁴⁹ Indeed, the principle of “voluntary repatriation” was not even raised by the U.S. until January 1952, half a year after the vast majority of the 21,000 Chinese prisoners had been captured. The U.S. came up with this novel proposition because its prisoner “reorientation” program had produced many anti-Communist prisoners who openly rejected repatriation.

Prisoner “reorientation” was another area where Nationalist personnel were hired. Unlike their interrogator colleagues who had little impact on the war, Nationalist teachers and interpreters in prison camps on Koje Island literally altered the course of the war. In September 1950, two months after the initial outbreak of the war, the National Security Council presented NSC 81/1 to Truman, outlining propaganda programs to “turn the inevitable bitterness and resentment of war-victimized Korean people away from the United States,” and direct it toward the Communists. In order to “effect the reorientation of the North Korean people, to cause defection of enemy troops in the field,” the policy suggested that the treatment of POWs “shall be directed toward their exploitation, training and use for psychological warfare purpose.”¹⁵⁰ In the same vein, in 1951 the Joint Chiefs of Staff repeatedly instructed Ridgway to exploit prisoners for psychological warfare purposes, reminding him to conduct “interrogation, indoctrination, and reorientation of POWs with a view toward their eventual utilization

¹⁴⁹ Huang Tiancai, *38 duxian*, 78.

¹⁵⁰ Report by the National Security Council (NSC) to the President, September 9, 1950, *FRUS*, 1950, Vol. VII, 718.

as avowed anti-Communists.”¹⁵¹ With the influx of Chinese prisoners, the UN Command decided to expand its reorientation program to the Chinese. Again, the UN Command hired linguists in Taiwan. This turned out to be a monumental miscalculation.

In June and July 1951, just when the armistice negotiations began, the U.S. Army’s reorientation agency in Japan, Civilian Information and Education (CIE), set up branches in prison compounds in Korea. The CIE was MacArthur’s brainchild, conceived to democratize post-war Japan. It was an independent military organization, superimposed upon the camp command, with its own chain of command leading up to the Far East Command in Tokyo. Operating with an overt anti-Communist agenda, the CIE actively supported anti-Communist prisoners. As social scientists Meyers and Bradbury observed, the CIE “contributed significantly to the intensification and polarization of political conflict” between pro-Communist and anti-Communist prisoners. They reported that 23 instructors were hired in Taiwan by agreement with the Nationalist government.¹⁵² In contrast, CIE official Kenneth Hansen claimed that recruiting translators “on Formosa among the Nationalist Chinese was avoided.”¹⁵³ No doubt Hansen lied. Nationalist interrogator Gao Qingcheng reported that from July 1951, the CIE contracted the Nationalist military to hire four groups of middle school teachers from Taiwan. More than 80 new hires served as teachers in CIE programs on Koje Island. Gao concluded, “They greatly aided the struggle of the Anti-Communist Righteous Men to go to Taiwan.”¹⁵⁴ Documentary evidence is not available to verify Gao’s figure of 80 teachers, which seems too high. Perhaps it included other Chinese-speaking teachers hired in Hong Kong, Japan and the U.S. Regardless of the discrepancy in the number of

¹⁵¹ Telegram, JCS to Ridgway, May 1, 1951, *FRUS, 1951, Vol. VII*, 398; Telegram, JCS to Ridgway, May 31, 1951, *ibid.*, 492.

¹⁵² Bradbury et al., *Mass Behavior*, 287.

¹⁵³ Kenneth K. Hansen, *Heroes Behind Barbed Wire* (1957), 54; Bradbury et al., 259.

¹⁵⁴ Gao Qingchen, 239.

teachers from Taiwan, it is clear that a separate group of Nationalist personnel entered Korea in summer 1951, a few months after MacArthur's dismissal.

While U.S. Ambassador Muccio mistakenly called the first four groups of interpreters hired in spring 1951 "Chiang Kai-shek's Gestapos," the second group of interpreter/teachers in summer 1951 bore more resemblance to intelligence agents. It is worth noting that the Nationalist Ministry of Defense's Second Bureau was responsible for selecting the teachers. Moreover, some of the teachers had close connections with Nationalist intelligence chief Chiang Ching-kuo. One teacher, Ma He, reported that the group went through a three-day training course before they went to Korea. The faculty of the program was a who's who of the Nationalist intelligence apparatus. The director was Chiang Ching-kuo, and a key instructor was Chen Jianzhong, who was the deputy director of the Sixth Section of the Nationalist Party Center. Ma vaguely mentioned, "The content of the training was extremely important and we learned a lot."¹⁵⁵ Most likely Chen passed down his knowledge of Communist ideology and methods to this corps of young teachers and interpreters before they embarked on their mission in Korea. Eventually, in the spring of 1953, Chen would personally go to Korea, using a pseudonym in the guise of the Deputy Army Attaché. There he led the struggle over POWs until the arrival of 14,220 men in Taiwan in January 1954.

This group of Nationalist teachers was mostly well educated and well trained. Not surprisingly, the mere presence of these "high-caliber men" in the compounds stimulated pro-Nationalist and anti-repatriation sentiment among the prisoners. Bradbury et al. suggested, "There is considerable scattered evidence that, both in the classrooms and outside, some of the Chinese teachers functioned, in effect if not by intent, as agents of

¹⁵⁵ Ma He 馬和, "Hanzhan yu qianfu douzheng" 韓戰與遣俘鬥爭 [Korean War and the Struggle over POW Repatriation], in *Chen Jianzhong xiansheng bazhi huadan wenji*, 443.

the Chinese Nationalist government.”¹⁵⁶ In essence, the CIE provided a crucial institutional platform for the Nationalists to infiltrate major prison camps and support anti-Communist prisoners. Nationalist translators and teachers served as the communication channel between anti-Communist prisoners and the Nationalist embassy in Pusan. Through its embassy and a network of interpreters and teachers Taipei closely monitored the POW situation in Korea. In a State Department report in June 1953, U.S. officials conceded that while the UN authority could never have complete, accurate and reliable information on the prisoners, the Chinese Nationalist embassy in Korea had exploited “ample opportunity . . . over [a] two year period” to obtain “detailed information about Chinese prisoners.”¹⁵⁷ Equipped with superior intelligence, the Nationalist government managed to preempt U.S. policies at several critical junctures, discussed in subsequent chapters.

In short, the seed of intelligence collaboration planted jointly by MacArthur and Chiang grew even after MacArthur’s departure. The U.S. government and military’s dire lack of Chinese linguists necessitated the involvement of Nationalist Taiwan. The fragmented nature of the U.S. government and military in the Far East allowed Chiang Kai-shek the opportunity to enter the Korean War covertly. Most importantly, U.S. policymakers completely failed to foresee the negative consequence of their prisoner reorientation program. By the time prisoner repatriation had become an issue in armistice talks, the U.S. found itself riding a tiger impossible to dismount. In the end, only Chiang Kai-shek could tame the tiger by taking it to Taiwan in triumph.

¹⁵⁶ Bradbury et al., *Mass Behavior*, 259.

¹⁵⁷ Telegram, Briggs to Dulles, June 29, 1953, NARA/RG59/Decimal Files/695A.0024/6-2953, June 29, 1953.

**Surrender, Defection, and Capture of Chinese “Volunteers” in Battles
And the Rise of Anti-Communists in Prisons**

Valiant and fearless
We cross the Yalu River
To preserve peace and protect the motherland
To safeguard our home
The good sons and daughters of China
Be united as one heart
Resist America, aid Korea
Defeat the American imperialist jackals!

— *“The Chinese People’s Volunteers Army’s Anthem”*

抗美援朝
死路一條
不被美國打死
便被自己幹部打死

Anti-American and help Korea,
Only one road of death before you.
If you attack, the Americans will kill you,
If you retreat, the officers of your unit will kill you.

— *A ditty secretly circulated among the troops in the Chinese 67th Army*¹

¹ Liu Shui Wang 劉水旺, Interrogation Report KT 1989, September 30, 1951, ATIS, 6. The translation is original.

Leading the valorous tune of “The Chinese People’s Volunteers Army Anthem,” the 21-year-old Zhang Zeshi and his unit, the 538th Regiment, 180th Division, 60th Army, marched across the Yalu River on March 21, 1951. Zhang and his Propaganda Team stopped at the end of the steel bridge moments before stepping onto the Korean soil. They looked back toward China, and shouted farewell, “Loved ones, wait for news of our victory!”² At this moment, Zhang and his comrades did not know that a week earlier the UN forces had recaptured Seoul.³ Nor did Zhang and his comrades know that roughly at the same time of their crossing of Yalu, the third batch of Chinese Nationalist interpreters had arrived at their translation and interrogation units on the 38th parallel, and were getting ready for the inflow of Chinese Communist prisoners. The first and second batches of Nationalist interpreters, including Gao Qingchen, had arrived in the previous thirty days. On March 15, Gao started his job at Pusan as a prisoner interrogator responsible for collecting strategic intelligence.

Most of the Chinese “volunteers” could not imagine that merely two months later, they would become prisoners of war. But some had been hoping for an opportunity to come to Korea and planning for an escape from the Communists. Even the Nationalist interpreters and interrogators did not anticipate encountering so many Chinese Communist prisoners. And they were to be surprised by the number of prisoners who expressed their will to go to Taiwan to rejoin the Nationalists.

The Chinese and North Korean forces launched their Fifth Campaign on April 22. This campaign turned out to be a major disaster, and it also became their last all-out offensive. In a period of three months, approximately 15,000 Chinese prisoners were captured. Before the armistice talks began in July 1951, 85 percent of the eventual total

² Zhang Zeshi, *Wo de Chaoxian Zhanzheng*, 3.

³ Zhang Zeshi, email correspondence with author, June 26, 2011. In addition, Zhang reported that he did not hear about MacArthur’s dismissal prior to his capture in May.

of 21,074 Chinese prisoners had been captured.⁴ Most of the Communist prisoner leaders and activists studied in this dissertation were captured during this period, including Zhang Zeshi, Zhao Zuoduan, Wei Lin, Du Gang, Zhong Junhua, Ding Xianwen, and Li Mocong. Also captured was a portion of future anti-Communist leaders and activists, such as Wang Zunming, Gao Wenjun, Yu Rongfu, Liu Yuru, Wang Jiati, and Yan Tianzhi. The vast majority of these prisoners belonged to the PLA/CPV 60th and 12th Armies of the 3rd Army Group.

While most of the future Communist prisoner leaders were captured in May 1951, most anti-Communist leaders other than Wang Zunming had defected or surrendered in earlier campaigns, such as Wang Shunqing, Wang Futian, and Tan Xingdong. By the time the influx of Chinese prisoners arrived in prison camps on Kojé Island in summer 1951, anti-Communist prisoners had become organized. Seeking to avoid interrogation, most Communist officers initially attempted to hide their officers' rank and Communist party membership. When "traitors" exposed their officers' identity and anti-Communist prisoners persecuted them relentlessly, they belatedly sought to organize and resist, but only fought a losing battle. Communist prisoners remained the underdogs in the struggle for prison leadership until April 1952, when the UN Command segregated prisoners after screening their repatriation wills.

Capture, Surrender, and Defection

When Zhang Zeshi and his fellow Chinese "volunteers" crossed the Yalu, these young men and women knew very little about what lay ahead of them. Many new soldiers, like Zhang, had never been directly engaged in actual combat, and the limited number of battles they had participated in were mostly lopsided bandit-suppression operations.

⁴ Bradbury et al., *Mass Behavior*, 214-215.

Adding to their romantic view of the war, the enemies were mocked as “spoiled brat troops,” who “put a blanket on the ground before getting into the shooting position.” What about that much hyped atomic bomb? The only damage it left was some shattered glass.⁵ The very subject of being captured was never broached in any of these mobilization meetings, and the private thought of being taken prisoner was too dangerous to be entertained.⁶

However, reality set in immediately. As a part of the second batch of reinforcements, the 60th Army, which consisted of the 179, 180 and 181 Divisions, was scheduled to reach the 38th parallel within two weeks, 700 kilometers south of the Yalu. This type of long-distance forced march in full gear was unprecedented, even for Communist veterans.⁷ Each soldier carried nearly 40 kilograms of weapons, ammunition and two weeks’ food supply. In order to avoid American air raids, the army marched only at night without flashlights. During the day, they dug individual foxholes and rested. However, in times of rain, some men tied themselves to tree trunks to sleep, which was a risky practice in case of bombing.⁸

When the 180th Division rushed to the north bank of the North Han River on April 4, the first phase of the Fifth Campaign was nearly over. Optimistic talk of recapturing Seoul was in the air, and some soldiers claimed that they could see the smoke emanating from the city’s train station, which was more than 60 kilometers away.⁹ On May 16, the second phase of the offensive began, with the 180th Division spearheading the charge across the river. Its advance was rapid and eerily unopposed. Six days later, at the end of its “weeklong offensive,” deep into the enemy territory, the

⁵ Liu Lang, 6. The “spoiled brat soldiers” myth is also reported in Yu Jing, 26.

⁶ Zhang Zeshi, Zhong Junhua and Cai Pingsheng, interview by author, August and September 2007, Chengdu, Sichuan.

⁷ Zhang Chengyuan and Gao Yansai, 14.

⁸ Zhang Zeshi, *Wo de Chaoxian Zhanzheng*, 4.

⁹ Yu Jing, 26.

division received orders to retreat north at full speed. But by this time, there was no escape from General Ridgway's "meat grinder" siege. The 179th Division, which had retreated north of the river, was ordered to return south to rescue the 180th Division, which only added losses to this fiasco.

In the largest military humiliation in PLA history, the entire 180th Division was annihilated. In Chinese People's Volunteer Army Commanding General Peng Dehuai's autobiography, Peng described the loss of the 180th Division, amounting to 3,000 casualties, as "the first [major] loss suffered by the CPV in the entire war".¹⁰ In a report/self-criticism submitted by the commanding generals of the 3rd Army Group, however, the number of lost personnel reached more than 7,000, including those killed, missing, and captured. The 4,000 surviving troops of the 180th Division included those who escaped enemy encirclement but also those in rear units, which had not gone into battle in the first place.¹¹ According to another source, more than 2,000 soldiers were killed, and 5,572 men were unaccounted for, which meant that most of them were probably taken prisoner.¹²

After hiding for days in the cold, wet valleys blocked by hostile fire, Chinese soldiers were out of food and ammunition, and some had no guns. Then came the shock from the sky. Loudspeaker blasted in Chinese: "Soldiers of the Chinese Communist 180th Division, you are totally encircled. Resistance is pointless. Surrender now. The UN forces treat prisoners well." Gradually, scattered Chinese soldiers were rounded up by UN Command (UNC) search squads in their daily raids into the mountains. When they were caught on May 27, Cai Pingsheng of the 179th Division was dead asleep from

¹⁰ Peng Dehuai 彭德怀, *Peng Dehuai zishu* 彭德怀自述 [Peng Dehuai's autobiography] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1981), 262.

¹¹ Wang Yan 王焰, ed., *Peng Dehuai nianpu* 彭德怀年谱 [Chronological biography of Peng Dehuai] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe 人民出版社, 1998), 504.

¹² Zhang Chengyuan and Gao Yansai, *Chongwei*, 132. However, PLA writer Yu Jin's estimate of more than 7,000, or more than one third of all Chinese POWs, was too high. Yu Jing, 8.

exhaustion, and Zhang Zeshi of the 180th Division was unconscious after falling off a rock the night before. The first thing that came to their minds was the same, “How could I become a prisoner? This is the end of everything in my life.”¹³ Becoming a captive was shameful. For Communist soldiers, their role models were the famed Five Heroes of Langya Mountain, who had jumped off a cliff to avoid the capture by the Japanese during the War of Resistance.

The aversion to captivity was so strong that it sustained many Chinese soldiers to fight on for days, weeks and even months. During the final debacle of the 180th Division, when Wu Chengde, the Acting Commissar of the 180th Division, and other top commanding generals were making their escape, they ran into a group of severely injured soldiers pleading for his help. While other generals ignored these troops, Wu relented and stayed to organize them, knowing perfectly well that there was little chance these injured men could escape. When he was finally captured in mid-July 1952, Wu Chengde and two surviving comrades had been hiding for more than 400 days, behind enemy lines in a foreign country. In a telegram from the U.S. embassy to the Secretary of State Acheson, incredulity was palpable: “Highest ranking Chi POW to date (approx equivalent major gen) this officer claims to have been straggler behind UN lines for over one year prior capture.” Despite his attitude being “uncooperative as yet,” Wu was “of high potential value for poli[tical] as well as milit[ary] background info, and well worth later attempt at exploitation for propaganda matching Commie handling Gen Dean,” who was captured by the North Koreans in 1950.¹⁴

¹³ Zhang Zeshi, *Wo de Chaoxian Zhanzheng*, 4. And Cai Pingsheng, 356.

¹⁴ According to Wu Chengde himself, he was captured on July 10, 1952. Wu Chengde 吴成德, “Xianru chongwei 陷入重围,” in *Kaoyan*, 34. However, among the U.S. sources, there are several conflicting reports. In a telegram from the U.S. embassy to the Secretary of State, October 17, 1952, it is stated that he was captured on July 12, 1952, General Records of the Department of State, Decimal File 1950-54, Box 3026, Record Group 59, National Archives. Interestingly, General William F. Dean also hid behind North Korean lines for thirty-five days before his final

For some, surrender was a way to preserve one's own life. A ditty that secretly circulated among the troops in the 67th Army vividly demonstrated the precarious existence of the Chinese soldiers under dual threats from both the Americans and the Communists:

Anti-American and help Korea,
Only one road of death before you.
If you attack, the Americans will kill you,
If you retreat, the officers of your unit will kill you.¹⁵

For some others, surrender was more than an option, but rather a dream came true, or a nightmare (under the Communists) came to an end. At the first opportunity, they defected or surrendered with alacrity. At the very minimum, UN psychological warfare leaflets and broadcast "promised safety and asylum to those Chinese and North Korean military personnel who would voluntarily surrender" to the UN forces, as the chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff (JCS) Omar Bradley noted.¹⁶ Furthermore, some defected because they heard that the Nationalist army were fighting on the UN side.

Former Whampoa cadet and current staff officer Gao Wenjun claimed that he had read leaflets that "falsely stated that three divisions of the Nationalist Army were fighting in South Korea with the UNC."¹⁷ Some Chinese soldiers also learned the misinformation about the presence of the Nationalist army in Korea through Communist propaganda.¹⁸ Believing that the Nationalist army was a much weaker enemy than the U.S. army, certain Communist officers spread the rumor as a means to mitigate troops' fear of the U.S. forces. One rumor was that General Bai Chongxi was leading the

capture. See William F. Dean, "The Lonesome Mountains," in *General Dean's Story, as told to William Worden* (New York: Viking, 1954), 40-58.

¹⁵ Liu Shui Wang 劉水旺, Interrogation Report KT 1989, September 30, 1951, ATIS, 6.

¹⁶ Memorandum, JCS to the Secretary of Defense, "Policy on Repatriation of Chinese and North Korean Prisoners," August 8, 1951, NARA/RG 59/Decimal File 1950-1954/695A.0024/8-851.

¹⁷ Gao Wenjun, *Hanzhan yiwang*, 148.

¹⁸ Liu Lang, 65-66.

Nationalist troops in Korea.¹⁹ And a more absurd claim was that Bai had come to Korea and was ready defect to the Communists, as he had not had a chance to do so in 1949.²⁰ Finally, some uneducated Chinese soldiers simply could not distinguish between the UN forces (*lianheguojun*) and the Nationalist Army (*guojun*), as they sounded similar.²¹

Truck driver Li Da'an's defection to the UNC was described with much drama and suspense in a hagiographic account published in Taiwan in 1955. With his left hand on the steering wheel, Li murdered his dozing co-driver with a hammer in his right hand, then he sped all the way to the south.²² However, according to his own confession made to the Communist military court in 1954 after his recapture, he admitted that in 1951 he and his co-driver both absconded into dark woods, with MacArthur's Safety Passes firmly in hand.²³

Former Whampoa artillery major graduate and current Staff Sergeant Liu Yuru (Liu Lang), had tucked the Safety Pass inside his quilted cotton jacket several days before his surrender on May 25, 1951. He followed the instructions on the Pass, "Leave your unit after dark, and hide in a secure place. The next day walk to the UNC on main roads." Once he was on other side, Liu joined the advancing troops of the U.S. Eighth Army, and went on the radio to persuade hiding Chinese soldiers to surrender. Four days later, when he was handed a tag in English, reading "Prisoner of War," his heart sank. His

¹⁹ Huang Tiancai (Hwang Tien-tsai) 黃天才, *Wo zai 38 du xian de huiyi* 我在38度線的回憶 [My memories at the 38th parallel (Taipei: Ink Book, 2010), 80.

²⁰ Zheng Zheng'an, interview by author, April 26, 2010, Taipei.

²¹ Guo Shigao, interview by author, March 1, 2010, Taipei.

²² Wang Pingling 王平陵 and Mu Qin 穆秦, "巨濟島漢賊不兩立 (下)," in *Fangong yishi fendou shi* 反共義士奮鬥史, 86.

²³ Li Da'an was drafted by the U.S. military intelligence and parachuted into North Korea on April 22, 1953. He was captured by the North Korean troops three days later, and handed over to the Chinese. See Fang Xiangqian, "pantu li da'an de xiachang" [Traitor Li Da'an's Ending], in *Kaoyan*, 328-329. His confession is cited in Yu Jing, 90.

enthusiasm to go to Taiwan was “quenched by half.”²⁴ Similarly, when Gao Wenjun defected, the first thing he asked was where the Nationalist army was. To his dismay, the interpreter, who was a defector himself, asked back in irritation, “You go ahead and look for them. If you find them, tell me!” By now it was clear that there was no Nationalist army in Korea, and there was no guarantee these defectors could go to Taiwan. Gao felt cheated by the Americans.²⁵

From the 38th Parallel to Pusan: Humiliation, Despair and Hope

Regardless of whether Chinese troops defected, surrendered or were captured, the UN forces treated them the same: as prisoners of war. At gunpoint, Zhang Zeshi and fellow prisoners plodded out of the valley where they had hidden for a week. Before him Zhang saw a winding line of Chinese captives, tattered and despondent. With their bandages stained with blood and dirt, many of the injured were leaning on makeshift canes made of tree branches. “Stop! Or you will be killed!” one GI shouted suddenly, and then fired a shot. Zhang looked around, and saw a captive running off the road, with his hands covering his belly. “Don’t shoot! He is having diarrhea.” Immediately Zhang was taken to see the officer. A U.S. Second Lieutenant took a curious look at this Chinese soldier, and told him to get in his jeep. “What’s your name? Where did you learn your English? Why you are here fighting in Korea?” Zhang told his name, and said he was a student of Tsinghua University, and had come to Korea to protect his homeland. The American officer lamented loudly, “I know Tsinghua University. A famous school. What

²⁴ Liu Lang, 225. In *Liuxue dao tianming*, Liu Lang’s ID photo contains his prisoner ID 710608, which is the same as Liu Yuru’s. See Ju Yu 劉儒裕 (Liu Yuru), Interrogation Report KG 0608, September 20, 1951, ATIS, 1. However, in *Liuxue dao tianming*, “Liu Lang” was formerly a student in art school, instead of a Whampoa graduate. Therefore, details in *Liuxue dao tianming* are not wholly reliable, and need to be crosschecked with Liu Yuru’s interrogation report. Overall, the chronologies of “Liu Lang” and Liu Yuru matched except the pre-1949 experiences.

²⁵ Gao Wenjun, *Hanzhan yiwang*, 153.

a pity you were deceived by the Communists, and ended up like this.” Seeing Zhang’s head turned away in silence, the officer changed his tune, “Don’t be afraid, Zhang. I’ve heard that the peace talks are about to begin. When the war is over, prisoners of war will be exchanged. Then you can go home and continue your education.” Peace talk, exchange of prisoners, going home, and reuniting with loved ones! Under the gloomy sky in Korea, Zhang saw a glimmer of hope.²⁶

The so-called “POW stockade” was merely a flat area surrounded by barbed wire, with armored vehicles guarding four corners.²⁷ When South Korean civilian workers carried huge baskets full of barley balls toward the gate of the enclosure, the 200 or so dejected prisoners got up to their feet and swarmed around the gate. “Zhang, come over here!” yelled the Second Lieutenant. When Zhang finally pushed himself through the mob, he was told to get the prisoners in line to pick up food one by one. While Zhang was handing out the barley balls, he told fellow prisoners with a lowered voice, “Don’t expose military secrets, don’t betray the motherland.” While some nodded, others simply stared at the food, emotionless. Some heard what Zhang said, then looked to the American guards, as if asking, “How dare you say this, under this circumstance!” A GI duly questioned him, “What are you saying?” Zhang responded, “I told them to eat slowly, otherwise they will have a stomachache.” A black soldier gave him a thumbs-up.²⁸

Soon after Zhang had his own barley and pea balls, a captain came to him and took him to a truck’s cabin for a chat. He introduced himself as Joseph Brooks. He was born in Kunming. His father was a missionary, his mother was Chinese, and he called

²⁶ This reconstruction is from Zhang Zeshi, *Wo de Chaoxian Zhanzheng*, 11-12.

²⁷ Gao Wenjun, *Hanzhan yiwang*, 152. And Zhang Zeshi, *Wo de Chaoxian Zhanzheng*, 14.

²⁸ Zhang Zeshi, *Wo de Chaoxian Zhanzheng*, 15.

China his second home. He also had a godfather who was a banker in Chongqing.²⁹ Judging from his appearance, Zhang could not discern a trace of Chinese blood. But his eyes appeared sincere. After learning of Zhang's Tsinghua background, Brooks stated, "If you agree to work in our headquarters of the Eighth Army, we can remove your POW status, and hire you as a civilian. Once the war is over, I can send you to study in the U.S." Zhang was startled by this proposition. Working for the Eighth Army, did that mean getting put on a plane to broadcast in the frontline? Even becoming a spy? Quickly Zhang had a legitimate excuse ready, "Thank you for your kind offer. But I have my fiancée waiting at home. I cannot break my vow." The disappointed Brooks wrote a note, and told Zhang, "Keep this reference letter. Any time you change your mind, show it to your guards. They will take you to the headquarters promptly. As we are battling the Chinese Communists, competent Chinese interpreters like you are very much in demand."³⁰

It was true that the U.S. military was in desperate need of more Chinese interpreters. In fact, Nationalist interpreters Huang Tiancai, Lu Yizheng, and Zheng Xian were already serving under Captain Brooks, who was the leader of the 163d Military Intelligence Service Detachment (163 MISD) under the 1st Marine Division.³¹ Perhaps

²⁹ Zhang Zeshi, email correspondence with author, June 4, 2008. Brooks's stories are discussed in detail in Chapter 7. Zhang's recollection is not accurate, or Brooks told him a different story than what he told others.

³⁰ Zhang Zeshi, *Wo de Chaoxian Zhanzheng*, 17.

³¹ Huang Tiancai, *Wo zai 38 du xian de huiyi*, 64-70, 157. And Huang Tiancai, interview by author, July 3, 2010, Taipei. Initially, American officers conducted prisoner interrogations in English, and Huang, Lu, and Zheng only acted as interpreters. A few weeks later, the officer in charge of interrogation, Second Lieutenant Jerry Finn, authorized the three Nationalist interpreters to conduct interrogations directly in Chinese, and write their reports in English. This promotion was evidently a result of the good performance of the three interpreters from Taiwan. Both Huang and Lu were journalists, and Zheng was a high school teacher. Although they had never worked as interrogators before, they were very experienced in talking to people and judging the veracity of prisoners' accounts. Moreover, both Huang and Lu were Central Political University (*Zhongyang Zhengzhi Daxue* 中央政治大學) graduates majoring in diplomacy, and both had served as interpreters for the U.S. army during WWII. Therefore, their English ability was probably superior to some of the U.S. officers in 163d MISD.

some of Zhang Zeshi's fellow prisoners were first interrogated by Huang, Lu, and Zheng for Level One (battle) and Level Two (tactical) intelligence. Or it was also possible Zhang Zeshi had encountered these Nationalist interpreters, since he met their boss Captain Brooks.

When Zhang Zeshi returned to his prisoner stockade, he saw a 16 or 17-year-old boy sobbing in the corner. The boy said that he was hit by his interrogators when he told them all Chinese soldiers were Communists, and there were 450 million of them in China, i.e., the entire population. "From the kicking my old wound is bleeding again now. I am not afraid of the pain. But I am afraid I will never return home in this life. My family must be so worried." Zhang comforted him with the news of possible armistice, and encouraged him to stay tough. The boy, Jiang Ruifu, would become one of the steadfast fighters for repatriation in later struggles.³² Jiang's claim of beating by interrogators could not be confirmed. As Huang Tiancai reported, and as confirmed by Communist officer Zhao Zuoduan, no physical coercion was involved during interrogation. Certainly, there could be exceptions. Another possibility is that Jiang was beaten by U.S. guards instead of interrogators.

Before dawn the next morning, Zhang and nearly 1,000 other prisoners were put on trucks and headed to Suwon, where he went through his first interrogation. Zhang took the liberty to decide what to tell and not tell. While he gave his actual name, age, family origin, education and army unit number, he lied and said that he was a mere propaganda soldier, non-party member, and a Christian. He parried questions about the names of regiment leaders, by saying he was too new, too junior to know their names. However, when the interrogator opened up a booklet in English, Zhang was stunned to

³² Zhang Zeshi, *Wo de Chaoxian Zhanzheng*, 19.

see all the officers' names were already accurately recorded in print.³³ Most likely this booklet was the product of Nationalist interpreters Huang, Lu, and Zheng.

Having passed the questioning, Zhang was brought to the new camp commander who offered Zhang an interpreter job. Along with the job came perks, such as a better tent and food, the same as those for American soldiers. Now Zhang was working for the enemy, and some prisoners called him a *hanjian* [traitor]. It sent chills down his spine. However, when Zhang put on the armband for UNC employees, he enjoyed certain power. When Zhang saw a group of prisoners “running around like monkeys” picking up cigarette butts thrown into the fences by laughing GIs, he was so embarrassed that he yelled, “Go back, you all go back to your tent!” Noticing his UNC armband, these prisoners reluctantly walked away. He knew that they hadn't had any cigarettes for more than two weeks by now. So once he was in the tent, he gave his pack of Lucky Strikes to them. But at this moment, everyone's heads were down, and no one would touch it. A heavy-built prisoner wrapped his hands around his head and began weeping.³⁴

Ten days later, Zhang spotted the first high-ranking officer he knew, Du Gang, the Deputy Chief of Staff of the 538th Regiment. He had to suppress his excitement until they could meet out of the eyesight of other prisoners. Finally, Zhang, the young Communist Party member, had found his party organization. He asked Du if his strategy of taking the interpreter job as a cover to protect and organize fellow prisoners was appropriate and feasible. Du praised his initiative.³⁵

To Zhang, Du's moral support and instruction were timely and much needed. The warm reception by Zhang must have been equally heartwarming for Du, since he had

³³ Zhang Zeshi, *Wo de Chaoxian Zhanzheng*, 21-22. Three years later, when he faced another interrogation by his own countrymen back home, repatriated Zhang would find out that revealing one's unit number was considered a crime “revealing military secret.” –Zhang Zeshi, interview by author, August and September 2007, Beijing.

³⁴ Zhang Zeshi, *Wo de Chaoxian Zhanzheng*, 24-25.

³⁵ Zhang Zeshi, *Wo de Chaoxian Zhanzheng*, 27-28.

been snubbed by a former subordinate just a few days ago in the frontline detention center. When former Whampoa cadet and Staff Sergeant Gao Wenjun had run into his boss Du, Du ordered him to keep his identity a secret, and to keep track of other prisoners from their regiment. Gao coldly replied, “I don’t know that many people. You’d better find someone else.” In a stern voice, Du warned, “I hope you reconsider! Be careful!” Gao simply found Du’s wish to conceal his identity ridiculous, as many surrendered soldiers knew who Du was.³⁶ Nevertheless, Du stuck to his line that he was a cook, befitting his older age. In Suwon, he reminded Zhang Zeshi to keep the secret. Similarly, when divisional commissar Wu Chengde was captured a year later, he insisted that he was only a cook.³⁷

Towards the end of May, every day there were hundreds of Chinese captives arriving in detention centers in Suwon or Seoul. They were shipped in trainloads further south to Pusan, the central clearing place for prisoners of war. In Pusan artillery Staff Sergeant Liu Lang (Liu Yuru) ran into Chen Zhixiang, commander of the 2nd Battalion in his 536th Regiment and a decorated “War Hero.” Chen asked Liu to conceal his rank, because he had declared himself as a lowly quartermaster. After hearing about the staggering loss suffered by Chen’s troops, Liu gloatingly bragged about how he deserted. As a final note, Liu educated Chen about the Geneva Conventions, which stipulated that officer prisoners enjoy certain privileges.³⁸

When Cai Pingsheng first arrived in Pusan’s detention center, he recognized Zhao Zuoduan, formerly the political director of Attached School before he became the Commissar of the 538th Regiment. Zhao signaled for Cai not to reveal his identity.³⁹ Cai quietly obliged. However, for a well-known top-ranking officer, it would soon prove futile

³⁶ Gao Wenjun, *Hanzhan yiwang*, 152.

³⁷ Wu Chengde, in *Kaoyan*, 34.

³⁸ Later Chen would request to reinstate his officer rank. Liu Lang, 229.

³⁹ Cai Pingsheng, in *Fengyan Rensheng*, 357.

to hide with his new identity, “Wang Fang” the quartermaster. UN interrogators must have been amused by the large number of self-claimed cooks and quartermasters in the Communist army.

The traumatic experience of being taken prisoner also produced its fair share of the deranged, demented, and deaf, both real and feigned. In Pusan’s No. 10 Detention Center, of which Zhang Zeshi had been appointed the “Battalion Leader,” there was a certain Cao You, a former reconnaissance officer, who had become insane after his recovery from severe head injuries. Often Cao would laugh, sing and dance on his own, sometimes babbling in English and Japanese. Zhang Zeshi observed this young man from a distance. Cao had a willowy body, slightly curly hair and dreamy deep eyes. Zhang suspected his insanity. One night, when the two moved to sleep next to each other in their tent, Cao gingerly asked Zhang to sing for him. In Zhang’s sorrowful melody of *The White Haired Girl*, tears rolled down Cao’s face.⁴⁰ With the floodgate of emotion burst open, down came the protective mask of insanity. Cao, whose real name was Zhao Bi, grew up as an orphan, raised by his grandma. His father, an underground Communist, was executed two weeks after his birth, and his mother fled. He had not seen her again until he was eighteen, a year before joining the PLA.⁴¹

After that night, Cao became another member of Zhang’s Patriotic Small Group. Zhang instructed Cao to continue to act crazy in order to learn information from “traitors” working for the U.S. army’s intelligence unit, G-2. Eventually, after completing his assignment in Pusan, Cao would return to sanity. For Xu Yisheng, the Organization Section Chief of the 179th Regiment, 20th Army, his deaf-muteness became resolutely

⁴⁰ *The White Haired Girl* was a revolutionary opera first created in 1945 in Yan’an, and its music was familiar to almost everyone who grew up under the CCP. Later during the Cultural Revolution its ballet version became one of the “Eight Model Plays.”

⁴¹ The encounter of Zhang and Cao is described in both Zhang Zeshi, *Wo de Chaoxian Zhanzheng*, 38-39, and Yu Jing, 121-122. Detailed rendition is from Yu’s, which was largely based on her interviews with Zhang in the 1980s. Zhang reconfirmed these descriptions with the author via email on June 2, 2008.

permanent. He was impervious to hard labor, hunger, beating, and any form of humiliation. He never talked to anyone, let alone complained. Legend has it that when his interrogators cocked their handguns behind his head, he acted unperturbed and no one could detect his ears raised slightly. Xu developed these extraordinary skills as a long-time underground Communist agent working in Nationalist-controlled areas. As if it was his second nature, his highest principle was to “never expose true identity.” For more than a year, Xu acted deaf to perfection, until he arrived safely in the pro-repatriation camp after the screening in April 1952.⁴²

While male prisoners attempted to conceal their ranks, females attempted to hide their gender. After Yang Yuhua’s capture on May 27, 1952, the sixteen-year-old nurse lived among male prisoners without being discovered for more than two months. When her gender was finally uncovered, she was sent to Pusan’s No. 7 Detention Center for female prisoners. When she was interrogated, she went on a hunger strike and refused to answer any questions. Nationalist interrogator Gao Qingchen interviewed Yang and lamented that the “poisoned” Yang “showed no sign of awakening.”⁴³ A Chinese prisoner witness reported that every time Yang saw another Chinese, she would cover her face and cry, “I have no face to see any Chinese. I will have to die.”⁴⁴ Eventually the prison authorities brought in Zhang Zeshi and Cao You to persuade Yang to end her hunger strike. They comforted her with the news of impending peace talk, “Soon you will be able to go home to see your mom.” This only made her cry harder, “I had no mother since I was little. I grew up with my grandma. And she doesn’t even know I joined the army.”⁴⁵ Zhang entrusted her to North Korean women prisoners, some of whom were

⁴² Yu Jing, 119-120.

⁴³ Gao Qingchen 高慶辰, *Kongzhan fei yingxiong* (Taipei, 2000), 242.

⁴⁴ Observations made by recaptured CPV soldier Luo Baorong in his military court confession. Quoted in Yu Jing, 124.

⁴⁵ Yu Jing, 124-125.

actually ethnic Koreans who had served in the PLA before being transferred to the North Korea army. Yang became the only recorded Chinese female POW of the entire Korean War.

To their American captors, the Chinese prisoners' visceral sense of shame and reflexive attempt to conceal identity were beyond comprehension. However, a captured document entitled "Temporary Regulations for Wartime Military Law and Discipline" issued by the Communist 9th Army Group sheds some light on the grave implications of becoming a prisoner. Essentially, it was punishable by death if one committed any of the 19 listed offenses, which included "surrendering to the enemy or deserting in the front line" (Item 1 and 16), "deserting with a weapon" (Item 4), "revealing military information" (Item 7) or "disclosing military secrets" (Item 10).⁴⁶ At this point in Pusan, nearly every Chinese POW had already committed a capital crime.

Pusan: The Prison Civil War Begins

When they arrived in Pusan, Chinese prisoners could not help but notice the huge presence of North Korean POWs, with whom they had to share space, at least initially. Whereas the bulk of the 2,000 Chinese prisoners were captured in spring 1951, the majority of the 100,000 North Koreans surrendered after General MacArthur's Inchon landing in September 1950. Unlike the Chinese army, which had a heavy component of former-Nationalist soldiers from the Civil War, the North Korean troops were better organized and well-indoctrinated. With their unit structure largely left intact, the Communist leadership in POW camps was active in staging protests and planning uprisings, corresponding to instructions from the North through grapevine communication channels supported by guerrilla networks in South Korea. However, the

⁴⁶ Captured CPV document, NARA/RG 59/Decimal File 1950-1954/695A.0024/.

Chinese POWs were like heaps of loose sand. With their officers busy concealing their own identities, Communist leadership was nonexistent. But not for long. Both Communist and anti-Communist prisoner leaders emerged. The Chinese Civil War continued behind the barbed wire. Indeed, in Pusan the battle had started long before the arrival of Zhang Zeshi and his fellow captives from the disastrous Fifth Offensive.

The clandestine war began during the registration process, which every prisoner had to go through first. On a card the size of a small book, a POW's biographical information and military experiences were recorded after repeated questioning. Each prisoner was assigned an ID number, starting from 700001 for the Chinese. No. 700001 was Huang Shizhou who was captured in mid-November 1950.⁴⁷ However, Huang was not the first Chinese prisoners. The earliest Chinese prisoners who were captured in October and early November 1950 initially had ID numbers similar to the North Koreans', but later were reassigned to ID numbers above 700000, which were reserved for Chinese prisoners. For example, Wang Futian defected on October 8, 1950, and received ID 92383 initially.⁴⁸ Later his ID changed to 700834.⁴⁹

The Registration Section was staffed by prisoners. Naturally the educated, particularly those with some knowledge of English, became the most desirable hires. Once employed, these clerks had some discretion as to what information to record, what to destroy, and what to pass on. Sometimes, when a Communist officer had just been identified through initial interview, his registration card would mysteriously disappear at night. This was done by pro-Communist registration clerks.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Liang Shiqiu, in *Fangong yishi fendou shi*, 19.

⁴⁸ Wang, Fu Tien 王福田 (Wang Futian), Interrogation Report No. 4614, December 28, 1950, ATIS, 1.

⁴⁹ Wang, Fu Tien 王福田, Interrogation Report No. 3733, February 23, 1951, ATIS, 72.

⁵⁰ Yu Jing, 111-112.

Riding high on his successful defection to the UN forces, Li Da'an walked into the transit center in Pusan with much anticipation in late April 1951.⁵¹ When he was taken into the registration section, Li vociferously protested to the Chinese POW staffer, "I am not a prisoner! I drove down here in an uprising. It is unfair of the Americans to lock me up here. I am not a prisoner!" Soon the section chief, a North Korean named Park came in and ordered Li to squat in the corner of the tent. "We cannot only listen to you. We will investigate first. Once the investigation is done, you will receive a special treatment."⁵² When it came to mealtime, Li discovered that the North Korean staffers also had control over the prisoners' stomachs. Those who were captured in the battlefield could have enough to eat, but deserters or defectors could only eat one small bowl of food.⁵³

In the evening, a bespectacled bookish young man with a southern accent came to Li and his company. He asked, "Among you who were defectors? Tell me, then you will have enough to eat, and you will have your own tent. I am a special agent from Taiwan." Li stepped out and answered, "I surrendered voluntarily." Before he could finish, he felt a kick from a stranger next to him. Once the "agent from Taiwan" left, the stranger quickly explained the ins and outs in the detention center.⁵⁴

The intellectual-looking man was Sun Zhenguan, a battalion commissar of the 20th Army. Taken prisoner in January 1951, Sun was the highest-ranking Chinese prisoner until the capture of regiment-level officers like Zhao Zuoduan and Du Gang in May 1951. In the eyes of anti-Communist prisoners, Sun was probably the most-hated Communist leader, and long remembered as a graduate of the Yan'an Red Army

⁵¹ Sun Zhenguan, "Zhanfuying nei de zhongchao zhanyou," in *Kaoyan*, 52. Li Da'an surrendered on March 24. It is plausible that by the time he arrived in Pusan, it was late April. See Li, Ta An 李大安 (Li Da'an), Interrogation Report KG 0486, September 3, 1951, ATIS, 1.

⁵² Yu Jing, 112-113.

⁵³ Wang Pingling and Mu Qin, in *Fangong yishi fendou shi*, 86.

⁵⁴ Yu Jing, 112-113.

University.⁵⁵ Although he had never been to Yan'an, the 22-year-old Sun had been a veteran Communist since 1944. He rose in ranks rapidly, and earned the nickname of “young veteran soldier” (*xiaolaobing*).⁵⁶ In Pusan, Sun had secretly established links with the North Korean Communist prisoner leadership.

Despite that fact his English was rather limited, the cosmopolitan Sun had the uncanny ability to charm his captors and befriend them.⁵⁷ When facing Chinese-American interrogators and interpreters, Sun would speak in Shanghainese dialect to build a *laoxiang* [native place] bond. When white officers were away, Sun often managed to turn interrogation sessions into information/propaganda sessions on the New China.⁵⁸

Not only were Sun and Li's political outlooks diametrically opposed, but also their styles. While Sun won people with his urbanity, Li had his own following partly due to the rough edges of a tough man. Though Sun remembered Li as “short and stout,” Li's friends and admirers remembered him as “an imposing big man full of bulging muscles.” Li had “very dark skin, fierce eyes, and a stentorian voice.” Li had a notoriously quick temper. “When he was in agreement with others, anything was fine. However, in case of a falling-out, the only outcome was ‘white knife in, red knife out.’ There was absolutely no room for compromise.”⁵⁹

Late in the night, several Chinese-speaking North Korean prisoners walked into Li Da'an's tent and took him away. One hour later, when he was carried back, Li had been badly beaten. The next morning, Sun was summoned before a U.S. Military Police Lieutenant Colonel and other G-2 personnel. In the face of a fuming Li, Sun coolly

⁵⁵ Chen Jiying, in *Fangong yishi fendou shi*, 29.

⁵⁶ Zhang Zeshi, *Wo de Chaoxian Zhanzheng*, 193.

⁵⁷ Sun's ability was widely acknowledged by friends and foes. For example, Wang Pingling and Mu Qin, in *Fangong yishi fendou shi*, 72.

⁵⁸ Sun Zhenguan, in *Kaoyan*, 49.

⁵⁹ Sun Zhenguan, in *Kaoyan*, 52. Wang Pingling and Mu Qin, in *Fangong yishi fendou shi*, 85.

denied he had ever met Li. During this encounter, Li hit Sun. After the beating, Sun was ordered to pick up his personal belongings, which consisted of a ragged blanket, a rice bowl and a pair of chopsticks. While Li Da'an and company were gloating, some other prisoners watched Sun's departure in silence, including those from the Registration Section who had aided him in secret. Sun shouted out, "I am betrayed by Li Da'an, the truck driver from Manchuria! Please tell my superiors and comrades how I died."⁶⁰ Although Sun was not killed, the first clash between the two archrivals ended in sweet revenge for Li.

Upon the emergence of a natural leader like Li, willing followers came out of hiding, showing their true colors as anti-Communists. The person who gave Li the kick was also a defector, and former Nationalist soldier. He told Li, "The (south) Korean investigator Lee told us before not to fight with the Communist until we have more people. Now you are here. Things will get better."⁶¹

With some popular support of the anti-Communist prisoners, Li began building his own power base, under the aegis of G-2 and its civilian employees from Taiwan.⁶² According to Li Da'an's confession after his recapture by the Communist in 1953, he was following the instructions given by Nationalist agent Bai who was employed by G-2. Bai had told Li to organize a Prison Guard (PG) squad once in Pusan to identify Communist party members and officers. With Sun's removal, Li promptly established a seven-men PG squad, and successfully rooted out several Communist party members and more than a dozen officers. In June, a U.S. officer praised Li's work and gave him another title, "Sanitation Inspector," so that Li could move across various compounds freely.⁶³

⁶⁰ Sun Zhenguan, in *Kaoyan*, 53. And Yu Jing, 114.

⁶¹ Yu Jing, 112.

⁶² Sun Zhenguan, in *Kaoyan*, 52-53. And Yu Jing, 114-115.

⁶³ Yu Jing, 114-115.

Permitted by G-2, Li could enter the Registration Section, and search cards for suspected Communists. Party member Wang Shaojun was informed on and brought to the PG tent. Wang immediately crumpled, and signed a confession with fingerprint in blood. Wang then went on to help the prison authorities arrest his company leader Liu Guang. Liu was tied up, suspended in mid-air and beaten, similar to the kind of torture Li Da'an had gone through in Communist prisons in China.⁶⁴ The torturer was none other than Wang.⁶⁵ Once he crossed the Rubicon, Wang became one of Li Da'an's diehard henchmen.

The anti-Communists had come out in the open, and declared their intention to go to Taiwan. Where were the Communists? "How did the cadres and party members become mute?" asked the prisoner "masses."⁶⁶ Most of the cadres were hiding in fear and in shame. A few did step forward to lead, but only in "grey" capacities, such as Zhang Zeshi serving as the battalion leader of the No. 10 Compound in Pusan.

When 538th Regiment Commissar Zhao Zuoduan (under the alias of Wang Fang) was identified, he was put under G-2 interrogation in Pusan. The "mentally disordered" Cao You learned about Wang Fang's torture by anti-Communist prisoners when Cao was transporting night soil in G-2 compound. Through the help of a North Korean doctor, Zhang Zeshi managed to meet Zhao and had him transferred as a viral diarrhea patient to Pusan's No. 3 Compound, the hospital compound, which was largely under Communist control.⁶⁷ After that, Zhang would regularly come to the hospital on night soil work details. Zhang made reports on his Patriotic Small Groups and asked for

⁶⁴ Li, Ta An 李大安 (Li Da'an), Interrogation Report KG 0486, September 3, 1951, ATIS, 1. Yu Jing, 76. As mentioned earlier, the interrogation process per se was non-violent. However, as Li's case suggested, when prisoners returned to their enclosures in the evening after they completed their interrogations during the day, they were subject to physical abuse by fellow prisoners.

⁶⁵ Yu Jing, 115-116.

⁶⁶ Yu Jing, 117.

⁶⁷ Zhang Zeshi, *Wo de Chaoxian Zhanzheng*, 41.

instruction on a draft constitution for the group. When Zhao was under persecution, fellow prisoners and even party members avoided him. Zhao was deeply moved by Zhang's actions, and the experience changed some of his "previous perceptions of intellectuals."⁶⁸ As it turned out, intellectuals were often more resolute than old PLA soldiers of peasant origins (*zidibing*).

Sun Zhenguan was an intellectual, and also a committed and tested Communist. When he was escorted out of the detention center, Sun thought he might get executed or at least put in prison. To his great surprise, he was simply delivered to the "Officers' Compound" within a large Chinese POW camp. In the initial period, Sun "did not speak or act," only observed in silence. Slowly he gathered around him a small group of former comrades. By feigning illness, Sun went to prison hospitals, where he linked up with the North Korea leadership. In mid-May 1951, the North Koreans were optimistically anticipating the liberation of the south by advancing Chinese and North Korean troops, thus planning a massive uprising in June. Sun happily pledged his participation in this grand scheme.

Upon returning to the Chinese officers' compound, Sun continued to expand his network of supporters, although cautiously. Tan Xingdong, who claimed to be a New Fourth Army veteran since 1940, approached Sun speaking in a thick Jiangsu accent. Tan implored Sun not to leave him out if Sun would join the Koreans in uprising. Tan's story seemed credible and his dialect authentic. Though Sun did not let his guard down completely, Tan nevertheless became close to Sun. Before long, Sun was interrogated again.⁶⁹ Tan, an old Communist party member, a self-claimed regiment propaganda section chief, had become one of the key leaders of the anti-Communist movement.⁷⁰ Tan

⁶⁸ Zhao Zuoduan, in *Kaoyan*, 184.

⁶⁹ Yu Jing, 139.

⁷⁰ Tan was listed as one of the key leaders in Liang Shiqiu, in *Fangong yishi fendou shi*, 20.

had successfully deceived the Communists, and no Communists knew his true identity as a former Assistant Battalion Commander in General Lin Biao's 38th army.⁷¹

From Pusan to Koje Island: Heightened Uncertainties

When the Communist forces launched the Second Phase of the Fifth Campaign in mid-May 1951, the UN Command had begun relocating prisoners from Pusan, South Korea's wartime capital, to Koje Island, located several miles offshore of Pusan and also the second largest island in Korea. It was primarily a measure to relieve overcrowding in the prison compounds near Pusan. U.S. Army Chaplain Earle Woodberry first broke the news to Chinese POWs during his sermon. The reaction was mixed and rumor was rife. Some heard the Communist forces had approached Taegu, and liberation was imminent. Some Communist prisoners thought the transport ships were heading to Taiwan, and they contemplated commandeering the ship or committing suicide before reaching Taiwan.⁷²

At 5 a.m. on May 13, 3,000 Chinese POWs rose early, packed up, and left Pusan, where some had been held for almost half a year. They boarded U.S. amphibious landing ships and soon they arrived at Koje Island without incident. To most prisoners, the first shock was the huge size of the prison complex. This 50 km-long, 30 km-wide island was dotted with thirty prison compounds of various sizes, housing approximately 155,000 soldiers and Civilian Internees.⁷³ Outside the barbed wire, there were 153,268 local

⁷¹ Tan, Hsing Tung 譚興東 (Tan Xingdong), Interrogation Report No. 4649, April 11, 1951, ATIS, 1.

⁷² Chen Jiying, in *Fangong yishi fendou shi*, 23. And Zhao Zuoduan, in *Kaoyan*, 178-179.

⁷³ Telegram, Muccio to Acheson, Feb 2, 1952, NARA/RG 59/Decimal File 1950-1954/695A.0024/2-252.

residents and more than 100,000 refugees. Finally, there were several thousand custodial personnel.⁷⁴

After thorough body searches completed by Republic of Korea (ROK) soldiers, Chinese prisoners entered Compound 72. The square-shaped enclosure was 200 meters long on each side, surrounded by two layers of barbed wire. Seventy-five to eighty prisoners were housed in each large tent, inside which were two rows of sleeping areas on the ground, and a ditch in the middle as a walk path. Compound 72 was divided into six *dadui* [battalions], which in turn were organized in a military-style hierarchy of subunits, from *zhongdui* [company], to *xiaodui* [platoon], to *ban* [squad]. There were about 8,500 inmates in Compound 72. A month later, Compound 86 was established one mile away from 72, which eventually held 8,150 prisoners.⁷⁵ After the three North Korean battalions moved out of 72, and a large number of new Chinese prisoners arrived in summer 1951, Compound 72 and 86 had a combined population of more than 16,000, which constituted the bulk of the some 21,000 Chinese POWs.

How did leadership fall into the hands of the Nationalists and the Communists? In Ambassador Muccio's view, it was "a free-for-all between Chinese Nationalists and Chinese Communists," but it was a process that "was never known or understood by the U.S. military." He lamented, "There was a terrific ideological struggle in those cages that we were responsible for, but we were not aware what was going on in there."⁷⁶ Probably Muccio overstated the UNC's ignorance, and his remarks reflected more on the State Department's frustration over its lack of information and cooperation from the military authorities, particularly its intelligence units.

⁷⁴ Chen Jiying, in *Fangong yishi fendou shi*, 24-25.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 25-27. Yu Jin's numbers vary slightly in *Eyun*, 244-245.

⁷⁶ John J. Muccio Oral History, Harry S. Truman Library (1971), 101-102.

The stakes for Chinese prisoners were very high, particularly for willing defectors. Repatriation to China would certainly mean death or a lifetime in slave labor, which many had witnessed in land reform or various suppression campaigns. Despite the fact that “in the conduct of psychological warfare in Korea, the UNC promised safety and asylum to those Chinese and North Korean military personnel who would voluntarily surrender to his forces,” the UNC had failed the defectors in two senses.⁷⁷ First, it treated willing defectors and the captured troops indiscriminately as prisoners of war. Second, throughout the long process, from the time of their defection, surrender or capture to their eventual departure to Taiwan in January 1954, the UNC never made any explicit guarantee on their relocation to Taiwan.

While the U.S. was aware of the moral dilemma that “forceful repatriation to the Communists of such individuals will be in violation” of the UNC’s promise made during the war, repatriation of all Chinese POWs had always been one of the options, in order to exchange for UN prisoners.⁷⁸ Nearly half a year after the beginning of the armistice negotiation in July 1951, the UN negotiators finally put forward its principle of “voluntary repatriation” on January 2, 1952, but only tentatively. In Washington, a policy debate over “voluntary repatriation” raged for months. Finally, President Truman declared on May 8, 1952 that any use of force to repatriate POWs would be “repugnant to the fundamental moral and humanitarian principles which underlies our action in Korea,” and the U.S. would “not buy an armistice by turning over human beings for slaughter or slavery.”⁷⁹ While it took the U.S. government nearly ten months to reach a

⁷⁷ Memorandum, JCS to the Secretary of Defense, “Policy on Repatriation of Chinese and North Korean Prisoners,” August 8, 1951, NARA/RG 59/Decimal File 1950-1954/695A.0024/8-851.

⁷⁸ Memorandum, JCS to the Secretary of Defense, “Policy on Repatriation of Chinese and North Korean Prisoners,” August 8, 1951, NARA/RG 59/Decimal File/695A.0024/8-851.

⁷⁹ John T. Woolley and Gerhard Peters, *The American Presidency Project* [online] (Santa Barbara, CA), accessed June 14, 2011, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=14108>.

truly “final and irrevocable” position on “voluntary repatriation,” prisoners on Kojé Island had been living under constant fear and uncertainty.

Chinese Nationalist Interpreters and Teachers, and the CIE

With news of armistice negotiation and rumors of impending repatriation running rampant in POW camps, the anti-Communist prisoners justifiably felt cheated and frustrated by the lack of assurance from the UNC. The fulfillment of their desire to go to Taiwan was far from certain. “To win your freedom and a good life, you will have to stand up and fight the Communists,” G-2 intelligence officer Bai told Li Da’an.⁸⁰ In essence, Li Da’an and company had to “earn” the right to go to Taiwan by mobilizing as many fellow prisoners as possible to resist potential repatriation, even if with violence.

Luckily for anti-Communist prisoners like Li, there were powerful forces coming to their aid. The U.S. military intelligence unit G-2 was a natural ally. It needed help from prisoners like Li to identify Communist officers, from whom it expected to extract military and strategic information on Communist China. As discussed in the previous chapter, in early 1951, General MacArthur’s intelligence chief Willoughby hired 73 linguists in Taiwan as Department of the Army Civilian (DACs). These interpreters and interrogators became an indispensable part of the U.S. intelligence operations, despite MacArthur’s dismissal in April 1951, soon after their arrival in Tokyo and Korea.

Throughout the war, the U.S. was never able to produce its own interpreters and interrogators in sufficient quality and quantity. Even more than a year after the arrival of the 73 Nationalist linguists, the U.S. military still relied on the Nationalists for its most important interrogation job. After the Commissar of the 180th Division Wu Chengde’s capture in July 1952, the U.S. embassy in Korea reported to Acheson that Wu’s

⁸⁰ Yu Jing, 116.

interrogation was “conducted by Dept Army civilian,” who was a Chinese “from Formosa and in frequent contact” with the Chinese embassy there.⁸¹ Despite the U.S. government’s concerns, the U.S. Army simply could not control the private lives of its employees the way the Communists controlled their men. Granted, most contact between the interpreters and the Nationalist embassies was not intelligence-related, but these DACs had ample opportunities to transmit intelligence through the embassies if they chose to do so. The link between Nationalist interpreters and the embassy provided the crucial communication channel between anti-Communist prisoners and Taipei.

The earliest recorded contact between Nationalist personnel and prisoners dated back to some time in June 1951. Liu Bingzhang, a former Nationalist officer who defected to the UN side, now a high-value prisoner, was flown to Tokyo for in-depth interrogations in February 1951. At the end of the four-month interrogation, a Chinese translator named Guo Zheng finally approached Liu in private, addressing him as a “comrade” of the Nationalist Party. Liu asked Guo, “Are you on an assignment for the Taiwan [government]?” “No. I am hired by the UNC, but I am from Taiwan,” Guo equivocated. However, before Liu’s return to the POW camps in Korea, Guo gave him a copy of the Nationalist classic, Sun Yat-sen’s *The Three People’s Principles*, which was worshipped and hand copied by anti-Communist prisoners until large quantities of anti-Communist literature arrived as textbooks for CIE programs.⁸²

In fact, Guo Zheng was a Nationalist Army officer. Along with Air Force officer Gao Qingchen, Guo was one of the first 18 Nationalist interpreters hired by the UN Command. After their arrival in Tokyo on February 13, 1951, six men, including Guo, were assigned to the headquarters of the Allied Translator and Interpreter Section (ATIS)

⁸¹ Telegram, U.S. embassy in Pusan to Acheson, November 13, 1952, NARA/RG 59/Decimal File/695A.0024/11-1352.

⁸² Chen Jiyong, “Jujidao han zei bu liangli (shang)” [Struggles between the loyalists and traitors on Koje Island, Party One], in *Fangong yishi fendou shi*, 40-42.

in Tokyo, and the remaining 12 were sent to ATIS units in Korea.⁸³ As discussed in Chapter 4, because the four batches of Nationalist interpreters, 73 in total, were hired by the UN Command before a large number of Chinese POWs were captured in May, and before Chinese POWs became an issue in armistice talks in late 1951, it was highly unlikely these interpreters carried missions related to POWs. Nevertheless, Guo's case made it abundantly clear where the sympathies of these personnel resided.

While G-2 utilized anti-Communist prisoners for help and tacitly supported them, the Civilian Information and Education Section (CIE) of the U.S. Far East Command openly favored the anti-Communists. The CIE was a military organization, headquartered in Tokyo, and superimposed upon the camp command. Originally General MacArthur's brainchild for democratizing Japan, CIE expanded into Koje Island to "reorient" prisoners in July 1951. The mission of CIE was best explained by its Field Operation Division Chief Lt. Colonel Robert E. O'Brien, as he stated:

We mean to provide an ideological orientation towards an orderly, responsible, progressive, peace-loving, and democratic society . . . Specifically, we would like to see these people develop a conviction that they and their people will be better off socially, politically, and economically under a democratic rather than totalitarian regime.⁸⁴

Operating with an overt anti-Communist agenda, the CIE had the express aim of teaching "the principles, ideals, and practices of democracy as contrasted to those of totalitarianism."⁸⁵ The very idea of democratizing prisoners was so appealing that Secretary of State Acheson supported its mission, at least initially. He instructed U.S. missions in Hong Kong and Taipei to hire instructors for CIE in Korea.⁸⁶

⁸³ Gao Qingchen, *Kongzhan fei yingxiong*, 234, 246.

⁸⁴ Quoted in Bradbury et al., *Mass Behavior*, 219. Also in NARA/Record Group 554/Records of the Civil Information and Education (CI&E) section.

⁸⁵ Memorandum by the State Department to ICRC, July 3, 1952, NARA/RG 59/Decimal File 1950-1954/695A.0024/7-352.

⁸⁶ Telegram, Acheson to U.S. Embassy in Pusan, August 9, 1951, NARA/RG 59/Decimal File/695A.0024/8-951.

In its classrooms within each compound, in addition to literacy courses and practical job training such as carpentry and metal works, the centerpiece of the CIE program was a 30-week mandatory classroom training that covered six subjects, including the background of the Korean War, the contrast between democracy and totalitarianism, and the lives of people in nations of the free world. One of the six themes taught in Chinese compounds included the following issues:

1. What is the purpose of labor unions?
2. What is the communist propaganda about the life of farmer in the central districts of China?
3. What kind of life have our brethren been leading under the Communists in China?
4. Why did the Chinese farmers oppose the communists?⁸⁷

Clearly, the CIE programs were not quite the seemingly innocuous “informational programs carried on in the camps” as “part of the recreational activities which are sanctioned by the Geneva Conventions,” that the U.S. State Department portrayed when the British Prime Minister Anthony Eden inquired about them in 1952.⁸⁸ Nor was it simply “an orientation program during which prisoners of war, on a voluntary basis, attend lectures on the history of Korea and China . . .” and where prisoners would acquire vocational skills.⁸⁹ Foreign Service officer Philip Manhard of the Political Section in the U.S. Embassy reported the contrary: the majority of the teachers were “mostly self-appointed POW instructors who tried emphasize anti-Commie polit[ical] indoctrination often requiring POW participation by force.”⁹⁰ A year later Koje prison commandant General Haydon L. Boatner made a similar observation: “U.S. officers did

⁸⁷ CIE Field Operations Division Report for week ending September 14, 1951, NARA/RG554/Records of the Civil Information and Education (CI&E) section/Box 3, Annex IV.

⁸⁸ Memorandum by Young to Alexis Johnson, “Answers to Questions on Prisoners of War, May 22, 1952, NARA/RG 59/Decimal File 1950-1954/695A.0024/5-2252.

⁸⁹ Memorandum by the State Department to ICRC, July 3, 1952, NARA/RG 59/Decimal File 1950-1954/695A.0024/7-352. Underline added in original document.

⁹⁰ Telegram No. 20, Muccio to Acheson, July 2, 1952, NARA/RG 59/Decimal File 1950-1954/695A.0024/7-252.

not adequately control the instruction.” His conclusion was that the CIE’s activities were “a major source of unrest.”⁹¹ When he took command in May 1952, he closed them down over the protests of local CIE officers. However, prior to the screening in April 1952, the CIE programs thrived.

To meet the shortfall of CIE teaching staff, some prisoners stepped up to the challenge, and in Chinese Compounds 72 and 86 all of them were anti-Communists. In Korean compounds, the leadership was divided. Not surprisingly, as CIE Director Monta L. Osborne observed, prisoner teachers were “in many, if not all cases, directly under the control of the POW’s in the compounds.” They did not “dare say anything that does not meet with the approval of the clique which rules a particular compound.” While the CIE employees retreated from the prison compounds at night, these prisoner instructors had to remain in the compound, where they were “subject to beating” and were afraid of “adverse reports that may go to the North Korean and Chinese Communist authorities.” Most outrageously, some instructors had referred to the Communist nations as “the new democracies.”⁹² However, that was mostly a Korean problem. In Chinese Compounds 72 and 86, the anti-Communist prisoners were in firm control.

In Chinese compounds, there had been “no cases to date of Communist POWs getting on the teaching staff as there have been in some of the Korean compounds,” reported CIE’s Chinese Language Material Branch Chief W. E. Stout. “The difficulty of instructors being threatened or beaten by other POWs has not been experienced in the Chinese compounds as it has in some of the Korean; in fact, the teachers in compounds

⁹¹ Boatner, letter to the Adjutant General, Department of the Army, “Comments on ‘Truce Tent and Fighting Front’, Center of Military History, 1966,” January 31, 1967, Hoover Archives/Boatner Papers/Box 2, Enclosure B, 3. “The I & E program was not under the island commander but only under GHQ in Tokyo. I, over the protests of the local I & E senior, closed them down on my own responsibility and never got any reaction from above” (after he took command in May 1952.)

⁹² Memorandum by Monta L. Osborne, August 14, 1951, NARA/Record Group 554/Records of the Civil Information and Education (CI&E) section.

72 and 86 appear to enjoy considerable prestige among their fellow POWs.”⁹³ Among them, defected Staff Sergeant and Whampoa cadet Gao Wenjun taught along with teachers Ma He and Zhang from Taiwan. Gao fondly remembered his brief teaching career as “his happiest days in POW camps.”⁹⁴ The CIE principal, teaching director and teachers were all former Nationalist military academy students or graduates. Former Nationalist policeman Cheng Liren served as the CIE principal for a period of time.

In a CIE report in September 1951, a number of slogans placed in classrooms by POWs were translated and listed:

- United Nations is the bulwark of the world peace.
- Win the whole world freedom.
- Devote ourselves for fatherland.
- Correction of communist ideal.
- Destroying of red thieves, and recapture of Chinese mainland.
- Bring about the three principles of people in China.
- Establish of free China.
- We shall go back Formosa, in any circumstance.
- We shall revenge to red thieves by the name of people who live beyond the iron curtain.
- The whole world peace could not realize without the complete destroying of red thieves.
- Learning is the preparation for counter attack to Chinese mainland.⁹⁵ [sic]

No doubt, the content of CIE teaching was blatantly anti-Communist.

While self-appointed Chinese prisoner teachers staffed the CIE faculty since July 20, 1951, more Mandarin-speaking teachers were hired in Hong Kong, Taipei, and Tokyo as Department of the Army Civilians (DACs). In CIE’s weekly reports, DACs appeared for the first time in mid-November.⁹⁶ This timeframe matches CIE teacher Ma He’s

⁹³ Memorandum by W. E . Stout, August 31, 1951, NARA/Record Group 554/Records of the Civil Information and Education (CI&E) section.

⁹⁴ Gao Wenjun, *Hanzhan yiwang*, 161.

⁹⁵ CIE Field Operations Division Report for week ending September 7, 1951, NARA/RG554/Records of the Civil Information and Education (CI&E) section/Box 3, Annex VI. These are original translation in this report.

⁹⁶ CIE Field Operations Division Report for week ending November 16, 1951, NARA/RG554/Records of the Civil Information and Education (CI&E) section/Box 3, Annex VI.

recollection that he was hired in the autumn of 1951.⁹⁷ Bradbury and Meyers, social scientists contracted by the U.S. Army to conduct research on mass behavior on Koje Island, reported that 23 Chinese were hired in Formosa.⁹⁸ As a result, “their mere presence in the compounds stimulated pro-Nationalist, anti-repatriation sentiment among the PW’s. There is considerable scattered evidence that, both in the classrooms and outside, some of the Chinese teachers functioned, in effect if not by intent, as agents of the Chinese Nationalist government.”⁹⁹ It could be safely concluded Ma He worked as a Nationalist agent, as he reported that he received a three-day training by Chiang Ching-kuo before leaving Taiwan.¹⁰⁰ No doubt, CIE employees from Taiwan played an instrumental role in the ascendancy of the anti-Communists.

It is worth noting that while Nationalist teachers did not join the CIE programs on Koje Island until November 1951, most likely some of the first 73 Nationalist interpreters hired in early 1951 were transferred to Koje to serve as interpreters for the prison authorities, especially after the surge of Chinese prisoner population after May 1951. Although Huang Tiancai remained on the 38th Parallel, he reported that some of his fellow Nationalist interpreters were transferred to Koje Island.¹⁰¹ Therefore, the arrival of Nationalist teachers only augmented pre-existing Nationalist presence in prison camps. However, unlike earlier interpreters who arrived in Korea before the POWs became an issue in the armistice talks, most likely teachers like Ma He received specific instructions regarding Chinese prisoners. And more likely they worked as agents of the Nationalist government.

⁹⁷ Ma He 馬和, “Hanzhan yu qianfu douzheng” 韓戰與遣俘鬥爭 [Korean War and the Struggle over POW Repatriation], in *Chen Jianzhong xiansheng bazhi huadan wenji*, 443.

⁹⁸ Hansen’s denial in *Heroes Behind Barbed Wire* (1957), 54.

⁹⁹ Bradbury et al., *Mass Behavior*, 259.

¹⁰⁰ Ma He 馬和, “Hanzhan yu qianfu douzheng” 韓戰與遣俘鬥爭 [Korean War and the Struggle over POW Repatriation], in *Chen Jianzhong xiansheng bazhi huadan wenji*, 443.

¹⁰¹ Huang Tiancai, interview by author, July 13, 2010, Taipei.

Furthermore, even before the armistice negotiation began in July 1951, the Nationalist embassy had established contact with Chinese POWs through Chinese merchants on Koje and the U.S. army chaplains, as Ambassador Wang Dongyuan later admitted. Responding to anti-Communist prisoners' requests, the embassy readily provided supplies and materials.¹⁰² Therefore, the Nationalist embassy in Pusan maintained effective contact with prisoners through Chinese nationals employed by the UNC in various capacities in Pusan, Tokyo and on Koje Island. By late August 1951, the anti-Communists prisoners had established firm control over CIE programs, which had become a third power center, next to compound leaders and the PG squads.

Encouraged by CIE personnel and acquiesced in by the prison authorities, pro-Nationalist POWs established three anti-Communist organizations: the Nationalist 63 Branch in Compound 72's Officers' Battalion, Chinese Patriotic Anti-Communist National-Salvation League in Compound 72 (for non-officers), Anti-Communist and Resist Russia Patriotic Youth Alliance in Compound 86.¹⁰³ Combining their control over compound leadership positions, prison guard squads and CIE classrooms, the anti-Communist prisoners won a series of camp battles, some of which involved stones and clubs, and gradually strengthened their grip on both compounds.

¹⁰² Wang Dongyuan 王東原, *Fu sheng jianshu* 浮生簡述 [A brief autobiography] (Taipei: Zhuanji wenxue chubanshe 傳記文學出版社, 1987), 108.

¹⁰³ Chen Jiying, "Jujidao han zei bu liangli (shang)" [Struggles between the loyalists and traitors on Koje Island, Party One], In *Fangong yishi fendou shi bianzuan weiyuanhui* ed., *Fangong yishi fendou shi* [The history of the Anti-Communist Fighters' struggles] (Taipei: fangong yishi jiuye fudaochu), 1955), 51-68. The Nationalist 63 Branch (Zhongguo Guomindang liusan zhibu 中國國民黨六三支部); Chinese Patriotic Anti-Communist National-Salvation League (Zhongguo aiguo qingnian fangong jiuquotuan 中國愛國青年反共救國團); Anti-Communist and Resist Russia Patriotic Youth Alliance (fangong kang'e qingnian aiguo tongmenghui 反共抗俄青年愛國同盟會).

Communists, Anti-Communists, Secret Societies, and the Americans

Contrary to the conventional perception of the Communist Party as a highly disciplined “organizational weapon,” the Communist prisoners were in a state of disarray. Fearing persecution by the U.S. and anti-Communist prisoners, many veteran Communist officers passed themselves off as cooks and quartermasters, and one even pretended to be deaf. Communist organization never came into formation in the two large compounds. In contrast, young students were mostly uncompromising, insisting on returning home to China. However, without any effective organization, these pro-repatriation students, along with suspected Communist sympathizers, were constantly harassed, intimidated, and often tortured by the anti-Communists.

By the summer of 1951, the contest for power among prisoners had become increasingly ideological in appearance and in nature. But it should be pointed out that this kind of division along ideological lines wasn’t necessarily always the case. Politically savvy prisoners had adopted ideological rhetoric, such as notions of democracy, freedom and anti-Communism, to meet more practical and immediate needs, namely food, shelter, and physical safety.

In the initial stage, when prisoners were first captured, the prisoner population was in a state of confusion and disorganization. The main contention was over food allocation between the Chinese prisoners and the North Korean prisoners, who by virtue of their seniority in camps were assigned to food duties. Food quantity and quality were nearly universally criticized by prisoners. Even though the UNC’s standard daily ration for each prisoner was one pound, when it came to their mouths, prisoners could only have one bowl of barley usually, and rice was a rare treat. Along with barley came vegetable soup, which was so thin that it was called “crystal soup.”¹⁰⁴ To make the matter

¹⁰⁴ On food: Gao, *Hanzhan yiwang*, 157. Cai Pingsheng, in *Fengyan Rensheng*, 357.

worse, it was common for prisoners who were in charge of allocating food to embezzle. In the Nationalist account, Li Da'an first came to fame by boldly challenging the North Koreans' control over food in Pusan, and gained a following of Chinese prisoners who wanted to have enough to eat.¹⁰⁵

In addition, there was a rigid hierarchy of food ration in camps, corresponding to camp power structure. On Koje Island, it was customary to have separate small stoves (*xiaozao*) for battalion leaders, very much similar to the Communist system instituted in Yan'an.¹⁰⁶ Compound leaders could eat until full; staff such as clerks and PG squad members could eat with large bowls, while rank-and-file prisoners could only eat with small bowls.¹⁰⁷ According to the Nationalist account, although Li Da'an did not forbid leaders to enjoy specially-cooked meals, he himself eschewed such privileges in Compound 72.¹⁰⁸

In May and June 1951, in Compound 72 Li Da'an and his company established two anti-Communist organizations: 63 Branch in 72's Officers' Battalion and Anti-Communist Youth League for non-officers. The situation in Compound 86 was murkier. A non-ideological organization based on the Sichuan *paoge* secret society emerged in July. Its leader Dai Yushu announced, "From now on, everyone eats a equal amount. No differentiation in big bowls or small bowls. We are all brothers, on the same road sharing life and death."¹⁰⁹ Dai, a former Nationalist platoon leader, and several hundred mostly Sichuanese prisoners in 86 became sworn brothers in a traditional secret society ceremony marked by drinking blood wine. They swore: "To return home together, and fulfill filial piety to our parents, we become brothers today. We will live and die

¹⁰⁵ Wang Pingling and Mu Qin, in *Fangong yishi fendou shi*, 86-87.

¹⁰⁶ Wang Pingling and Mu Qin, in *Fangong yishi fendou shi*, 87.

¹⁰⁷ Wu Jundu and Wu Chunsheng 吴均度 吴春生, "巨济岛上的血雨腥风," in *Kaoyan*, 113.

¹⁰⁸ Wang Pingling and Mu Qin, in *Fangong yishi fendou shi*, 87.

¹⁰⁹ Yu Jing, 172.

together.”¹¹⁰ The Brotherhood (*xiongdihui*) was established. And the 17-year-old Zhong Junhua was one of Brothers.

With clubs in their hands, Dai and his brothers drove away anti-Communist leader Cheng Liren, replaced him as the leader of the 4th Battalion in Compound 86, and commanded more than 1,000 prisoners. Dai’s friend and advisor, veteran Communist Cao Ming, became the battalion’s PG squad leader. With Compound 86’s top leader being another *paoge* brother Ying Xiangyun, Compound 86 remained unconquered by the anti-Communists. On August 2, 1951, the infamous Li Da’an, accompanied by 1,000 prisoners from Compound 72 marched into Compound 86.¹¹¹ Li was appointed by the camp authorities as the Deputy Compound Leader. For a moment, actually for a day, it looked like Li Da’an was about to replicate his success in Compound 72. That very night, Li was attacked by three club-wielding Brothers. They told Li, “You son of a turtle, you want to take power from my Big Brother! We will beat you to death!” The next morning, Li retreated to Compound 72.¹¹² This was the second time Li was beaten. The first time was by North Korean Communists, and this time by the Sichuanese Brothers.

The showdown came in the evening of October 9, 1951, the night before the planned October 10 celebration, which was to include a flag-raising ceremony for the pro-Nationalists. Pro-repatriation prisoners, which included the Communists and Sichuanese *paoge* Brothers, came into a clash with anti-Communist PG squads. One pro-repatriate Wang Shaoqi was killed by anti-Communists, and 81 were arrested by U.S. troops. After pro-repatriation leaders and key activists were arrested, Compound 86 was largely cleansed of active pro-repatriation POWs. The next day, as CIE officer Captain Booth noted in his log book, CIE’s “formal instruction was not held Wed, Oct 10.

¹¹⁰ Yu Jing, 175.

¹¹¹ Yu Jing, 177-178.

¹¹² Yu Jing, 179.

Compound held festival in celebration of the 40th anniversary of the Chinese Republic.”¹¹³ American diplomat Philip Manhard observed, “every facility was extended to alleged pro-Nationalist to celebrate Oct 10 with banners, three-ring circuses, speeches, etc.”¹¹⁴ From then on, the anti-Communist prisoners headed by Wang Shunqing had uncontested control in Compound 86.

While the anti-Communists were celebrating the Double-Ten (October 10) holiday, 81 arrested pro-repatriation prisoners from Compound 86 were languishing in a special prison. Actually only three were Communist party members, including Zhang Zeshi, who only arrived on Koje a month ago. Brother Zhong Junhua was only a Youth League member. One month later, on November 8, another group of 148 pro-repatriation officer prisoners in Compound 72, led by Sun Zhenguang, won a petition to go to a separate compound. CIE’s Captain Booth seemed happy to see their departure, as he noted in his weekly report, “They were holding public meetings which interfered with normal compound operations.”¹¹⁵

These two groups of pro-repatriation prisoners were to join forces in the pro-Communist Compound 71. When Sun Zhenguan and his 140 officer comrades were leaving Compound 72, Li Da’an gathered his PG squads and wanted to give the Communists a beating before their departure. However, Compound 72’s top leader Wang Shunqing stopped him: “If the Americans let them go, they must have a reason.”¹¹⁶

¹¹³ CIE Field Operations Division Report for week ending October 12, 1951, NARA/RG554/Records of the Civil Information and Education (CI&E) section/Box 3, Annex VI.

¹¹⁴ Manhard, “Chinese POW Incident, Chejudo – Oct 1,” in Muccio’s telegram to Acheson, October 20, 1952, NARA/RG 59/Decimal File 1950-1954/695A.0024/10-2052.

¹¹⁵ CIE Field Operations Division Report for week ending November 9, 1951, NARA/RG554/Records of the Civil Information and Education (CI&E) section/Box 3, Annex VI.

¹¹⁶ Yu Jing, 244. Cai Pingsheng, who was undergoing interrogation in Pusan at the time, missed the opportunity to escape from 72. After the interrogation in Pusan was completed, Cai was sent back to Compound 72, only to find out that Sun Zhenguan and company had left for Compound 71.

Probably one of the reasons was Philip Manhard. Later during a visit to the pro-repatriation Compound 71, Manhard told Zhang Zeshi that he had been instrumental in the creation of a separate compound for pro-repatriate prisoners.¹¹⁷ Judging from available evidence, Manhard's words are credible. In his frequent visits to the camps from July to December 1951 and during the last week of February 1952, Manhard in the disguise of a news reporter introduced himself as Philip and befriended Chinese prisoners. As Army Chaplain Woodberry and CIE's Nationalist teachers were sympathetic to anti-repatriation prisoners, Manhard played an indispensable role in transmitting pro-repatriation prisoners' messages to camp authorities, the Embassy in Pusan and the State Department in Washington, D.C.

Known as an American reporter but suspected by Communist prisoners of being a CIA spy, Manhard helped to bring tangible improvement to their lives. Manhard procured desks, chairs and office supplies for Zhang Zeshi, so he could write his petitions and protest letters to the camp authority.¹¹⁸ In their time of boredom, Manhard provided *Tang Poetry* and *Collected Works of Guo Moruo* to Zhang, and *Tang Poetry* to Wu Chengde, the divisional commissar under solitary imprisonment.¹¹⁹ Years later, Zhao Zuoduan, the regiment commissar recalled wistfully, "After conversations with him, I often felt that imperialism was not a monolith."¹²⁰ Pro-repatriation prisoner translator Gao Jie overheard Philip's last name when General Boatner was addressing him. Gao remembered Philip's "beautiful spoken Chinese," and his contempt for those ingratiating prisoner guards. Manhard would say to them, "Are you still Chinese?" Poking fun at the mini-Statue of Liberty erected in front of Compound 72, he compared the torch to the clubs in the hands of prisoner guards. Manhard reported to Washington,

¹¹⁷ Zhang Zeshi, *Wo de Chaoxian Zhanzheng*, 92.

¹¹⁸ Zhang Zeshi, *Wo de Chaoxian Zhanzheng*, 92.

¹¹⁹ Yu Jing, 310.

¹²⁰ Yu Jing, 183.

If allowed freedom to choose a PW compound under the leadership of pro-Nationalists or pro-Communists, I believe many would flee their present compounds to pro-Communist ones in the hope of escaping intimidation and the denial of minimum human freedoms by trustees whose behavior has commanded the respect of very few POWs.¹²¹

However, prior to the full-scale screening in April, Compound 71's Chinese prisoner population never exceeded 254, or a minuscule 1.3 percent of some 20,000 Chinese POWs.

In Compound 72, after the departure of Sun Zhenguan and 147 other pro-Communist officer prisoners, Wang Shunqing and Li Da'an had total control over some 8,500 Chinese prisoners. Similarly in Compound 86, after the 81 pro-Communist/pro-repatriation prisoners were arrested, Wang Zuming and fellow anti-Communists gained uncontested control over near 8,000 Chinese POWs.¹²² Manhard witnessed this process first-hand while conducting interrogation work for the State Department on the Kojé Island from July to December 1951 and during the last week of February 1952. He observed:

Chinese prisoners of war are controlled by a thin veneer of PW trustees not freely elected by the prisoners whom they control, but appointed by US Army camp authorities on the basis of ostensible anti-Communism. These trustees exercise discriminatory control over food, clothing, fuel and access to medical treatment for the mass of Chinese prisoners.

In terms of the leadership's composition, Manhard reported:

These trustees are mostly composed of two mutually antagonistic pro-Nationalist groups: (1) former CNA MP's mostly captured by the CCF on Hainan Island and in South China, and (2) company-grade officer graduates of CNA military academies, many of whom were demoted to enlisted status upon absorption into the CCF. A third group of trustees, members of a secret society formerly strong in Ssuchuan Province, have been dominated by the first two groups in the camp.¹²³

¹²¹ Memorandum by Manhard to Muccio, March 14, 1952, *FRUS 1952-1954, Vol. XV*, 99.

¹²² These numbers are from CIE Field Operations Division Report for week ending December 28, 1951, NARA/ RG554/Records of CI&E/Box 3, Annex II.

¹²³ Memorandum by Manhard to Muccio, March 14, 1952, *FRUS 1952-1954, Vol. XV*, 98-99.

Perhaps Manhard overstated the division within the pro-Nationalists. Clearly the first group referred to leaders such as Wang Shunqing, who was captured on Hainan, and Wang Zunming, who was captured in Sichuan, although they were not necessarily military police. The second group of Whampoa graduates and cadets included men like Wang Jiati and Gao Wenjun. The third group of secret society was that of Dai Yushu and fellow Sichuanese brothers. Manhard correctly pointed out that eventually the secret society was dominated by the anti-Communists in Compounds 86. In fact, when differing ideological beliefs became the most salient cleavage, secret society brothers were subsumed into either Communist or anti-Communist groups. While a small number of the brothers went to pro-Communist Compound 71, the remaining brothers submitted to anti-Communists like Wang Zunming.

**The Screening in April 1952:
“Voluntary Repatriation” Turned Violent**

Prisoners of war shall be released and repatriated without delay after the cessation of active hostilities.

— *Geneva Conventions Article 118*.¹

A number of fellows in Tokyo and Korea felt that if Washington would only give up its altruistic concern for a lot of worthless Chinese there wouldn't be any problem about POWs.

— *U.S. Admiral William Fichteler, March 19, 1952*.²

There was nothing altruistic about our position. We had attached great importance to the POW issue and the communists knew that it was repugnant to us to force the return of prisoners who did not want to return. If, having taken this strong position, we should now cave in on it would be convincing to the Communists that in a pinch we will cave in on anything, even if it is of great importance.

— *U.S. Diplomat Charles Bohlen, March 19, 1952*.³

[T]here shall not be a forced repatriation of prisoners of war—as the Communist has insisted. To agree to forced repatriation would be unthinkable. It would be repugnant to the fundamental moral and humanitarian principles which underlie our action in Korea. To return these prisoners of war in our hands by force would result in misery and bloodshed to the eternal dishonor of the United States and of the United Nations. We will not buy an armistice by turning over human beings for slaughter or slavery.

— *U.S. President Harry S. Truman, May 7, 1952*.⁴

¹“Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War.” Adopted on August 12, 1949 by the Diplomatic Conference for the Establishment of International Conventions for the Protection of Victims of War, held in Geneva from April 21 to August 12, 1949. Entry into force on October 21, 1950. Accessed on May 11, 2008 at website of United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (<http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/91.htm>).

² Memorandum of State-JCS meeting, March 19, 1952, *FRUS 1952-1954, Vol. XV*, 103.

³ *Ibid.*, 103-104.

⁴ John T. Woolley and Gerhard Peters, *The American Presidency Project* [online] (Santa Barbara, CA), accessed June 14, 2011, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=14108>.

The Korean War lasted for more than three years, the armistice negotiations for two years, from July 1951 to July 1953. What prevented the reaching of an armistice agreement was the impasse over the repatriation of approximately 21,000 Chinese and more than 130,000 North Korean POWs. The Communist camp, headed by Stalin and Mao, insisted on having all POWs repatriated on an all-for-all basis, following the Geneva Convention Article 118, which stipulates, “Prisoners of war shall be released and repatriated without delay after the cessation of active hostilities.” However, American negotiators argued that “the *spirit* of the Geneva Convention was to protect the best interests of prisoners,” promoting the policy of “voluntary repatriation.”⁵

Conflicting U.S. Policies: Prisoner Exchange vs. Reorientation

Before the summer of 1951, there was little indication that the large number of prisoners, consisting of approximately 150,000 North Koreans, which included 20,000 civilian internees, and some 20,000 Chinese, might become a contentious issue in the armistice negotiations. In the first armistice negotiation session, Nam Il, the North Korean chief negotiator, immediately raised the issue of prisoner exchange.⁶ The Communist eagerness was understandable, owing to the hugely disproportionate number of prisoners held by the two sides. While the UN side held about 170,000 prisoners, the Communist side reduced their prisoner list from an earlier claim of 65,000 to 11,559, asserting that most had been “released at the battle front.” In fact the North Koreans had impressed many of the South Korean prisoners into their own army.⁷

Strictly speaking, international law was on the Communist side, as the Geneva Convention Article 118 clearly stipulates, “Prisoners of war shall be released and

⁵ Joy, *How Communists Negotiate*, 153.

⁶ Telegram, Ridgway to JCS, July 10, 1951, *FRUS 1951, Vol. VII*, 650.

⁷ Acheson, *The Korean War*, 130.

repatriated without delay after the cessation of active hostilities.” Therefore Communists assumed the position of all-for-all prisoner exchange from the outset, and expected little resistance. As late as November 1951, Mao still thought that “it will not be difficult to reach an agreement” on prisoner exchange on an all-for-all basis. Stalin, the ultimate mastermind of the Korean War, endorsed Mao: “Your position is completely correct, and it will be very difficult for the enemy to raise objections.”⁸

Washington had a better grasp of the situation than Moscow and Beijing did. Even before the U.S. responded to Malik’s peace feeler, Rusk had foreseen that the POW question constituted a potential sticking point in negotiations.⁹ Again in October, Rusk made another prescient warning that the prisoner issue would be “very troublesome” and that “there would not be any reason for optimism.”¹⁰ Apparently Rusk was aware of conflicting U.S. interests that would certainly complicate the prisoner exchange issue. To begin with, the gross imbalance of prisoner populations made an all-for-all exchange undesirable. Knowing that the Communists would certainly reject the one-for-one formula, Washington nevertheless instructed Ridgway to begin talks with such proposal as the initial negotiation position.¹¹ When the Communists rejected the formula as expected, a policy debate raged within the U.S. government and military. Suggestions of an all-for-all formula began to float, based on the argument that it was the only sure method to get all UN prisoners back home safely.

On October 29, President Truman weighed in and put a temporary end to the all-for-all idea. Arguing that the plan was not on “an equitable basis,” Truman made it known that he would not accept an all-for-all scheme “unless we received for it some major concession which could be obtained in no other way.” Truman made a case on

⁸ Shen Zhihua, ed., *Chaoxian Zhazheng: Eguo danganguan de jiemi wenjian*, 1103, 1108.

⁹ Memorandum of conversation by Rusk, June 29, 1951, *FRUS, 1951, Vol. VII*, 596.

¹⁰ Memorandum of conversation, October 26, 1951, *FRUS, 1951, Vol. VII*, 1065.

¹¹ Telegram, JCS to Ridgway, June 30, 1951, *FRUS, 1951, Vol. VII*, 600.

humanitarian grounds, as he feared that those prisoners who surrendered and had cooperated with the UN would be “immediately done away with” once they were sent back. At this point, Under Secretary of State James Webb realized that “a final settlement might rest on exchange of prisoners.”¹²

What complicated the prisoner exchange formula debate was more complex than the simple horse-trading of prisoners. Besides the humanitarian concerns professed by Truman, less high-minded motives drove U.S. policies as well. As explained in Chapter 4, the reorientation of prisoners became an official policy objective immediately after the outbreak of war in June 1950. When the policy was formulated in September 1950, the whole idea of re-orientating POWs “with a view toward their eventual utilization as avowed anti-Communists” was predicated on the assumption that Korea would be unified under the ROK, so there was no need to consider the eventuality of prisoner exchange. However, when China entered the war, the same assumption did not hold for Chinese prisoners, as the U.S. government never planned to invade China. Furthermore, the policy of reorientation entailed an implicit moral commitment to the safety of prisoners, particularly those who surrendered voluntarily and cooperated with UN forces. Without a clear understanding of the gravity of policy implications, the same ill-considered reorientation policy was applied indiscriminately to the Chinese prisoners.

The U.S. government and military alike shared this serious lack of foresight on the consequence of prisoner indoctrination. Even Secretary of State Acheson, who was usually suspicious of the military, supported the reindoctrination program for prisoners, at least initially. Soon after the armistice negotiation started in summer 1951, Acheson sent instructions to State Department staff in Korea, emphasizing that “current armistice discussion including exchange POWs gives program special urgency.” He continued that

¹² Memorandum by Webb, October 29, 1951, *FRUS, 1951, Vol. VII*, 1073.

the State Department understood that “shortened, intensified orientation program” was hampered by the lack of American Chinese-language personnel. Therefore he ordered his diplomats to “offer all possible appropriate other assistance.”¹³ Before long Acheson would realize that his endorsement was a mistake, and he would reverse his position.

In summer 1951, U.S. missions in Hong Kong and Taipei hired instructors for the CIE in Korea. Perhaps it could be argued that Acheson instructed U.S. missions to hire teachers through the State Department channels, in hope of preventing the Nationalist government’s involvement. If that was the case, Acheson’s policy still failed. U.S. missions simply could not provide enough qualified teachers. Even among the limited number of teachers they hired, some nevertheless had Nationalist ties or sympathy. For example, Qiao Hong, one of the teachers hired in Hong Kong, later became a famous actor known for his anti-Communist stance.¹⁴ In the end, the CIE had to ask the Nationalist government to provide teachers.

In a most glaring manifestation of conflicting U.S. policies, in the summer of 1951, while American diplomats, such as Acheson, and generals, such as Ridgway, were suing for peace, the CIE expanded its branches to Koje Island. The CIE’s teaching program began in Korean compounds in June, and in Chinese Compounds 72 and 86 in July. As discussed in the previous chapter, besides certain vocational training courses, the CIE’s main curriculum was an overtly anti-Communist indoctrination program. The most puzzling fact was that Acheson supported such a program, and presumably Ridgway did the same. Clearly, the idea of anti-Communist prisoners refusing to return to China and seeking to join the Nationalists in Taiwan did not occur to U.S. policymakers. They

¹³ Telegram, Acheson to U.S. Embassy in Pusan, August 9, 1951, NARA/RG 59/Decimal File/695A.0024/8-951.

¹⁴ Huang Tiancai, interview by author, July 13, 2010, Taipei.

simply could not believe Chiang Kai-shek, the man they had already written off, could have any appeal to the Chinese people.

In short, by launching an anti-Communist reorientation program, the U.S. effectively undermined its objective of a speedy exchange of prisoners and an early end of the war. If Chinese prisoners were successfully converted to anti-Communists, there should be little doubt they would seek to join the Nationalists in Taiwan. However, the U.S. military was preoccupied with its own psychological warfare objectives, Acheson was blinded by his contempt for Chiang Kai-shek, and no one seemed to have broached such an obvious outcome. In the end, conflicting U.S. policies would prove self-defeating for the U.S. government, but a boon for Chiang Kai-shek.

“The Chinese Have Influenced the Course of Events in Kojedo and at Panmunjom”

With the growing presence of UNC-hired Nationalist personnel in Tokyo and Korea, the Nationalist embassies emerged as the central coordination points for intelligence gathering. However, for most career diplomats, intelligence work was neither their forte nor their cup of tea. That was probably the case for Ambassador to Korea Shao Yulin. On June 18, 1952, Chiang Kai-shek summoned him to report on the Korean situation.¹⁵ Three days later, he tendered his resignation. His successor, Wang Dongyuan, was a general on active duty with stellar credentials as a staunch anti-Communist. In 1927 he had participated in the bloody “party cleansing” campaign in Hunan to purge Communists from the Nationalist Party. Wang carried his experience to Korea, and soon the Nationalist embassy was transformed into an intelligence powerhouse.

¹⁵ Chiang Diaries, June 18, 1952. Shao Yulin 邵毓麟.

In addition to regular diplomatic channels provided by the Foreign Ministry, Ambassador Wang most likely had direct communication channels to the Nationalist party center and the Ministry of Defense, both of which converged on the person of Chiang Ching-kuo. Despite the inaccessibility of the secret files of the KMT and the military, from fragments found in newly released Foreign Ministry documents, a shadowy spy network emerges. One of the first requests Wang made to the ministry was to allocate funds for four specialists who were to investigate political, military, economic and social conditions in Korea. Foreign Minister George Yeh revealed the status of these “specialists” in a memorandum: “As in the past, the Ministry of Defense dispatched personnel overseas in the guise of embassy or consular staff. These personnel had their special missions.”¹⁶ Another agent handpicked by Wang was Major Chen Ding of the Armored Forces. Chen assumed the title of commerce attaché, borrowing an identity from someone in the Ministry of Economy.¹⁷ A document sent to the Foreign Ministry seven months later gave away Chen’s intelligence role: he was an agent posted in Korea by the Seventh Special branch of the Central Reform Committee.¹⁸

While the first four batches of Nationalist interpreters hired in spring 1951 were not “Chiang Kai-shek’s Gestapos,” the second group of interpreter CIE teachers, who were hired for CIE specifically in late 1951, most likely carried missions related to Chinese prisoners. Certainly that was the case for Ma He, who received a three-day training prior to leaving for Korea. Even though not all Nationalist personnel hired in Taiwan were secret agents, the mere fact of regular contact and information exchanges between prisoners and interpreters/teachers had potentially explosive ramifications. In

¹⁶ Memorandum by Ye Gongchao (George Yeh), September 25, 1951, TWJSS/Personnel file/914/3-00010.

¹⁷ Memorandum by Wang Dongyuan 王東原 to Ye Gongchao, October 2, 1951, TWJSS/Personnel file/914/3-00033.

¹⁸ Memorandum by Wang Dongyuan to Ye Gongchao, May 3, 1952, TWJSS/International Organization File/633/43-531068-70.

view of the fact that prisoners had no access to newspapers or radios, these translators and teachers became the only source of information about the outside world beyond the isolated Koje Island. A series of petition letters signed in blood by anti-Communist prisoners was smuggled out of the prison compounds to the Nationalist embassy and released at a number of critical junctures during the armistice negotiations. This fact strongly suggests coordination between the prisoners and Nationalist personnel.

While Ambassador Wang Dongyuan was revving up the Nationalist intelligence engine in Korea, verbal battles between the UN and North Korea-China were raging on the negotiating table, first in Kaesong, then in Panmunjom. As a non-participant in the conflict, Taiwan was entirely excluded from the negotiations, and was dismissed as a non-factor by both sides. This negligence proved to be a fatal miscalculation on the part of the warring parties. Another factor initially overlooked by both sides was the phenomenon of anti-repatriation prisoners. Few had imagined that men like Wang Zunming, Wang Futian, and Wang Shunqing would become the cause for continued fighting for another two years. No one expected that the majority of prisoners would refuse repatriation to their homeland. Soon these two factors would dictate war and peace.

When news surrounding various peace proposals began to circulate in prison camps in spring 1951, anti-Communist prisoners panicked. Deserters, including former Nationalist officers and military academy cadets, knew that in all likelihood they would be sent back to China. That outcome would certainly mean death for those who were openly anti-Communist. By that time they felt they had been manipulated by UN propaganda, and they had lost faith in the U.S. Some of them had willingly surrendered under the false impression that Nationalist troops were on the UN side, as discussed in the previous chapter. Many were misled by the intentionally ambiguous language of UN

psychological warfare leaflets promising safety and asylum. In a secret memo, the Joint Chiefs of Staff acknowledged, “In the conduct of psychological warfare in Korea, the UNC *promised* [italics added] safety and asylum to those Chinese and North Korean military personnel who would voluntarily surrender to his forces.”¹⁹ But once they surrendered, there were no Nationalist troops to embrace them. Moreover, the UNC custodial personnel adopted an indifferent attitude toward these voluntary deserters, lumping them together with those involuntarily captured. The promise of asylum was never mentioned again. Effectively, they were left to rot on Koje Island.

Not surprisingly, anti-Communist prisoners turned to Nationalist interpreters and teachers for help. In return, they received encouragement, information and instructions. Soon they began to organize. In the summer of 1951, The Anti-Communist Patriotic Youth Corp and The Nationalist 63 Party Branch were formed in Compound No. 72. In Compound 86, The Anti-Communist Resist Russia Youth Alliance was founded.²⁰ Immediately these groups organized a string of mass campaigns, including blood petition letters and anti-Communist tattoo drives. By early July 1951, the Nationalist Mission in Tokyo had transmitted prisoners’ appeals to Taipei, documents that had been relayed by interpreters.²¹ On July 25, the Nationalist Embassy in Korea reported that a group of prisoners had knelt before interpreters, pleading for the Nationalist government to intervene.²² In September, the embassy forwarded a petition by a number of former KMT party and youth organization members, vowing to fight the Communists once they were sent to Taiwan. These men declared, “If we continue to languish in despair [in the

¹⁹ Memorandum, JCS to the Secretary of Defense, “Policy on Repatriation of Chinese and North Korean Prisoners,” August 8, 1951, NARA/RG 59/Decimal File 1950-1954/695A.0024/8-851.

²⁰ Chen Jiyong, “Juji dao han zei bu liang li (shang),” in *Fangong yishi fendou shi*, 51-68.

²¹ Intelligence Report, July 3, 1951, TWGFB No. 0004159800010004w.

²² Memorandum by Zhou Zhirou to Chiang, July 3, 1951, TWGFB No. 0004159800010004w.

prison camps], the only way out is to commit mass suicide.”²³ Certainly some of these petition letters reached the desk of Chiang Kai-shek. On October 28, the subject of prisoners of war in Korea appeared for the first time in Chiang’s diary: “Upon reading the blood letters signed by Yin Liangwen, Li Da’an and more than one thousand prisoners in Korea, pledging allegiance to the Party and the country, I felt all the more ashamed and uneasy for [failing to protect] my old troops.”²⁴

Fully aware of the lack of legal grounds to transfer prisoners of war to Taiwan, the Nationalist government decided to proceed quietly “without overt actions or public pronouncements.”²⁵ However, as the negotiations in Panmunjom entered into serious discussion of POW issues in November, Taipei began to selectively release some of the petitions to domestic and international media. Claiming that these petitions were mailed directly from prison camps, the Nationalists attempted to conceal the pivotal role the embassy had played. In the meantime, Nationalist diplomats in Korea, Tokyo, and Washington approached U.S. officials, carefully gauging U.S. positions on prisoner exchange. However, the Americans said nothing and guarded information on prisoner policy more stringently than any other military secret.²⁶ Instead of cooperating with the Nationalists, the U.S. became very alarmed. In early November 1951 the U.S. Counter-Intelligence Corp (CIC) ordered its agents to investigate the links between the Nationalist embassy and prisoners.²⁷

On November 12 Ambassador Muccio reported to Acheson that it was not “(repeat not) impossible [that] Taipei circles have had access [to] such petitions for some

²³ Contained in telegram, Wang Dongyuan to Ye Gongchao, November 11, 1951, TWJSS 633/43-530890.

²⁴ Chiang Diaries, October 28, 1951.

²⁵ Memo by Zhou Zhirou to Chiang Kai-shek, August 21, 1951, TWGFB.

²⁶ Telegram, He Shili to Ye Gongchao, November 23, 1951, TWJSS/International Organization File/633/43-530905-6.

²⁷ Telegram, Wang Dongyuan to Ye Gongchao, November 6, 1951, TWJSS/International Organization File/633/43-530891.

time.” He suggested that the developments “may indicate increasing efforts [by] Chinese Nationalists to influence foreign opinion re disposition [of] Chinese POW’s.”²⁸ Certainly Muccio was right; but this realization came several months too late. Chiang Kai-shek’s men had taken the lead in the propaganda game.

Another critical moment in the armistice negotiations was December 18, 1951, when the two sides finally exchanged prisoner data. The ratio of the number of prisoners held on the two sides was over ten to one: the Communist lists showed only 11,559 prisoners, while the UN lists had 132,000 Communist prisoners plus 37,000 civilian internees. To the shock of the UN negotiators, while South Korea claimed 88,000 and the U.S. reported over 11,500 missing in actions (MIAs), the Communists’ number of 11,559 included only 7,142 ROK and 3,168 American prisoners. In contrast, out of 188,000 men listed as missing by the Communists, the UNC held over 169,000 in total.²⁹ When asked to explain the huge discrepancy, the Communists argued unconvincingly that most of the captives had been released on the battlefield.

Despite the lopsided ratio, the exchange of prisoner data was generally considered as a significant step toward a final resolution on prisoner exchange. On the same day, following a request made by Ambassador Wang Dongyuan, Foreign Minister George Yeh released a statement entitled “Free China Objects to Exchange of POWs against Own Will” via the Associated Press (AP). In the AP report, “Harvard and Cambridge educated Foreign Minister George Yeh” declared that it would be “undemocratic” and “un-Christian” to send POWs against their free will for the purpose of “political expediency.” Implicitly reminding Americans of the moral values at stake, Yeh concluded, “we must allow ourselves to be guided only by the concept of human

²⁸ Telegram, Muccio to Acheson, November 12, 1951, NARA/RG 59/Decimal File 1950-1954/695A.0024/11-1251.

²⁹ Hermes, 141.

rights and the dignity of the human freedom affirmed in the charter of the UN and reaffirmed in the Human Rights Declaration.”³⁰ For the first time, the principle of no forced repatriation was raised publicly and vigorously. Commanding the moral high ground, the Republic of China successfully asserted itself into the Korean War peace negotiations, even though from a distance.

Having witnessed the rising influence of the “groups of interpreters, translators and CI&E personnel” brought in by the U.S. military and “a recently greatly augmented Chinese Embassy, military attaché and air attaché organization,” in February 1952 Ambassador Muccio lamented the U.S. Embassy’s inability to keep tabs on its overt and covert activities. He had to concede, “I personally have a hunch that the Chinese have influenced the course of events in Koje-do and at Panmunjom.”³¹ Clearly, Muccio was referring to the Chinese Nationalists in this case. In a sense, while the Chinese Communists were pounding the UN forces on the 38th parallel, the Chinese Nationalists had hijacked the course of the war by influencing Chinese prisoners on Koje Island.

U.S. Debate: All-for-All, One-for-One, or Voluntary Repatriation?

Although George Yeh was the first to publicly advocate a repatriation policy based on prisoners’ choices, the idea itself had been circulating in Washington for some time, as the original UN position of one-for-one exchange included a choice for some of the prisoners held by the UNC. According to historian Rosemary Foot, in early July 1951 General Robert McClure, the army’s chief of psychological warfare, was the first within policy circles to raise explicitly the issue of whether all prisoners of war should be repatriated, arguing that humanitarian and propaganda concerns warranted free choice

³⁰ Zhou, ed., *Zhanhou waijiao shiliao huibian: hanzhan yu fangong yishi pian 1*, 172-173.

³¹ Memorandum by Muccio to Johnson, February 27, 1952, *FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. XV*, 64-66.

for prisoners.³² Coincidentally, at almost exactly the same time, General Lai Mingtang, the director of military intelligence, posed the question of bringing Chinese prisoners to Taiwan.³³ As early as August 9, Taiwan's Ministry of Defense had come to the conclusion that accepting Chinese prisoners was "necessary" in view of the "political and human resources" advantages that such an outcome could bring.³⁴ The only objection was from professional diplomats who were concerned about legal constraints and feared Communist infiltrators who might be disguised as anti-Communist prisoners. Ambassador Wang assured doubters that a collective responsibility system (*lianbao lianzuo*) could eliminate infiltrators.³⁵ Presumably Chiang Kai-shek and Chiang Ching-kuo agreed with Wang, and the Nationalist policy objective became clear: to bring the committed anti-Communist prisoners to Taiwan.

On the U.S. side, fundamental policy clashes between the State Department and the military persisted for almost a year to the peril of formulating a logically consistent policy on prisoner exchange. Most peculiarly, both the State Department and the military reversed their original policy preferences, and effectively ended up adopting their opponents' previous position. Initially, the military acknowledged the fact that UN forces indeed "promised safety and asylum" to those who would voluntarily surrender. In a memo dated August 8, 1951, the Joint Chiefs proposed that "Subject to adequate safeguards for UN prisoners in Communist hands, the UNC in Korea be authorized, to repatriate to Formosa all Chinese prisoners of war who are found to be acceptable to the Chinese Nationalist Government and who claim to be ex-Nationalists or Nationalists at heart and elect such repatriation." In addition to humanitarian considerations, they

³² Rosemary Foot, *A Substitute for Victory* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 87.

³³ Memorandum, Lai Mingtang to Chiang, July 7, 1951, TWGFB No. 0004159800010004w.

³⁴ Memorandum, Zhou Zhirou to Chiang, February 1, 1952, TWGFB No. 0004159800040023w.

³⁵ Telegram, Wang Dongyuan to Taipei, January 23, 1952, TWJSS/International Organization File/633/43-530882.

argued, “the effectiveness of future U.S. psychological warfare programs would be enhanced by the adoption of this policy.” While recognizing that the matter transcended the military, on balance, the JCS were inclined to favor voluntary repatriation because of “its extreme importance to the effectiveness of psychological warfare.”³⁶ The military’s obsession with psychological warfare was best reflected in the rapid growth and pervasive presence of CIE programs throughout all anti-Communist compounds.

Early endorsement of the prisoner reorientation schemes came from a very unlikely person. Acheson, the consummate lawyer, suffered a serious lapse in judgment. The very notion of reorienting prisoners inevitably entailed a moral commitment to offer these individuals asylum. Who would want to be converted into an “avowed anti-Communist” one day, then sent back to the Communist side to be slaughtered the next? By endorsing the scheme, Acheson seemed to support the idea of voluntary repatriation. Perhaps this implication did not occur to Acheson. Nevertheless, he quickly shifted position. On August 27, in a memo to the new Secretary of Defense George Marshall, Acheson stated, “the State is seriously concerned over the possibility that the proposed policy [of one-for-one exchange] might jeopardize the prompt return of all UN and ROK POWs,” which should be the “overriding consideration.” In a return to his lawyerly sensibility, Acheson concluded, “U.S. interests in this and future conflicts dictate, in my opinion, strict observance of the provisions of the Geneva Convention.”³⁷ It seemed an all-for-all formula was required to ensure the prompt return of all UN POWs.

While the voluntary repatriation idea wrapped in the one-for-one proposal was making little headway in Panmunjom, military leaders, particularly Ridgway and UN chief negotiator Admiral C. Turner Joy, became preoccupied with the idea of bringing

³⁶ Memorandum, JCS to the Secretary of Defense, “Policy on Repatriation of Chinese and North Korean Prisoners,” August 8, 1951, NARA/RG 59/Decimal File 1950-1954/695A.0024/8-851.

³⁷ Memorandum by Acheson to Marshall, August 27, 1951, *FRUS, 1951, Vol. VII*, 858.

American prisoners home, and showed little interest in the whole argument about psychological warfare. By October their views began to converge with Acheson's. However, at this juncture Truman took a personal interest in the POW issue, and effectively ruled out an all-for-all solution.³⁸ Ever loyal to the President, Acheson came up with an ingenuous compromise: applying special provisions in the Geneva Convention, the UNC would first parole the prisoners who "rendered outstanding assistance to the UNC," then exchange the remaining prisoners on an all-for-all basis. However, neither the JCS nor Ridgway thought this legal legerdemain was an acceptable solution. And they plainly added, "We may be forced to return to the Communists certain personnel whose retention would be desirable."³⁹

Going down this slippery slope, on November 15, the JCS drafted an instruction to Ridgway: "you are authorized to agree to all-for-all exchange" if it appeared necessary in order to secure the release of all, or a maximum number of UN prisoners. In a chilling about-face, the U.S. military categorically disavowed any promise the UNC had made to prisoners. It claimed that the psychological warfare program "has scrupulously avoided the subject of non-repatriation and, further, has held forth no promise of asylum" to Communist troops.⁴⁰ On November 28, Ridgway requested the authority to make compromises, arguing that "it is essential to authorize . . . to agree to an all-for-all exchange, even though it would mean turning over to Communist control all prisoners of war, including . . . individuals who have voluntarily aided UNC."⁴¹

When the impasse reached Truman, once again he questioned the military men's "fuzzy thinking on this problem," and made it clear that he wanted "any directive on

³⁸ Memorandum by Acheson, October 29, 1951, *FRUS, 1951, Vol. VII*, 1073.

³⁹ Memorandum by JCS to Lovett (Secretary of Defense), December 3, 1951, *FRUS, 1951, Vol. VII*, 1227.

⁴⁰ Memorandum by JCS to Lovett, November 15, 1951, *FRUS, 1951, Vol. VII*, 1171.

⁴¹ Telegram, Ridgway to JCS, November 28, 1951, *FRUS, 1951, Vol. VII*, 1197-1198.

POW's cleared with him." Truman's logic was simple, as he believed that "it is clear that if all of the prisoners in our hands are returned some of them will be prompt[ly] done away with."⁴² Ridgway was undaunted by Truman's ruling. On December 18, he again argued for using one-for-one exchange only as a negotiation ploy, while remaining open to an all-for-all resolution. Nevertheless he acknowledged the risk of playing this game. The one-for-one alternative that effectively "extends the institution of asylum to POWs is so appealing to humanitarian sentiment . . . Once it is announced and publicized, the demand by our people to stand or fall on this proposal may preclude ultimate abandonment of this position."⁴³ Before the U.S. had an opportunity to announce and publicize this scheme, George Yeh preempted the Americans on December 18. Curiously enough, the next day, another order arrived in Panmunjom from Washington, "Any position requiring forced return of personnel held by UNC must have prior approval by Wash[ington]."⁴⁴

At this moment on December 21, 1951, Chiang Kai-shek wrote in his diary: "Regardless of the final outcome of the armistice negotiation, as long as Taiwan can stand independently, the danger we face is much less threatening than last year." What tormented Chiang the most was the uncertainty surrounding the prisoners who had signed petitions to "return to Taiwan." "That country, the U.S., will abandon justice and morality, ignore the protests lodged by our government. ~~With a evil heart, certainly the U.S. will repatriate these men,~~ and they will be slaughtered by the Communist bandits." In the end, Chiang cried out, "Is there still humanitarianism and justice in America? How heartbreaking."⁴⁵ Clearly Chiang was not aware of the fact that the person who had

⁴² Memorandum on State-JCS meeting, December 5, 1951, *FRUS, 1951, Vol. VII*, 1244.

⁴³ Telegram, Ridgway to JCS, December 18, 1951, *FRUS, 1951, Vol. VII*, 1371.

⁴⁴ Telegram, JCS to Ridgway, December 19, 1951, *FRUS, 1951, Vol. VII*, 1380.

⁴⁵ Chiang Diaries, December 21, 1951. The sentence was crossed out, but still legible.

to this point single-handedly prevented prisoners from being sent back to China was his nemesis Truman.

Finding an all-for-all exchange inequitable, President Truman decided to explore alternative formulas, namely voluntary repatriation. The UN negotiators first proposed the principle of “voluntary repatriation” on January 2, 1952, fully aware of the risk of endangering the lives of some 12,000 UN soldiers in Communist captivity.⁴⁶ The Communist side responded with fury, particularly the Chinese, who saw it as a ploy to detain Chinese POWs and ship them to their mortal enemy Chiang Kai-shek in Taiwan. “If anybody dares hand over any of the personnel of the Chinese People’s Volunteers captured by the other side to the deadly enemy of the Chinese people, the Chinese people will never tolerate it and will fight to the end,” threatened Chinese negotiator Colonel Chai Chengwen.⁴⁷ On the other side, having announced the position of “voluntary repatriation,” the U.S. government staked its prestige on following it through. General Matthew Ridgway, who succeeded General MacArthur as the Supreme Commander of the UN Command, pointed out, “once it is announced and publicized, the demand by our people to stand or fall on this proposal may preclude ultimate abandonment of this position.”⁴⁸ Most importantly, President Truman, who never thought an all-for-all exchange “equitable,” took a personal interest in the POW issue, and effectively ruled out any forced repatriation, as he feared that those prisoners who had surrendered and cooperated with the UN would be “immediately done away with” once they were sent back.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Acheson, *The Korean War*, 131.

⁴⁷ Allan E. Goodman, ed., *Negotiating While Fighting: The Dairy of Admiral C. Turner Joy at the Korean Armistice Conference* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1978), 199.

⁴⁸ Ridgway memorandum to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, United State Dept. of State and Service Congressional Information, Foreign Relations of the United States (hereafter FRUS), 1951, Volume VII, Korea and China (Washington: U.S. G.P.O., 1976), 1371, December 18, 1951.

⁴⁹ FRUS, 1951, Volume VII, *Korea and China*, Part I, 1073, October 29, 1951.

Nevertheless, Truman was almost overwhelmed by continued opposition from the military. When the U.S. formally presented the voluntary repatriation concept on January 2, 1952, the JCS told Ridgway, "It is possible that in face of 3000 UN [U.S.] prisoners is balanced against the welfare of an indefinite number of Communist prisoners in our hands, the govt might find it necessary to further modify our stand. You should act as if current position were final position, keeping next preceding sentence strictly for your own guidance."⁵⁰ The only restriction was that it had to be cleared by Washington. Certainly the new position still left open the possibility for a compromise. Thus, Ridgway and other top brass continuously pestered Washington with various schemes to undermine the supposedly inflexible stance of voluntary repatriation. Interestingly, neither did Mao believe the U.S. could stick to this policy. In a cable to Stalin dated January 31, 1952, Mao confidently dismissed the "flippant idea of voluntary repatriation," and argued that the enemy could not oppose the principle of repatriating all prisoners.⁵¹

Facing Uncertainties, Prisoner's Petition and Tattooing Campaigns

Fearing that a breakthrough on the question of POW exchange might be reached at any point, namely that the U.S. might agree to repatriate all prisoners at any moment, anti-Communist prisoners on Kojé Island became increasingly agitated. In the summer of 1951, they had begun the practice of writing petition letters in blood and tattooing anti-Communist slogans on their own bodies as a means of demonstrating their determination to resist repatriation. However, after half a year had elapsed, despite their repeated petitions and protests, the UNC remain mute and gave absolutely no assurances of their asylum, nor did it make any promise to send prisoners to Taiwan.

⁵⁰ Telegram, JCS to Ridgway, January 15, 1952, *FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. XV*, 26.

⁵¹ Shen Zhihua, ed., *Chaoxian zhanzheng: Eguo danganguan de jiemi wenjian*, 1144.

According to a report by Ambassador Wang dated January 8, 1952, among the 20,740 prisoners, about half of them were former Nationalist troops, and among these former troops 70 to 80% did not wish to return to Communist China. Out of the potential anti-repatriates, about 3,000 were “resolute in their determination to return to Taiwan,” as evidenced by their tattoos and activism, and the rest had not “made their attitude known.” Because the American authority took active measures to prevent direct contact between the Nationalist embassy and the prisoners, Wang had to rely on indirect channels—which presumably meant interpreters and CIE teachers—to instruct the prisoners “to continue their petition campaign, expressing the anti-repatriation stance with extreme determination.”⁵² And Wang asked the Foreign Ministry to publicize their petitions to the world.

What ensued in the prison compounds was a propaganda drive that was “reaching a climax with use of brutal force to obtain signatures,” reported U.S. diplomat Philip Manhard, who was a Chinese language specialist and was on site on Koje Island to observe the situation. Manhard gave unsettling depictions of the reality in camps on Koje Island: “With encouragement from Formosan Chinese assigned to PW work by GHQ Tokyo, the trustees have for several months conducted a drive to collect petitions for transfer to Formosa.”⁵³ When a truce seemed imminent, thousands of prisoners under anti-Communist leadership addressed urgent petitions to the UNC and world media, imploring non-repatriation. The pro-Nationalist groups started their tattooing campaign in July 1951, inscribing anti-Communist slogans and symbols onto their bodies. In tandem with escalating tattooing campaigns, anti-Communist prisoner leadership collected rounds of petition letters written in blood or signed with blood. CIE personnel

⁵² Telegram, Wang Dongyuan to Ye Gongchao, January 08, 1952, TWJSS/International Organization File/633/43-530946-51.

⁵³ Memorandum by Manhard to Muccio, March 14, 1952, *FRUS 1952-1954, Vol. XV*, 99. GHQ: general headquarters.

and chaplains transmitted pictures of mass tattooing and blood petition letters to Taiwan and Western media. Under the rally cry of “Back to Taiwan or die,” “*Hui Taiwan*” became their cause to resist potential repatriation.⁵⁴

The intensity of such a campaign was startling to American observers. Behavioral scientists Meyers and Bradbury commented that this “aggressive loyalty to . . . Nationalist China” and this kind of “mass resistance to repatriation has been almost unknown in modern warfare until very recent times.”⁵⁵ Manhard provided his explanation: “The trustees,” that is, anti-Communist leaders, “maintain control over the Chinese compounds by means of force and coercion.”⁵⁶ Corroborating Manhard’s observations, another U.S. Embassy staff member named Bennett made similar observations in POW camps. Bennett was convinced that

[A]ctions Chinese prisoner signing petitions in blood and tattooing themselves not (rpt not) completely voluntary protest against repatriation to Commie territory. Chinese Nationalist faction of prisoners is in control of Chinese prisoner compound and these leaders have forced some prisoners tattoo themselves and print petitions as part of effort to convince UN auths most Chinese prefer go Formosa.⁵⁷

Manhard also “interrogated several tattooed Chinese and one branded who confessed they submitted under prisoner intimidation.”⁵⁸ Most likely the branded prisoner was Tang Yao, the young intellectual from Lanxi county, Zhejiang who joined the PLA in May 1949. In Compound 72, Tang was one of a small number of open pro-Communists. One night in January 1951, the infamous Li Da’an used a hot iron to brand on Tang’s chest. When Tang saw Manhard, he said, “This place is inhumane. I want to complain!”⁵⁹ Manhard briefly mentioned this branding incident in his report to Muccio. Another

⁵⁴ Chen Jiying, in *Fangong yishi fendou shi*, 39.

⁵⁵ Bradbury et al., *Mass Behavior*, xviii.

⁵⁶ Memorandum by Manhard to Muccio, March 14, 1952, *FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. XV*, 99.

⁵⁷ Telegram, Muccio to Acheson, February 2, 1952, NARA/RG 59/Decimal File 1950-1954/695A.0024/2-252. Rpt not: repeat not; auths: authorities.

⁵⁸ Telegram, Muccio to Acheson, February 2, 1952, NARA/RG 59/Decimal File 1950-1954/695A.0024/2-252.

⁵⁹ Tang Yao, interview by author, May 26, 2010, Shanghai.

hapless prisoner, Cai Pingsheng, was forced to have the English words “Anti-Red” inscribed on his right arm.

As a rough guess, Bennett believed no more than 25 percent of the Chinese prisoners would elect to go to Formosa if given free choice, because most prisoners were convinced they would be impressed into the Nationalist Army again and many were tired of fighting. Approximately another 10 to 15 percent Chinese were estimated to be “indoctrinated Commies” who would elect to return to China. Finally, Bennett believed that a good many of the remainder, perhaps 5,000 of 20,000 total, would elect to go back to China and “take their chances on Communists, because of love [for] their homeland, family ties, etc.”⁶⁰ Perhaps Cai Pingsheng belonged to the last group. He later recalled, “I didn’t know much about Communism. And I didn’t care much about it. I just wanted to return home, to see my parents.”⁶¹

During the same period, the Nationalist Embassy in Pusan made its own assessment, presumably through interpreters and CIE teachers: out of the 20,740 Chinese prisoners, more than half were former Nationalist troops. Between 70 to 80 percent of the prisoners did not wish to return to Communist China, and among them 3,000 were determined anti-repatriates.⁶² This estimate of 3,000 hardcore anti-Communists was actually smaller than Bennett’s rough guess of 25 percent of the prisoners in Compounds 72 and 86, which had a combined a population of 16,000.

Clearly, as both Wang and Bennett recognized, the majority of prisoners were in the middle. Intimidation and coercion exercised by anti-Communist prisoners were mostly directed at the majority to prevent them from choosing repatriation. This

⁶⁰ Telegram, Muccio to Acheson, February 2, 1952, NARA/RG 59/Decimal File 1950-1954/695A.0024/2-252.

⁶¹ Cai Pingsheng, interview by author, September 2007, Chengdu, Sichuan.

⁶² Telegram, Wang Dongyuan to Ye Gongchao, January 3, 1952, TWJSS/International Organization File/633/43-530931-2.

development was an unfortunate but logical outcome of an ambiguous U.S. policy. According to the policy of voluntary repatriation, later renamed non-forcible repatriation, the burden of proof of one's will was on the prisoner. Only if a prisoner demonstrated that he would violently resist repatriation, would he be considered a non-repatriate. In effect, this was an open invitation to violent behavior. Facing the UN authority that was ready to repatriate them at any moment, it was logical for anti-Communist prisoners to attempt to control as many fellow prisoners as possible, as a means of demonstrating their collective will, even if that involved violent methods.

Non-forcible Repatriation: Is the “Final Position” Really “Final”?

Indeed, the prisoners' anxiety was totally justified, as policy debate over repatriation formula never ceased. Now a key proponent of the non-forcible repatriation policy, Acheson acknowledged the position of his opponent: “The military were, understandably enough, primarily concerned with getting back their men... to insure the return of our enemy-held prisoners, the Pentagon favored the return of North Korean and Chinese prisoner and civilian internees regardless of their wishes.”⁶³ UN's chief negotiator, Admiral Joy, shared the military's sentiment, “‘Voluntary repatriation’ placed the welfare of ex-Communist soldiers above that of our own UNC personnel in Communist prison camps, and above that of our UNC personnel still on the battle line in Korea.”⁶⁴ In a memo from the Joint Chief of Staff to State Department, it was suggested to “agree to an all-for-all exchange,” “if and when voluntary repatriation becomes only apparent obstacle to armistice, . . . Considerations pertinent to foregoing alternatives: (a)

⁶³ Acheson, *The Korean War*, 130-131.

⁶⁴ Joy, *How Communists Negotiate*, 152.

how important is it to U.S. to achieve an armistice? “⁶⁵ In the end, the political objective of ending this unwinnable war might trump other considerations.

Even within the ranks of the State Department, there was a small but significant dissenting voice against this policy. Frank Stelle of the Policy Planning Staff highlighted the unpleasant fact regarding the Geneva Convention: “In the first place, whether we like to remember it or not, the law is on the Communist side.”⁶⁶ One of Acheson’s top planners Charles Burton Marshall bluntly contended, “We are not in Korea to protect a Chinese regime or to protect Chinese. We could force them back without sacrificing our case as to Korea. I cannot make the same case in regard to them as I can in regard to the Koreans.”⁶⁷

However, Acheson stood firm. In a memo to President Truman dated February 8, 1952, he argued, “Any agreement in the Korean armistice which would require United States troops to use force to turn over to the Communist prisoners who believe they would face death if returned, would be repugnant to our most fundamental moral and humanitarian principles on the importance of the individual, and would seriously jeopardize the psychological warfare position of the United States in its opposition to Communist tyranny.” At the end of February, Acheson’s view prevailed. He claimed that after “a series of meetings with the President, . . . the top civilian officers of Defense did not oppose State.”⁶⁸

Once the President was firmly on the side of non-forcible repatriation, U.S. officials found there was another problem: although the discussion had been ongoing for

⁶⁵ Memorandum, JSC to the State Department, January 28, 1952, NARA/RG 59/Decimal File/695A.0024/1-2851.

⁶⁶ Memorandum, Frank Stelle to Paul Nitze (Director of Policy Planning for the State Department), January 24, 1952, in *Records of the Policy Planning Staff of the Department of State* (Seoul, 1997), 11.

⁶⁷ Memorandum, CB Marshall to Paul Nitze, January 28, 1952, in *Records of the Policy Planning Staff of the Department of State* (Seoul, 1997), 11.

⁶⁸ Acheson, *The Korean War*, 131.

months regarding anti-repatriation prisoners, the U.S. never had a good estimate of how many would actually resist repatriation with violence. Belatedly, U.S. policy makers saw the need to screen and separate prisoners. On February 2, Acheson and Lovett, the new Secretary of Defense, jointly authored a memorandum to Truman. Noting that the prisoner issue “will shortly become the sole remaining fundamental issue in the Korean armistice negotiations” and “balancing all of the considerations and weighing all of the risks,” Acheson and Lovett concluded, “the world moral and psychological warfare position of the United States in its opposition to Communist tyranny” required the U.S. to adopt “non-forcible repatriation,” an euphemism for “voluntary repatriation.” “The only course of action that seems to offer any reasonable possibility of carrying out this policy requires the taking of irrevocable actions at the beginning of its implementation regardless of the ultimate consequences to prisoners held by the Communists or to the conclusion of an armistice.”⁶⁹ The “irrevocable action” at core was to screen out anti-repatriation prisoners, and present the outcome as a *fait accompli* to the Communists.

Seeing this approach as “an act of bad faith on the part of the U.S.” that would “inevitably result in reprisal against prisoners held by the Communists,” American negotiators in Panmunjom opposed the new policy vehemently, although they were unable to suggest “any possible solutions other than forcibly returning to the Communists all POWs held by the UNC.”⁷⁰ Truman was forced to delay a final decision and sent General Hull on a fact-finding mission to Tokyo and Korea. The picture Hull depicted was not optimistic. Preliminary estimates at Ridgway’s headquarter revealed that 50,000 North Korean and 11,500 Chinese POWs could be expected to violently resist repatriation. Most importantly, “qualitatively as well as possibly quantitatively, the

⁶⁹ Draft memorandum by Acheson and Lovett to Truman, February 4, 1952 *FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. XV*, 36.

⁷⁰ Memorandum by Johnson, March 10, 1952, *FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. XV*, 77-78.

problem of [Chinese] POWs and possible Communist reactions thereto was much more difficult than that of Korean POWs.”⁷¹ Hull also reported that the Communist military position was now stronger, so the Communists did not desire an armistice as urgently as they had in summer 1951. Clearly, from the military point of view, the policy of voluntary repatriation would certainly break down the armistice negotiations, prolong the war, and endanger the lives of UN prisoners held in Communists hands.

At this crucial moment, on February 25, George Yeh announced the Nationalist government’s readiness to accept anti-repatriation prisoners, and made an emotional appeal to the world, “to save them so others may live.”⁷² Two days later, the JCS sent Ridgway the “final” U.S. government position: “US govt will not accept any agreement which would require use of force to repatriate to Commies POWs held by UNC who would violently oppose such repatriation and whose lives would be endangered thereby.” Implicitly criticizing officers who had charged the policy as “an act of bad faith on the part of the U.S.,” the directive asserted, “We believe this position can be maintained without use of any subterfuge.”⁷³ On March 15, the JCS ordered Ridgway to plan a screening of prisoners, and made it clear that non-forcible repatriation was the “final and irrevocable position.”⁷⁴ On March 19, the Nationalist military attaché in Korea reported that he had been contacted by the UNC regarding arrangements to transfer the first batch of 25 prisoners to Taiwan. His assessment was that “the UNC’s position on voluntary repatriation seemed quite firm.”⁷⁵

The past, however, suggested that no “final position” was final. Policy debate over the final position continued to seethe in Washington. In one of the many State-Pentagon

⁷¹ Memorandum of conversation, February 25, 1952, *FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. XV*, 59.

⁷² Zhou, ed., *Zhanhou waijiao shiliao huibian: hanzhan yu fangong yishi pian* 1, 209-210.

⁷³ Telegram, JCS to Ridgway, February 27, 1952, *FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. XV*, 70.

⁷⁴ Telegram, JCS to Ridgway, March 15, 1952, *FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. XV*, 89.

⁷⁵ Unnumbered memo, TWGFB, March 19, 1952,

joint meetings, one official asked, “Will they [the U.S. public] advocate leaving our boys in Communist hands or will they want to insist on the principle of no involuntary repatriation?” These questions encapsulated the dilemma Truman faced, and also highlighted Truman’s role as the final arbiter. In the same meeting, Admiral William Fechteler remarked, “a number of fellows in Tokyo and Korea felt that if Washington would only give up its altruistic concern for a lot of worthless Chinese, there wouldn’t be any problem about POWs.” However, State Department official Charles Bohlen countered:

[T]here was nothing altruistic about our position. We had attached great importance to the POW issue and the communists knew that it was repugnant to us to force the return of prisoners who did not want to return. If, having taken this strong position, we should now cave in on it would be convincing to the communists that in a pinch we will cave in on anything, even if it is of great importance . . . It would be interpreted as a real sign of Western weakness.⁷⁶

As a Russia expert, Bohlen cited the persecution of German-captured Soviet POWs after their return to the Soviet Union, and made his impassioned appeal to save anti-Communist prisoners. President Truman was convinced.

It is no exaggeration to say that had Truman relented for one moment on voluntary repatriation, many policymakers would have jumped at the opportunity to sell the prisoners down the river by agreeing to an all-for-all solution.

A Disastrous Round Figure and Preparations for Screening

Admiral Fechteler was not alone in thinking about disposing of these “worthless Chinese.” Kim Il Sung felt the same way about these former “Chiang Kai-shek’s brigands.” However rigid the U.S. and Chinese views, after months of wrangling, the North Koreans began to show some flexibility, as they became tired of a war they had no

⁷⁶ Memorandum of State-JCS meeting, March 19, 1952, *FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. XV*, 103-104.

chance of winning.⁷⁷ The North Koreans hinted on March 22 that certain prisoners could be given “special consideration.”⁷⁸ By late March, the Communist side had modified its position, insisting only on the “complete repatriation of all non-Korean prisoners,” that is, the Chinese.⁷⁹ Therefore, the North Korean prisoners became a non-issue, and Kim Il-sung had given up the idea of recovering all of them. But Mao would not allow a single Chinese prisoner to escape from the fate of returning to his control.

With some flexibility shown on the Communist side, particularly the North Koreans, the negotiations seemed to forge ahead toward a final resolution, and switched into secret sessions to iron out final differences. Delighted by this sign of hope, the UNC scrambled to come up with a “round number” of prisoners it could hand back to the Communists, but the UNC staff actually had “no idea as to just how many prisoners would refuse repatriation.” “Based on guesswork,” General Hickey, UNC chief of staff, estimated that of the 132,000 military prisoners, 116,000 would eventually choose to return. Among the 20,000 Chinese, he thought that over half would forcibly resist repatriation, because “they were well organized, disciplined, and controlled by strong leaders with Nationalist sympathies.”⁸⁰

As if Hickey’s folly of wishful thinking and wild guess was not enough, a certain UNC negotiator made a small error that turned into a monumental mistake. In early April, Colonel Hickman, hinted to his Chinese counterpart, Colonel Chai, that roughly 116,000 prisoners might be involved in an exchange. But he failed to mention General Hickey’s estimate of the larger number of Chinese POWs’ resistance to repatriation.⁸¹ This American officer was totally insensitive to the Chinese Communists’ intense desire

⁷⁷ One of the earliest records of the North Koreans’ desire to end the war appeared in a cable from Mao to Stalin, Feb 8, 1952, in *Eguo danganguan de jiemi wenjian*, ed. Shen, 1152.

⁷⁸ Hermes, 168.

⁷⁹ Telegram, Vishinsky to Molotov, July 7, 1952, in *Eguo danganguan de jiemi wenjian*, ed. Shen Zhihua, 1183.

⁸⁰ Hermes, 169.

⁸¹ Hermes, 169.

to recover all Chinese prisoners, a fact that should have been glaringly apparent to the Americans. He unwittingly misled Chai into thinking that China and North Korea would recover approximately 116,000 prisoners, or roughly 88% of all POWs, and the ratio would apply to both the Chinese and North Koreans. Perhaps this ratio was sufficiently face-saving for the Chinese Communists. The Chinese negotiators seemed eager to get a round figure of those who would forcibly resist repatriation, so a screening of the prisoners' will was agreed. At the request of the UNC, on April 6 Chai provided an amnesty statement written in the names of Kim Il Sung and Peng Dehuai, which would be announced to prisoners to reassure them that they would not be punished once they returned home. Clearly, hopes were high for the Communists, as they believed most "Chinese Volunteers" would naturally choose to return home. Unfortunately, they did not know what was in store.

Once the Communists accepted the 116,000 number, in order to meet this unrealistically high figure the UNC thought of various ways to reduce the number of anti-repatriates. All "Taiwanese" employed by the UNC, including interpreters and CIE teachers were removed from the compounds by late March. Most importantly, on April 6, the prison authorities held conference with compound leaders, and repeatedly made the following announcement over the public announcement system:

All POWs will be individually interviewed by impartial UNC pers within the next few days. This interview is being conducted for the purpose of determining which POWs desire to be repatriated to the Korean People's Army or to the Chinese People's Volunteers and which ones have compelling reasons which they feel would make it impossible for them to return to their own side. This determination will speed up the rate of repatriation at the time POWs are exchanged.

At this time I must caution you that the decision you make is a most important one, possibly the most vital one you will ever be called upon to make. You must most carefully consider each aspect of the matter. You must make your own decision and for your own safety it is essential that you do not discuss this matter with others and above all that you let no other person, even your best friend, know what your decision will be prior to the time you are asked for it by the interviewer.

To those prisoners of war who are not violently opposed to repatriation, the United Nations Command will guarantee return to your authorities at the time prisoners of war are exchanged. Your decision in this matter will be considered final. The UNC can make no guarantee whatever as to the ultimate fate of those who refuse to go back to their own people.

Before any of you, for any reason which you think may be compelling, decides irrevocably to reject repatriation, you must consider the effect of your decision on your family. The fact that you are a POW has been reported to your authorities and they know that you are alive and well. If you fail to return, the communists will undoubtedly consider your family suspect. You may well never see your family again. You must consider this matter from every angle.

If your final decision is that you are violently opposed to repatriation, you may undoubtedly be held in custody here on Koje-do for many long months. However, the UNC cannot house and feed you forever. The United Nations Command can make no promises regarding your future. In particular, the UNC cannot and will not guarantee to send you to any certain place. This is a matter which you should consider most carefully.

Interviews will be conducted in each compound to prepare rolls of the prisoners of war to be repatriated.

Rosters by battalion have already been prepared.

Within a few days interview points will be established near the sally port in each compound. At the appointed hour prisoners of war will be formed by battalion according to roster. Unarmed UNC clerks and U.S. MPs will enter the compound to conduct the interviews. Prisoners of war will move to the interview point when called by the clerks, where they will be asked to express their decisions. They will carry their equipment and clothing with them.

Depending upon each individual's decision, he will remain in his present compound or be moved immediately.

After individual interview, prisoners of war who are to be repatriated will be housed in compounds separate from those prisoners of war who strongly oppose repatriation.

You are reminded that quiet and good order must be maintained within the compound during the conduct of these interviews.⁸²

Apparently, the UN Command was trying to maximize the number of prisoners who might choose repatriation. To allay prisoners' fear of reprisals after repatriation, the UNC broadcast Peng Dehuai and Kim Il Sung's reassurance message that was transmitted through Radio Pyongyang. The message read:

⁸² Telegram C67178, Ridgway to Department of the Army, April 19, 1952, *FRUS 1952-1954*, vol. 15, part 1, 160-164. Italics added.

The spokesman of the Korean People's Army and the Command Headquarters of the Chinese Peoples Volunteers has been authorized on April 6, 1952 to make the following statement concerning the release and repatriation of all prisoners of war following an armistice in Korea.

The Korean Peoples' Army and the Chinese Peoples Volunteers have always held that, following the cessation of active hostilities, both belligerents should speedily release and repatriate all the prisoners of war in their respective custody. This reasonable position of ours definitely will not undergo any change on account of the fact that a number of our captured personnel, during the period of captivity, have had their arms tattooed or have written certain documents or committed other similar acts. We are deeply aware that such acts have certainly not been done out of their own volition and that they should not be held responsible for these acts.

We wholeheartedly welcome the return of all our captured personnel to the arms of the Motherland; we have further guaranteed, in an agreement reached with the other side, that all captured personnel shall, after their repatriation, rejoin their families to participate in peaceful construction and live a peaceful life.⁸³

Yet, many prisoners in Compounds 72 and 86 could not hear these messages clearly because the anti-Communists made so much noise to drown out the loudspeaker. After all, these measures were too little too late.

April 1952: Reign of Terror on the Eve of the Screening

The actual screening was carried out in Compound 86 on April 8, in Compound 72 on April 9. While the most ostensible moment of choice was the U.S.-administered screening beginning on April 8, 1952, much of the terror occurred the night before. On the eve of the screening, many prisoners in Compounds 72 and 86 went through horrific pre-screening sessions that were blotted by intense fear, widespread torture, cruel mutilations and the gruesome murders of pro-repatriation prisoners.

Later two Chinese-American interpreters described the harrowing scene to Admiral Joy. On the night before screening, pro-Nationalists camp leaders "asked those who wished to return to step forward. Those doing so were either beaten black and blue

⁸³ Telegram C67178, Ridgway to Department of the Army, April 19, 1952, *FRUS 1952-1954*, vol. 15, part 1, 160-164

or killed.”⁸⁴ It is no exaggeration to say that the final breakdown of repatriation and non-repatriation was determined in the months leading up to the April 8, 1952 screening, and cemented in the violent nights before the actual screening.

Pro-repatriation prisoner Cai Pingsheng’s experience on the night of April 8 fully demonstrates the brutality of this “reign of terror” by anti-Communist prisoners in Compound 72.⁸⁵ After dark, all of the more than 8,000 prisoners in Compound 72 were summoned to large tents according to their prison battalions. Cai’s company leader announced, “Tomorrow the United Nations Command will carry out a screening of prisoners. For those who want to return to the mainland, step out now. Otherwise there is no chance for that tomorrow.” Without a second thought, Cai sprang up. He was promptly dragged away by two club-wielding prisoner guards (PG) to a smaller tent, where he was punched and kicked. By the end of the session, Cai found forty-seven other men like him were beaten and locked in the tent.

At this moment, Fu Tietao, Cai’s former classmate in the Attached School and currently the battalion clerk, walked into the tent. Fu said, “As your old classmate, I hope you can change your mind. Why be so stubborn? Once you declare to go to Taiwan, your torment will be stopped immediately.” “Each man has his own will. I don’t want to go to Taiwan,” retorted Cai. “Because my parents are in China, my home is in China.” Upon hearing this, two PGs jumped in, took Cai by his arms, and hauled him to the regiment headquarter. They ripped Cai’s shirt, and pressed him down onto the ground. Fu pulled out a razor, and sliced a large piece of skin off Cai’s left forearm where a tattoo reading “Anti-Red” had been inscribed in English. Literally adding salt to the injury, Fu sprayed salt and pepper onto Cai’s open wound, saying they were “antiseptics.” Dripping with

⁸⁴ Goodman, ed., *The Dairy of Admiral C. Turner Joy*, 355.

⁸⁵ Cai Pingsheng, interview by author, September 2007, Chengdu, Sichuan.

blood, the removed skin was put in a steel basin, which was filled with the skin of other prisoners, and was making the rounds in different tents throughout Compound 72.

While Cai's forearm was still bleeding, the notoriously brutal Li Da'an, the Deputy Leader of Compound 72, arrived with a baseball bat. Cai was shoved down to the ground, and Li whacked Cai with his bat relentlessly, until Cai blacked out. When Cai was woken up by Fu Tietao's shaking, it was already 4 or 5 o'clock in the morning. "Can you hear it? They have been digging a grave all night. It will be the final destination for you people who want to go back to the mainland. This is your last chance to recant. If you do, I can guarantee your safety." At a point so close to death, Cai's mind went "totally blank." "Say nothing more to me now, anything you say is a waste," Cai uttered. Then he stared Fu in the eye, in dead silence. Finally Fu gave up, and stormed out with a roar, "You, just wait and die!" Miraculously, thanks to the hard topsoil in cold temperature, the grave-digging job wasn't completed at daybreak, when loudspeakers announced the assembly of all prisoners. Official screening finally began, and Cai barely survived.

However, several fellow pro-repatriation prisoners were less fortunate. The most well-known victim was Sichuan University student Lin Xuebu, who was murdered on the eve of the screening. One U.S. army report describes the scene of three dead prisoners, through the eyes of a U.S. officer:

On 9 April 1952, at approximately 0945 hours, upon arrival at Compound #72, the undersigned viewed the bodies of the deceased as they lay upon the trash pile where they were discovered by an unidentified POW... the unclothed body of CHOU with bruises about the face, ears and thighs. It appeared that CHOU's body had been dragged to the trash pile. ... Approximately three small perforating wounds were observed about the body of LIN. Also the neck bore rope burns apparently from a short length of rope found thereon. LIN's upper left arm had been peeled of skin. ... A short length of rope was also found around the neck of CHANG. The face appeared very blue.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ Report of Proceedings by Board of Officers, in NARA/RG 554 (Records of General Headquarters, Far East Command)/290:51:9:5 Incident Investigation Cases/Box 6/Case #117.

This description matched the account made by a fellow prisoner in Compound 72: “the next morning, after breakfast, when we walked past the (CIE) hall, there were three naked dead bodies, lying on the dirt pile in front of the kitchen. In Lin Xuebu’s mouth was dirt; his nares, arms, and belly were covered in blood. Blue bruises were all over his thighs.”⁸⁷ However, these observations were merely superficial. Postmortem examinations conducted by the 64th Field Hospital revealed more gruesome details.

The body is that of a well developed, poorly nourished Chinese male which measure 66 inches in length and is estimated to weigh 130 lbs... There are ecchymoses of both eyes, bleeding from both nares, avulsion of the skin over the lateral surface of the left arm for an area measuring 12x7 cm...There are two perforating wounds—one in the left anterior auxiliary line at the level of the eight interspace, and one in the left lower quadrant.” The causes of death: “Perforating wounds of the left thorax and left abdomen with resulting hemothorax, left and hemoperitoneum.”⁸⁸

Lin Sho Poo or Lin Xuebu’s death later became a legend in the history written by the returnees. Lin, a Sichuan University student majoring in English, volunteered to join the PLA and served as a translator in the 180th Division, 60th Army. After his capture, he initially served as a leader in Compound 86, but was later pushed aside by the anti-Communists. On the night of April 7, Lin was brutally murdered by the notoriously violent anti-Communist leader Li Da’an.⁸⁹ In 1982, Lin posthumously received the honor of a “Revolutionary Martyr,” and later his name was inscribed along with those of other revolutionary alumni on a stele on the campus of Sichuan University.⁹⁰ However, for readers skeptical of Communist hagiography, three gruesome details related to the

⁸⁷ Yu Jing, 266-267. This prisoner was an anti-Communist who was later drafted by the U.S. intelligence to parachute into North Korea, captured and sentenced to death in 1958 in China. This is a part of his confession.

⁸⁸ Report of Proceedings by Board of Officers, in NARA/RG 554 (Records of General Headquarters, Far East Command)/290:51:9:5 Incident Investigation Cases/Box 6/Case #117.

⁸⁹ Zhang Zeshi 张泽石, Zhao Guoxi 赵国玺 and Ding Xianwen 丁先文, “Buwei qiangbao de Lin Xuebu” 不畏强暴的林学逋 [The Indomitable Lin Xuebu], in *Kaoyan: Zhiyuanjun zhanfu Meijun jizhongying qinliji* 考验: 志愿军战俘美军集中营亲历记 [Test: personal accounts of Chinese People’s Volunteer Army prisoners in U.S. Army’s concentration camps], ed. Zhang Zeshi (Beijing, 1998), 330-334.

⁹⁰ Zhang Zeshi, Zhao Guoxi and Ding Xianwen, in *Kaoyan*, 334.

circumstances of his death seemed to be beyond imagination. One was the claim that Lin's skin, once forcibly tattooed by other prisoners with anti-Communist slogans, was sliced off by the anti-Communists. Secondly, it was reported that Lin's heart was taken out by Li Da'an with a dagger. Finally, it was said that Lin, a non-party member, cried out "Long Live Chairman Mao!" at the final moment of his life, before Li's dagger impaled his chest.

Clearly, the first doubt can be largely dispelled by the U.S. military's postmortem report, which contains "avulsion of the skin over the lateral surface of the left arm for an area measuring 12x7 cm." Judging from other prisoners' accounts, the peeling of tattooed skin was a standard punishment meted out to those who lived inside Compound 72 but wished to return to China.⁹¹ Further evidence can be found in the anti-Communist hagiography of Li Da'an in *Fangong yishi fendoushi*, published in 1955 in Taiwan, despite the fact that Li never made his way to Taiwan because he was drafted by the U.S. intelligence, parachuted into North Korea, and captured. Without specifically mentioning Lin Xuebu, it described the scene on the eve of screening: "Li Da'an pulled out his knife, sliced off tattooed (anti-Communist) characters from the arms of these traitors, piece by piece." And "as if nothing had happened," in front of fellow prisoners, he "swallowed these skins with blood."⁹²

While the autopsy reported "perforating wounds of the left thorax and left abdomen," it did not state whether the heart was missing. Therefore, it is still premature to accept the second claim. However, in a recent Masters thesis (2008) by Ma Kuo-cheng, one witness, presumably also one of those who participated in the killing of Lin, recalled,

⁹¹ Cai Pingsheng 蔡平生, interview by author, September 2007, Chengdu, Sichuan.

⁹² *Fangong yishi fendou shi* 反共義士奮鬥史 (Taipei, 1955), 88, 126.

That fellow Lin, an excellent person, his English was brilliant... And he taught me English. We got along really well... If it were up to me, I wouldn't kill him... He didn't do anything wrong. That guy was educated, and spoke great English. It would have been nice to keep his heart.⁹³

In this oral history interview conducted by Ma, whose father was a friend and fellow POW with the witness, the witness probably spoke of “heart” figuratively. However, one cannot help but ask, is there a possibility that he spoke of the “heart” literally?

The same witness also confirmed the third claim. “When (we) killed him, he even shouted ‘Long live Mao Zedong’ two or three times.” His explanation for this behavior of Lin was that “since he knew his life was coming to an end, he just decided to become a hero.”⁹⁴ Another prisoner, a former colleague of Lin, but not present at the murder scene, was Ma Furui, Ma Kuo-cheng’s father. Ma gave his account of Lin’s death, “Lin was actually anti-Communist... but he often complained about the heavy-handed controls instituted by compound leaders, especially Li Da’an’s.” Because Lin often conversed with the Americans, he was suspected of reporting on prisoner leaders. Consequently, he was demoted from the Compound headquarters, where the HQ staff enjoyed many privileges and certain prestige, to a platoon for rank and file prisoners. In these bottom-rung platoons, “restrictions were many, and were even more strict than Communist methods.” Fifty prisoners lived in the same tent. Internally it was controlled by a platoon leader; and outside it was guarded by prison monitors. “Prisoners were not allowed to talk freely... They could only speak to people living in the same tent. Even talking to prisoners in the next tent was prohibited.”⁹⁵ Ma Furui confirmed, “there were many deaths on the eve of the screening.” “Many who were discovered as pro-Communists were ganged up against and beaten to death. Their bodies were buried

⁹³ Ma Guozheng 馬國正 (Ma Kuo-Cheng), 反共、恐共、恐國？韓戰來台志願軍戰俘問題之研究 (unpublished masters thesis, 國立中正大學歷史研究所), 133.

⁹⁴ Ma Guozheng, 134.

⁹⁵ Ma Guozheng, 133.

randomly. And the Americans did not bother to discipline the perpetrators.” According to Ma, violence was widespread in Compound 72, where he belonged, and it was more extreme in soldiers’ battalions than in officers’. In Compound 86, it was “relatively moderate.”⁹⁶

Probably the violence in Compound 86 was less outright, as most prisoners would agree, including those who were repatriated to China eventually. During the screening beginning from April 8, whereas only about 400 men escaped from the iron hands of Li Da’an in Compound 72, 1,128 men in Compound 86 managed to express their will to return to China.⁹⁷ Nevertheless it was still a treacherous place.

At about 0045 hours on 8 April 1952, the body of POW Tseo Win Kang, ISN 63NK 719370, was found hanging from a rafter in the bath house in Compound #86, Enclosure #8, by a fellow PW. Cause of death was suffocation by strangulation.⁹⁸

That on 8 April 1952, about 1000 hours, the body of Prisoner of War Chi Choong Tang, IN 63NK 712374 was found hanging in an empty tent by a fellow prisoner of war. Prior to his death Chi had stated that he did not want to return to Communist party zone. Death was due to strangulation with resulting asphyxia.⁹⁹

In near identical fashion, these two prisoners supposedly committed suicide. During investigations, witnesses provided nearly identical accounts: the deceased was unhappy prior to screening, because of fear to be “returned to the Chinese Communist Forces” or “Communist zone.” When asked by UNC investigators, “Do you think he hung himself?” The answer was uniformly, “yes.”¹⁰⁰ One has to wonder, were these similar suicides coordinated? Despite the obvious question marks, the investigation of Chi’s

⁹⁶ Ma Guozheng, 130.

⁹⁷ Zhou Xiuhuan (Hsiu-huan Chou), ed., *Zhanhou waijiao shiliao huibian: hanzhan yu fangong yishi pian 1* [Documentary Collections of Foreign Affairs of Postwar Taiwan: The Korean War and the Chinese Communist Defectors, vol.1] (Taiwan: Guoshi guan, 2005), 234.

⁹⁸ Report of Proceedings by Board of Officers, in NARA/RG 554 (Records of General Headquarters, Far East Command)/290:51:9:5 Incident Investigation Cases/Box 6/Case #121.

⁹⁹ Report of Proceedings by Board of Officers, in NARA/RG 554 (Records of General Headquarters, Far East Command)/290:51:9:5 Incident Investigation Cases/Box 6/Case #120.

¹⁰⁰ NARA/RG 554/Incident Investigation Cases/Case #121 and Case #120.

apparent suicide found “no evidence of foul play.” Furthermore, “the present policy of UN POW Camp #1, APO 59, is to segregate POWs of different political beliefs,” which was to be continued.¹⁰¹

Apparently, during the reign of terror on the eve of the screening, the prison authorities had largely failed to protect pro-repatriation prisoners by choosing not to intervene. While U.S. guards in watchtowers or outside the barbed wire could hear victims howling, the authorities did not act. Certainly this unchecked violence traumatized many prisoners, leading them to believe that the UN Command was behind all the violence and the screening was only a trap to round up all pro-Communists, as the anti-Communist leaders had long claimed. In a state of heightened fear, many prisoners who actually wanted to return home dared not to choose repatriation.

The April 1952 Screening: Operation Scatter

After going through the harrowing night before April 8, 1952, prisoners in Compound 72 and 86 were screened individually by the UN Command. This was known as Operation Scatter. In a report to Washington General Ridgway described the aim of this operation was “to conduct screening and segregation of North Korean and Chinese POWs with a view to making the maximum number available for return to Communist control, reduced by those who present reasonable evidence that they would forcibly oppose return to Communist control.”¹⁰² Strictly speaking, the polling questions were designed to encourage repatriation. Nationalist personnel were excluded from the process. Other Mandarin-speaking U.S. personnel were employed to ask individual prisoners seven questions:

¹⁰¹ NARA/RG 554/Incident Investigation Cases/Case #120.

¹⁰² Telegram C67178, Ridgway to Department of the Army, April 19, 1952, *FRUS 1952- 1954*, vol. 15, part 1, 160.

1. Will you voluntarily be repatriated to Communist China?
2. Will you forcibly resist repatriation?
3. Have you carefully considered the impact of such actions on your family?
4. Do you realize that you may remain here at Kojedo long after those electing repatriation have returned home?
5. Do you realize that the United Nations cannot promise that you will be sent to any certain place?
6. Are you still determined that you would violently resist repatriation?
7. What would you do if you are repatriated in spite of this decision?

These questions were asked one at a time, and the interviewer waited for a reply before asking the next question. If at any time a prisoner expressed a decision to accept repatriation the questioning ceased, and he was taken to a separate compound. If at any time the POW mentioned "suicide, fight to death, escape, braving death or similar information," the POW was segregated with those who would resist repatriation.¹⁰³ In the case of the Chinese Compounds 72 and 86, non-repatriates returned to their original compound, and repatriates were transported to a new compound.

In the early morning of April 9, the UNC erected ten tents in the middle of the plaza on Compound 72, and made prisoners trickle in one by one to be interviewed. With his left arm swollen nearly twice as large as his right one, Cai practically crawled into the tent. The interviewer, probably an Asian-American man in uniform, noticed Cai's injury. "They beat you?" Cai answered, "Yes." "Where do you want to return to?" "I want to go back to the mainland." The officer wrote down "Go," and stepped out to call in four American GIs. Cai was carried by the soldiers out of the main gate of Compound 72, and loaded onto a truck. Seeing a China-bound prisoner being carried away, other anti-Communist prisoners watching behind barbed wire erupted into cursing and started throwing rocks at Cai. The American soldiers had to shout back at the prisoners. Cai took

¹⁰³ Telegram C67178, Ridgway to Department of the Army, April 19, 1952, *FRUS 1952- 1954*, Vol. 15, 162.

a chance on the polling, and finally he escaped from his anti-Communist tormentors in Compound 72.

Despite the fact that poll questions were designed to encourage repatriation and no personnel from Taiwan participated in the polling, at the polls “the majority of the POWs were too terrified to frankly express their real choice. All they could say in answer to the questions was ‘Taiwan’ repeated over and over again.” According to the two interpreters who briefed UNC chief negotiator Joy, this was a clear indication of “the terrifying dominance of their pro-Nationalist leaders.”¹⁰⁴

After the first four days of screening, as of April 12, 1952, 14,126, or roughly 80.3 percent of the 17,593 Chinese prisoners screened so far, declared their will to forcibly resist repatriation to China.¹⁰⁵ Naturally, most of them were from Compounds 72 and 86, which a combined population of 16,000. According to Nationalist interpreters, who were excluded from the screening process but nevertheless had information, only about 400 men from the 7,000 in Compound 72 opted for repatriation, and 1,128 out of some 8,600 prisoners in Compound 86 did the same.¹⁰⁶ In the pro-Communist Compound 71, all 254 prisoners collectively refused screening, and were classified as pro-repatriates. In Compound 70, in which neither the Communists nor anti-Communists had total control, 1,217 out of some 1,400 chose repatriation, after its influential Prisoner Guard Squad leader Gao Pan suddenly announced his own wish to return home.¹⁰⁷ And in Communists-controlled hospital compound in Pusan, which was dominated by pro-Communist prisoners, 1,306, or 71.3 percent, of the 1,832 sick Chinese prisoners chose

¹⁰⁴ Goodman, ed., *The Dairy of Admiral C. Turner Joy*, 355.

¹⁰⁵ Telegram C66832, Ridgway to Department of the Army, April 12, 1952, *FRUS 1952- 1954*, Vol. 15, 143.

¹⁰⁶ Zhou, ed., *Hanzhan yu Fangong Yishi pian* 1, 234.

¹⁰⁷ He Ming 贺明, *Zhongcheng: Zhiyuanjun zhanfu guilai renyuan de kanke jingli* 忠诚: 志愿军战俘归来人员的坎坷经历 [Loyalty: the difficult experiences of repatriated POWs of the Korean War] (Beijing : Zhongguo wenshi chubanshe 中国文史出版社, 1998), 37-38.

repatriation.¹⁰⁸ Clearly, the outcome of the screening was largely pre-determined by the leadership and their political dominance of various prison camps.

Table 1. Screening Results in Major Compounds¹⁰⁹

Compound	Control	No. of POWs	Repatriates	Anti-Rept	Source
72	Anti-Comm	7,000	400 5.7%	6,600 94.3%	Zhou ¹¹⁰
86	Anti-Comm	8,600	1,128 13.1%	7,400 86.0%	Zhou
70	Neutral	1,400	1,217 86.9%	183 13.1%	He Ming ¹¹¹
71	Comm	254	254 100.0%	0 0.0%	He Ming
Pusan Hospital	Comm	1,832	1,306 71.3%	526 28.7%	FRUS ¹¹²

Note: Approximate figures are in italics; accurate figures are in bold font.

The large number of anti-repatriates came as a shock to the Americans. It was also much higher than the initial estimates made by the Nationalists that about 8,000 to 10,000 tattooed prisoners would reject repatriation. Ambassador Wang attributed this outcome to the “well-selected” Nationalist interpreters. He contrasted the outcome to the Korean case. Despite the presence of South Korean interpreters, only 50% of the North Koreans rejected repatriation.¹¹³ In a meeting with Joy, two Chinese-American interpreters estimated that the “removal of the (pro-Nationalist) leaders, coupled with a period of indoctrination [*sic*] of the POWs, would bring the percentage in those pro-Nationalist dominated compounds of those wishing to return to the enemy up from 15 to

¹⁰⁸ Telegram C67178, Ridgway to Department of the Army, April 19, 1952, *FRUS 1952- 1954, Vol. 15*, 163. OR NARA/RG319 (Army G-3 Operations)/General Decimal Files/G3 383.6 TS/box 127, 5.

¹⁰⁹ Since no single source provides both combined and compound-specific numbers, this table is constructed by using various sources.

¹¹⁰ Zhou, ed., *hanzhan yu Fangong Yishi pian* 1, 233-234.

¹¹¹ He Ming, *Zhongcheng*, 37-38.

¹¹² Telegram C67178, Ridgway to DoA, April 19, 1952, *FRUS 1952- 1954, Vol. 15*, 163.

¹¹³ Zhou, ed., *hanzhan yu Fangong Yishi pian* 1, 233-234.

85%.”¹¹⁴ In the next few days, Joy conferred with Ridgway and proposed a rescreening of prisoners with anti-Communist trustees removed. However, General Van Fleet, the commander of the Eighth Army, which was responsible for running Kojoe prison, determined a rescreening impractical. The idea of a thorough rescreening was dropped.¹¹⁵

In Panmunjom, Chinese Communist negotiators were expecting a “round number” of more than 80% choosing repatriation. At the meeting of the staff officers on April 19, Colonel Hickman “calmly informed Tsai that 7,200 civilian internees, 3,800 ROK prisoners, 53,900 North Koreans, and 5,100 Chinese- a total of 70,000 men- would be available for repatriation.” Chai Chengwen was stunned speechless, “overcome with emotion.”¹¹⁶ When he recovered enough to talk, Chai quickly requested a recess to regain his composure and to get instructions from his superiors. The next day, Chai declared that it was “completely impossible for us to consider” these figures, and he charged the UNC, “You flagrantly repudiated what you said before.”¹¹⁷ Understandably, the Chinese negotiators felt that “they had been duped and led into a propaganda trap.” The armistice negotiations came to an impasse again. As official U.S. military historian Walter G. Hermes concluded, “The screening process which momentarily seemed to be a way to break the deadlock had merely resulted in increasing it.”¹¹⁸ The war was set to continue, until the Communists, especially the Chinese, were willing to accept this humiliating propaganda defeat.

¹¹⁴ Goodman, ed., *Negotiating While Fighting*, 355. Here the term “indoctrination” means a period of re-education to disabuse the prisoners of fear instilled by the anti-Communist leaders in these compounds.

¹¹⁵ Goodman, ed., *Negotiating While Fighting*, 356-357.

¹¹⁶ Hermes, 171.

¹¹⁷ Hermes, 171-172.

¹¹⁸ Hermes, 172.

Chiang Kai-shek: “A Victory Came Unexpectedly”

Once again, the armistice negotiations stood on the brink of breaking down. The Communists demanded a rescreening, under the condition of a total removal of Nationalist personnel and segregation of anti-Communist prisoner leaders. Joy also recommended a rescreening to Ridgway who agreed in principle and inquired General Van Fleet, the commander of the Eighth Army, about its feasibility. With a grave sense of crisis, in mid-April Chiang Kai-shek made daily entries in his diary on the urgency of mobilizing world public opinion to condemn the “injustice and inhumanity” of U.S. policy.¹¹⁹ Chiang’s supporters in the U.S. intensified their propaganda offensive to prevent Truman from backing down. Holding up psychological warfare leaflets on the Senate floor, Senator Knowland asserted the U.S. had promised asylum to any surrendering Communist soldiers. “I hope,” he pronounced, “that the Government... is not going to consider returning over a single soldier... who has surrendered under those guarantees.”¹²⁰ Although from a legalistic point of view, these leaflets did not constitute a promise of asylum, the public found Knowland’s moral argument persuasive. Truman could not sound a retreat. Too much of America’s moral prestige and his own legacy was at stake. The U.S. government announced its determination to stand by the voluntary repatriation principle, and the screening results.

On April 30, Chiang reflected on the struggle over the POWs so far, which he regarded as “a victory that came unexpectedly.” This development was “the only satisfying event in this year’s work.” As a result of it, “the conspiracy to end the Korean War was completely smashed.”¹²¹ As if to seal Chiang’s moral victory, on May 7 President Truman personally made a statement, which read:

¹¹⁹ Chiang Diaries, April 9, 11, 12, 1952.

¹²⁰ Foot, 99-100.

¹²¹ Chiang Diaries, April 30, 1952.

[T]here shall not be a forced repatriation of prisoners of war—as the Communists have insisted. To agree to forced repatriation would be unthinkable. It would be repugnant to the fundamental moral and humanitarian principles which underlie our action in Korea. To return these prisoners of war in our hands by force would result in misery and bloodshed to the eternal dishonor of the United States and of the United Nations. We will not buy an armistice by turning over human beings for slaughter or slavery.¹²²

Finally, Truman's proclamation effectively ended any chance of forced return of anti-Communist prisoners.

On the day of Truman's declaration, North Korean prisoners kidnapped UN prison commandant General Francis Dodd. To secure his release, on May 10 Dodd's successors signed an agreement without proper clearance from superiors, effectively admitting prior brutality in prison camps. Brandishing the agreement in Panmunjom, Communist negotiators castigated the U.S. for murder and lying. In conjunction with the propaganda offensive generated by germ warfare allegations, the Communists seemed to have turned things around in the moral battle and gained a higher ground. An exasperated Truman went into a rage in his diary. "What has happened to the 1,000,000 German prisoners the Soviet holds or have they been murdered as the Poles were murdered at Katyn? Where are the million Japs who surrendered to the Russians?" In a language strikingly similar to Chiang's, Truman lambasted the Communists: "You have no morals, no honor... Your whole program at this conference has been based on lies and propaganda." Finally, Truman wanted the Communists to read Confucius, the Buddha's code, the *Declaration of Independence*, and the Bible.¹²³ Ironically, Truman's nemesis, Chiang, not the Communists, had been reading Confucius and the Bible.

At this point, it seemed that Chiang's prophecy of ten months earlier was coming true. When the armistice negotiations began in July 1951, Chiang assessed the

¹²² John T. Woolley and Gerhard Peters, *The American Presidency Project* [online] (Santa Barbara, CA), accessed June 14, 2011, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=14108>.

¹²³ Truman, *Off The Record*, 251.

Communist truce offer as the same kind of ploy they made in 1946 during Marshall's mediations between the Communists and the Nationalists. "The armistice negotiation is only the beginning of retribution for Marshall's deeds. The Americans have not experienced the true taste [of Communist negotiation tactics]. The true taste is to come."¹²⁴ Now, Chiang and Truman had more than mutual contempt in common. On one item they were on the same page.

In essence, although the screening process was originally devised to produce a *fait accompli* for the Communists, it generated such a hugely lopsided result that in effect it constituted a *fait accompli* for Truman. Mounting public pressure and Truman's own conscience precluded any possibility of rejecting the screening result, let alone abandoning the non-forcible repatriation policy. In addition, practically speaking, there was no way the U.S. could repatriate the core group of die-hard anti-Communist prisoners without using brutal force on the very men whom the U.S. once attempted to convert. Men like Li Da'an, Wang Shunqing, and Wang Zunming, if repatriated to China, would face certain death. They would rather be killed by the U.S. than the Communists. Certainly, that was not an outcome the U.S. was willing to entertain.

Whereas the UN side stiffened its position, Mao and Stalin firmed up their insistence on the return of all Chinese prisoners. In a telegram to Stalin dated July 15, Mao warned, "The percentages of repatriates among the Chinese and North Korean prisoners diverged so much. The enemy's provocative scheme is designed to drive a wedge" between China and North Korea. In his reply, Stalin endorsed Mao's intransigence on the repatriation issue, despite Kim Il Sung's repeated pleas for a compromise to end the war. On August 20, Stalin repeated his support of Mao to the visiting Zhou Enlai: "Chinese comrades must understand this: if the U.S. does not lose

¹²⁴ Chiang Diaries, July 28, 1951.

this war, China will never recover Taiwan.” Dismissing Kim’s complaints over casualties, Stalin told the North Koreans to follow the lead of the Chinese.¹²⁵ Clearly, Stalin and Mao were resolved to fight on, for the express objective of regaining Chinese prisoners. As Chiang had predicted, the Communists rejected the UN’s final package deal in October, so the armistice negotiations broke down indefinitely. Fighting continued.

As early as late May 1952, Chiang Kai-shek had regained his confidence. In April, the Sino-Japan Peace Treaty (The Treaty of Taipei) was signed, with Japan renouncing sovereignty over Taiwan. In the U.S., Dulles made a policy announcement supporting Nationalist China. In his diaries, Chiang Kai-shek recalled Dulles’s suggestion of UN trusteeship two years earlier, and contrasted it to the new policy of helping “Nationalist China restore its independence and not forsaking Taiwan to the fate” of Communist domination.¹²⁶ To his great encouragement, Chiang noted, “The respect accorded to the yellow race is something that people could not have dreamed of two thousand years ago.” Sure of his survival and hopeful about his future, Chiang was not about to spare his detractors. He saw Taiwan’s survival as “the biggest lesson for Marshall, Acheson and other hero dogs of the Communist bandits.” Chiang exclaimed, “How can sparrows understand the ambitions of a swan?”¹²⁷

A Final and Irrevocable Outcome

In retrospect, it is no exaggeration to conclude that by April and May 1952, in the aftermath of prisoner screening and Truman’s public announcement on May 7, voluntary repatriation had become a “final and irrevocable” U.S. policy stance, and the breakdown

¹²⁵ Shen, ed., *Chaoxian zhanzheng: Eguo danganguan de jiemi wenjian*, vol. 3, 1186, 1201-1202.

¹²⁶ Chiang Diaries, May 22, 1952.

¹²⁷ Chiang Diaries, May 23, 1952. Judging from the context, Chiang probably intended to say, “The respect accorded to the yellow race is something that people could not have dreamed in the last two thousand years.”

of armistice negotiations and continued fighting were expected. This course of development was anticipated and desired by Chiang Kai-shek, as it would guarantee the survival of the Republic of China on Taiwan. This decisive moment occurred half a year before Eisenhower's election in November 1952, and one year after General MacArthur's dismissal in April 1951. Chiang Kai-shek and Ching-kuo seized a thin thread of history, first presented by the outbreak of the Korean War and MacArthur in 1950, and ran with it. Despite the sacking of MacArthur, once MacArthur had inducted Taiwan into the secret war in Korea, the Nationalists quickly found leverage on the POW issue, and surreptitiously but forcefully asserted Taiwan into the course of war. Perhaps the Nationalists finally found the spirit Madame Chiang, who had once preached, "God helps those who help themselves."

From a larger geo-political perspective, Taiwan's quiet shift from non-player and non-factor status in the Korean War to victor and beneficiary status signaled a profound reversal of its political fortune. Once regarded as the "orphan of Asian" on the brink of collapse, it had now become a bastion of the anti-Communist crusade in the Cold War. This was the product of Nationalist intelligence efforts during the war. Chiang's secret war began with a trickle of agents flowing into Tokyo and Korea, but ended with a torrent of Chinese prisoners "returning" to Taiwan. These operations started in secret, but concluded as a dramatic spectacle.

From the perspective of Chinese prisoners, the widespread violence perpetrated by the anti-Communist prisoners on pro-Communists had a profound psychological impact on those pro-Communists who survived the ordeals in Compounds 72 and 86. These horrific experiences convinced many of them of the need to have a strong organization to counter the anti-Communist "traitors" and the prison authorities. When

the pro-Communists had an opportunity, they formed their organizations and enforced their discipline, which was often similarly violent and brutal.

Most consequentially, once a prisoner made his “final and irrevocable” decision regarding repatriation in April 1952, he fell under the control of either Communist or anti-Communist prisoner leaders with little chance of escape. That being said, however, for the anti-repatriation prisoners, they had a chance to reverse decisions, when the UN Command conducted a surprise rescreening on April 19, immediately before they boarded ships to Cheju Island.¹²⁸ During this operation, 415 prisoners changed their mind and declared their will to return to China.¹²⁹ Shanxi native Wang Guanhu was one of the prisoners who dared not to choose repatriation on April 8, but took a chance this time. He was sent to join other pro-repatriates in the newly created Compound 602.¹³⁰ However, after this surprise rescreening, anti-repatriate prisoners would not have a chance to reverse their decisions for another 16 months. Until then, they had to live under the iron hand of their fierce anti-Communist leaders, such as Wang Shunqing and Wang Zunming. Dissenters and vacillators were tortured, and sometimes murdered.

While a portion of the anti-repatriates would eventually have a chance to reconsider during the “explanation” in late 1953, those who chose repatriation in April 1952 would never had such an opportunity. They had to follow their Communist leaders to fight against the prison authorities. Dissenters and vacillators were persecuted, and sometimes murdered.

¹²⁸ *Fangong yishi fendou shi* 反共義士奮鬥史, 109.

¹²⁹ Memorandum by U. Alexis Johnson, “Result of the screening of POWs based upon the most recent cable from General Ridgway,” April 30, 1952, NARA/RG 59/Decimal File 1950-1954/695A.0024/4-3052.

¹³⁰ Wang Guanhu, interview by author, June 4, 2010, Wenxi county, Shanxi province, China.

**“Old China Hands” on Koje Island:
Prison Incidents in Spring and Summer 1952**

I do admit that there has [sic] been instances of bloodshed where many PW have been killed and wounded by UN Forces. I can assure in the future that PW can expect humane treatment in this camp according to the principles of International Law. I will do all within my power to eliminate further violence and bloodshed. If such incidents happen in the future, I will be responsible.

— *UN Prison Commandant Brigadier General Charles Colson, May 10, 1952*¹

After the screening in April 1952, while many prisoners were seeking respite from political struggles and violence, life-and-death conflicts in prison camps allowed no refuge from politics. This chapter outlines a series of prison incidents, including the screening in April, the kidnapping of Prison Commander General Francis Dodd by North Korean prisoners, the arrival of General Boatner and his “get tough” policies, the transfer of Chinese prisoners from Koje to Cheju Island, and the conflicts on Cheju. These events involved suicides, murders, riots and massacres of prisoners. By examining some of the most dramatic tragic cases, I seek to highlight the intensely precarious existence of the prisoners who lived in an alien, confusing, and constantly changing environment.

If the Korean War was a conflict of ideology and military technology between Communist countries and the West, the prison incidents were the outcome of a clash of ideology and culture, especially military culture and prisoner of war culture. This chapter will discuss the U.S. military’s vacillation in policy and lack of preparation. It will also uncover cases of poor discipline and subsequent cover-ups. It will underscore the

¹ Hermes, 252.

Chinese prisoners' dilemma facing an uncertain future while living in a foreign environment under information blockade. It will illustrate how the relations between the Chinese prisoners and the U.S. authorities deteriorated progressively, and how mutual misunderstanding led the two onto a collision course.

Mid-May 1952. "Old China Hand" Boatner takes over Prison Command

As the screening and the subsequent segregation known as "Operation Scatter" continued, pro- and anti-repatriation prisoners were finally separated. The pro-repatriates who had just escaped from Compounds 72 and 86 thought that a time of peace and recuperation had finally arrived, and bloodshed had come to an end. However, the civil war was not over. The battle between the Communists and anti-Communists was to continue.

"Separated by two layers of barbed wire and a road," recalled anti-Communist prisoner Liu Yuru, under the alias "Liu Lang," in his famous memoir *Bleed Until Dawn*, those who went to the Communist side were timid or confused people, "misled by the thought of 'reunion with family,' or scared by the thought of Taiwan's imminent 'liberation,' or intimidated by the UNC's denial of a Taiwan-bound guarantee."²

In Liu's description, the highest-ranking Communist officer in the now much enlarged China-bound compound, Zhao Zuoduan, was a sinister beast, "yet he was such a meek little lamb when he was with us" in Compound 72. Now under Zhao's watch, prisoners were making heated criticisms and self-criticisms. Two men who had "tattooed anti-Communist vows on their arms," were now waiting for their punishment. "With Zhao's order, twenty or more arms were covered in blood." Moments later, "pieces of

² Liu Lang 刘朗, *Liuxue dao tianming* 流血到天明 [Bleed until dawn] (Hong Kong: Yazhou chuban youxian gongsi 亚洲出版有限公司, 1955), 244-245. The author's real name was Li Yuru, who is discussed in Chapter 2.

skins with tattoos were hanging on the barbed wire fences.”³ In this patently anti-Communist literature published in Hong Kong in 1955, the Communists were devils, and the anti-Communists were righteous patriots risking their lives to return to Free China. It reads much like a propaganda piece. How can such content be trusted?

“We are all sinners! We can only wash away our shame through struggle. As dishonored men, we can fight for honor!” Such slogans were the “heartfelt cries” of ashamed prisoners, writes PLA writer Yu Jing in her book *Eyun* (or Nightmare), which is still considered by many returnees as the most balanced and well-researched account of their struggle.⁴ According to Yu, in the newly created pro-repatriations Compound 602, within one month all of the some 2,000 tattooed prisoners had “performed surgeries of some sort” to remove the anti-Communist tattoos on their arms. One young male nurse was asked to perform so many removals with his scalpel that he had constant nightmares. He begged to quit this horrific job.⁵ Zhang Zeshi, who was initially nominated to be the new compound representative, begged his fellow prisoners not to perform this type of self-mutilation. However, one prisoner stood up in front of hundreds and raised his voice, “Party, please don’t worry. We are not going to carry these shameful marks back to our motherland.” Before everyone, he cut his own arm with a homemade blade.⁶

As the physical self-cleansing was underway, a political movement aimed to touch every soul was gathering steam. While on a work detail unloading rice from a Japanese cargo ship, several prisoners found crumbled pieces of the Chinese newspaper, *Jiefang Ribao* [The Liberation Daily]. They were pieced back together, and the topic of “three-antis and five-antis” was featured on the front page. “Follow the footsteps of the

³ Liu Lang, 245.

⁴ Yu Jing, 326.

⁵ Yu Jing, 327.

⁶ Yu Jing, 327.

motherland!” the Communist leaders called. And a “three-antis” movement of the prisoners’ own began: “anti-compromise, anti-treason, and anti-right-leaning vacillation.”⁷ For those who once dreamed of a peaceful life after escaping from their anti-Communist tormentors in Compounds 72 and 86, they were forced to engage in “continuous struggle” against the enemy. With the anti-Communist POWs shipped away to Cheju soon after the screening, the only enemies the Communist could struggle against on Koje Island now were the Americans without, and traitors within. Soon, the North Korean Communists would serve as the example.

On May 7, 1952, in a most fantastic plot, North Korean prisoners kidnapped the UN prison commandant, Brigadier General Francis Dodd. In early May, Dodd was under pressure from UN negotiators in Panmunjom to “complete an accurate roster and identification of all the remaining prisoners of war on Koje-do.”⁸ In order to accomplish this difficult task, which would require the prisoners’ cooperation, Dodd was keen to lessen the tension in the camp, and went out of his way to accommodate the prisoners. On May 6, Dodd had just “successfully” ended a hunger strike launched by the Chinese prisoners in Compound 602, after he went to the compound gate to negotiate with Representative Sun Zhenguan and his translator Zhang Zeshi. At the time neither Dodd nor Sun and Zhang knew that this exercise was merely a ploy to lure Dodd into a trap set by the Korean Communist underground leadership. Under the instruction of the Koreans, the Chinese prisoners held the hunger strike, though they did not know the larger plan.⁹

In the meantime, the Korean prisoners in Compound 76 had also requested to meet with Dodd directly to “discuss matters of importance.” They tantalizingly suggested

⁷ Yu Jing, 326.

⁸ Hermes, 244.

⁹ Zhang Zeshi 张泽石, *Wo de Chaoxian Zhanzheng* 我的朝鲜战争 [My Korean War], 129-131.

that “they would be willing to let themselves be listed and fingerprinted if Dodd would come and talk to them.” To Dodd, it appeared “the chance to win a bloodless victory was too good to be missed.”¹⁰ So he went to the sally port to meet with prisoner representatives. They were standing outside the main gate, and U.S. guards were standing behind Dodd. During the prolonged talk, a work detail team returned to the compound after dumping night soil into the sea, and the main gate was swung open. Dodd and his troops yielded to them and tried to stay away from the stench of honey buckets. Suddenly the last dozen or so work detail team members, the strongest of all, leaped forward, seized Dodd, and dragged him into the compound as a hostage.¹¹

To secure his release, on May 10 Dodd’s successor Brigadier General Charles Colson signed an agreement with the prisoners without proper clearance from his superiors in Pusan and Tokyo, and unaware of its political ramification. The agreement contained the following damaging lines:

I do admit that there has [*sic*] been instances of bloodshed where many PW have been killed and wounded by UN Forces. I can assure in the future that PW can expect humane treatment in this camp according to the principles of International Law. I will do all within my power to eliminate further violence and bloodshed. If such incidents happen in the future, I will be responsible.¹²

Effectively Colson admitted prior brutality in prison camps, especially during the screening. Hours later the North Korean government received the content of this agreement via clandestine channels from Koje. Brandishing the Colson agreement, Communist negotiators in Panmunjom castigated the U.S. for murder and lying. In conjunction with the propaganda offensive generated by germ warfare allegations, the

¹⁰ Hermes, 244.

¹¹ Zhang Zeshi, *Wo de chaoxiao zhanzheng*, 134-135. And Hermes, 245. The basic descriptions of the event are the same in Zhang and Hermes’ accounts. Zhang’s account is based on what he heard from the Korean prisoners, and offers more vivid details.

¹² Hermes, 252.

Communists seemed to have turned things around in the moral battle and gained the higher ground. The U.S. was hit by a propaganda fiasco.

In a scramble to control damage, Clark promptly fired Colson as the prison commandant after less than five days on the job. The U.S. denied the validity of the Colson-prisoners agreement, stressing that it was done under duress. To pacify the situation on Koje Island, Brigadier General Haydon L. Boatner, the Deputy Commanding General of the 2nd Division, was summoned from the middle of his R&R (rest and recuperation) to the Far East Command Headquarters in Tokyo. The new Commanding General was Mark Clark, the successor to Matthew Ridgway, who had flown to Europe to replace Eisenhower to lead the U.S. forces there. Clark told Boatner he would be flown to Koje Island in two hours.¹³

Boatner, a West Pointer (1920-1924), was an old China hand. From 1928 to 1930, he served in the 15th U.S. Infantry stationed in Tianjin, China. Coincidentally, George C. Marshall and Matthew B. Ridgway both had served in Tianjin in this regiment nicknamed "The Old China Hands." In the next four years, he was a U.S. military Chinese Language Officer based in Beijing, where he met John King Fairbank, the future doyen of Chinese studies in the U.S. Boatner traveled extensively, and earned a MA degree from the California College in China in 1934.¹⁴ After Pearl Harbor, Boatner returned to Asia in 1942 as General Joseph Stilwell's commanding officer at Lashio, Burma, where he witnessed the collapse of the Allied defense. In 1942-1945, he was Chief

¹³ Boatner, letter to subscribers to "Haydon's letters," July 1, 1952, July 1, 1952, Hoover Archives/Boatner Papers/Box 1, 1. DSM: Distinguished Service Medal.

¹⁴ Boatner, letter to General Harold K. Johnson, Chief of Staff, US Army, January 4, 1966, in Hoover Archives/Boatner Papers/Box 1, 2. "The California College in China was first established in 1910 in Peking as the North China Union Language School, a school for English-speaking missionaries, businessmen, and diplomats." See Jean Beckner, "Rich Fare From Special Collections" (Claremont Graduate University website), accessed March 21, 2011, <http://www.cgu.edu/pages/3008.asp>.

of Staff for the Chinese Army in India and Burma.¹⁵ In his friend Fairbank's words, "He and Stilwell were the only two American officers appointed directly under Chiang Kai-shek." And Boatner was "the only General officer to stay through it in China up to the surrender in October 1945."¹⁶ In the eyes of General Clark, Boatner's eleven years of Asia experience and his knowledge of the "Asiatic mentality" made him an obvious choice for the Koje-do job.¹⁷

Clark's instruction to Boatner was simple, "Restore order." Boatner made one statement and one request. He stated that bloodshed might now be required to restore order; Clark concurred. He requested the assignment of a Judge Advocate (military lawyer) knowledgeable of the Geneva Convention, as he noted that no military lawyer had ever been on Koje, "even when the POW population totaled over 160,000." Clark agreed and "stated he would have thought that one was already there."¹⁸ Boatner gladly observed, "Suddenly, on the priority lists, Koje rose from the bottom to the top."¹⁹ However, despite all this unprecedented support and preparation, Boatner was set to be shocked and appalled.

On May 13, two hours after his meeting with General Clark, Boatner flew to Pusan, where he had dinner with the recently released Dodd. At 6:30 a.m. the next day, he flew to Koje and met with Colson for half an hour.²⁰ When he started his job, Boatner received his first shock not from the prisoners, but his own men. Being "completely oblivious to the international implications and seriousness" of the mess, his staff wanted

¹⁵ Boatner, letter to General Harold K. Johnson, January 4, 1966, 2.

¹⁶ John K. Fairbank, letter to John S. Service, September 9, 1971, in Hoover Archives/Boatner Papers/Box 1.

¹⁷ "Asiatic mentality" is frequently mentioned in Boatner's writings, e.g., Boatner, letter to Gen. Harold K. Johnson, Chief of Staff, US Army, January 4, 1966, in Hoover Archives/Boatner Papers/Box 1, 1.

¹⁸ Boatner, "Military Control of Riot and Koje-Do," undated (circa 1971), unpublished typewritten draft, in Hoover Archives/Boatner Papers/Box 1, 2-3.

¹⁹ Boatner, "Military Control of Riot and Koje-Do," 4.

²⁰ Boatner, letter to subscribers to "Haydon's letters," July 1, 1952, 1.

to give their new boss a cocktail-reception the second night after his arrival!²¹ Boatner was disgusted by the quality of his subordinates. “The Military Police officers, as a group, and the enlisted men were the poorest quality of American soldiers with whom I had ever served... The men and officers were largely culls and rejects from the combat units and other logistical units and headquarters.”²² Within the first 10 days, Boatner “had to fire three of the four senior officers and two of the four senior staff officers.”²³ Among those relieved was Colonel Maurice J. Fitzgerald, who was the prison commandant before Dodd’s arrival, and later Dodd’s deputy. Soon he sent 400 substandard U.S. troops away to the mainland.²⁴ Boatner, the “Butcher of Kojé Island,” as the Communists would soon label him, started his job by “butchering” Americans’ jobs.

In the first few days, Boatner “sat tight” so he could estimate the situation quietly from a distance. He avoided “taking any action or talking to POW representatives or giving any orders to the POWs.”²⁵ However, that also meant “it was necessary to take unbelievable and disgraceful abuse from the prisoners.”²⁶

While Boatner was on the defensive, the Communist prisoners were riding high on their victory extracted from the Dodd kidnapping and the Colson agreement. For the Chinese prisoners in the pro-repatriation Compound 602, emotions were running high. Gao Jie, the chief translator who replaced Zhang Zeshi, recalled, “Because the ‘reactionary running dogs’ killed some of our comrades during the ‘April 8th Screening,’ in our heart we were angry, and our fighting spirit was strong. We were on the offensive.” The majority of 5,000 or so prisoners had just escaped from the clutches of the anti-

²¹ Boatner, letter to subscribers to “Haydon’s letters,” July 1, 1952, 2.

²² Boatner, letter to Gen. Harold K. Johnson, January 4, 1966.

²³ Boatner, letter to subscribers to “Haydon’s letters,” July 1, 1952, 2.

²⁴ Boatner, letter to the Adjutant General, Department of the Army, “Comments on ‘Truce Tent and Fighting Front’, Center of Military History, 1966,” January 31, 1967, in Hoover Archives/Boatner Papers/Box 2, Enclosure B, 2. Boatner did not specifically name Fitzgerald in his writings.

²⁵ Boatner, “Comments on ‘Truce Tent and Fighting Front’,” Enclosure B, 1.

²⁶ Boatner, letter to subscribers to “Haydon’s letters,” July 1, 1952, 2.

Communists in Compounds 72 and 86. “With bruises and knife scars still fresh, every day we raised the flag, we sang, performed skits... we carried the portraits of [Communist] leaders, put up protest slogans, and demonstrated.”²⁷

Boatner saw the same thing: within the compounds, “the inmates were regularly holding mass demonstrations – marching and waving communist flags, singing, and shouting in unison. Inside were statues of Stalin and Kim II-sung, along with tall flagpoles with communist flags flying. The POWs would crowd against the perimeter fences and curse our Korean guards outside.” Ignoring their captors, in each compound, “the prisoners had an observation post on a barracks roof-top from which semaphore messages were sent and received.” Boatner lamented, “They had gradually been allowed more than their ‘rights’ as POWs.” Overall, the atmosphere was “one of high-voltage tenseness and belligerence.”²⁸

In the face of prisoner defiance, the captors seemed helpless and clueless. Physically, the prison enclosures and compounds were “in shambles.” The outer fences were made of “twisted barbed wire strung on rotten sapling poles.” To Boatner’s horror, the corner perimeter guard towers had been built inside the perimeter fences, a design that put the guards’ lives in danger. Boatner concluded, “It was what any reasonable soldier would call an unholy mess.”²⁹

True to his nickname, “Bull,” Boatner immediately moved to remedy the mess. To improve the discipline and preparedness of U.S. personnel, Boatner put on a program to “militarize” his staff and troops. He put everyone into combat uniform, and made everyone carry arms habitually.³⁰ To tighten prison security, existing fences were

²⁷ Gao Jie 高子, interview by Lin Mocong 林模丛, date unknown (circa 1996), Chengdu, Sichuan, transcript.

²⁸ Boatner, “Military Control of Riot and Koje-Do,” 3-4.

²⁹ Boatner, “Military Control of Riot and Koje-Do,” 3-4.

³⁰ Boatner, letter to subscribers to “Haydon’s letters,” July 1, 1952, 2.

repaired, and guard towers moved outside of the compounds. He also removed all South Korean troops as perimeter guards, and replaced them with U.S. troops, who were better disciplined than the trigger-happy ROK guards. Boatner noted, “Dodd could not do so as he did not have enough U.S. troops.”³¹ Boatner was blessed with a much larger U.S. troop presence as a result of the Dodd incident. While Dodd never had more than 1,000 U.S. forces to guard more than 160,000 prisoners on Koje, Boatner had 14,000 U.S. troops to guard 80,000, as anti-Communist prisoners had been shipped to the mainland or Cheju Island by the time of his arrival.³²

With respect to his two unfortunate predecessors, and the 12 others before them as the prison commandant on Koje, Boatner admitted, “I have had many many advantages over them.”³³ And he would effectively put all his advantages to work, gradually tightening the screws on the prisoners.

Mid-May 1952. The Killing of a Prisoner and His Funeral

Before he felt ready, General Boatner had his first encounter with his captives three days after his arrival on Koje, when a very serious incident took place in the only Chinese Communist Compound 602. At 10:00 a.m., May 16, 1952, 170 Chinese POWs returned to the gate of their compound, after dumping night soil into the sea, or the so-called “honey bucket” detail. Sergeant Charlie E. Ainsley ordered them to be searched before entering their compound, but prisoners continued singing and refused to allow the body search. The U.S. army’s incident investigation file described the case: “Sgt Ainsley warned them three times and they still refused to be searched. Sgt Ainsley brought two prisoners of war forward and demonstrated how they would be searched.

³¹ Boatner, “Comments on ‘Truce Tent and Fighting Front’,” Enclosure B, 2.

³² U.S. troop strength is from Boatner, “Comments on ‘Truce Tent and Fighting Front’,” Enclosure B, 2. Prisoner population is from Boatner, “Military Control of Riot and Koje-Do,” 1.

³³ Boatner, letter to subscribers to “Haydon’s letters,” July 1, 1952, 1.

Prisoner Wang Hua-yi grabbed his honey bucket pole and attempted to strike Sgt Ainsley. Sgt Ainsley shot Wang three times in self-defense.”³⁴

Irrespective of the validity of the “self-defense” characterization of the killing, the simple fact is that in broad daylight, in front of the main gate of Compound 602, right before the eyes of many Chinese prisoners, a fellow comrade was shot to death. Their anger erupted into loud protest. As one South Korean guard described, “The detail team were singing and shouting. Also the prisoners inside the compound were next to the fences and were singing and shouting.”³⁵ Prisoner translator Gao Jie recalled, “in an organized manner, we had protest banners strung onto barbed wire fences; we tossed white paper carnations, carried wreathes; we circumambulated in our compound in protest.” Very soon the neighboring North Korean Compounds 603, 604, 605, 606, and 607 started their demonstrations within their compounds to show support. These protests “went on day and night.”³⁶

Upon hearing the report of the killing and protest, Boatner “decided to at first stay away,” as he was reminded by Dodd’s mishap. However, he quickly realized the “grave inadequacy” of his staff on such matters “due entirely to their inexperience with Chinese.” Yet he “had more than 10 years previously with them as friend, ally and enemy...”³⁷ Therefore, he went to the site. He observed from a secluded spot, far way from the gate and crowds.³⁸ What did he see?

It flabbergasted me! The POWs were assembled on their central parade ground, in military formation, waving flags and chanting in unison.

³⁴ Enclosed letter to commanding general, 2nd Logistical Command, in NARA/RG 554 (Records of General Headquarters, Far East Command)/290:51:9:5 Incident Investigation Cases/Box 6/Case #106.

³⁵ Report of Proceedings by Board of Officers, in NARA/RG 554/290:51:9:5 Incident Investigation Cases/Box 6/Case #106, 7.

³⁶ Gao Jie 高子, interview by Lin Mocong 林模丛, date unknown (circa 1996), Chengdu, Sichuan, transcript.

³⁷ Boatner, letter to Senator John G. Tower, February 4, 1970, in Hoover Archives/Boatner Papers/Box 1, 2-3.

³⁸ Boatner, “Comments on ‘Truce Tent and Fighting Front’,” Enclosure B, 6.

Several thousand off-duty US soldiers had rushed to the surrounding fences and were jeering at and taunting the Chinese. It reminded me of a home-side big neighborhood fire. My God!³⁹

Quickly, that “mob of Americans,” in the number of three to five thousand, was ordered away, and Boatner later made sure that “such scene was never repeated.”⁴⁰ In order to end the Chinese prisoners’ demonstration, Boatner invited the compound representative to his office “by circuitous route,” and listened to his concerns. Through his translator, this senior Chinese officer made his case, citing a litany of issues and events, including the Panmunjom talks and the Geneva Convention, which Boatner thought was “a lot of bunk!” However, he listened until the Chinese finished, then suddenly replied to him in Chinese. The Chinese officer “almost fainted from surprise.”⁴¹ Boatner began:

What kind of talk is that? You are a soldier, and I am a soldier. And we don't know anything about things like the Pan Mun Jom talks. All I know is what you know. One of your POW colleagues has been killed. You don't know how it was done, and I don't know. I'll have to start an investigation. But I won't start it until your men return to disciplined order and to their tents. You can tell them I am a soldier, and I will do nothing until they act like the fine Chinese soldiers I have known.⁴²

Boatner went on to tell the Chinese representative about his long connection with China: he had served with U.S. troops in Tianjin for two years, and his son had been born there. Subsequently he had lived 4 years in Beijing, traveled throughout China, studied the language and gotten a degree, and had been General Stilwell's chief of staff in Burma in WWII. After finding out the Chinese officer was from Fenchow (Fenzhou), Shanxi, Boatner told him that he once hunted there, and he knew a famous medical missionary Dr. Lewis who was based there. He reminded the Chinese officer, “I am a soldier, and

³⁹ Boatner, “Military Control of Riot and Koje-Do,” 7. It is not clear on which day Boatner first went to the site.

⁴⁰ Boatner, “Military Control of Riot and Koje-Do,” 7. And the number is from Boatner, “Comments on ‘Truce Tent and Fighting Front’,” Enclosure B, 6.

⁴¹ Boatner, “Comments on ‘Truce Tent and Fighting Front’,” Enclosure B, 6.

⁴² Boatner, letter to Senator John G. Tower, February 4, 1970, in Hoover Archives/Boatner Papers/Box 1, 2-3.

you are a soldier. We are here to do a simple soldier's duty."⁴³ He promised an investigation only if the prisoners stopped the demonstrating. Upon their return to the compound, the demonstration ceased.

Cross-referencing with Chinese prisoners' accounts and interrogation records, it is clear that the representative Boatner met with was Wei Lin, and the interpreter was Gao Jie. Wei, age 27, was formerly a regimental chief of staff in the 180th Division. According to his interrogation record, he farmed in Wenxi County before being conscripted into the Communist army in 1946.⁴⁴ Although Fenzhou (or Fenyang today), which was mentioned by Boatner, is about 100 miles north of Wenxi, the discrepancy was probably due to Boatner's faulty memory or Wei's inconsistency in different settings under captivity, which was considered a standard practice for Communists. For example, the interrogation report recorded Wei as a battalion commander, but in fact he was the chief of staff of a regiment. Or it well might be the fact that he had served in both positions.

The interpreter, Gao, age 29, was a university student during WWII before he joined the Chinese Expedition Army to Burma. He was arrested by the Nationalist government for his leftist thoughts, and made his escape. After he completed his university education in 1947, he taught high school. After 1949, Gao joined the PLA. Because of his excellent English, he was selected to serve in the Political Section of the 12th Army Headquarters. His responsibility was to handle UN prisoners. Ironically, during the Fifth Campaign, Gao was taken prisoner himself.⁴⁵ On Koje Island, Gao proved to be one of the best English speakers among prisoners. During the Dodd

⁴³ Boatner, letter to General Harold K. Johnson, Chief of Staff, US Army, January 4, 1966, in Hoover Archives/Boatner Papers/Box 1, 4.

⁴⁴ Wei Lin 魏林, Interrogation Report No. KG 0287, August 11, 1951, ATIS, 1.

⁴⁵ Gao Jie 高子, interview by Wu Jinfeng, June 10, 1984, in *Andeshe Biji: Guoguo Zhanfu Zishu Ji* 安德舍笔记—归国战俘自述集 [Andeshe notes: statements by repatriated POWs], vol. 1 (unpublished manuscript, 1986), 34.

incident, Sun Zhenguan and Zhang Zeshi, the representative and chief interpreter of Compound 602, went to the Korean compound No. 76 to participate in the “trial” of Dodd. When Sun and Zhang were not permitted to return, Wei and Gao succeeded them respectively.

After returning to China at the end of the war in 1953, Wei did not leave any writings about his prison experience, but Gao gave two long interviews. One was in 1984 with Wu Jinfeng, then the newly retired Deputy Chief Editor of *PLA Literature and Culture*; and another was with a fellow prisoner Li Mocong in the mid-1990s. In these two interviews, Gao provided many details, which were as vivid as Boatner’s account. And there are certain interesting discrepancies, which deserve a researcher’s attention. These discrepancies may reveal a storyteller’s limitations and biases, or “froth” floating above submerged facts.

While Boatner emphatically stressed his Chinese language ability, repeatedly claiming “I spoke Chinese and had a certificate to prove it,” Gao Jie never mentioned Boatner speaking Chinese in the their meetings.⁴⁶ Instead, Gao said dismissively, “it was said that he was relatively familiar with China, and could speak a few Chinese sentences.”⁴⁷ Boatner once asserted that he could understand Wei’s Chinese “thoroughly because he was obviously from North China.”⁴⁸ However, in Gao’s account, he liberally translated Wei’s words and added whatever he deemed appropriate, because they had decided before the meeting that the much better educated Gao could negotiate better. The game went on until American diplomat Philip Manhard entered the room. “Philip’s Beijing accent is more authentic than ours. In front of him, we could no longer play the game. I had to translate [exactly] what Wei said... And I could no longer confer with Old

⁴⁶ Boatner, “Military Control of Riot and Koje-Do,” 4.

⁴⁷ Gao Jie 高子, interview by Lin Mocong 林模丛, date unknown (circa 1996), transcript. It cannot be verified, as Gao Jie died several years ago.

⁴⁸ Boatner, letter to Senator John G. Tower, 2-3.

Wei as if nobody was around (*pangruowuren*).⁴⁹ Clearly, in terms of Chinese ability Gao considered Boatner as a “nobody.” For unknown reasons, in none of the Boatner papers or letters is Manhard mentioned. Boatner or Gao, whose story to trust?

There is a crucial piece of evidence that lends credence to Gao. Gao recalled that Boatner introduced Manhard to them, “This is Mr. *Manhade* (sound).”⁵⁰ For the first time, Gao, or any Chinese prisoners, heard the last name of Philip Manhard. Before this day, he was always known as “*Feilipu*” (Philip) the journalist. Judging from available POW literature, none of the Chinese prisoners, including individuals like Zhang Zeshi who had extensive contact with “*Feilipu*,” knew Manhard’s full name until this day. Gao and Wei were the only two persons who heard his last name. Had Manhard not been present at the scene, Gao would not have heard it.

Then, the question is: why would Boatner omit Manhard in his account? The answer probably lies in the fact that the presence of Manhard, who spoke better Chinese, would diminish Boatner’s credential as a Chinese language expert, and distract the reader from this “old China hand.” However, Boatner’s omission should be understood in the context in which Boatner recorded these events. These records were found in his correspondence with the Department of the Army and a U.S. senator almost twenty years after the event. For his specific purposes of letter writing, which was not writing history, Manhard was not crucial.

Certainly Boatner is not alone in being incomplete in providing facts or inconsistent with records. Comparing Gao’s two interview records, one clear difference is how his portrayal of his boss Wei changed. In Gao’s interview with PLA officer Wu Jinfeng in 1986, Wei is described as “extremely smart” in spite of his lack of formal

⁴⁹ Gao Jie 高子, interview by Lin Mocong 林模丛, date unknown (circa 1996), transcript.

⁵⁰ Gao Jie 高子, interview by Lin Mocong 林模丛, date unknown (circa 1996), transcript.

education.⁵¹ However in his 1996 interview with fellow prisoner Lin, Gao was more frank: “Staff Officer Wei had one characteristic: he didn’t look like a smart person. Smart enemies can tell that very easily.”⁵² In addition, some of the witty retorts to Boatner, once attributed to Wei, turned out to be Gao’s own.

After all, being inconsistent is human. What’s surprising is not how much Boatner and Gao’s accounts diverge, but rather how much they actually agree in the large scheme of things. For example, Boatner claimed that he refused the Chinese prisoners’ request to allow all 7,000 or so prisoners to march to the cemetery; instead he arranged one truck to transport a number of representatives.⁵³ However, in vivid detail, Gao recounted how Boatner sent 10 trucks to take 100 prisoners to the funeral. How many trucks actually went to the funeral? Probably somewhere between one and ten. Logically speaking, the Chinese prisoners had the tendency to exaggerate the concessions they won, and Boatner had an incentive to downplay the compromises he had to make. Regardless of the discrepancies in head count and truck count, two facts can be established. One is that Boatner did send an officer as his personal representative to the funeral and delivered flowers. Boatner also arranged that 20 rolls of white toilet paper and one quart of Mercurchrome sent to the POW compound, and they were made into funeral flowers.⁵⁴

The day after the meeting, according to Gao, following the oral agreement made between Boatner and Wei, a U.S. major, instead of the captain mentioned in Boatner papers, came to Compound 602 with ten trucks.⁵⁵ The U.S. officer first let the Chinese representative review the eulogy drafted by Boatner, which promised an investigation

⁵¹ Gao Jie 高子, interview by Wu Jinfeng, June 10, 1984, in *Andeshe Biji*, vol. 2, 164.

⁵² Gao Jie 高子, interview by Lin Mocong 林模丛, date unknown (circa 1996), transcript.

⁵³ Boatner, letter to Senator John G. Tower, 2-3.

⁵⁴ Boatner, letter to Senator John G. Tower, 2-3.

⁵⁵ Gao Jie 高子, interview by Lin Mocong 林模丛, transcript. And Boatner, letter to Senator John G. Tower, 2-3.

and vowed that a similar incident would not occur again. Roughly 100 Chinese prisoners marched out of their compound, accompanied by the full pomp consisting of the Chinese, North Korean and Soviet Union's flags, three large drums, and 15 small ones.⁵⁶ This procession was reported in *TIME* magazine: "Shortly after dawn, a P.W. band using beer-can bugles, bamboo flutes and drums made of oilcans struck up an eerie cacophony. Twelve Chinese carrying flowers made of G.I. toilet paper shuffled out of the compound to the camp cemetery." *TIME* noted that Boatner approved the procession, and in return, the Chinese Communists agreed to remove anti-UN banners from the barbed wire fence.⁵⁷ Perhaps Gao inflated the number of prisoners who went to the funeral, but the fact is that Boatner did arrange for a number of prisoners to attend the funeral.

At the funeral site, Gao recalled, following speeches made by Wei and others, the U.S. major read out his eulogy. On their way back, all prisoners were "singing and shouting." In his conclusion, "That was the first time since we were taken prisoners, we felt that we had eked out a small revenge/victory (*chuqi*), though it was at the cost of Wang Huayi's blood. It was also the first time that Chinese prisoners had experienced such fair treatment."⁵⁸

For a moment, it seemed that the prison authorities and the Chinese prisoners had reached a *modus vivendi*. The Chinese prisoners believed that they had had a face-to-face negotiation with the American commander for the first time, which was a major victory. By meeting with the compound representative Wei, Boatner seemed to have recognized the prisoners' leadership and their organization. That perception was not totally baseless. Boatner's boss, the Commanding General of the 2nd Logistics Command, Paul F. Yount's sent out a written order: "Utilize the Prisoner of War

⁵⁶ Gao Jie 高子, interview by Lin Mocong 林模丛, transcript.

⁵⁷ "Trouble at Koje," *TIME*, June 2, 1952, accessed January 12, 2011, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,857205,00.html>.

⁵⁸ Gao Jie 高子, interview by Lin Mocong 林模丛, transcript.

Association authorized in the recent negotiation to the fullest extent you find feasible.”⁵⁹ However, Boatner saw the situation very differently. Despite acknowledging the fact he met with prisoner representatives, Boatner adamantly denied that the meeting was a negotiation, “I never negotiated with the POWs and never once recognized their association. These were grave errors that in my opinion were largely responsible for the riots. I announced publicly ‘POWs don’t negotiate.’”⁶⁰ In Boatner’s view, as long as the Chinese prisoners ceased their demonstrations, his handling of the Wang Huayi killing case was successful. He claimed, “Never after that did the Chinese compound give me trouble.”⁶¹ Soon it would be time for him to give the Chinese prisoners trouble.

While Boatner was dealing with the prisoners’ representatives, a board of officers was investigating Wang Huayi’s killing. Sgt. Ainsley admitted that he shot Wang three times. But he asserted, “At the time he had raised his honey bucket pole in a manner which indicated that he was going to strike me with it. I considered that my life was in danger and shot him.”⁶² One American GI witness saw the prisoners refusing body search, and Ainsley “fired in front of them to scare them but then a PW fell.”⁶³ Seven Chinese prisoners witnesses were called, and Captain Joseph Brooks, whose Chinese name was Wang Liwen, served as their interpreter. The Chinese invariably claimed that the body search was “illegal.” They argued, on their hour-long honey bucket detail to and from the beach, they were constantly guarded by Sgt. Ainsley and 30 ROK guards. They

⁵⁹ Boatner, “Comments on ‘Truce Tent and Fighting Front’,” Enclosure B, 2.

⁶⁰ Boatner, “Comments on ‘Truce Tent and Fighting Front’,” Enclosure B, 2.

⁶¹ Boatner, letter to Senator John G. Tower, February 4, 1970, in Hoover Archives/Boatner Papers/Box 1, 2-3.

⁶² Report of Proceedings by Board of Officers, in NARA/RG 554/290:51:9:5 Incident Investigation Cases/Box 6/Case 106, 3.

⁶³ Report of Proceedings by Board of Officers, Case 106, 6.

had no contact with any others, and they carried nothing forbidden. “So that there was no reason to search us,” claimed prisoner Pu Xuelin.⁶⁴

Why did the prisoners insist on this claim of illegality? Was it simply a Communist propaganda mantra? Probably not so, as Ainsley’s boss, Military Police Company Captain A. L. Washam’s statement suggests. Washam reported, on May 16, before the work detail departed in the morning, a new regulation was announced to POW interpreters in No. 602 that all details leaving the compounds would be searched.⁶⁵ Clearly, the Chinese prisoners did not accept this new rule, and they refused the “shake-down.” Did this act of refusal warrant the shooting? Did Ainsley fire to scare or to kill?

We can find clues to this puzzle in the context of heightened tension. According to Washam, since Ainsley’s assignment as the assistant compound commander to No. 602 in April 1952, “during this period there were frequent changes of policy and plan dealing with the administration, supervision, and guarding of POWs.” All this, compounded by the capture of General Dodd, and the resultant security activities “created a feeling of high tension” among the U.S. personnel. “With a show of force of American arms and the assumption of the new General, a definitive impression was given to the effect that control would be positively established over all operations and activities of the POWs.”⁶⁶ Specifically, three days prior to the incident, the MP Company’s Lieutenant Rosen conducted a meeting, at which Ainsley was most likely present. Rosen told his troops that “any prisoner caught in the sally port and would not

⁶⁴ Report of Proceedings by Board of Officers, Case 106, Exhibit G. Wang Liwen 王立文.

⁶⁵ Report of Proceedings by Board of Officers, in NARA/RG 554/290:51:9:5 Incident Investigation Cases/Box 6/Case #106, Exhibit E.

⁶⁶ Report of Proceedings by Board of Officers, in NARA/RG 554/290:51:9:5 Incident Investigation Cases/Box 6/Case #106, Exhibit E.

get out to *shoot him* [sic]. If any prisoner showed any acts of violence or of cursing after us to *shoot him*... We were to warn them first and if they did not obey to *shoot them*.”⁶⁷

While the sudden announcement of the body search policy aggravated the Chinese prisoners, the aggressive pep talk by a U.S. officer made the already nervous GIs trigger-happy. This was precisely the atmosphere of “high-voltage tenseness and belligerence” that Boatner had described.⁶⁸ It is under these circumstances the tragic killing of Wang Huayi took place.

On May 29, the Board of Officers summarized its findings in an internal report: “That the incident was due to a work detail of prisoners refusing to be searched as required by the policies at this station governing the handling of prisoners; to their shouting, singing, and inciting a disorder; and to one prisoner, Wang Hwa I, raising a honey bucket pole in a threatening manner toward Sgt Ainsley.”⁶⁹

Not surprisingly, Ainsley was “absolved of any guilt in connect [sic] with this incident” because his act “in shooting and the killing Wang should be classified as ‘Justifiable Homicide.’” However, “the instructions given by Lt. Rosen to the men of the 552nd MP EG Co was not in line with the polices as layed [sic] down by the Commanding General... ordinarily Lt. Rosen should be reprimanded for his actions.” However, since both Washam and Rosen had been transferred out of Koje, “it is believed that no good or useful purpose would be served by conducting a further investigation to definitely establish whether he should or should not be reprimanded.” In its final conclusion, “the incident was not due to any fault or neglect on the part of Sgt. Ainsley, member of the ROKA, or any member of the UNC.”⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Report of Proceedings by Board of Officers, Case 106, 5. Italics added by this author.

⁶⁸ Boatner, “Military Control of Riot and Koje-Do,” 3-4.

⁶⁹ Report of Proceedings by Board of Officers, Case #106, 8.

⁷⁰ Report of Proceedings by Board of Officers, Case #106, 8.

While it seemed that a no-fault conclusion had become a given in these investigation reports, Boatner thought differently on the Wang case, albeit privately.

Years later Boatner would recall the incident in the following terms:

A U.S. negro sergeant while surrounded by U.S. soldiers searching a POW returning from a work party at a main compound gate, killed him with several shots of gun fire. He claimed the POW had resisted search. Conditions were such then that I did not think it in the best interest of the US to have a full investigation and resultant court-martial—so I had that soldier returned to the mainland.⁷¹

Obviously, Ainsley's act was not considered "justifiable" in the eyes of Boatner, who once professed, "my father was a judge, his father a lawyer and both his grandfathers were judges, so I had great respect for the law."⁷² Nevertheless, the investigation came to a familiar conclusion that surprised no Chinese prisoner or U.S. captor.

Early June, 1952. Boatner: "Prisoners Don't Negotiate"

The reason Boatner chose not to pursue a full investigation and court-martial was that at this point he had moved beyond the initial stage of protest-watching, compromise-making, and "abuse-taking." Following his master plan, Boatner had shifted into the next phase, that of an increasingly assertive posture. "Prisoners," he publicly announced, "don't negotiate."⁷³

Upon the arrival of construction materials, his troops had started "working on a 24-hour basis in building new areas to house 4,000 prisoners in each enclosure."⁷⁴ Within each of these new enclosures, there were eight smaller compounds each with a

⁷¹ Boatner, letter to Gen. Harold K. Johnson, Chief of Staff, US Army, January 4, 1966, in Hoover Archives/Boatner Papers/Box 1, 3-4. Underscore in original document.

⁷² Boatner, "Comments on 'Truce Tent and Fighting Front'," Enclosure B, 4.

⁷³ Boatner, "Comments on 'Truce Tent and Fighting Front'," Enclosure B, 2. Also in "U.S. Gets Booby-Trapped by Reds," *LIFE* 32, no. 21 (May 26, 1952), 25.

⁷⁴ Boatner, letter to subscribers to "Haydon's letters," July 1, 1952, 2.

500-man capacity. Boatner saw these smaller sub-enclosures as essential to his effort to tame rebellious prisoners.

While army engineers and infantrymen were building smaller and stronger enclosures, Boatner also dealt with “another sore spot” which shocked his boss General Clark when he first learned about it. The village situated in the general area of existing prison camps had long served as “a key center in the communication network established by General Nam Il’s men with the prisoners.”⁷⁵ Communist agents and guerrillas lived in the village, and they mingled with the villagers and sometimes South Korean guards. According to Clark, the agents’ method of communication with prisoners was “so simple as to be elementary.” These agents dropped notes where prisoners on work details could find them, and vice versa.⁷⁶ Then agents would slip through the zigzagged Koje coastline in fishing boats owned by the local population. Therefore, what transpired in Panmunjom was quickly transmitted to the North Korean Communist prisoner leadership. And what occurred in prison camps was readily transmitted to Nam Il at Panmunjom. To cut off the contact between villagers and prisoners, Boatner ordered the removal of “over 6,000 villagers from the camp area and off the island.”⁷⁷ And villagers’ huts adjacent to prisons were set ablaze and razed to the ground by tanks.⁷⁸

While native villagers on Koje were on their way out, a series of multinational reinforcements was sent in by the UN Command: the First Company of the Royal Canadian Regiment, one company of the British King’s Shropshire Light Infantry, and the First Company of the Greek Expeditionary Forces. Most importantly, the crack paratroopers of the U.S. 187th Airborne Regiment were flown in from Japan at the risk

⁷⁵ Mark W. Clark, *From the Danube to the Yalu* (New York: Harper, 1954), 65-66.

⁷⁶ Clark, 57.

⁷⁷ Hermes, 259.

⁷⁸ There is no written record on the razing of the village. This inference is based on photos by Dimitriv Boria, circa June 1952, in Boria Collection, MacArthur Archives, Norfolk, VA.

of weakening “the already inadequate defenses of Japan.”⁷⁹ Joining forces with the Netherlands Battalion and ROK troops already on Kojé, they formed a six-nation tank and infantry force almost one division strong, or 14,820 men to be precise.⁸⁰ Outside barbed wire compounds, UNC troops manned their machine guns and held riot drills with bayonets fixed and gas masks on. Inside the eighteen enclosures were some 81,000 pro-Communist Chinese and Korean prisoners.

To Eighth Army Commander General James A. Van Fleet, who was on Kojé to inspect the new precautions in late May, “everything looked fine & dandy, as it has all along to him.”⁸¹ As a tough combat general preoccupied by the war front on the 38th parallel, Van Fleet apparently missed the political significance and operational complexity of the POW issue. After Dodd’s kidnapping, once Van Fleet griped, “There’d be no incident down there if the Communists would only behave.”⁸² Now, when Boatner had just begun implementing the “getting tough” policy, Van Fleet announced optimistically, “I don’t think there will be any more trouble.” The more coolheaded Boatner disagreed. “We can’t get into those compounds,” he confessed. “We can’t take a roll-call. We don’t know what they’re plotting.”⁸³

Boatner recalled that his biggest horror was that “the POWs would attempt a mass breakout during which several hundred might be shot.” To prevent this scenario from happening, “[i]ncreased discipline of both POWs and UN troops was mandatory.”⁸⁴ Boatner started a schedule for increasing disciplinary control by increments. First, all

⁷⁹ Clark, 227.

⁸⁰ Korea Institute of Military History, *The Korean War*, vol. 3. (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 370.

⁸¹ “Trouble at Kojé,” *TIME*, June 2, 1952, accessed January 12, 2011, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,857205,00.html>.

⁸² “U.S. Gets Booby-Trapped by Reds,” *LIFE* 32, no. 21 (May 26, 1952): 23.

⁸³ “Trouble at Kojé,” *TIME*, June 2, 1952.

⁸⁴ Boatner, “Military Control of Riot and Kojé-Do,” 5-6.

UN troops were “put into combat fatigues and constantly armed.”⁸⁵ Central to Boatner’s riot control technique was the use of weapons other than bullets: bayonet, tear gas, concussion grenade, and flamethrowers—the latter two could be lethal and were arguably more brutal than bullets.⁸⁶

Gas masks were issued to troops and bayonet fighting was practiced. Professing his philosophy that “it is far better to intimidate the mob, intentionally, than to kill or wound some of them unintentionally,” Boatner emphasized the need to avoid firing bullets.⁸⁷ Standing on a table to welcome the Canadian troops, Boatner told them not to kill unless absolutely necessary: “If you get into a fight [with a prisoner], slash him, use the butt of your rifle, give him the knee in the groin.”⁸⁸ Bullets were considered the last resort. Boatner claimed that he “went to extremes to prevent brutality to POW’s” which was “a very natural thing for unthinking combat soldiers to do.”⁸⁹

When Boatner felt more confident of his ability to prevent a breakout of the 81,000 prisoners, he started closing in on them.⁹⁰ Timing his disciplinary measures with the progress of construction of new compounds, Boatner began giving orders to the POWs, starting with those that he knew he could enforce and always setting a time for compliance. To each prison compound, Boatner ordered prisoners to take down their flags and protest banners, and remove statues of Communist leaders. As in the past, no compound initially complied.

⁸⁵ Boatner, “Military Control of Riot and Koje-Do,” 4.

⁸⁶ According to Wikipedia, “the concussion grenade is an anti-personnel device that is designed to damage its target with explosive power alone, instead of shrapnel. Compared to fragmentation grenades, the explosive filler is usually of a greater weight and volume. The case is far thinner and is designed to fragment as little as possible. The overpressure produced by this grenade when used in enclosed areas is greater than that produced by the fragmentation grenade. Therefore, it is especially effective in enclosed areas.” Accessed March 1, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hand_grenade#Concussion.

⁸⁷ Boatner, “Military Control of Riot and Koje-Do,” 5.

⁸⁸ “Prisoners: Ticklish Job,” *TIME*, June 9, 1952, accessed January 12, 2011, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,806437,00.html>.

⁸⁹ Boatner, “Comments on ‘Truce Tent and Fighting Front’,” Enclosure B, 5.

⁹⁰ Boatner, letter to subscribers to “Haydon’s letters,” July 1, 1952, 2.

One of the banners hanging on the barbwire fence read in English: “U.S.A. imperialists responsible for violating the human rights of PWs and the international law! Secure the human rights of PWs by the international law!” Insultingly placed right next to a row of honey buckets, into which prisoners peed, a banner was written in broken English: “Prohibit right now, So-called the forced crime of free repatriations instruction with threat and ... PWs of Korea People’s Army.”⁹¹ The prisoners carried their defiance outside their compounds as well. “Even the garbage detail openly defies U.N. orders,” *LIFE* photographer observed a North Korean work detail team, “flaunting North Korean flag—made from a rice bag—as it marches alongside a bayonet-carrying U.S. guard.” It was noted that exactly the same type of prisoners on honey bucket detail had seized General Dodd on May 7. Of late these Korean prisoners had triggered another incident, when they were trying to exchange messages as they were marching past a compound. In one week, two incidents left six prisoners killed by battle-hardened troops who were “on hand with tear gas and flashing bayonets.”⁹²

Unlike previous authorities, Boatner did not bluff. In a show of muscle, shirtless soldiers of the U.S. 187th Airborne Regimental Combat Team jogged between the compounds in paratrooper exercises. Out of the eyesight of the prisoners, other UN troops wearing gas masks were rehearsing riot control tactics with bayonet and rifle butts. In the meantime, inside the North Korean Communists compounds, in broad daylight prisoners were practicing fighting with spears made of tent poles, with

⁹¹ Probably it meant, “Immediately stop the so-called voluntary repatriation screening, which involved threat on POWs.” Dimitriv Boria, photographs, circa June 1952, in Boria Collection, MacArthur Archives, Norfolk, VA.

⁹² “And Koje Prisoners Still Flaunt Defiance As U.S. Flexes Muscles,” *LIFE* 32, no. 23 (June 9, 1952): 35.

instructors openly demonstrating “battle tactics to use on guards.”⁹³ As it seemed, a final showdown would be decided by person-to-person close combat.

In his “first real test case,” Boatner chose the Chinese POW Compound 602, probably because he felt confident after he had successfully dealt with the Chinese in the Wang Huayi incident. He ordered Chinese prisoners to “take down the Communist flag and tear down the statue of a Communist leader (... Stalin or Kim Il-Sung) at 12 noon on a certain day.”⁹⁴ As the Chief of Staff of the Chinese Army in India during World War II, Boatner learned that “verbal orders were no good for Chinese. They would obey them only if they chose to. But they would obey a written order, if and only if, (1) There was an official seal (chop) on it and (2) There was a time limit for compliance.”⁹⁵ Therefore, all orders were in writing and also broadcast so that “all the POWs, not just the leaders, knew the entire situation.”⁹⁶ An exact time for compliance was announced. As predicted, Chinese prisoners ignored this order.

Before carrying out measures to force compliance, Boatner’s troops rehearsed their roles “piece-meal” so as to conceal their intent. He marched an infantry unit from a concealed position past the gate and noted the elapsed time. The same was separately done with two tanks.⁹⁷ When his plan was put into effect, the prisoners “were surprised by the suddenness and clockwork precision” of his small operation.⁹⁸

At exactly noon, June 2, an Infantry Battalion, 9th Infantry and two tanks arrived at the gate of Compound 602. In Boatner’s own words, “[T]he gates were thrown open by guards; the troops entered, tore down the flag and statue and moved out in less than 5

⁹³ “And Koje Prisoners Still Flaunt Defiance As U.S. Flexes Muscles,” *LIFE* 32, no. 23 (June 9, 1952): 32.

⁹⁴ Boatner, “Comments on ‘Truce Tent and Fighting Front’,” Enclosure B, 2.

⁹⁵ Boatner, “Comments on ‘Truce Tent and Fighting Front’,” Enclosure B, 2. Underscore was added in the original text.

⁹⁶ Boatner, “Military Control of Riot and Koje-Do,” 6.

⁹⁷ Boatner, “Comments on ‘Truce Tent and Fighting Front’,” Enclosure B, 2.

⁹⁸ Boatner, “Military Control of Riot and Koje-Do,” 6.

minutes elapsed time.”⁹⁹ The Associated Press reported, “The soldiers, wearing gas masks, formed a ring of bayonets to keep the prisoners at bay while one of tanks battered down a fifty-foot flagpole.” They “tore down a Communist flag and burned five insulting banners” and the prisoners “offered no resistance.”¹⁰⁰ The Chinese POWs were stunned by the force and rapidity of this operation. They did not even have time to lower their red flag and hide it, as they always did in case of emergency. In *The Chronology of the People’s Volunteers Prisoners’ Struggles in U.S. Concentration Camps*, it was tersely recorded, “On June 2, Brigadier General Boatner personally commanded two battalions of U.S. troop and tanks, charged into Compound 602. They seized one national flag, and the flagpole was bulldozed by a tank.”¹⁰¹ In addition, “flame throwers burned the banners and caricature posters on fences.”¹⁰²

Following the successful execution of forced compliance in Compound 602, Boatner carried out similar small operations in other compounds. On June 4, infantrymen from the 38th Regiment supported by two tanks moved quickly into Compounds 85 and 96. They destroyed the flagpoles and burned banners. During these operations, anti-Communist prisoners escaped from their Communist tormentors and ran to the protection of UN troops, with 10 from Compound 85 and 75 from Compound 96. The last Communist flags still aloft were in Compound 60. Using tear gas, the infantry went in and chopped down the poles. “Not a single casualty was suffered by

⁹⁹ Boatner, “Comments on ‘Truce Tent and Fighting Front’,” Enclosure B, 2.

¹⁰⁰ “Troops Burn Red Banners,” NYT, June 2, 1952, 3.

¹⁰¹ Li Ziyang 黎子颖, *Zhongguo Renmin Zhiyuanjun beifu renyuan zai meijun jizhongying douzheng dashiji* 中国人民志愿军被俘人员在美军集中营斗争大事记 (Unpublished draft, original draft, POW Returnees’ Management Bureau, Changtu, Liaoning, January 1954; revised draft, Changshou, Sichuan, June 1990), 30.

¹⁰² Zhang Zeshi 张泽石, *Wo de Chaoxian Zhanzheng* 我的朝鲜战争 [My Korean War], 151. Zhang was confined in the Korean Compound 76 at that time. His description was probably based on reports made by other prisoners in 602, told to him after their repatriation to China in 1953.

either side during these quick strikes,” as it was recorded in the official U.S. military history.¹⁰³

Besides flags and banners, other “annoying practices” were also put to an end. By a specific date, Boatner ordered off the signalmen on barrack rooftop sending semaphore messages. As predicted, they ignored the order, “until the first shotgun load of No.8 shot was fired into one man's legs from a reasonable distance. All they came down and stayed down.” The next order forbade the POWs from leaning on the perimeter fences and established five yards as the closest they could be to the fence. “They complied with that order,” Boatner claimed.¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, to check for escape tunnels suspected of being constructed by prisoners, British infantrymen used tear gas to move a mob so engineers could dig.¹⁰⁵

Nevertheless, the 6,400-strong Compound 76 was yet to be conquered. *LIFE* reported with a sense of anxious anticipation: “Any day the prisoners of Compound 76, toughest of all and scene of the abduction, would be dispersed into small enclosures.”¹⁰⁶ To impress Compound 76's inmates, Boatner “staged a rehearsal with tanks and flamethrowers in an empty compound next to theirs. The prisoners answered by digging chest-deep trenches and continuing to turn out steel-tipped spears and other crude weapons on their hidden forge.”¹⁰⁷

Inside 76, the Korean Communist prisoners were preparing for the looming final battle. The underground General Leading Headquarter held an emergency meeting, and decided to mobilize prisoners in all compounds to prepare for the worst, a massacre. Sun Zhenguan and Zhang Zeshi, the Chief Representative and Chief Translator of the Chinese

¹⁰³ Hermes, 259.

¹⁰⁴ Boatner, “Military Control of Riot and Koje-Do,” 6-7.

¹⁰⁵ *LIFE* 32, no. 24 (June 16, 1952): 34.

¹⁰⁶ *LIFE* 32, no. 24 (June 16, 1952): 34.

¹⁰⁷ “Hands Up,” *TIME* (June 16, 1952), accessed January 12, 2011, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,859698,00.html>.

Compound 602, and two other Chinese translators, witnessed and participated in these pre-battle efforts.¹⁰⁸ Zhang recalled, “Prisoners of the entire 76 were mobilized to dig bunkers and trenches. Fighting Squads and Dare-to-die Squads were formed. ... The entire compound conducted battle drills.”¹⁰⁹ Prisoners also accelerated their weapons-making effort. Molotov cocktails were made with horded gasoline, which was provided by the camp as cooking fuel. Their main weapons were spears, whose blade was sharpened sheet metal cut from gasoline barrels, fastened onto shaft made of tent poles. The four Chinese prisoners not only dug trenches with the Koreans, also they were invited to give pep talks and performed revolutionary songs and skits.¹¹⁰ “The temper of the Communist prisoners still was high,” General Clark remarked.¹¹¹

Communist mobilization entailed more than motivational speeches, skits, songs, and labor; it also involved “self-criticism” sessions for all prisoners, and “public trials” of prisoners suspected of treason. Intelligence files of the UN Command contained a number of reports of these kangaroo court sentences, probably compiled with the help of escaped and survived anti-Communist prisoners. One report pertains to Compound 85, which was not far from the “iron triangle” of North Korean compounds 76, 77, and 78. “A 1,000-man “jury” [250 men from each battalion] on June 6, 1952, conducted a “self-criticism” of prisoners and sentenced one to death.” The charge was that the executed prisoners had plotted to kill the leaders of Compound 85.¹¹²

Similar trials and executions were not recorded in the published memoirs by the four Chinese prisoners then living in Compound 76. However, in a recent email exchange

¹⁰⁸ The existence and operation of General Leading Headquarter is recorded in Clark, 60-62, and corroborated by Zhang Zeshi’s account. On May 7, Sun and Zhang were moved by the prison authorities to 76 on May 7 to negotiate with the new Commandant for Dodd’s release. Two more translators were transported there the next day. After the release of the Dodd on May 10, they had been confined in Compound 76.

¹⁰⁹ Zhang Zeshi, *Wo de Chaoxian Zhanzheng* [My Korean War], 151.

¹¹⁰ Zhang Zeshi, *Wo de Chaoxian Zhanzheng* [My Korean War], 151.

¹¹¹ Clark, 63.

¹¹² Clark, 62.

Zhang Zeshi acknowledged that as a general rule, before “major battles” executions did occur in both Chinese and Korean camps, though he did not personally witness such executions during his stay in Compound 76.¹¹³ Soon, the breakup of 76 would yield concrete evidence.

June 10, 1952. The “War Criminal” Boatner Launches Operation Breakup

Boatner was ready to attack when around-the-clock construction was completed and some POWs could be moved. On June 9 three new 4,000-men compounds were ready. Each of these had eight smaller sub-enclosures for 500 men, bringing total capacity to 12,000.¹¹⁴ In contrast to his earlier experiments that started with the easiest target, this time Boatner selected prisoners of Compound No. 76, “the toughest of them all” to be moved first. He chose 76 because they were “the ones who had captured and held General Dodd and it was to that compound that the leaders of each of the others had been moved to negotiate with the new Commandant for Dodd's release.”¹¹⁵ Among representatives from other compounds were Sun Zhenguan, Zhang Zeshi, and two other Chinese.¹¹⁶ Boatner's theory was that “if No. 76 can be moved the others would follow suit peacefully.”¹¹⁷

Boatner's “final and crucial test” came on June 10, exactly one month after the release of General Dodd. At 5:15 a.m., Boatner went to Compound 76, and summoned its leader, Colonel Lee Hak Koo, whom Boatner described as “a dumb, cowardly, fat stooge,” to assemble his men in groups of 150 in the centers of the compound and prepare for

¹¹³ Zhang Zeshi, email correspondence with the author, February 20, 2011.

¹¹⁴ Boatner, letter to subscribers to “Haydon's letters,” July 1, 1952, 2.

¹¹⁵ Boatner, “Military Control of Riot and Koje-Do,” 8.

¹¹⁶ These figures are from Zhang Zeshi, *Wo de chaoxiao zhanzheng*, 154.

¹¹⁷ Boatner, “Military Control of Riot and Koje-Do,” 8.

movement at 6:00.¹¹⁸ The order read: “This is a legal order for you to prepare the prisoners of war in Compound 76 to move out into the newly constructed compounds.”¹¹⁹

At 5:45 A.M., messages were broadcast over loudspeakers telling the prisoners that they were to be moved to new areas and that they would not be harmed if they cooperated. Boatner thought that he “had demonstrated so much force that the POWs in No. 76 would move without our having to use it.” However, “such did not prove to be the case.” Observing from his command post on a hill overlooking Compound 76, Boatner “could see the POW leaders and their henchmen prevent any of their colleagues from assembling as ordered.”¹²⁰ Prisoners were “shouting and chanting their defiance as their leaders obviously tried to whip them up to fighting pitch.”¹²¹ Instead of forming into groups for movement, they took their positions in trenches, and armed themselves with spears, knives and other weapons.

At 6:15 a.m., Boatner sent in two battalions of paratroopers of the 187th Airborne Regimental Combat Team to break up the compound. Immediately all hell broke loose. “Within split-second timing, troops covering the initial assault sent rockets of tear gas arching over the barbed wire into the heart of Compound 76. Within a few seconds the five-sided enclosure was covered with dirty clouds of gas. Another barrage of percussion grenades exploded in a series of crimson flashes inside the tents and long rows of huts. ... Some of the grenades were lobbed squarely into hidden stores of gasoline inside the enclosure, and the wooden buildings erupted in smoke and flame.”¹²² The wallowing wave of tear gas “soon was so thick that, several hundred yards away on the top of a hill,

¹¹⁸ Boatner, letter to subscribers to “Haydon’s letters,” July 1, 1952, 2; and Hermes, 259.

¹¹⁹ “Hands Up,” *TIME* (June 16, 1952), accessed January 12, 2011, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,859698,00.html>.

¹²⁰ Boatner, “Military Control of Riot and Kojé-Do,” 8.

¹²¹ Clark, 64.

¹²² George Barrett, “Red Core Crushed in Battle on Kojé; 30 of Foe, 1 G. I. Die,” *NYT*, June 10, 1952, 3.

from where General Boatner commanded the over-all operation, everyone in the sand-bagged post gasped and wiped away tears.”¹²³

Down on the compound ground, special wire cutting teams snipped the barbed wire, and nine flame-throwers burned two gaping holes. 750 paratroopers stormed into the barricade. They outflanked the POWs by surprise, since the prisoners seemed to have been looking for an attack through the main gate and had manned trenches in preparation for a frontal attack. The mask-wearing paratroopers charged the trenches with bayonets. “Prisoners in the trenches were bayoneted in their holes, and some kept fighting as long as they could move.”¹²⁴ “Cowboy yells from the Americans and an eerie chant from the Communists mixed with the popping of concussion grenades, the swish of tear gas rockets and the heavier explosions of Communist gasoline dumps.”¹²⁵

Without much resistance, the troops advanced to the middle of the compound. Some prisoners broke ranks from trenches, tents or huts, ran towards the main gate, and assembled in the central ground as ordered. “Hot dog, look at them run,” Boatner yelled out. “I think we’ve got them licked.”¹²⁶ As planned, the troops halted in the central square “long enough to allow the POW resistance to crumble.” However, it did not. Although “most prisoners quickly quit and squatted in abject surrender,” including Colonel Lee Hak Koo, who quit after only twenty minutes, “the diehards fought savagely and when cornered were sometimes seen to stab their own would-be deserters.”¹²⁷ From a distance, Boatner “could see them being killed and maimed with long spears and barbed-wire whips by other POWs.”¹²⁸

¹²³ Barrett, NYT, June 10, 1952, 3.

¹²⁴ Barrett, NYT, June 10, 1952, 1, 3.

¹²⁵ The Associate Press (AP), “Yanks Crush Uprising in Bloody Kojé Isle Battle: 30 Prisoners Killed, 152 Wounded in Fight With Angels From Hell,” LAT, June 10, 1952, 1.

¹²⁶ NYT, June 10, 1952, 3.

¹²⁷ “Kojé is Blasted, Subdued,” *LIFE* 32, no. 25 (June 23, 1952): 30.

¹²⁸ Boatner, “Military Control of Riot and Kojé-Do,” 8.

The last 1,500 or so of the 6,000 POWs retreated to the southwest corner of the compound.¹²⁹ They fought back against bayonets and concussion grenades with spears and Molotov cocktails. Later it was estimated that the prisoners had used 1,000 “Molotov cocktails.”¹³⁰ When these North Korean fighters were driven out from trenches, they crowded into buildings and tents, and locked themselves inside. They had to be driven out by grenades. Watching from his command post, Boatner was awed by the bravery of the prisoner fighters. “I had never thought they would do that,” he said. “That takes a lot of guts.”¹³¹ Admiration notwithstanding, Boatner ordered tanks to close in on these final resisters. “After all this is war,” as he had said before the operation.¹³²

“Six Patton tanks roared into the compound and trained their guns on the die-hards, but held their fire.”¹³³ Tanks broke holes in the concrete or mud walls.¹³⁴ And the paratroopers, “swinging axes, punches holes in the sides of the buildings, then forced in concussion grenades upon the tightly packed prisoners. ... Many were killed or seriously injured in this manner.”¹³⁵ In less than an hour after the attack had started, “all forty-five Communist tents were in smoking ashes and many of the twenty-five low wooden buildings had been leveled.”¹³⁶

By 8:45 a.m., the fight was over. Compound 76 was “a flaming shambles, Colonel Lee was a weeping prisoner and the paratroopers were in control.”¹³⁷ And “the ground

¹²⁹ AP, “Defiant Koje POWs Yield After Rioting,” *The Washington Post* (hereafter WP), June 11, 1952, 1.

¹³⁰ AP source quoted in “More Koje Prison Camps under Control,” *TIMES* (London), June 11, 1952, 6. However, in Xinhua newswire, it claimed, “the U.S. fired roughly 1,000 flame bombs (噴火彈).” That was probably a misreading of the AP source; see *Renmin Ribao*, June 11, 1952, 1.

¹³¹ “Three Women Among Ringleaders,” *TIMES* (London), June 11, 1952, 6.

¹³² George Barrett, “Red Core Crushed in Battle on Koje; 30 of Foe, 1 G. I. Die,” *NYT*, June 10, 1952, 3.

¹³³ AP, “Defiant Koje POWs Yield After Rioting,” WP, June 11, 1952, 1.

¹³⁴ “Three Women Among Ringleaders,” *TIMES* (London), June 11, 1952, 6. As the *TIMES* correspondent was reporting from New York, this claim was most likely a second-hand one.

¹³⁵ George Barrett, *NYT*, June 10, 1952, 3.

¹³⁶ George Barrett, *NYT*, June 10, 1952, 3.

¹³⁷ “Koje is Blasted, Subdued,” *LIFE* 32, no. 25 (June 23, 1952): 30.

was covered with bayonet-torn captives and wounded soldiers, most of them also weeping from the effects of the gas.”¹³⁸ Among those last captured were the four Chinese prisoners, who had been ordered by the Koreans to hide in an underground bunker and prevented from participating in the fighting. When they were forced out, Zhang Zeshi saw the entire compound was “razed to the ground, with burning tents and uniforms everywhere.” “Tanks were still burning from the damage done by Molotov cocktails. ... Martyred and injured comrades were lying on the ground, and wounded GIs were being carried away on stretchers.”¹³⁹

Those captives considered able-bodied were ordered to squat or sit on the ground in the central square. Eighteen representatives from other compounds who came for the Dodd negotiation a month ago were selected by a roll call. After that, Zhang Zeshi recalled, “We were horded to huge trucks outside the compound. These trucks’ tires were taller than a man’s height. We were hustled to climb into the truck, whose top was covered by barbwire. Unswept animal dung still covered the floor. At the point of bayonets, we were forced to crouching on the floor, keeping both hands behind our heads.”¹⁴⁰ Behind them came “another vehicle with guns ready to discourage any attempt to escape the transfer.”¹⁴¹

At the end of the two-and-a-half-hour battle, 31 prisoners were found killed, and 139 wounded.¹⁴² However, *LIFE* reported, “Of 30 dead prisoners 12 had been killed by their own comrades,” and later hospital deaths from battle wounds brought the prisoner

¹³⁸ George Barrett, NYT, June 10, 1952, 3.

¹³⁹ Zhang Zeshi, *Wo de chaoxiao zhanzheng*, 152.

¹⁴⁰ These figures are from Zhang Zeshi, *Wo de chaoxiao zhanzheng*, 154.

¹⁴¹ “Kojé is Blasted, Subdued,” *LIFE* 32, no. 25 (June 23, 1952): 30. They were taken to the maximum-security prison for alleged “war criminals.” From then on, Sun and Zhang would be separated from fellow Chinese prisoners until their repatriation in September 1953.

¹⁴² Hermes, 259.

death toll to 41, and 274 were wounded.¹⁴³ One U.S. soldier was speared to death and 14 were injured. Moreover, after Compound 76 had been cleared, a tally of weapons showed 3,000 spears, 4,500 knives, 1,000 gasoline grenades, and a large number of clubs, hatchets, barbed wire flails, and hammers.”¹⁴⁴ Also discovered amid the debris were “three live women, a map blueprinting an escape plan and a tunnel leading toward nearby Compound 77.”¹⁴⁵ According Zhang Zeshi, these women were the representatives from the women prisoners’ compound invited to negotiate for Dodd’s release one month ago.¹⁴⁶

Witnessing the havoc from their enclosures adjacent to No. 76, leaders of Compounds 78 and 77 learned their lesson. By noon 6,800 POWs orderly marched out of Compound 78 in orderly fashion. However, Boatner agreed to an overnight delay in transferring Compound 77. After the POWs marched out the next day, UN troops found “in ditches, wells and oil drums the fresh corpses of 16 anti-Reds tried and murdered by kangaroo courts during the night.”¹⁴⁷

The “iron triangle” of Korean Communist resistance was crushed. Immediately General Van Fleet commended Boatner for his “highly efficient” operation. Boatner declared, “Resistance definitely is on the ebb and I believe the worst is over.”¹⁴⁸ He proudly called the troops’ discipline “superb.”¹⁴⁹ Most importantly, he declared, “Not one

¹⁴³ “Kojé is Blasted, Subdued,” *LIFE* 32, no. 25 (June 23, 1952): 30-31. Figures from different reports made at a different time by a different agency were not in complete agreement.

¹⁴⁴ Hermes, 259. General Boatner disagreed with the usage of such a “flippant cliché” in official U.S. military history; see Boatner, “Comments on ‘Truce Tent and Fighting Front’,” Enclosure B, 5.

¹⁴⁵ “Kojé is Blasted, Subdued,” *LIFE* 32, no. 25 (June 23, 1952): 30.

¹⁴⁶ Zhang Zeshi, email correspondence with the author, February 22, 2011.

¹⁴⁷ “Kojé is Blasted, Subdued,” *LIFE* 32, no. 25 (June 23, 1952): 30.

¹⁴⁸ “Kojé is Blasted, Subdued,” *LIFE* 32, no. 25 (June 23, 1952): 30.

¹⁴⁹ “Three Women Among Ringleaders,” *TIMES* (London), June 11, 1952, 6.

shot was fired by U.S. troops throughout the entire operation. Those killed or wounded were hurt by their own colleagues using spears or by the concussion grenades.”¹⁵⁰

Boatner confidently claimed, “Some forty or fifty war correspondents witnessed the entire operation from beginning to end – and not one adverse or critical press report has filed.”¹⁵¹ “Not one shot was fired” became the refrain of Boatner, the U.S. military and the U.S. press in their narratives of this event. General Clark remarked in his 1954 memoir *From the Danube to the Yalu*: “Boatner well knew the propaganda use of the Communist High Command made of Red ‘martyrs’ in the POW camps, so he did everything he could to avoid casualties. He ordered his men to attack with tear gas and concussion grenades only. They followed his order effectively and brought the mob under control without firing a single shot.”¹⁵² U.S. official military historian Hermes stated that the paratroopers “advanced without firing a shot.”¹⁵³

LIFE magazine praised U.S. troops’ discipline, “To keep bloodshed down they fought with unloaded rifles and did not fire a single shot.”¹⁵⁴ However, the description of “unloaded rifles” was not completely accurate. The Associated Press was more precise: “Not a shot was fired by the paratroopers. They had bullets in the rifle magazine but none in the firing chambers.”¹⁵⁵ In Boatner’s lawyerly exact words, “Our riflemen were ordered to load only the magazine of their rifles and forbidden to move the cartridges into the chambers of the barrels until ordered to do so by an officer.”¹⁵⁶ He added, “The

¹⁵⁰ Boatner, “Military Control of Riot and Koje-Do,” 8.

¹⁵¹ Boatner, “Military Control of Riot and Koje-Do,” 8.

¹⁵² Clark, 64.

¹⁵³ Hermes, 259.

¹⁵⁴ “Koje is Blasted, Subdued,” *LIFE* 32, no. 25 (June 23, 1952): 31.

¹⁵⁵ The Associate Press, “Yanks Crush Uprising in Bloody Koje Isle Battle: 30 Prisoners Killed, 152 Wounded in Fight With Angels From Hell,” *LAT*, June 10, 1952, 1.

¹⁵⁶ Boatner, “Military Control of Riot and Koje-Do,” 8. Written circa 1971, Boatner continued, “Please re-read the above sentence. Quite possibly had such a precaution been taken at Kent state that tragedy would have been averted. Some facets of the above operation seem especially applicable to the control of domestic and civil riots in the US.”

simple command LOAD can be executed in split seconds.”¹⁵⁷ Even though he did not say specifically if he ordered “LOAD” or “FIRE,” he implied that it was not ordered, since “not one shot was fired.”

If that was the case, the claim that “not one shot was fired” rested on the perfect discipline of the troops. As Boatner was fully aware of the fact that “the trigger happy soldier is a common phenomenon,” in the mayhem of a battle against fanatic Communist prisoners this perfect discipline was probably difficult to maintain. Chinese prisoner Zhang Zeshi doubted this claim. Although he was “hiding in an underground bunker with the door blocked by North Korean prisoners,” he recalled, “vaguely I could hear the sound of explosions, tanks’ rumbling, North Korean’s People’s Army soldiers’ battle cries, and the occasional sounds of carbines.” Zhang reasoned, “The claim that ‘not one shot was fired’ was at best an order not to shoot wantonly. When the North Koreans were hurling firebombs at tanks and throwing spears at GIs, it would be very difficult for U.S. troops not to shoot.”¹⁵⁸ The death of one U.S. soldier by spear thrust attested to the fatal danger the troops faced. Did the “some forty or fifty war correspondents” miss something important?

Nearly six decades after the event, one U.S. soldier’s memoir appeared online and substantiated Zhang’s suspicion. The then-17-year-old Thurman J. Nichols of the Reconnaissance Company in the U.S. 3rd Infantry Division participated in the operation on June 10, 1952. He recalled, “We were issued live ammo and then we had to go in with fixed bayonets and flame-throwers to get control.” “I was never so scared in my whole life,” confessed this young but battle-tested soldier, who was previously wounded in the famed Battle of Chosin Reservoir. Once troops charged into the compound, a prisoner “came running out of a tent with what looked like a gun.” Nichols saw the soldier next to

¹⁵⁷ Boatner, “Military Control of Riot and Koje-Do,” 8.

¹⁵⁸ Zhang Zeshi, email correspondence with the author, February 22, 2011.

him “tak[ing] aim with his M-1 rifle and shoot him right between his eyes. It looked like his whole head exploded.” In many ways, Nichols’s account is much more graphic and grisly than what was provided by war correspondents at that time. He continued, “A bunch of prisoners were held up in a sheet metal building. We didn't know if they were armed or not. Someone called in for flame-throwers. I could hear them screaming inside and the tin just melted. I had smelled burnt flesh several times in their bunkers after napalm had hit them in the front.”¹⁵⁹

Granted, one soldier’s account does not necessarily invalidate the whole narrative that “not one shot was fired,” but it does call into question the validity or accuracy of this claim, or any categorical claims made by parties in this conflict. Notwithstanding the probability of shooting in this crackdown, the U.S. paratrooper largely maintained good discipline. As a result, after a two-hour gruesome battle between more than 6,400 prisoners and 750 troops and tanks, the death toll was 41, including some killed by the prisoners themselves. If shooting were ordered, many more prisoners would have been killed.

Certainly the Communist mouthpiece Xinhua News Agency was not willing to give Boatner the benefit of the doubt. From Kaesong, its dispatch blasted Boatner “the American executioner” for “carrying out a bloody massacre.” Featured on the front page of *The People’s Daily*, Xinhua called the “not one shot was fired” claim “shameless to the extreme.” Citing an earlier Associated Press report that the only American death was caused by a concussion grenade, Xinhua employed its favorite high-frequency high-pitch phrase, “it gave a loud and sound slap on the face” of Boatner.¹⁶⁰ Even though by the time

¹⁵⁹ Thurman J. Nichols, “Veteran’s Memoirs” (written in August 2010), *Korean War Educator*, accessed March 1, 2011, http://www.koreanwar-educator.org/memoirs/nichols_thurman/index.htm#Kojedo.

¹⁶⁰ “Right Way At Koje,” WP, June 11, 1952, 14; *Renmin Ribao*, June 13, 1952, 1.

of this accusation the Associated Press had made a correction that the soldier was killed by spear thrust, Xinhua never bothered to mention this new interpretation.¹⁶¹

While Boatner was reviled in the Communist world, Western media sang lavish praises for his firm and methodical handling of Communist prisoners. In an article entitled “Right Way at Koje,” *The Washington Post* lauded Boatner’s troops for showing “extraordinary finesse in cleaning up the prisoner mess at Koje Island.”¹⁶² The U.S. military was so pleased with Boatner’s performance that honors and promotions were heaped on him. On August 4, Boatner was promoted from a Brigadier General to a Major General. General Clark hailed Boatner’s performance on Koje, in addition to his superior “combat record as assistant division commander of the Second Division during some of the hardest fighting in Korea.”¹⁶³ A month later in Tokyo General Clark presented to Boatner an Oak Leaf cluster to the Distinguished Service Medal. The citation praised General Boatner for the “exercise of strong leadership” in the rapid reorganization of his forces, which “permitted security troops to obtain complete jurisdiction over more than 160,000 war prisoners.”¹⁶⁴

In late August Boatner turned over his command to Colonel Charles V. Caldwell, his deputy and recently provost marshal of the Eighth Army. He completed his tour in Korea and was to return to the U.S. to serve as the deputy commander of the Fourth Army at San Antonio, Texas.¹⁶⁵ When Boatner bade farewell to Asia, *The People’s Daily* sent him off with an indictment: “Boatner was promoted for his ‘merit’ in massacring prisoners. . . . Although he has already left, he should be put on trial as a war criminal, as he personally directed numerous mass-killing incidents against prisoners.” It also

¹⁶¹ AP, “Defiant Koje POWs Yield After Rioting,” WP, June 11, 1952, 1.

¹⁶² “Right Way At Koje,” WP, June 11, 1952, 14.

¹⁶³ “Boatner Now a Major General,” NYT, August 5, 1952, 2.

¹⁶⁴ “Deputy Succeeds Boatner, Who Gets Honor by Clark,” NYT, September 1, 1952, 2.

¹⁶⁵ “Deputy Succeeds Boatner, Who Gets Honor by Clark,” NYT, September 1, 1952, 2.

blasted Caldwell for announcing his intention to continue the “hard-line policy” that promised “force when necessary.” *The People’s Daily* declared, “These executioners will not escape the punishment they deserve. The noose of justice awaits them!”¹⁶⁶

June-July 1952. Foreign Service Officer Manhard Reports from Koje

Despite the Communist propaganda machine’s portrayal of Boatner as a “butcher” and “war criminal” responsible for “numerous mass murder incidents,” the fact is that after the bloody breakup of Compound 76 on June 10, there was no other large-scale violent incident under Boatner’s reign, which ended on September 1 the same year. During the entire war, the most deadly prison incident occurred prior to Boatner’s tenure, when 77 North Korean prisoners were killed in a riot on Koje Island in February 1952.¹⁶⁷ And the second most deadly incident took place exactly one month after Boatner’s departure, when 56 Chinese prisoners were killed on October 1.¹⁶⁸ Boatner’s June 10 operation ranked third in terms of death toll. But it was the largest open clash between the UN Command and prisoners, involving the largest number of combatants, with nearly one thousand troops battling six thousand prisoner-fighters. In the immediate aftermath of this crackdown, Communist prisoners were unable to stage any organized confrontation.

The grim lesson of Compound 76 was immediately learned. Other prison compounds succumbed to the Boatner’s orders. The once defiant Communist prisoners in Compounds 78 and 77 marched in an orderly manner from their former bastions of resistance on June 10 and 11. They were placed in newly constructed 500-men pens. Other compounds followed suit. On June 17, without any incident the Chinese prisoners

¹⁶⁶ *Renmin Ribao*, September 02, 1952, 1.

¹⁶⁷ Hermes, 239.

¹⁶⁸ NARA/RG 554/Entry 224(A1) _Incident Investigation Cases/Box 9.

in Compound 602 were moved to Compound 70.¹⁶⁹ On June 19, Compound 62, the scene of Koje's bloodiest riot when 85 prisoners and one American infantryman were killed on February 18, 1952, was broken up.¹⁷⁰ Boatner proudly stated: "Not one shot was fired during that movement (on June 10) nor during the succeeding 10 days required to move all 81,000 prisoners at least once."¹⁷¹ In addition, the UN Command finally screened all Korean prisoners, who previously held out in their compounds and refused to be screened.¹⁷² Finally, pro-Communists and anti-Communists were segregated. All anti-Communist Korean prisoners were transferred to the Korean mainland, while more than 15,000 anti-Communist Chinese prisoners had been living on Cheju Island since the screening in mid April.

Out of the original 81,000 prisoners on Koje, as of July 1, only 50,000 had been placed in their new permanent 500-men enclosures. The other 30,000 moved to temporary compounds, waiting to move into new enclosures, which were still under construction. "As a reward" to his success, Boatner was authorized to "construct 3 more enclosures, each for 4000 prisoners" on Koje Island and build "enclosures for 18,000 more ... on two other near-by islands." Although the prisoner population on Koje would be reduced by more than half after the anti-Communist prisoners were moved out, all in all, Boatner's enlarged prison command "won't lose many prisoners but gain two island camps and one other."¹⁷³ Most likely this unspecified "one other" island camp meant Cheju Island, where the anti-Communist Chinese POWs had been held since April. The approximately 5,500 pro-Communist prisoners were to be transported there in July.

¹⁶⁹ "17,500 Red Captives Move Without Disorder on Koje," NYT, June 17, 1952, 4. And Li Ziying, *douzheng dashiji* [Chronology of Struggles], 31.

¹⁷⁰ "KOJE MOVES NEAR END; Tough Compound 62 Among Last to Be Broken Up," NYT, June 19, 1952, 4.

¹⁷¹ Boatner, letter to subscribers to "Haydon's letters," July 1, 1952, 2.

¹⁷² Boatner, letter to subscribers to "Haydon's letters," July 1, 1952, 2.

¹⁷³ Boatner, letter to subscribers to "Haydon's letters," July 1, 1952, 2. And Clark, 66.

When the remaining 30,000 prisoners still living in large compounds were finally moved into 500-men enclosures, Boatner's Operation Breakup came to its completion. With order restored, Boatner began to institute strict disciplinary measures. General Clark remarked, "Compound inspection by camp authorities, impossible in some of the enclosures in the past, were made daily in every compound. The POWs no longer were able to declare any part of the camps off limits to UN troops." In particular, the Prison Command conducted "regular searches for contraband to prevent any repetition of the astonishing build-up of an arsenal by the POWs."¹⁷⁴ Approximately by July, the UN authorities achieved unfettered access to all compounds.

Koje camps opened their doors not only to troops, but also to an old Kojer regular—U.S. Foreign Service Officer Philip Manhard. Secretary of State Acheson anxiously instructed Ambassador Muccio, "in view [of] critical importance [of] POW issue, if you could spare Manhard for brief trip Kojer for purpose indicated if opportunity [is] at hand provided Boatner and Second Log[istical] Command do not object." The purpose of the trip to Kojer was to interview "two top Chi[nese] Commie POW leaders whom [were] regarded [as] promising sources" on the basis of earlier State Department interrogations conducted by Manhard and others. However, prior to June 10, due to "such POWs' temporary residence in Korean Comp 76 where tense conditions made Gen Boatner feel wld be then unwise [to] attempt [to] bring out for interview," Boatner then suggested that after the breakup of 76 it would "produce situation permitting" the interrogation of the two prisoners.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ Clark, 65-66.

¹⁷⁵ Telegram, Acheson to Muccio, June 12, 1952, NARA/RG 59/Decimal File 1950-1954/695A.0024/6-1252. Wld=would.

On June 13 Muccio replied to Acheson, informing him that “at Gen. Boatner’s invitation,” Manhard had “been at Koje-do continuously during the past 10 days”.¹⁷⁶ Prior to that, from May 29 to June 3 in Pusan Manhard was interviewing anti-Communist Korean prisoners recently screened and transferred from Koje to Pusan.¹⁷⁷ At this point, the “two top Chi Commie leaders,” i.e., Sun Zhenguan and Zhang Zeshi, were held in solitary confinement in the maximum-security prison on Koje. According to telegrams from Muccio to Acheson, Manhard had extensive interviews with Sun from June 20 to 24.¹⁷⁸ However, Manhard did not meet Zhang Zeshi until August 2. Sun was the Chief Representative and the nominal leader of all pro-Communist Chinese prisoners in Compound 602. A veteran Communist since the Anti-Japanese War, Sun rose to the rank of battalion commissar before his capture. In contrast, although Zhang was the Chief Translator in Compound 602, before his capture he was merely a cultural instructor, a lowly position equivalent to a deputy platoon leader. Apparently, to Manhard Sun was a much more important source of information than Zhang.

In the next few weeks, the U.S. embassy in Pusan forwarded a flurry of Manhard reports to Washington, beginning with his interview notes with Sun Zhenguan, evaluation of the April screening, assessment of the indoctrination program of the CIE, and ending with his proposal for improvements in prison management. One of the first reports was a detailed “interview highlights” with Sun, in which Chinese Communist prisoners’ main complaints and their views of the screening were listed verbatim. In this report, the main targets of the pro-repatriation prisoners’ grievance were not the U.S. authorities, but rather the anti-Communist prisoner trustees, who used “info[rmation]

¹⁷⁶ Telegram, Muccio to Acheson, June 13, 1952, NARA/RG 59/Decimal File 1950-1954/695A.0024/6-1352.

¹⁷⁷ Telegram, Muccio to Acheson, June 28, 1952, NARA/RG 59/Decimal File 1950-1954/695A.0024/6-2852.

¹⁷⁸ Telegram, Muccio to Acheson, June 28, 1952, NARA/RG 59/Decimal File 1950-1954/695A.0024/6-2852.

blockade,” “deception,” and “physical terror including organized murders, beatings, threats, before and even during polling process” to deter prisoners from choosing repatriation. In addition, many pro-repatriation Chinese POW’s asserted the “American chaplain and his Korean assistant played major role in deterring Chinese from choosing repatriation between first and second polling in 72 and possibly in 86.” Sun challenged the overall lopsided screening result by pointing to the inverse outcome in Compound 70, where 1,200 out of 1,400 chose repatriation. Sun attributed the result to “the weakness of pro-Nationalist POW leadership [in] that group and [the] lack [of] physical violence.” He maintained that Compound 70 was politically typical of the majority of Chinese POWs.¹⁷⁹

Despite Manhard’s disclaimer that “All Comments POW opinion unless otherwise indicated,” clearly Sun Zhenguan’s levelheaded analysis free of the typical Communist bombast convinced Manhard and Ambassador Muccio that it warranted the reading of Secretary of State Acheson. Most strikingly, in ensuing reports Manhard’s own evaluation and assessment closely resembled that of Sun’s. The Communist prisoners had long asserted that the screening result in April was skewed by pro-Nationalists’ control in most compounds, and there was no inherent demographic difference between those who chose repatriation and those who opposed it. Manhard’s analysis concurred.

Per Acheson’s request, on June 29 Manhard air pouched the Department of State “statistics obtained last two weeks on 3,200 of 5,300 pro-repatriation Chinese [on] Kojedo, comparable with those on anti-repatriation Chinese [on] Cheju-do.” Although he was “still unable [to] get complete [new] roster directly from POW’s[,] figures on 3,200 developed from old mater lists are considered fairly reliable majority sample. Remaining

¹⁷⁹ Telegram, Muccio to Acheson, June 28, 1952, NARA/RG 59/Decimal File 1950-1954/695A.0024/6-2852.

2,100 made up of about 1,000 amputees and comparatively recent captures.” Manhard highlighted, “Most outstanding is percentage similarity [in] almost every statistic.”¹⁸⁰

Manhard noted, “Only major difference[s between] two groups are:”

- Pro-repatriates with more CCF than CNA military service 56 percent, anti-repatriates 42 percent;
- Pro-repatriates with more CNA than CCP service 27 percent, anti-repatriates 39 percent;
- Pro-repatriates with no CNA service 37 percent, anti-repatriates 31 percent;
- Among pro-repatriates more list occupation as farmer, far less as soldier than anti-repatriates;
- 25 percent pro-repatriates from North China, 11 percent anti-repatriates;
- 26 percent pro-repatriates from southwest China, 35 percent anti-repatriates.¹⁸¹

Unfortunately it is not very clear how these percentages break down.

Nevertheless, judging from these data, it could be gleaned that prisoners with longer service in Communist forces than in the Nationalist army tended to choose repatriation, and vice versa. And professional soldiers were more likely than farmers to be anti-repatriates. Actually this phenomenon could be partially explained by the Communist prisoners’ standard line that those “unreformed former Nationalist elements” took lead in the anti-repatriation movement. In terms of native place, prisoners of northern origins appeared to be more likely to be pro-repatriation, and those of southwestern origins tended to oppose repatriation. One plausible explanation is that Communist officers tended to be those with longer service in the Communist forces, and they were mostly northerners. They were severely persecuted in the anti-Communist Compounds 72 and 86. Logically, if given a chance, they would escape from the anti-Communists. Therefore, a lower percentage of officers would oppose repatriation, thus lowering the

¹⁸⁰ Manhard, report enclosed in Muccio’s telegram to Acheson, June 29, 1952, NARA/RG 59/Decimal File 1950-1954/695A.0024/6-2952. Also enclosed were sketches showing compound layout in Compound 72 during the April polling process.

¹⁸¹ Telegram, Muccio to Acheson, June 29, 1952, NARA/RG 59/Decimal File 1950-1954/695A.0024/6-2952. CCF: Chinese Communist Forces; CNA: Chinese Nationalist Army.

percentage of northern anti-repatriates. Besides these variations, the differences between pro- and anti-repatriates were not so significant.

Then, the question is: what swayed prisoners of largely similar backgrounds to make opposite decisions when it came to repatriation? Manhard basically agreed with Sun that the UN reorientation programs, i.e., the CIE, played a major role in aiding the rise of anti-Communist trustees and consequently swinging prisoners against repatriation. Apparently aware of the fact that the idea of rescreening was being entertained in Washington, Tokyo and Panmunjom, Manhard listed a number of pre-conditions if the Chinese POWs were to be polled in the future. Among others, the three most important conditions were:

3. Separate judicial detention for all POW trustees of former compounds 72 and 86 in Koje-Do against whom evidence exists of subversion of purpose of original polling.
4. Rigorous suppression of all PW-appointed “guards” and camp supervised election of new POW reps for smaller units of 500-1000 only.
5. Cessation of all polit[ical] indoctrination activities such as CI and E ‘reorientation’ features and polit[ical] sermons and other non-religious activities by camp chaplains, whether American Chinese or Korean.¹⁸²

In a sense, these items amounted to an indictment of the CIE program and the pro-Nationalist prisoner leaders.

In Manhard’s final analysis, the April screening had failed to achieve its designed purpose of applying “objective criteria to determine bona fide anti-Commies.” He concluded:

In Korea polling actually appeared as choice between two political allegiances for POW’s from divided countries. Polling procedure superimposed on background of extreme coercion and intimidation over long period of both pro and anti-Commie leaders Korean compounds, anti-Commie leaders Chi compounds. Physical safety [of] all POW’s immed[iately] before and during polling process [were] not guaranteed due [to] lack internal control of compounds by UN guards. Honest naiveté [in] polling questions resulted in involuntary repatriates and many

¹⁸² Telegram no. 18, Muccio to Acheson, July 2, 1952, NARA/RG 59/Decimal File 1950-1954/695A.0024/7-252.

involuntary non repatriates, choice being made in atmosphere of fear and uncertainty.¹⁸³

Notably, Manhard left out pro-Communist Chinese prisoner leaders in his charge of “extreme coercion and intimidation over long period.” While Manhard’s views often agreed with Sun’s, it would be mistaken to consider Manhard a gullible American diplomat. That the Chinese Communist prisoners did not engage in “extreme coercion and intimidation over long period” was a hardheaded assessment for two simple reasons. First, overt coercion and intimidation was not the preferred method of the Chinese Communists, who were famed for their indoctrination or “reeducation” programs. More importantly, the fact that the tiny pro-repatriation pro-Communist compound 71, which had only 254 prisoners initially, was established rather late and remained very small precluded the possibility of systematic violence “over a long period.”

While Manhard was most critical of the anti-Communist prisoner trustees and their sponsors in the CIE programs, he had held no punches when he assessed the UN troops’ disciplinary problems. “In past camp command has had difficulty enforcing discipline among US and ROK troops. Some trigger-happy men had not been adequately trained in Govt [*sic*] control techniques and equipped with non-lethal weapons. Stones, songs and insults have on occasion been silenced by bullets and bayonets.” Moreover, “Authorized personal possessions POWs frequently confiscated by other POWs, ROK and US personnel.¹⁸⁴ These were exactly the same grievances that the Communist prisoners had been protesting, but to no avail.

Although it appeared that Manhard had mostly interviewed the Chinese pro-Communist prisoners and listened to their views, across the ideological divide he

¹⁸³ Telegram, Muccio to Acheson, July 5, 1952, NARA/RG 59/Decimal File 1950-1954/695A.0024/7-552.

¹⁸⁴ Telegram no. 18, Muccio to Acheson, July 2, 1952, NARA/RG 59/Decimal File 1950-1954/695A.0024/7-252, Telegram.

identified one target of universal complaint: food. In this instance, the divide was between the Chinese and the Americans, who had entirely different dietary preferences. However, the issues were much more serious than taste. It was chronic food shortage and its resultant hunger. The *TIME* magazine once glowingly described Koje prisoners' nutrition: "They are fed three times a day—rice, beans, fish, pepper mash, soy sauce. This is a nourishing, 2,800-calorie diet, on which many prisoners have gained weight."¹⁸⁵ However, such claims even the anti-Communist prisoners would dispute, despite that they normally sided with the U.S. ideologically and were more muted in their protest. Chinese anti-Communist prisoner Gao Wenjun recalled, "Our staple diet was not rice, but barley mostly. At each meal, each prisoner was rationed a large bowl of food, roughly equivalent to two small bowls that are used at home. Side dishes included dried fish, canned food and vegetables. But side dishes were often absent, so we just had 'crystal clear soup' made of water and salt." Consequently most anti-Communist prisoners were often left hungry.¹⁸⁶

In a strikingly similar fashion, the Communist prisoners complained about the lack of rice and more. "Our main food supplies consisted of unmilled barley, wheat or very roughly-ground barley with a moldy smell."¹⁸⁷ Even to this day, former prisoner Zhong Junhua still remembers with disgust the nearly indigestible diet made of unmilled barley.¹⁸⁸ In terms of quantity, the U.S. authorities "claimed that one prisoner had one pound of daily food ration; but in reality, it never reached that level after it was skimmed at various levels." Meat was a rarity. "One pound of meat was allocated for every 50

¹⁸⁵ "Beggars' Island," *TIME*, January 28, 1952, accessed January 5, 2011, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,806262,00.html>.

¹⁸⁶ Gao Wenjun, *Hanzhan yiwang*, 157-158.

¹⁸⁷ The editorial committee, "Chaoxian Zhanzheng zhong zai meifang de zhongguo zhanfu jizhongying qingkuang zongshu" 朝鲜战争中在美方的中国战俘集中营情况综述 [An overview of the U.S. concentration camps for Chinese POWs during the Korean War], in *Kaoyan*, 4-5.

¹⁸⁸ Zhong Junhua, interview by author, October 17, 2009, Chengdu, Sichuan.

prisoners, and it usually came as dried squid. Under normal circumstances, prisoners had only two meals a day, each consisted of a fist-sized rice-ball or a half-bowl of barley, and a bowl of clear soup dotted by a few vegetable leaves and cooking oil drops. If they were lucky, prisoners occasionally found morsels of meat or fish in their soup.”¹⁸⁹

Manhard recognized the prevalence of food shortage. In a report to Washington he maintained: “previous POW resistance to camp authorities [on] Koje-do stemmed from (1) uncontrolled internal political agitation and unauthorized polit[ical] indoctrination, (2) misuse of inadequate force by camp command and (3) food bulk below non-combat standards of Commie forces.” Manhard elaborated, “Amount and type of food ration subj[ect to] constant complaint among practically all Chi POWs regardless of polit[ical] attitude, and presumably among many Korean POWs. Since original diet established, rice ration lowered in quality, two thirds replaced by inferior grains often indigestible for many POWs and requiring more fuel to prepare. Stomach and digestive diseases long chronic among large number POWs.”¹⁹⁰ Therefore, one of his recommendations for improving camp management was: “Modification of food ration to include more rice and vegetables in closer approximation POW eating habits which will conserve fuel cook unmilled grains and reduce medical expense entailed in treating chronic digestive sicknesses.”¹⁹¹

If Manhard shared many views of the Chinese Communist prisoners, he arrived at the same conclusions after his extensive observation of Chinese prisoners on Koje and his frequent interaction with them since mid 1951. While Manhard was being fair in stating that the Chinese Communists did not perpetrate systematic violence prior to the

¹⁸⁹ The editorial committee, in *Kaoyan*, 4-5.

¹⁹⁰ Telegram No. 18, Muccio to Acheson, July 2, 1952, NARA/RG 59/Decimal File 1950-1954/695A.0024/7-252, Telegram.

¹⁹¹ Telegram No. 20, Muccio to Acheson, July 2, 1952, NARA/RG 59/Decimal File 1950-1954/695A.0024/7-252, Telegram.

screening in April, and it was true that he had befriended their leaders, he warned about the danger of “undisputed control” of compounds by “intractable pro-Commie POW leaders” after the screening.¹⁹² To wrestle compound control away from these Communist leaders, Manhard suggested having them segregated from the rank and file, the same method he had recommended to segregate the anti-Communist leaders from their followers. He thought segregation would leave the Chinese prisoners without leadership for resistance.

To General Boatner’s headquarters, Manhard presented a detailed plan dated July 5, “by which maximum control could eventually be gained over the mass of POWs while minimizing the influence of hard-core Commie agitators.” This elaborate proposal was designed to improve prison management and intelligence gathering, and it “involved a careful and detailed screening for personal background by which segregation could be carried out based on rank, degree of political indoctrination, length of service and literacy.” Once segregation was achieved, a prisoner of war or defector would be exploited for three purposes: “1. Strategic intelligence. 2. Propaganda. 3. Political reorientation (away from Communism to understand and support democratic principles and practices).” Ultimately, his program was designed for “maximum effectiveness in exploiting POWs to our own advantage—to get the biggest pay-off on our investment in care and protection of POWs,” Manhard maintained.¹⁹³ Clearly, Manhard had larger objectives beyond the minimum requirement of security and control. Unfortunately, Manhard still failed to acknowledge the inherent moral dilemma of indoctrinating prisoners. How could the U.S. “reorient” the prisoners to become anti-Communists or

¹⁹² Telegram No. 18, Muccio to Acheson, July 2, 1952, NARA/RG 59/Decimal File 1950-1954/695A.0024/7-252, 2.

¹⁹³ Manhard, “Chinese POW Incident, Chejudo – Oct 1,” in Muccio telegram to Acheson, October 20, 1952, NARA/RG 59/Decimal File 1950-1954/695A.0024/10-2052, 3; and enclosed memo, July 5, 1952, 1-2.

non-Communists one day, and then send them back into the hands of the Communists the next?

Nevertheless, as if a final testament to the dominance of the simple “get tough” policy and the disposal of nuanced non-confrontational approach (and other ambitious objectives), Manhard’s comprehensive proposal was shelved indefinitely because of its “difficulty.” “Instead,” Manhard lamented, “the school solution calls for bullets as the answer to songs and stones.”¹⁹⁴

Captain Joseph Brooks and Father Thomas O’Sullivan Enter the Scene

In a sense, Manhard’s failure was a by-product of General Boatner’s success. Before and after the screening of prisoners in April 1952, Acheson gave instructions to Muccio and Manhard to “interrogate” Chinese prisoners and gather intelligence so that the State Department could formulate its own policy regarding prisoner repatriation, though the armistice negotiations were carried out in Panmunjom by the U.S. military. In the aftermath of the lopsided screening results, which shocked everyone, Acheson was eager for facts independent of the military sources, so he could weigh in with his own data during debates on the feasibility of a rescreening of prisoners. However, Manhard’s mission was delayed by the kidnapping of General Dodd and the ensuing blockade of Compound 76. By the time Manhard furnished his reports to Washington in late June and early July 1952, rescreening was already out of the question. In addition, as the Truman and Acheson administration was on its way out, not surprisingly a junior Foreign Officer in a far-flung outpost like Manhard failed to effect policy changes in Washington.

¹⁹⁴ Manhard, “Chinese POW Incident, Chejudo – Oct 1,” in Muccio telegram to Acheson, October 20, 1952, NARA/RG 59/Decimal File 1950-1954/695A.0024/10-2052, 3.

Nor did Boatner have any incentive to implement recommendations made by Manhard, despite the two men's frequent and close interactions. After having fought grueling trench wars near the 38th parallel from December 14, 1951 to April 16, 1952 and restored order on Koje in June, Boatner looked forward to winding down his tour in Asia.¹⁹⁵ His successors were even less motivated to entertain Manhard's proposal, which would entail not only a significant restructure of the prison system, but also a significant commitment of resources. The proposed "careful and detailed screening" required a large number of experienced Chinese linguists, who were in dire short supply throughout the war. MacArthur's makeshift solution was to hire linguists in Taiwan. Even though probably not all of these Taiwan linguists were "Chiang Kai-shek's Gestapos," as Ambassador Muccio called them, it is expected that they sympathized with the anti-Communist prisoners, who were doing everything possible to go to Taiwan. Precisely because of these Chinese Nationalist personnel's presence in prison camps, the anti-Communist prisoners won dominance over their Communist foes. For all of these reasons, Manhard's proposal was unrealistic.

The easiest and safest approach for Boatner's successors was to simply continue his "get tough" policy. However, there was a crucial difference: apparently Caldwell and others were not familiar with the Chinese language and culture—or at least there was no indication of such ability, judging from available sources. Unlike Boatner who often directly interacted with the prisoners, his successors had to rely on others. Entering the scene: two other old "China hands," Captain Joseph N. Brook of Chicago and Father Thomas O'Sullivan, a civilian Catholic chaplain. These two men exercised "a great deal of

¹⁹⁵ Boatner, letter to subscribers to "Haydon's letters," July 1, 1952, 1.

immediate influence over the policies of handling this particular group of [pro-Communist] Chinese POWs since July” 1952, reported Manhard.¹⁹⁶

Compared to Boatner and Manhard, Brooks and O’Sullivan belonged to a different type of “China hands.” As a U.S. military Chinese Language Officer based in Beijing (Beijing), Boatner studied Chinese and earned a MA Degree in 1934 from the California College in China, whose mission was “for the training of Americans in knowledge of China, its civilization, language and trade customs.”¹⁹⁷ Similarly, Manhard had his formal Chinese language training in Beijing, from March of 1948 until early October 1949. It was an 18-month intensive course taught at the U.S. Foreign Service Chinese language school, where “at one time even George Marshall had attended school there in that place with the Army, way back.”¹⁹⁸ The Chinese they learned was the standard Mandarin, or the official Beijing dialect. As discussed previously, Boatner claimed he understood northern accents, which were close to the Beijing dialect.¹⁹⁹ Manhard’s Chinese was probably one notch better. When prisoner translator Gao Jie, who was a Shandong native, remarked that Manhard’s Beijing accent was better than his own, it reflects how well Manhard had mastered the language after 18 months of one-on-one tutoring by Beijing teachers.²⁰⁰

In contrast to Boatner and Manhard’s elitist language education, Brooks and O’Sullivan learned their Chinese “among the masses,” in a sense. Father O’Sullivan stated, “I spent thirteen continuous years in China, from 1936 to 1949, living amongst the Chinese and speaking the language in conversation every day.” As a result, he spoke

¹⁹⁶ Manhard, “Chinese POW Incident, Chejudo – Oct 1,” in Muccio telegram to Acheson, October 20, 1952, NARA/RG 59/Decimal File 1950-1954/695A.0024/10-2052, 3.

¹⁹⁷ Jean Beckner, “Rich Fare From Special Collections” (Claremont Graduate University website), accessed March 21, 2011, <http://www.cgu.edu/pages/3008.asp>.

¹⁹⁸ Philip W. Manhard, interview by Marshall Green, December 1, 1988, transcript (The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project), accessed March 20, 2011, <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/mfdip.2004man01>.]

¹⁹⁹ Boatner, letter to Senator John G. Tower, 2-3.

²⁰⁰ Gao Jie 高子, interview by Lin Mocong 林模丛, transcript.

three dialects of Chinese.²⁰¹ If Father O’Sullivan’s linguistic attainment was impressive, Brooks’ claims were staggering. Brooks said that he learned his Chinese “during several years [of] residence in China.” “More specifically, from 1945 through 1949, while I was a member of the American Army, and attached to or working with elements of the Chinese National Army. I have lived in 21 of 28 Provinces of China and can communicate in the three major dialects of Mandarin, Shanghai and Cantonese. I am familiar with the lesser spoken dialects—central, western and southwestern China.”²⁰²

Taking issues with such fantastic claims of Brooks, Manhard doubted this self-taught language genius, “Although he claims to be a ‘Chinese linguist’ his vocabulary is limited to coolie lingo and he is almost completely illiterate in the written language.”²⁰³ Huang Tiancai, the prisoner interrogator-interpreter who was hired in Taiwan by the U.S. Far East Command and served under Brooks in the 163d Military Intelligence Service Detachment, U.S. Marine First Corps, thought differently. Huang recalled, “Among all the Chinese-speaking American officers I had met [in Korea] Captain Brooks spoke the most authentic Mandarin [sic]. ... He had been to many places in China and he could understand a number of dialects.”²⁰⁴ More importantly, Huang pointed out, when it came to interrogating Chinese prisoners, who were mostly illiterate, precisely because Brooks was conversant with laymen’s language in various dialects, he was much more effective than other Americans who were university-trained in standard but bookish Chinese.²⁰⁵ In assessing Brooks’ language ability, probably Manhard was probably half right, on the written part, and half too harsh, on the spoken part.

²⁰¹ Report of Proceedings by Board of Officers, NARA/RG 554/Box 9/Case 158, Exhibit A, 7.

²⁰² Report of Proceedings by Board of Officers, RG 554/Incident Investigation Cases/Box 9/Case 154, 16.

²⁰³ Manhard, “Chinese POW Incident, Chejudo – Oct 1,” in Muccio telegram to Acheson, October 20, 1952, NARA/RG 59/Decimal File 1950-1954/695A.0024/10-2052, 1.

²⁰⁴ Huang Tiancai (Hwang Tien-tsai) 黃天才, *Wo zai 38 du xian de huiyi* 我在38度線的回憶 [My memories at the 38th parallel (Taipei: Ink Book, 2010), 154.

²⁰⁵ Huang Tiancai, interview by author, October 8, 2010, Taipei.

One of the few Chinese prisoners who had conversations with both Brooks and Manhard was Zhang Zeshi. He compared the language ability of these two “Chinese linguists”: in terms of their fluency in spoken Chinese, they were comparable; but Manhard’s Mandarin pronunciation was superior. In addition, Zhang stressed, “in terms of temperament/demeanor (*qizhi*), Brooks was no match for Philip.”²⁰⁶ Evidently, the tall, slender, and urbane Manhard, a graduate of University of Southern California, impressed Zhang much more than the short, chubby, and uncouth Brooks ever did. Moreover, the lasting negative image of Brooks was sealed during their final encounter, which took place in Koje’s top prison. As a result, Zhang’s impression of Brooks deteriorated from a simple but friendly American to a surly imperialist bully.

Under custody in Koje’s top prison, Sun Zhenguan, Zhang Zeshi, and another Chinese prisoner Li Ziyang decided to hold a one-day hunger strike on July 1, 1952 to commemorate the Chinese Communist Party’s founding. On June 30 Zhang drafted a protest letter addressed to Boatner. The next afternoon, while he was on hunger strike in his cell, Captain Brooks appeared, along with a doctor. They had not seen each other for a more than a year, since they first met in the frontline prisoner stockade on May 27, 1951. Brooks first expressed sympathy for Zhang’s incarceration. When he told Zhang that he was sent by General Boatner to ask him to end the hunger strike, the conversation turned sour. When Zhang refused to cooperate, Brooks threatened, “If you don’t follow this order, I will give you an injection to make your stomach burn!” Zhang noticed the doctor was carrying a tray with a syringe covered by gauze. At the end of this unpleasant reencounter, Brooks did not carry out his threat, but he yelled at Zhang, “I

²⁰⁶ Zhang Zeshi, email correspondence with author, March 21, 2011.

will keep you locked up here for good!”²⁰⁷ That was also the final meeting between the two men.

To Zhang, this Brooks on Kojé was not the same Brooks from May 1951, when he offered the newly captured Zhang a job to work for the Eighth Army as a civilian translator, and told Zhang that he could go to the U.S. to study physics after the war. Zhang did not know that Brooks would soon become the Number One Enemy of the Chinese Communist prisoners held on Cheju Island. This most-hated and most-wanted Captain Brooks was commonly referred to and remembered as Dog Captain Brooks (*gou dawei bulukesi*).²⁰⁸ Soon Brooks would lead the attack on sub-Compound No. 7 on October 1, 1952, resulting in a bloodbath.

What differentiated Brooks and O’Sullivan from Boatner and Manhard was the first two men’s open antagonism toward the pro-Communist prisoners. Boatner had a long and rich relationship with the Chinese. In his writings, Boatner maintained a largely balanced view of China and the Chinese, and he displayed no overt hostility to pro-repatriation prisoners. In fact, in his mind he “never could become an enthusiastic supporter of the principle of voluntary repatriation,” which “seemed like a propaganda exercise” to him.²⁰⁹ In his dealings with the Chinese prisoners, Boatner was tough but reasonable. Manhard had witnessed the Communist “liberation” of Beijing first hand, and then worked a deputy consul in Tianjin until U.S. diplomats’ final evacuation in April 1950. He had had his share of difficulties in Communist China, but apparently he did not develop a particular hatred for the Chinese or the Chinese Communists.

²⁰⁷ Zhang Zeshi, *Wo de chaoxiao zhanzheng*, 169.

²⁰⁸ *Gou dawei bulukesi* 狗大尉布魯克斯.

²⁰⁹ Boatner, “Prisoners of War: Have U.S. Policies Protected Americans in Asia?” circa 1968, Hoover Archives/Boatner Papers/Box 2, 19.

After thirteen years in China, the Irish Franciscan Father O'Sullivan ended his mission in 1949.²¹⁰ Presumably he was deported. In view of the larger context of the Chinese Communists' expulsion of missionaries and persecution of Catholic believers, Father O'Sullivan could hardly be a friend of Chinese Communists. In Brooks' case, it was much more visceral: his wife and child were killed by the Chinese Communists, he claimed.

Details of the purported family tragedy of Brooks were featured a year later on Taiwan's *Central Daily (Zhongyang Ribao)*, the Nationalists' equivalent of the *People's Daily*. Brooks gave the full story: he first went to China with the Marshall Mission in 1946, and later served in the U.S. Military Advisory Group to China. During his tour, he met the sister of a Chinese colleague. In 1947 they were married, and had a baby boy named Willy. However, Brooks suffered from a severe case of jaundice, so he had to return to the U.S. for treatment, leaving his wife and child behind in China. By the time he recovered in 1949, China had been lost to the Communists. He had no information about his wife and child, except the hearsay that they were taken away by the Communists when they were fleeing south. To add to the pain, Brooks did not possess a single photograph of his wife or child, as all his photos were lost on his way back to the U.S.²¹¹

Brooks told a story so heartbreaking, so hapless at so many turns that some people found it suspicious. Manhard asserted, "His claim that his Chinese wife and child were killed by the Chinese Commies in 1949 is open to doubt."²¹² Manhard was not alone. Even Brooks' subordinate Huang Tiancai, the interrogator hired from Taiwan,

²¹⁰ John Osborne, "An Issue Which Has 49,000 Parts," *LIFE* 34, no. 13 (June 15, 1953), 132.

²¹¹ *Zhongyang Ribao* 中央日報 [The Central Daily], September 3, 1953.

²¹² Manhard, "Chinese POW Incident, Chejudo – Oct 1," 1.

doubted this account. Therefore, although Huang praised Brooks' language ability and reminisced about their interactions, he left this story out of his memoir.²¹³

Regardless of the veracity of Brooks' story, one clear fact is that he hated the Communists, and he carried this animosity to Koje and Cheju Islands. Manhard observed that Brooks' attitude toward the pro-repatriation Chinese POWs "is characterized by vicious hatred and a burning desire for 'revenge.'" In the ensuing conflicts Captain Brooks and Father O'Sullivan played direct and crucial roles, which were much larger than their lowly ranks would suggest.

June-July 1952. "Hard-Core Communist Leader" Zhao Zuoduan Segregated

If there was anything Brooks and Manhard had in common, it was their agreement on the need to segregate Communist leaders from rank-and-file prisoners. In Manhard's view, "the majority of the pro-repatriation Chinese POWs" were different from their die-hard Communist leaders, and they were "certainly not fanatic, hard-core Communist."²¹⁴ However, the screening of April 1952 had one unintended consequence: it "resulted in allowing Communist POW leaders to take over uncontested control over almost all prisoners choosing repatriation, the practical effect of which was to deny exploitation of this group for intelligence and propaganda..."²¹⁵ With their leader removed, Manhard argued, the U.S. could begin "exploiting POWs to our own advantage" in the areas of "strategic intelligence, propaganda, and political reorientation."²¹⁶

²¹³ Huang Tiancai, *Wo zai 38 du xian de huiyi*, 154. Confirmed in interview with author, October 8, 2010.

²¹⁴ Manhard, "Chinese POW Incident, Chejudo – Oct 1," 2. Underscore was added in the original text.

²¹⁵ Manhard, "Reappraisal of POW Concept in Light of Korean War Experience," enclosed in memo to Department of State, February 2, 1953, NARA/RG 59/Decimal File 1950-1954/695A.0024/2-253, 2.

²¹⁶ Manhard, "Chinese POW Incident, Chejudo – Oct 1," enclosed memo, 1.

The top leader of the Communist prisoners, also their highest-ranking officer on Koje, was no other than Zhao Zuoduan, the former Commissar of the 538th Regiment, 180th Division. Although Manhard had effectively saved Zhao's life half a year earlier by facilitating Zhao's transfer away from the clutches of anti-Communists in Compound 72, this time he played an important role in the arrest of Zhao, who was under the disguise of Wang Fang the quartermaster. Manhard admitted, "The POW Command was unaware of his identity or rank until I suggested to General Boatner that he be segregated."²¹⁷

However, Zhao had long been identified by his captors. On interrogation report No. KG 0537 dated September 11, 1951, Zhao Zuoduan's full name (spelled Chao, Tso Tuan) and identity were fully recorded. Significantly longer than the other prisoners' interrogation records, this 15-page report featured a full personal chronology of Zhao, along with detailed sociological, political and military information, replete with multiple organizational charts of the Communist government and military.²¹⁸ Evidently, the U.S. Far East Command's intelligence branch G-2 knew his identity, and Zhao did cooperate during the interrogation. Prior to this in-depth interrogation by G-2 in Pusan, Zhao under the alias of Wang Fang was first uncovered by "traitors" in Compound 72, who were his former subordinates.²¹⁹ Precisely because Zhao was already exposed, he decided to cooperate in this two-week-long interrogation. In an interview in 1983, Zhao rationalized his action, "if I refused interrogation, I would be sent back to 72. So I decided to tell public information, but not those secret."²²⁰

If Zhao's identity was known by the authorities, why did Manhard claim, "the POW Command was unaware of his identify or rank"? Further more, since Zhao's

²¹⁷ Manhard, "Chinese POW Incident, Chejudo – Oct 1," 2.

²¹⁸ Chao, Tso Tuan 趙佐端 (Zhao Zuoduan), Interrogation Report KG 0537, September 11, 1951, ATIS, 1.

²¹⁹ Zhao Zuoduan 趙佐端, "Chuqiu nantian wangbei gui" 楚囚南天望北归 [Imprisoned in the south, yearning to return north], in *Kaoyan*, 180.

²²⁰ Zhao Zuoduan, interview by Wu Jinfeng, June, 1983, in *Andeshe Biji*, vol. 2, 20.

interrogators had already known his true identify, why did Zhao continue to use the alias Wang Fang? The answer to the first question pertains to the peculiar dysfunction of the U.S. military authorities; the key to the second question reveals the Chinese Communists' peculiarly secretive approach to underground struggle.

Most likely, Manhard's claim that the POW Command was unaware of Zhao's identity or rank was technically correct. Later Manhard lambasted the absence of information sharing between various U.S. military and government agencies. "Interrogation teams have usually reported their information exclusively through their own, separate channels, while the camp command has had no access to certain information." Moreover, the lack of "coordination of high-level policy and field-level operation between interested government agencies has been largely lacking, one result of which has been to deprive the camp command of information and advice necessary for efficient operation while embroiling it in internecine conflict with various field units having separate chains of command."²²¹ In Zhao's case, his interrogation was conducted in Pusan by Allied Translator and Interpreter Service (ATIS), which was under the chain of command of the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2 (Intelligence) based in Tokyo. However, the Prison Command belonged to the 2nd Logistics Command of the U.S. Eighth Army based in Pusan, Korea.

While the Prison Command had its own records of prisoners, they were woefully inadequate. In a separate memorandum written in June 1953, Manhard revealed these "sad, embarrassing facts," and highlighted "the near uselessness of our records." He concluded that the "UNC has never been able to develop, and does not now have, anything resembling adequate POW records." The U.S. authorities had "almost no

²²¹ Manhard, "Chinese POW Incident, Chejudo – Oct 1," 1-2.

knowledge of the most elementary information about the prisoners.”²²² If it had some information, it was often unreliable. “Records do not match the prisoners and vice versa. The majority have assumed false names and ranks, frequently switch or change internment numbers.” Interestingly, Manhard noted, the records of the pro-Communist POWs were “probably in even worse condition than those of the anti-repatriates.”²²³ That is to say, Communist prisoners tended to be more evasive in providing information. Certainly that was true.

Like many captured Communist officers, when Zhao was first taken prisoner on May 27, 1951, he assumed the alias of Wang Fang and the false rank of a quartermaster, which suited his relatively old age of 35. However, his true identity was uncovered by anti-Communist prisoners only two days after his arrival on Koje Island in June 1951. When the G-2 selected him to be interrogated in Pusan in August, the prison authorities picked him up from the anti-Communists-controlled Compound 72, apparently without any difficulty. When he returned to Koje in December, his identity had long been exposed. He was tortured several times in the anti-Communist Korean Compound 61 and Chinese Compound 72 precisely because of his status as the highest-ranking Chinese Communist officer.²²⁴ At this point, one would think that his alias Wang Fang no longer served any purpose, as all his enemies knew his identity.

However, the legend of Wang Fang lived on. Despite G-2 having full information of his true identity and the anti-Communist prisoner trustees’ knowledge of his real name, Zhao Zuoduan continued to be referred as Wang Fang on Koje. While no Prison Command’s record on Zhao or Wang Fang has been found, judging from repatriated

²²² Manhard, “Recent development in the UNC POW camps,” memo to U.S. Ambassador, June 16, 1953, NARA/RG 59/Decimal File 1950-1954/695A.0024/6-1653, 1-2.

²²³ Manhard, “Recent development in the UNC POW camps,” memo to U.S. Ambassador, June 16, 1953, NARA/RG 59/Decimal File 1950-1954/695A.0024/6-1653, 3.

²²⁴ Zhao Zuoduan, in *Kaoyan*, 180-187.

Chinese prisoners' literature, Zhao was consistently referred to as Wang Fang, even during the Communist prisoners' dealings with the prison authorities. And the alias Wang Fang appeared on the *People's Daily* of September 5 and 7, 1953, when Xinhua reported the repatriation of Wu Chengde, Sun Zhenguan, Wang Fang, and Wei Lin, the four highest ranking Chinese officer prisoners.²²⁵ Clearly, the alias Wang Fang was used by the Communist prisoners all the way until Zhao's repatriation, and most likely, it was accepted by the Prison Command as his name.

This bizarre phenomenon simply validates Manhard's criticism on the poor state of record-keeping and the lack of record-sharing between various U.S. government agencies. G-2 knew who Zhao Zuoduan was, the anti-Communist prisoners knew him, yet the Prison Command did not know who Zhao Zuoduan was. Enough said about the "near uselessness" of prison records.

The second question, however, remains: after Zhao was transferred to the small pro-Communist Compound 71 and assumed the leadership of the underground Communists, why did Zhao continue to use his alias? One possible explanation is that probably Zhao and the Communists detected the poor coordination between U.S. agencies, and decided that since Zhao could get away with his alias, he should continue to use it. Theoretically, an alias adds some protection against the prison authority. However, another explanation is more consequential: by using the alias Zhao could protect himself and the underground party organization could protect its leader from traitors. To an underground Communist, especially a leader, the most dangerous threat is not from the enemy in the open, but rather traitors in the dark. Therefore, although Zhao was the highest leader, he operated behind the scene. Sun Zhenguan, who was the third or fourth in command, acted as the front leader. This arrangement was similar to

²²⁵ *Renmin Ribao*, September 5, 1953, 1; *Renmin Ribao*, September 7, 1953, 1. The other three used their real names.

that of the Korean Communists. The famed Lee Hak Koo was only a figurehead, and their actual top leader, a former provincial party secretary by the last name of Park (Piao Xiangxian), operated deep behind under an alias. Park was not identified and segregated until some time after the June 10 breakup of Compound 76.²²⁶

Once informed by Manhard of Zhao's identity and rank, Boatner proceeded to segregate him. However, this seemingly simple task of taking Zhao out of the Chinese compound turned out to be an enormously difficult exercise. As Manhard had noted, since April screening Communist POW leaders had took over "uncontested control over almost all prisoners choosing repatriation."²²⁷ While Operation Breakup and the subsequent transfer of Korean prisoners to the newly built 500-men sub-enclosures had subdued the Koreans, more than 5,000 Chinese prisoners still lived in one large compound No. 602 until June 16. At this point, the U.S. had completed the construction of 500-men pens on Cheju Island.²²⁸ Before moving the pro-Communist prisoners to their new enclosures in Cheju, Boatner decided to segregate their top leader, Zhao.

As Boatner had done with the Koreans, he proceeded in a methodical manner. On June 17, the Prison Command announced to the Chinese prisoners in Compound 602 that they were to be moved to Compound 70 closer to the pier, and the move was a preparation for transportation to Cheju Island. The underground Communist leadership decided to comply, as a means to "conserve strength, especially in view of the bloody

²²⁶ Zhang Zeshi, *Wo de chaoxiao zhanzheng*, 138, 188. The North Korean leader's full name in Chinese is 朴相显.

²²⁷ Manhard, "Reappraisal of POW Concept in Light of Korean War Experience," enclosed in memo to Department of State, February 2, 1953, NARA/RG 59/Decimal File 1950-1954/695A.0024/2-253, 2.

²²⁸ Lin Haiyin 林海音, "Mosepu pinsi zheng ziyou (xia)" 莫瑟浦拼死争自由 (上) [Risking their lives to fight for freedom in Mosulpo, Party One], in *Fangong yishi fendoushi* (Taipei, 1955), 111.

massacre in Compound 76.”²²⁹ Without any incident the Chinese prisoners moved to Compound 70.²³⁰ Perhaps this was a warm-up exercise before arresting Zhao.

The next day, a broadcast vehicle announced the order to have Zhao, here presumably “Wang Fang,” to turn himself in at the gate. Coincidentally, on the same day, Boatner announced to the press that he had “found the suspected ‘Czar’ of Koje, a fanatical Communist who masterminded the Koje riots and murders.”²³¹ It is not clear if this alleged “Czar” was Zhao or the Korean leader Park. Regardless of whom Boatner referred to as the Czar, Zhao and other Chinese Communist leaders decided to ignore the order. “The loudspeaker blared out the order all day long” in the ensuing days, yet the Communist prisoners still ignored it. In the meantime, Zhao summoned the Central Committee of the Communist Solidarity (*gongchanzhuyi tuanjiehui*) to prepare for the worst. They decided to expand the Central Committee and branch committees to four echelons of replacement leadership. This meeting turned out to be the last Central Committee meeting Zhao chaired.²³²

Twelve days elapsed before Zhao was finally captured on June 30. The Prison Command was hopelessly incapable of bringing about his arrest. This was indeed a new phenomenon created by the separation of pro and anti-Communist prisoners since the screening in April. In the good old days when anti-Communist prisoners were dominant in the two large compounds No. 72 and 86, the UN authorities could arrest any prisoner they desired. The rough and tough anti-Communist trustees or monitors would fetch any suspected Communists with alacrity. After the screening, with the anti-Communists separated and moved out, the Prison Command lost its eyes, ears, and arms. Manhard

²²⁹ Zhao Zuoduan, in *Kaoyan*, 191.

²³⁰ “17,500 Red Captives Move Without Disorder on Koje,” NYT, June 17, 1952, 4. And Li Ziyang, *douzheng dashiji*, 31.

²³¹ United Press, “Boatner Identifies Koje Prison Leader,” NYT, June 18, 1952, 3.

²³² Zhao Zuoduan, in *Kaoyan*, 191.

observed, “One result [of] repatriation polling placed intractable pro-Commie POW leaders in undisputed control many large compounds without internal control by UN.”²³³ Now, the prison authorities even had trouble entering the 5,000-men strong Compound 602, not to mention capturing their leader, who was heavily protected and in disguise. This was a situation similar to that of the Korean Compound 76 prior to the June 10 crackdown.

“These leaders possibly fear being killed or punished whether or not they follow camp orders,” Manhard analyzed.²³⁴ To the Chinese prisoner leaders, they were justifiably wary of the intention of the Prison Command, especially in view of the bloody crackdown on Compound 76. To exacerbate their suspicion, Chief Representative Sun and Chief Translator Zhang had not been seen since May 7, when they were transported by the authorities to Compound 76 immediately after General Dodd’s kidnapping. Naturally, no leader would voluntarily submit himself to the authorities.

To single out a prisoner from a mass of more than 5,000 men presented a major challenge to the Prison Command. Even if U.S. troops forcibly entered the compound and subdued all prisoners, they still needed to identify the man. Although the prison authorities had one-inch headshots of prisoners on file, such a small photograph would be of little help.²³⁵ The saying that “to a white man all Chinese looked the same” may well be a flippant cliché, but it had some truth to it on Kojé and Cheju Islands. For example, prisoners managed to swap identities and enclosures through a simple means: when two work detail teams from different enclosures met on the road, prisoners would create a

²³³ Telegram no. 18, Muccio to Acheson, July 2, 1952, NARA/RG 59/Decimal File 1950-1954/695A.0024/7-252, 2.

²³⁴ Telegram no. 18, Muccio to Acheson, July 2, 1952, NARA/RG 59/Decimal File 1950-1954/695A.0024/7-252, 2.

²³⁵ Judging from incident investigation files, deceased prisoners had a small ID photo on file. Presumably such files existed for all prisoners. For example, NARA/RG 554/290:51:9:5_Incident Investigation Cases/Box 6/Case #117.

commotion and switch teams according to plans. The U.S. guards, unable to communicate with the prisoners, simply could not prevent this from happening.²³⁶

Of course, Manhard could easily identify Zhao. But no one could realistically expect Foreign Service Officer Manhard to get his hands dirty in pointing out Zhao, whom he had befriended and helped before. Therefore, unless someone else who knew Zhao stepped forward to do the finger pointing literally, Zhao could never be segregated. That person had to be a “traitor,” who was yet to emerge.

In his next move, Boatner split the Chinese prisoners into two camps. On June 28, approximately 3,000 Chinese prisoners were forcibly segregated and transferred to Compound 66. To effect this dispersal, “the U.S. troops threw more than forty tear gas bombs into the crowd of Chinese prisoners.”²³⁷ On June 30, attacked by tear gas grenades, the remaining 2,000 plus Chinese prisoners in Compound 70 were forced to leave their compound and assemble on the seaside. They were made to walk single file before a “traitor,” the former leader of the Machine Gun Platoon under Zhao’s command. Zhao was taken away and put under solitary confinement in the maximum-security prison. At the time, Sun Zhenguan and Zhang Zeshi were held in the same prison, but Zhao never caught sight of them.²³⁸

Perhaps feeling sorry for his own role in the arrest of Zhao, Manhard went to visit Zhao under his usual disguise as the Associate Press correspondent “Philip.” In Zhao’s recollection, “Philip” first asked him, “Do you get beaten here?” Instead of answering the question, Zhao challenged Manhard, “Why do you (Americans) jail me here?” Manhard told him it was because he was the highest-ranking officer and the Chinese prisoners had

²³⁶ Zhong Junhua, interview by author, October 17, 2009, Chengdu, Sichuan. Similarly, according to interrogator-interpreter Huang Tiancai from Taiwan, it was quite likely that Nationalist agents assumed the identity of U.S.-hired Taiwanese interrogator-interpreter or teachers, and infiltrated the camps. Huang Tiancai, interview by author, October 8, 2010, Taipei.

²³⁷ Li Ziyang, *douzheng dashiji*, 31.

²³⁸ Zhao Zuoduan, in *Kaoyan*, 192.

been making a lot of trouble. A fruitless debate followed.²³⁹ The next day was the Fourth of July. Manhard returned and told Zhao that it was Independence Day, when Americans “commemorate the American Revolution.” “However,” Zhao countered, “your flag [of revolution] has been stained.” That was followed by another debate over the alleged “abuse of Chinese prisoners by American imperialists.” In the end, Manhard gave two Chinese books to Zhao, one of them written by the Chinese leftist writer Guo Moruo, presumably as consolation.²⁴⁰ Apparently that was their final encounter.

Zhao Zuoduan was held in the top prison on Koje only for ten day. During Zhao’s absence, with the aid of tear gas bombs, the authorities transported the 3,000 prisoners in Compound 66 to Cheju Island on July 3. On July 9, when the Prison Command proceeded to ship the remaining 2,000 plus prisoners in Compound 70, they resisted. They demanded to see Zhao to make sure he was still alive. As a result of their bargaining, Zhao was escorted out of prison and put on the ship to Cheju. However, once he arrived, he was quickly put in solitary confinement.²⁴¹

Manhard asserted Zhao’s “solitary confinement since around July first ...” was “apparently on the recommendation of Brooks. No formal charge has ever been made, but the apparent attitude of the local Army officials is that he is a ‘potential trouble-maker’ being a hard-core Communist.” While acknowledging his initial role in suggesting the segregation of Zhao, Manhard argued, “I, of course, did not intend that he be given unnecessarily cruel and unusual punishment for committing no illegal act.”²⁴²

However, with the benefit of hindsight, Manhard should not have felt so sorry for Zhao. First of all, Zhao’s solitary confinement ended one day after his arrival on Cheju.

²³⁹ Zhao Zuoduan, in *Kaoyan*, 192.

²⁴⁰ Zhao Zuoduan, interview by Wu Jinfeng, June, 1983, in *Andeshe Biji*, vol. 2, 17-21. And Zhao Zuoduan, in *Kaoyan*, 192.

²⁴¹ Zhao Zuoduan, in *Kaoyan*, 192.

²⁴² Manhard, “Chinese POW Incident, Chejudo – Oct 1,” 2.

In response to his protest, the prison authorities transferred two pro-repatriation prisoners to Zhao's small stockade. One of them was the English-speaking Zhang Jiliang, who proved to be very useful in gleaning information from the guards through their casual conversations. Soon the ranks at this special enclosure for top leaders and "troublemakers" swelled to over sixty, and they formed their party branch.²⁴³ Certainly Zhao was not in solitary confinement.

Second, although certainly uncomfortable, Zhao's prison term on Cheju was not so much a "cruel and unusual punishment," when compared to the torture he suffered in the hands of anti-Communist prisoners on Koje, especially in contrast to the staggering loss of life in the October 1 incident. In his own memoir, there is no mention of torture on Cheju.²⁴⁴ Had he sustained frequent torture, most likely it would have been mentioned. The only recorded incidence of beating occurred on the day after the October 1 incident, when Brooks and guards beat Zhao for putting out a banner protesting the massacre of prisoners.²⁴⁵

Finally, whether Zhao committed any "illegal act" was a matter of perspective. Today, available evidence shows that Zhao was ultimately responsible for directing the Communist prisoners' protests against the U.S., and for approving the executions of 17 suspected "traitors" in 1952 and 1953.²⁴⁶ When Manhard made his assessment on October 20, 1952, he could not have known of the clandestine operations of the Chinese Communists on Cheju. Manhard had been out of touch with the Chinese prisoners for some time. The last recorded encounter the Chinese prisoners had with him was his casual meeting with Sun Zhenguan and Zhang Zeshi in Koje's top prison on August 3,

²⁴³ Zhao Zuoduan, in *Kaoyan*, 193-196.

²⁴⁴ Zhao Zuoduan, in *Kaoyan*, 193-194.

²⁴⁵ Yu Jing, 367. This figure was confirmed by Lin Mocong, telephone interview by author, September 21, 2010. Seventeen was the total number of executions of "traitors" during the entire prison term which lasted until September 1953.

²⁴⁶ Yu Jing, 387.

when he presented two Chinese books and a number of *TIME* and *Reader's Digest* magazines to them.²⁴⁷ With Boatner's departure, Manhard was probably not welcomed by the Prison Command. And there is no indication that he had ever been to the Chinese prisoners' new compounds on Cheju Island. Most importantly, the Chinese Communist prisoners were no longer the same disorganized underdogs in Compound 72 and 86, whom Manhard had known initially. They were in near total control of the ten sub-compounds. On Cheju, the Chinese Communist prisoners' organizational capability far exceeded his knowledge. Their ingenuity in clandestine communication far exceeded anyone's imagination, as did their cruelty in struggles against suspected traitors and the prison authorities.

Ensnared in the relative safety of the Close Confinement Stockade, Zhao and other top Communist leaders directed the resistance movement and mobilized the prisoners to rise up against the authorities. Their struggle climaxed on October 1, 1952, when 56 rank-and-file prisoners were killed and nearly one hundred wounded in sub-compound No. 7. Yet, their top leaders did not shed one drop of their own blood.

²⁴⁷ Zhang Zeshi, *Wo de chaoxiao zhanzheng*, 180-181.

**The October 1, 1952 Incident on Cheju Island:
A Mass Prison-Break or a Massacre?**

“Fanatic Reds Riot on Cheju; 52 Slain: G.I.'s Quell Chinese P.W.'s in First Mass Uprising” blared the prominent headline on the front page of *The New York Times* on October 2, 1952. From Tokyo, it was reported, “Fifty-two Chinese Communists were killed yesterday morning and 113 others were wounded by two platoons of United States soldiers sent into a prison compound on Cheju Island, off the south coast of Korea, to quell one of the most serious prisoner of war uprisings of the Korean war. Forty-five Chinese died during the uprising. It was announced this morning in Seoul that seven others had succumbed to their injuries.” Despite suggesting that the reason for the outbreak was “not clear,” the report mentioned that, “the Chinese were celebrating the third anniversary of the Peiping Communist regime,” which was on October 1. The United Nations Command (UNC) promptly issued an official statement blaming the prisoners for “reverting to former patterns of violence.” However, it was duly noted by the *New York Times* reporter that “A significant point in the violence was that it was the first time that Chinese prisoners had engaged in a mass disorder. Earlier large-scale disturbances in the prison compounds had been confined almost entirely to fanatical North Korean Communists.”¹

The final death toll of 56 made it the second bloodiest incident in UN prison camps during the Korean War from 1950 to 1953, with the most deadly incident occurring in February 1952 when 77 North Korean prisoners were killed in a riot on Koje

¹ Murray Schumach, “Fanatic Reds Riot on Cheju; 52 Slain,” *New York Times* (hereafter NYT), October 2, 1952, 1-2.

Island.² The current death toll surpassed the forty deaths incurred in the famed breakup of Compound 76 on July 10, when General Haydon “Bull” Boatner moved tanks and troops armed with flamethrowers to break up the Korean Communist prisoners’ stronghold, resulting in 41 deaths.³

In the same afternoon, Major General Thomas W. Herren, Commanding General of the Korean Communications Zone, and Colonel Charles V. Caldwell, head of the Prisoner of War Command, flew to Cheju Island. By 7:00 p.m., they had appointed an investigation board consisting of six U.S. officers. The investigation commenced immediately, continued well past midnight, and resumed the next morning. By 2:30 p.m. the next day, the board had completed its questioning of witnesses, which included eighteen Americans and four Chinese prisoners. After having spent a day and a half on the island, General Herren announced to a group of reporters just flown in by the U.S. Army that the crackdown had been a response to “a mass break.” He revealed “5884 Reds in 10 compounds had planned to use the riot—in compound 7—as a signal for a mass break,” and they had intended to join guerrillas in the hills of Cheju Island. Colonel Richard D. Boerem, commander of the Cheju prison, further suggested that the prisoner-of-war command headquarters had learned in August that “the Reds planned the mass escape for Oct. 1.”⁴

On October 2, in Panmunjom, General Nam Il, the chief Communist negotiator, lodged a formal protest with his UN counterpart, General William K. Harrison Jr., lambasting this “bloody incident of barbarous yet cowardly massacre.” The protest

² Walter G. Hermes, *Truce Tent and Fighting Front: U.S. Army in the Korean War* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, U.S. Army, 1992), 239.

³ Forty-one deaths included hospital deaths from battle wounds, see “Kojé is Blasted, Subdued,” *LIFE* 32, no. 25 (June 23, 1952), 30-31. The initial death count was 31, see George Barrett, “Red Core Crushed in Battle on Kojé; 30 of Foe, 1 G. I. Die,” *NYT*, June 10, 1952, 1.

⁴ The Associated Press (hereafter AP), “Prisoners’ Mass Break Plot Seen in Cheju Riot,” *Los Angeles Times* (hereafter LAT), October 3, 1952, 12. Also quoted by *Renmin Ribao*, October 6, 1952, 1.

concluded that the incident “belies all your fraudulent pretexts for refusing to repatriate war prisoners, reveals your deliberate intention to undermine the Korean armistice negotiations and proves once again that your side, which has committed towering war crimes in Korea, is determined to be the enemy of the peoples of Asia and the world to the very end.”⁵

A week later, the armistice negotiations in Panmunjom indeed came to a sudden but not totally unexpected halt. On October 8, after Nam Il rejected the UNC’s “final and irrevocable” position of non-forcible repatriation of prisoners, Harrison made a thirty-four minute speech condemning the Communists for starting the war and refusing a reasonable settlement. Harrison announced that the UNC negotiators had not come to Panmunjom merely to “listen to the abuse and false propaganda” from the North Korean and Chinese delegation. After declaring an indefinite recess, Harrison and the rest of the UNC delegation stood up and walked out of the conference tent.⁶ The war continued, and the armistice negotiations did not resume in full until March 1953, after Stalin had suddenly died.

It would be a stretch to suggest that the October 1 incident on Cheju Island led directly to the breakdown of the armistice negotiations in Panmunjom 500 kilometers north. But the two lines of development leading up to these events were closely intertwined. The armistice negotiations came to a deadlock precisely because of the disagreement over the repatriation of some 20,000 Chinese POWs. As the negotiations dragged on, the uncertainty over POW repatriation increased. Communist and anti-Communist prisoners alike became increasingly anxious and agitated. After the April 1952 screening on Kojedo Island, pro- and anti-repatriation Chinese prisoners were

⁵ Schumach, "P. W. Killings Foil A Mass Break-out: U. S. General Says Cheju Riot Was to Have Been Signal for Uprising by 6,000 Captives," NYT, October 3, 1952, 2. Also in *Renmin Ribao*, October 3, 1952, 4.

⁶ Hermes, 282.

separated and transferred to new camps in Cheju Island. The 15,000 anti-Communists felt they had to continuously demonstrate their adamant will against possible repatriation. Their slogan was “Return to Taiwan or Die!” On the other hand, the more than 5,000 pro-Communist prisoners felt they had to “struggle against the U.S.” to show the world their determination to return home. Thus, on October 1, Communist prisoners staged a celebration of the third anniversary of the People’s Republic, singing Communist songs and raising red national flags. Was this a part of the “planned mass prison break”?

The Xinhua News Agency made its obligatory condemnation, based on second-hand reports from Kaesong, North Korea. “The Americans Massacred Chinese POWs Again” appeared on *The People’s Daily* on October 3. “...American troops savagely attacked totally unarmed Chinese prisoners who were singing in the middle of Enclosure 7 in POW Camp 3-A. The cause was that our People’s Volunteer Army prisoners insisted on singing to celebrate our great National Day.” But Xinhua made a serious blunder. Citing an earlier erroneous report by *The New York Herald Tribune*, Xinhua assumed that Camp 3-A interned “cooperative anti-Communist prisoners,” and concluded that “now these ‘cooperative anti-Communist’ prisoners, as called by the U.S., were massacred simply because they celebrated the National Day. It allows the whole world to see through the U.S.’s evil conspiracy to forcibly detain the 15,000 Chinese POWs, in order to prevent the timely conclusion of the armistice negotiations.” Moreover, “it allows the entire world to see clearly our prisoners’ love for their motherland, and their indomitable, resolute will to return to their motherland.”⁷

The People’s Daily was too quick to laud this uprising of alleged anti-Communists. Camp 3-A actually interned approximately 5,000 pro-Communist

⁷ *Renmin Ribao*, October 3, 1952, 4.

prisoners, and the 15,000 anti-Communists were held in Camp 3-B.⁸ Both camps were located on Cheju Island, but twenty miles apart. Even though all United Press and Associated Press reports from Cheju prominently termed these rioting prisoners as “die-hard Reds” or “Red fanatics,” i.e., pro-Communist pro-repatriation prisoners, Xinhua stuck to its error. Its logic was rather peculiar: “As the U.S. so far has not dared to disclose whether the massacred prisoners were those who wanted to be repatriated, or those so-called ‘anti-repatriates,’ the inescapable conclusion is that they were the so-called ‘anti-repatriates.’”⁹ By making this claim, Xinhua denied the existence of anti-repatriation and anti-Communist prisoners. It implicitly argued that if there were any anti-repatriates, they were Chiang Kai-shek’s agents. Clearly, this claim was simply false.

Nevertheless, *The People’s Daily* was right about the blatantly excessive use of force. From the Associated Press and United Press reports, it gleaned several striking facts: “Most of the slain and wounded Reds were victims of gunfire” and “no concussion grenades or tear gas were used.”¹⁰ Another contrast was that while the troops killed 51 prisoners with bullets and bayonets, only two American soldiers were “injured slightly.”¹¹ *TIME* magazine raised similar questions, and it reminisced about former prison commandant General Boatner’s old methods. “Nonfatal weapons such as tear gas, concussion grenades, rifle butts and shotguns (firing small shot) were to be preferred to

⁸ This misunderstanding seemed to persist, as evidenced by the similar claims made on October 16, 1952. It is quite bizarre, because by then numerous Western reports had made it clear the crackdown occurred in the Communists’ prison compound, not the anti-Communists’. Probably it was too embarrassing for Xinhua or the *People’s Daily* to admit a major foul-up. It simply stuck to its false line asserting that even the “cooperative anti-Communists” were massacred by the U.S.

⁹ *Renmin Ribao*, October 3, 1952, 4.

¹⁰ *Renmin Ribao*, October 3, 1952, 4. AP reports in “Officials Probe Cheju POW Riot: Furious Rebellion of 500 Chinese War Prisoners Second Most Deadly in Korea,” *LAT*, October 2, 1952, 11, and “Prisoners’ Mass Break Plot Seen in Cheju Riot,” *LAT*, October 3, 1952, 12.

¹¹ *Renmin Ribao*, October 6, 1952, 1. AP, “120 Hurt as Defiant Chinese Hurl Stones, Hoist Communist Flags,” *LAT*, October 1, 1952, 1, and “Officials Probe Cheju POW Riot: Furious Rebellion of 500 Chinese War Prisoners Second Most Deadly in Korea,” *LAT*, October 2, 1952, 11.

bullets.”¹² Seoul-based Foreign Service Officer Philip W. Manhard, who had extensive experience dealing with prisoners in Korea, wrote a secret memorandum rebuking the military for its handling of this incident. Highlighting the fact that “[o]f an approximate total of 500 POWs in this compound about 11% were killed and 25% wounded,” Manhard protested, “it is absolutely unbelievable that such methods are necessary to achieve adequate security control.”¹³

In the October 13 *TIME* report, more troubling details emerged. “By an unfortunate coincidence,” the camp commander, Boatner’s successor, was ill, and was replaced with a new man, Colonel Boerem, who rejected the prisoners’ request to raise flags on October 1. “By a further unlucky coincidence, a new battalion of U.S. troops, fresh from combat, had replaced the old outfit of well-drilled guards.” On October 1, prisoners raised flags and ignored orders to take them down. When the U.S. Military Police and infantrymen forced their way into the enclosure, the prisoners showered them with a barrage of rocks. The officer leading troops to storm the prison was a man “whose wife and child had been killed by the Communists in China.” He raised his pistol and fired the first shot at a prisoner, which “the other Americans regarded as a signal” and began firing.¹⁴ Ten minutes and 52 deaths later, it was over.

Specifically referring to this *TIME* piece, in his memo Manhard identified the trigger-happy officer as Captain Joseph Brooks, and he questioned Brook’s claim that “his Chinese wife and child were killed by the Chinese Commies in 1949.” Brooks’ attitude toward pro-repatriation Chinese POWs was “characterized by vicious hatred and a burning desire for ‘revenge.’” Most significantly, Brooks had “a great deal of immediate

¹² “Death in Compound 7,” *TIME*, October 13, 1952, accessed Sept. 20, 2010, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,817025,00.html>.

¹³ Philip W. Manhard, “Chinese POW Incident, Chejudo – Oct 1,” attached in Muccio’s memo to Acheson, October 20, 1952, NARA/RG 59/Decimal File 1950-1954/695A.0024/10-2052, 2.

¹⁴ *TIME*, October 13, 1952, accessed September 20, 2010, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,817025,00.html>.

influence over the policies of handling this particular group of Chinese POWs since July.”¹⁵ Manhard noted that the current hard-line policy was a shift away from General Boatner’s more balanced approach, which combined force and persuasion, displayed force but avoided firing bullets, which was considered a last resort. “General Boatner established a policy in June whereby pro-Commie POWs would be permitted to display certain prescribed insignia and take the day off on recognized Commie holidays, provided they submitted proper written application in advance and stuck to the approved activities on the day in question.” Apparently this time their application was rejected outright. Manhard deplored the current solution that “call[ed] for bullets as the answer to songs and stones.”¹⁶ In contrast to the harsh treatment of the Communists, Manhard noted, “last year every facility was extended to alleged pro-Nationalist to celebrate October 10 with banners, three-ring circuses, speeches, etc.”¹⁷ Sharing Manhard’s sentiment, the *TIME* writer also recalled Boatner’s ability to “tread carefully the narrow line between too much severity and too much laxity.” The author lamented the general’s promotion and departure. “Already, Haydon L. Boatner was being sadly missed in Korea.”¹⁸

Echoing *The New York Times* report’s point that this incident was the first mass disorder among the Chinese prisoners, Manhard argued, “The history of this group of POWs shows that they have degenerated from an almost completely cooperative behavior in May and June to an attitude of defiance rapidly becoming unanimous.”¹⁹ The consequence of this change was so grave that we are compelled to ask what exactly had happened within the short few months, from April to October 1952. Obviously U.S.

¹⁵ Manhard, “Chinese POW Incident, Chejudo – Oct 1,” 1.

¹⁶ Manhard, “Chinese POW Incident, Chejudo – Oct 1,” 1, 3.

¹⁷ Manhard, “Chinese POW Incident, Chejudo – Oct 1,” 1.

¹⁸ *TIME*, October 13, 1952, accessed September 20, 2010, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,817025,00.html>.

¹⁹ Manhard, “Chinese POW Incident, Chejudo – Oct 1,” 2.

policies did change, evolving along with the rapid turnover of prison camp commandants on Koje and Cheju Islands. Furthermore, developments in Panmunjom armistice negotiations impinged on the objectives and approaches of U.S. prison management. On the other hand, the Chinese prisoners changed, from “an almost completely cooperative” group to “fanatic reds,” if these characterizations were accurate at all.

The following sections outline a series of prison incidents on Cheju Island in the lead-up to the tragic October 1 incident. The deteriorating relationship between the prison authorities and pro-Communists prisoners is fully examined.

July-August 1952. Chinese POWs “Worked Over Frequently”

While Manhard failed to perceive the strength of the underground Communist resistance, he correctly pointed out the responsibility of the other side in the dangerous confrontations on Cheju Island. He reported, “According to a CIC officer who spends a great deal of time in the Chejudo camps and is well qualified in written and spoken Chinese, the pro-repatriation Chinese POWs on Chejudo have been worked over frequently ...with various ‘riot control’ techniques.”²⁰ In fact, these “riot control” techniques had been practiced since the days of Boatner, but their intensity and frequency increased on Cheju. In response, the Chinese Communist prisoners’ upped the ante in their struggle.

The day after Zhao’s arrest on Koje, July 1, 1952 was the 35th anniversary of the founding of the Chinese Communist Party. On that day, “two traitors were uncovered promptly” in the transitional compound No. 66. “Dangwan chujue” (executed the same night) were the only four Chinese characters describing the execution in *The Chronology*

²⁰ Manhard, “Chinese POW Incident, Chejudo – Oct 1,” 2. CIC: Counter Intelligence Company.

of the People's Volunteers Prisoners' Struggles in U.S. Concentration Camps, which was compiled by Communist prisoner leaders during and after their imprisonment.²¹

The Chronology recorded a string of conflicts between the prison authorities and prisoners. On July 3, the first batch of 3,000 Chinese prisoners in Compound 66 was transported to Cheju. To bring about the move, the troops lobbed tear gas bombs into the compound, and one prisoner suffered an eye injury. Once the pro-repatriation prisoners arrived at Camp 3A near Cheju City, they were held in the newly built 500-men sub-enclosures, which were ironically built by their anti-Communist brethren in May. Each of the ten sub-enclosures was surrounded by three layers of four-meter-tall barbed-wire fences; the larger overall compound was surrounded by another three layers of fence. Altogether there were a total of six fences.²²

However, contrary to the Prison Command's hope that this new 500-men sub-compound scheme would diminish prisoner resistance, tension continued to rise. On July 7, prisoner Guo Zhihua on work detail was wounded by bayonet "for no reason." The next day, the 3,000 Chinese prisoners held coordinated mass protests in their sub-enclosures. In response, the authorities cut off food and water supply. Subsequently, prisoners in sub-compound No. 2 began digging a well.²³ This unauthorized digging led the guards to open fire on prisoner Zhang Donghai, resulting in his death.

U.S. Army Chaplain Thomas O'Sullivan acted as the interpreter during the incident, and described the event to investigators:

At approximately 2000 hour 9 July 1952 I accompanied 1st Lieutenant Francis J Donovan to the United Nations Prisoner of War Enclosure Number 21 to act as interpreter between Lieutenant Donovan and the prisoners of war. Upon arrival at Compound #2 I saw some prisoners of war digging a hole near the fence line. Lieutenant Donovan told me to inform the prisoners of war to stop digging and fill in the hole. The

²¹ Li Ziyang, *dashiji*, 31-32.

²² Lin Haiyin, in *Fangong yishi fendoushi*, 111.

²³ Li Ziyang, *dashiji*, 32.

prisoners continued to dig. ... When the spokesman arrived, ... he began to agree [*sic*, probably it should be “argue”] that it was reasonable to dig for water, since they were thirsty. ... The spokesman said slowly and deliberately, “We will stop digging the hole if you give us water.” I then shouted, “Step back! Everyone away from the fence and the hole.”²⁴

Clearly Father O’Sullivan had little patience for these Communists. And his reading of the prisoners’ reactions was alarmist.

All the prisoners of war scattered as if frightened and make off into their tents, where singing and rhythmic clapping of hands began within a few minutes. To me, this indicated that the prisoners of war had been ordered by their bosses to go to their tents and begin noisy covering sounds. I was suspicious that some special plans were on foot within the compound. We waited motionless and silent watching the hole and the compound. I told Lieutenant Donovan, “They are singing Communist songs.”²⁵

Five minutes later, one lone prisoner walked out of a tent and approached the hole.

When he came to the hole he hesitated a moment. A shot rang out... Evidently he was not shot. ... Within another four or five minutes a prisoner of war appeared the same direction as the last prisoner of war. ... Another shot rang out. He moved slightly. Another shot rang out. He turned quickly, bent a little, ran about three steps, stumbled at the entrance as if he tripped on the tent ropes.²⁶

The next morning, the corpse of a prisoner was taken to the compound gate. This slain prisoner was Zhang Donghai. Postmortem examination revealed he had been shot “through the head.” The wound of entrance was in the “rt [right] temporal area 7.5 cm – wound jagged measures 2.0 in diameter.” Wound of exit was in the “lt [left] temporooccipital area –brain tissue exuded from wound site, the perforation is jagged & measures 8 cm in diameter.”²⁷ Evidently Zhang was shot point-blank, and a single bullet took his life. The Findings of the Board concluded, “5. That the injury and resulting death of Jang Doong Hai, ISN 63NK 713433, Chinese male, was a result of a round fired

²⁴ Report of Proceedings by Board of Officers, NARA/RG 554/RG554_Entry 224(A1)_290:51:9:5_Incident Investigation Cases/Box 9/Case 158, Exhibit A, 7.

²⁵ Report of Proceedings by Board of Officers, NARA/RG 554/Case 158, Exhibit A, 7.

²⁶ Report of Proceedings by Board of Officers, NARA/RG 554/Case 158, Exhibit A, 7.

²⁷ Report of Proceedings by Board of Officers, NARA/RG 554/Case 158, Exhibit B. Rt: right; Lt: left.

by Sergeant Porter M Summersett, and was non-intentional, and was not due to the culpable negligence of Sergeant Summersett.” Not surprisingly, the Recommendation of the Board was the standard line: “That no disciplinary or punitive action be initiated against any member of the United Nations Command or any other person(s) as a result of this incident.”²⁸ It is worth noting that the investigation board called no Chinese prisoners as witness.

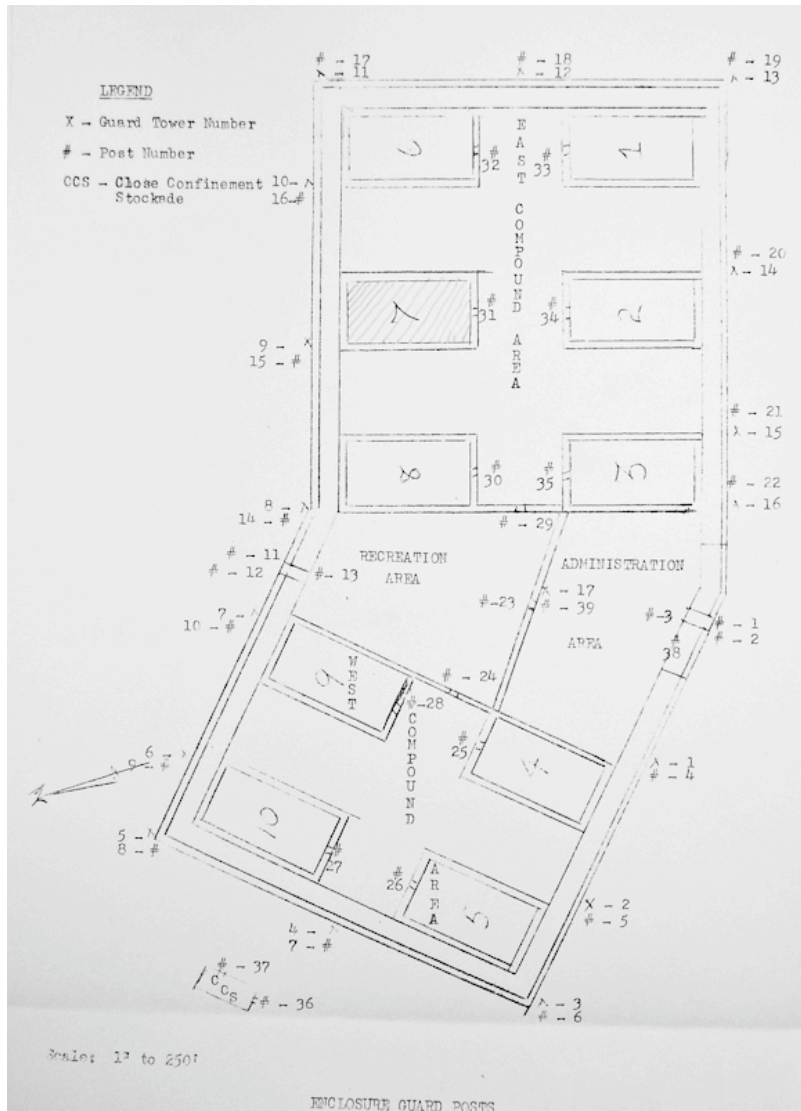
This particular incident, the first Chinese prisoner death on Cheju Island, was particularly revealing in two respects. First, as an indicator of the desperate lack of linguistic personnel, an Irish Franciscan missionary was relied upon by the camp authorities to conduct day-to-day interpretation work between the guards and prisoners. Hardly a disinterested party, Father O’Sullivan, like Captain Brooks, exacerbated the tension between the Prison Command and the prisoner, instead of reducing it. Second, the communication between the authorities and prisoners was reduced to orders versus confrontations, food and water embargos versus protests. The message that the U.S. military conveyed to prisoners boiled down to “Obey orders, or get shot.” Apparently the prison authorities had adopted an increasingly aggressive posture.

With their communication with the Prison Command reduced to confrontation, effectively the Chinese prisoners suffered an information blockade. In the old days on Koje, the Korean Communist prisoner leadership communicated with the Chinese regularly via underground channels. Once the Chinese prisoners were moved to Cheju, they were totally cut off from any friendly information sources. Facing an increasingly hostile Prison Command, unsure of its intent, the Chinese Communist prisoners became progressively more desperate and agitated. With their leaders rounded up one by one, replacement leaders stepped forward with ever more combative counter-measures.

²⁸ Report of Proceedings by Board of Officers, NARA/RG 554/Case 158, Exhibit A, 2.

Camp 3A was becoming a cauldron of frustration, anger, hate, intrigue, and eventually, war.

Map 1.



Note: the Close Confinement Stockade (CCS) located outside the main compound.²⁹

²⁹ Report of Proceedings by Board of Officers, NARA/RG 554/Case 154, Exhibit B.

On July 9, the remaining 2,000 plus prisoners temporarily held in Compound 70 on Koje were shipped to Cheju. In response to the prisoners' demand, the Prison Command took Zhao Zuoduan out of the top prison on Koje, and transported him along with the main body of prisoners. Although they were on the same ship, Zhao was held in a separate cell. Upon their arrival at Cheju's Camp 3A, to the prisoners' surprise, Zhao was escorted to sub-compound No. 4 in the main compound. When prisoners saw the arrival of the leader "Wang Fang," the crowd in various sub-compounds cheered toward the direction of No. 4, and they began shouting Communist slogans. "To avoid inviting unnecessary attention from the authorities," Zhao signaled to the prisoners to stop their cheers. But it was too late. The next day, Zhao was taken away, and confined in the "Close Confinement Stockade" outside the main compound. He was to remain segregated in various special prisons for Communist leaders and troublemaker until his final repatriation in September 1953.³⁰

With their top leader cut off from the main compound and other Central Committee members scattered in different sub-compounds, each roughly 100 meters apart, communication across compounds became an urgent challenge. At this critical moment, ingenious prisoners rose to the occasion. Only three days after Zhao's arrival on Cheju, a semaphore of simple and inconspicuous hand gestures was created. When prisoners were transmitting codes to other compounds, prison guards initially thought they were practicing calisthenics.³¹ As all ten sub-compounds and the Close Confinement Stockade were within sight of other compounds, orders, instructions, and reports were transmitted in relays between the Communist Solidarity Central Committee and various sub-compounds. *The Chronology* recorded, since the invention of these code

³⁰ Zhao Zuoduan, in *Kaoyan*, 192-195.

³¹ Li Xier 李喜儿, "He pantu bianjiezhe douzheng" 和叛徒变节者斗争 [Struggling against the traitors], in *Kaoyan*, 214.

transmission technologies in mid-July, “the prisoners in the entire Camp 3A acted in a concerted and unified manner.”³²

Other methods were also invented. Prisoners developed the skill to sling hollowed rocks to the next compound, and coded messages hidden in the rock were relayed to their desired destinations. Between the two compounds farthest apart, relaying a message via rock-slinging required only one hour, while via semaphore it took more than two hours.³³ As the Korean prisoners had done on Koje, Chinese prisoners on work details hid messages behind rocks near the pier, and their comrades from another compound would retrieve them. Another more convenient channel was created when prisoners hid messages on food delivery trucks, which went to various enclosures.³⁴ When prisoners needed to go to different compounds, prisoners either managed to climb under fences at night, or swapped teams during work details.³⁵

When it became absolutely necessary for face-to-face communications with their top leaders confined in the special stockade, prisoners picked a fight with U.S. guards. As a punishment, they were taken to the “Close Confinement Stockade” for trouble-makers, which was separated from Zhao by one wall. On the wall prisoners drilled a small hole, so they could talk at night. The guards never discovered this hidden communication channel.³⁶

All these clandestine communications were controlled by the underground Communist leadership. Immediately after the creation of the semaphore, the Central Committee of the Communist Solidarity ordered the creation of branch committees in

³² Li Ziyang, *douzheng dashiji*, 33.

³³ Li Xier, in *Kaoyan*, 214.

³⁴ Li Ziyang, *douzheng dashiji*, 33.

³⁵ Zhong Junhua, interview by author, October 17, 2009, Chengdu, Sichuan.

³⁶ Zhao Zuoduan, in *Kaoyan*, 194.

each of the ten sub-compounds.³⁷ At every branch committee, three echelons of replacement leadership teams were prepared. Therefore, under any circumstance, new leaders would step forward to take charge.³⁸ Like the standard structure of Communist party organization, each branch committee had a number of functional sections, including propaganda, logistics and security. Among them the most important was the security section, as it controlled both communications and internal security.

Once its organization was in place, immediately this stealthy Communist apparatus flexed its muscle. On August 1, the People's Liberation Army's Day, the underground Communist leadership decided to commemorate the founding of the Communist army by simultaneously raising the five-star national flags in all ten compounds. According to *The Chronology*, on August 1 prisoners managed to raise ten improvised flags. U.S. troops entered the compound and destroyed the flagpoles. However, the flags were lowered in time and successfully concealed.³⁹ Riding on the success of their first show of force, prisoners proceeded to launch yet another struggle in early August. Protesting under the slogan of "anti-abuse," prisoners refused to eat unmilled barley. After negotiations, the prison authorities agreed to supply ground grains. Prisoners scored another victory.⁴⁰

On August 15, the Communist leadership ordered another flag-raising demonstration in celebration of the victory in the Anti-Japanese War and the Korean liberation. In view of the fact that Camp 3A was located in Cheju city, "in order to broaden the impact," one of the ten flags was a North Korean national flag. However, this time the Prison Command reacted with more force. "U.S. troops threw tear gas bombs

³⁷ Li Ziyang, *douzheng dashiji*, 33.

³⁸ Gu Zesheng 顾则圣, interview by Wu Jinfeng, June 17, 1983, in *Andeshe Biji*, vol. 2, 16.

³⁹ Li Ziyang, *douzheng dashiji*, 34.

⁴⁰ Li Ziyang, *douzheng dashiji*, 34.

into all ten sub-compounds. Four prisoners and four soldiers were injured.”⁴¹ In retaliation, the Communist Central Committee ordered all compounds to launch “counterattacks from the periphery.” Prisoners on work details were instructed to wage “small-scale struggles,” such as holding strikes and even “seizing guns from the guards.”⁴² It is worth noting that the UN prisons followed the Geneva Convention, which exempted officer prisoners from labor. Thus, all leaders were spared the “counterattacks from the periphery,” rather conveniently.

In late August, prisoners from sub-compound No. 3 had two clashes with guards while on work detail. They held strikes to protest against “soldiers beating prisoners without reason.” The prison authorities cut off food and water supplies for “two hours” in one instance, and a full day in another. The prisoners were forced to stand in the rain. And in another instance, they were left outdoors overnight. Furthermore, three prisoners suffered bullet wounds. In sub-compound No. 10, the tuberculosis patients compound, the prisoners “gave the U.S. officer and sergeant a good beating after they insulted and beat their Compound Representative,” and kicked them off the premises of their enclosure. The authorities cut off water and food supplies for a day, and arrested the Compound Representative and two other prisoners.⁴³

In a hidden act of “counterattack from the periphery,” while on work detail prisoners stole a document from the prison office. According to Zhao, this “draft speech text” contained the speeches made by General Boatner and his boss General Herren at a meeting attended by “officers at or above the rank of Second Lieutenant”—a description

⁴¹ Li Ziyang, *douzheng dashiji*, 34. From the U.S. side, no dedicated reports on these two flag-raising incidents were found. However, in Captain Brooks’ deposition during the investigation for the Oct 1 incident, he mentioned troubles during “two Communist holidays,” which proves the existence of conflicts during these two occasions. See Report of Proceedings by Board of Officers, RG 554 (Records of General Headquarters, Far East Command)/Incident Investigation Cases/Box 9/Case 154, 17.

⁴² Li Ziyang, *douzheng dashiji*, 34-35.

⁴³ Li Ziyang, *douzheng dashiji*, 35-36.

sounding awfully like a Chinese Communist meeting. This alleged document stated: “As the Red Prisoners have pinned down a large number of troops and created negative publicity, they pose a major threat in the rear of the UN Command. They may connect with the Korean Communist guerrillas [on Cheju Island] and plot mass riots. Therefore, [the Prison Command] must use force, and should not refrain from eliminating [*buxi xiaomie*] the most diehard Reds.”⁴⁴

Remarkably, after multiple translations, from English to Chinese, to codes, and back to Chinese, Zhao’s understanding of the document did not deviate too far from the authorities’ actual internal policy and practice. Colonel Boerem, Commanding Officer of Camp 3-A, later claimed: “Our troops are instructed that if they are attacked or rocks thrown at them or any items thrown at them they will shoot, and those orders are promulgated right from General Clark’s Headquarters. . . . We are enjoined and ordered that we will maintain uncontested control and that cannot be done by accepting assault by PWs of any kind.”⁴⁵ In a nutshell, the authorities’ policy was to shoot in case of attack by the prisoners.

In Zhao’s understanding, the Prison Command had decided to use force on prisoners, even if that meant “eliminating the most diehard Reds,” who were the prisoner leaders, presumably. This translation and reading of the document was skewed toward assuming a more active intent to kill on the part of the authorities. Moreover, when this understanding was transmitted back to other underground Communist branches for discussion, it was read as “it is permissible to make excuses to massacre prisoners.”⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Zhao Zuoduan, in *Kaoyan*, 195.

⁴⁵ Boerem’s testimony, NARA/RG 554/Case 154, 23.

⁴⁶ Li Ziyang, *douzheng dashiji*, 35. In Chinese, “可以制造籍口屠杀战俘。”

Regardless of the veracity of the story or the authenticity of the document, what mattered was the fact that the Communist leaders took this discovery very seriously. They took it as a clear indication the U.S. was about to further tighten its grip on Communist prisoners, by means of eliminating their leaders. The fear for their own personal safety precipitated the leaders to take bolder preemptive actions. The underground leaders launched a new campaign, calling the “masses” to “resolutely fight back against the U.S.’s arrogant aggression.” “All comrades” were asked to “push forward three major missions: to strengthen solidarity, improve studies, and fight bravely.” The new study program was entitled “Education on the Nature of American Imperialists.”⁴⁷

In the meantime, as the Prison Command had correctly predicted, the Chinese Communist prisoner leaders were seeking to reconnect with the Korean Communists, whose guerillas were presumably active in the mountains of Cheju Island. Revelation from the enemy document probably spurred them to take more immediate and drastic actions. On August 26, Wei Lin, the Deputy General Secretary of the underground Communists and the branch secretary in sub-compound No. 5, sent two ethnic Korean prisoners to escape from the camp with the instruction to find Korean guerrillas. The two prisoners managed to slip into Mount Halla, but before long they were apprehended and taken back to prison. Five days later, Wei was arrested, and jailed in the Close Confinement Stockade, where Zhao was held. The next day, U.S. troops entered sub-compound No. 5 to search for contraband, but to no avail.⁴⁸

Despite the escalating commotion and tension, the outside world heard nothing at the time. Contrary to the heavy media coverage during Boatner’s breakup of Compound 76 in June, there was little report on the Chinese prisoners after their departure from Koje. It is not clear whether that was a conscious decision by Boatner to

⁴⁷ Li Ziyang, *douzheng dashiji*, 36.

⁴⁸ Li Ziyang, *douzheng dashiji*, 36-37.

discourage media attention, or the media had lost interest in prisoner affairs after the dramatic climax in June.

Finally in the wake of the October 1 tragedy news correspondents were flown to Cheju by the UN Prison Command, and only then was the escape plan reported. According to *The Washington Post*, “Col. Richard D. Boerem of Ontario, Calif., commander of the Cheju City POW camp, said his headquarter learned of the planned break on August 24, but he did not say where he had received the information.”⁴⁹ *The Los Angeles Times* reported, “American authorities got wind of the escape plot in August and were able to move quickly when the decisive hour arrived. ... Maj. Gen. Thomas W. Herren, commander of the Korean Communications Zone, told correspondents here yesterday that 5884 Reds in 10 compounds had planned to use the riot—in compound 7—as a signal for a mass break. Col. Richard D. Boerem said prisoner-of-war command headquarters learned Aug. 24 that the Reds planned the mass escape for Oct. 1.”⁵⁰ If Boerem was correct, the U.S. had learned of the escape plot more than a month in advance. Why didn’t the Prison Command take actions to forestall it? Instead, did the prison authorities bait the prisoners so that “when the decisive hour arrived,” they could “move quickly” to mass slaughter over 10% of the prisoners in one single compound?

September 1952. Leaders Mobilize the Masses

It is difficult for anyone to believe that prisoners armed with stones could bring about a prison break on a foreign island, especially when they were guarded by well-armed U.S. troops. The idea of a mass prison break plan was so outlandish that the prison authorities probably did not take it too seriously back in August. Only in the

⁴⁹ United Press, “Escape Plot Seen in Cheju Prison Riot,” WP, October 3, 1952, 5. The date reported here is two days ahead of what Li Ziyong recorded. It could be an error made by either party, but it is insignificant as the basic facts remain intact.

⁵⁰ “Prisoners’ Mass Break Plot Seen in Cheju Riot,” LAT, October 3, 1952, 12.

aftermath of the October 1 incident was it broached for the first time. This change was more a means to deflect doubts about the excessive casualties inflicted on the prisoners. To associate prisoners' flag-raising and stone-throwing actions with an escape plot was an attempt to obscure the prison authorities' failure in detecting the true intent of the Communist prisoners and in preventing its troops' excessive killings.

While the U.S. authorities' exaggeration of prisoners' threat was apparent, the Chinese prisoner leadership's motives were less obvious. Upon examining prisoner leaders' statements made after their repatriation to China in 1953 and their memoirs written in the 1980s and 1990s, it becomes clear that the Communist prisoner leadership was equally if not more misguided in its estimation of enemy intent. It misjudged the U.S.'s intent both in Cheju and in Panmunjom.

Of course, the Chinese prisoners' misjudgment was largely a result of the information blockade imposed by the U.S. prison authorities. The more or less friendly Chinese-speaking American, Manhard, was no longer in contact with the prisoners. The prisoners' daily encounters with the likes of Brooks and O'Sullivan added nothing but hostility and mistrust. The only information they could glean was from the mouths of U.S. guards during their casual conversations with English-speaking prisoners, and scrap newspapers they stole from the prison offices, which eventually became closely guarded.⁵¹ Thus, their calculations of the situation in Cheju and the larger world were based on very little information, much speculation and a great deal of zeal.

Following their successful flag-raising exercises on August 1 and 15, it was expected by both the prisoners and the prison authorities that a similar demonstration would take place on October 1, which was an even more important holiday. The prisoners knew that the authorities definitely would intervene, as they had done before. In August,

⁵¹ Li Xier, in *Kaoyan*, 214.

when the troops forcibly entered the compound to confiscate the flags, the prisoners quickly lowered the flags and hid them away. Despite some small scuffles, the demonstrations ended quickly without casualties. However, this time Communist leadership decided that prisoners must protect the flags to death, which would necessitate violent resistance against the troops. Thus, bloodshed was seen as inevitable, and it was just a matter of how much. Certainly the Communist leadership calculated that bloodshed was a price worth paying. A blood price for what, exactly?

First of all, the Communist prisoner leaders sought to create a major incident to demonstrate the Chinese prisoners' will to return to China, and they believed that the publicity generated by the incident would have an impact on Panmunjom negotiations.

In *Kaoyan*, a volume of collected memoirs by repatriated prisoners, Zhao Zuoduan gave his rationale: "While the imperialist U.S. brazenly propagandized the idea that it is a free and democratic country, it is scared to death by our pursuit of freedom of faith. In order to demonstrate to the people of the entire world our will to return to our country, to expose the barbarity of our enemy, and to strip off our enemy's cover of 'freedom and democracy,' we collectively decided to commemorate our National Day on October 1."⁵² If the bombast is filtered out, the key idea is to demonstrate the prisoners' desire for repatriation.

In the same book, in more specific terms prisoner Li Ziying and Ding Xianwen explained, "On the negotiating table in Panmunjom, American delegates had repeated the pretext that 'Korean and Chinese prisoners do not wish to be repatriated,' so they insisted on their stubborn policy of 'voluntary repatriation.' In view of that, the Communist Solidarity leadership decided to raise flags on October 1 as a solemn

⁵² Zhao Zuoduan, in *Kaoyan*, 192.

declaration of our will to return to our country.”⁵³ The prisoner leaders seemed to have assumed that the U.S. claimed that all Chinese prisoners, including the 6,000 pro-repatriation prisoners, had refused repatriation. Therefore, they wanted their voices to be heard.

Certainly that was not the case in Panmunjom, where the haggle was over the 15,000 anti-Communist Chinese prisoners, who had declared their will not to return to China. The wish of the pro-repatriation prisoners was not an issue. The reason they could not return home was Stalin and Mao’s rejection of the partial solution of “voluntary repatriation.” In fact, on August 20, the same day when the prisoners stole a U.S. officer’s document regarding “plans to massacre prisoners,” Stalin received Chinese premier Zhou Enlai. Stalin listened to the Chinese leader’s complaints about Kim Il Sung’s alleged defeatism, particularly his intention to retreat from the “all-for-all” prisoner exchange scheme in the armistice negotiations.

Zhou reported, “The [North] Koreans are ready to accept the U.S. repatriation figure of 83,000 prisoners. But they have not considered the fact that among the 83,000, only 6,400 are Chinese, the rest are all Koreans. In fact, the U.S. should return another 13,600 Chinese Volunteers. ... This scheme clearly demonstrates that the U.S. is trying to drive a wedge between China and Korea.”⁵⁴ Zhou further stated that although the number of Chinese repatriates was a matter of principle for China, China was open to more negotiations “if the U.S. agrees to make some concessions, even if they are not major ones.”⁵⁵ In essence, Mao and Zhou wanted a more face-saving ratio of repatriates to non-repatriates than the current ratio of 1 to 2. The key was not those who already

⁵³ Li Ziyang 黎子颖 and Ding Xianwen 丁先文, “Jizhoudao ‘shiyi’ daxue’an” 济州岛“十一”大血案 [The October 1 bloody incident], in *Kaoyan*, 237.

⁵⁴ Memorandum of Conversation by Stalin with Zhou Enlai, August 20, 1952, in *Eguo dangangguan de jiemi wenjian*, ed. Shen Zhihua, 1200.

⁵⁵ Memorandum of Conversation by Stalin with Zhou Enlai, August 20, 1952, in *Eguo dangangguan de jiemi wenjian*, ed. Shen Zhihua, 1200.

chosen repatriation, but those who had rejected it. Indeed, as U.S. military historian Hermes noted, the chief U.S. negotiator Harrison attempted “to drive a wedge between the Chinese and the North Koreans by stressing the inequity in the importance granted the Chinese prisoners and the casual way in which the fate of the North Koreans was being handled.”⁵⁶ However, as Stalin sided with Mao and overruled Kim, the negotiations made little headway and the war continued.

In retrospect, it may seem rather odd that the prisoner leaders repeatedly claimed that one of the goals of their struggle was “to support the negotiations in Panmunjom,” when they had absolutely no contact with the Chinese Communist government throughout their prison terms, either in Pusan, Koje or Cheju. While in Pusan and Koje, the Chinese Communist prisoners collaborated with their North Korean counterparts, who were in regular contact with the North Korean government via clandestine channels. As if a fitting irony to their acclaimed “brotherhood cemented by blood,” although the Chinese and North Korean negotiators collaborated daily in Panmunjom in their verbal war against the U.S., General Nam Il, the reputed North Korean spy chief in charge of prisoners insurgencies in Koje, apparently did not facilitate communication between the Chinese prisoners and their government.⁵⁷ Consequently, the prisoners’ understanding of Panmunjom negotiations was entirely based on bits of information gleaned from guards or stolen copies of the U.S. army newspaper *Stars and Stripes*.

Of course, there was no way the Chinese prisoners could have known of the intrigue in Moscow, as few people did until Russian documents were declassified in the 1990s after the fall of the Soviet Union. Even if they had known this, their October 1

⁵⁶ Hermes, 276.

⁵⁷ On a side note, Shen Zhihua once said that the so-called “blood-cemented friendship” between the North Koreans and the Chinese was “all blood, but no friendship.”

demonstration probably would have taken place nevertheless. A sufficiently large protest on Cheju would draw the world's attention to the issue of prisoner repatriation. With sufficient bloodshed, the world might come to question the moral stance of the U.S. policy of "voluntary repatriation." In addition, as Zhao and others had similarly stated, their purposes were more wide-ranging than simply demonstrating their will to return home. They intended to "strike hard on the enemy's arrogance and to show our strength."⁵⁸ The struggle on Cheju was as important as that at Panmunjom, if not more so.

While Stalin and the prisoners were a world apart, both in terms of power and physical distance, they had one thing in common: they were unafraid of bloodshed. Stalin assured Zhou, "Mao is right [in insisting on having all prisoners repatriated]. This war has hurt the strength of the U.S. The North Koreans have lost nothing, except some sacrifices."⁵⁹ Indeed, the North Koreans had lost nothing but more human lives! Stalin went further, "In dealing with the U.S., one has to be firm. Chinese comrades must understand this: if the U.S. does not lose this war, then China will never recover Taiwan."⁶⁰ In fact, the Chinese prisoner leadership operated along similar logic: the enemy has to be hit hard, even if at a high price; otherwise we will never get what we want. On the battlefield along the 38th parallel, the price Stalin and Mao were willing to pay was the blood of Chinese and Korean soldiers, and Korean civilians. In prisons on Cheju, the price the prisoner leaders were willing to pay was the blood of the prisoners. The question was how much.

⁵⁸ Li Ziyang and Ding Xianwen, in *Kaoyan*, 237.

⁵⁹ Memorandum of Conversation by Stalin with Zhou Enlai, August 20, 1952, in *Eguo danganguan de jiemi wenjian*, ed. Shen Zhihua, 1200.

⁶⁰ Memorandum of Conversation by Stalin with Zhou Enlai, 20, 1952, in *Eguo danganguan de jiemi wenjian*, ed. Shen Zhihua, 1201.

Gu Zesheng, the fifth-in-command of the Communist underground and the de facto leader after the arrest of other top leaders before October 1, described the objective of the prisoners' demonstration: "With the aim to proactively assist the negotiations in Panmunjom, ... and to inspire the fighting spirit of our comrades, we decided to engage in struggle with limited bloodshed. Once we reached our goals, we would end our struggle."⁶¹ However, Gu and others should have known that in war, once a battle commenced, it could not be stopped at will. The savagery of the U.S. troops' response went beyond their estimate.

While the prisoner leaders' professed goal of aiding Panmunjom talks may have seemed elusive, a major incident on Cheju would serve a more immediate purpose: to unite the prisoners through a constant struggle against the enemy. In September 1952, the impasse at Panmunjom nearly broke down the negotiations, with little progress made since the spring. Although the impasse was essentially over the fate of the 15,000 Chinese anti-Communist prisoners, it was wrapped in a more convoluted negotiation packages. Bits and pieces of information on the impasse reached the pro-Communist Chinese prisoners. "A negative mood of frustration, exhaustion and desperation began to spread slowly" among the rank and file prisoners.⁶² Prisoners began to doubt the purpose and efficacy of their daily struggle against the prison authorities. Prisoner Cai Pingsheng recalled his sentiment at the time: "had we just cooperated with the Americans, and waited for repatriation, there would have been no trouble."⁶³ Granted, Cai's recollection may have been influenced by hindsight. It was natural to yearn for peace after all the persecutions and struggles they had undergone on Koje.

⁶¹ Gu Zesheng 顾则圣, interview by Wu Jinfeng, June 17, 1983, in *Andeshe Bijl*, vol. 2, 16.

⁶² Yu Jing, 371.

⁶³ Cai Pingsheng, interview by author, August 6, 2007, Chengdu.

To reverse this dangerous tide of “right-leaning passivity,” the underground Communist Central Committee held an emergency meeting. This question was posed, “Is bloodshed necessary as we are waiting to be repatriated?” Some answered, “It is time for bloodshed. Living peacefully under the Americans could only weaken our fighting spirit.” Some argued, “Without bloodshed and sacrifice, we can not have an impact on the Panmunjom negotiations. The question is how much bloodshed.” Another reasoned, “If the sacrifice is too great, we would wrong the masses [*duibuqi qunzhong*]; if the sacrifice is too small, not enough international impact. How can we achieve the maximum impact with minimum sacrifice?” The dominant view emerged: “Revolutionary soldiers should not be afraid of sacrifices. The New China was won at the cost of the martyrs’ blood. Today, we are all sinners [for being taken prisoner]. Is there anything we can not forsake?” Via secret code, Zhao Zuoduan weighed in: “Without bloodshed and sacrifice, we cannot unify the masses. Without paying the price of lives, we cannot demonstrate our steadfast love for the party and the country. The masses will not allow it [bloodless cooperation]. In the future, the motherland and the people will not forgive us!”⁶⁴ Clearly, in their calculation of risk and “return,” the leaders had a long-term view of their own political future.

The Communist leaders’ reasoning displayed a strong desire to redeem their sins for being taken prisoner and making compromises under various circumstances. This desire for redemption, combined with their fear of being killed by the prison authorities, motivated them to escalate the struggle. However, while they claimed that they were unafraid of death—which may well have been the truth—their refrain was that the price in blood was to be paid by the masses mainly. True to the tradition of underground

⁶⁴ Yu Jing, 371. However, in *Kaoyan*, Zhao Zuoduan does not elaborate on his role in approving bloodshed. Most likely these candid accounts in Yu Jin’s *Eyun* contributed to the banning of the book soon after its publication in 1988.

Communists, the top leaders operated behind the scene, letting the masses to charge at the front and bear the brunt of repercussions. For the larger cause of revolution, the leaders were assets too precious to be sacrificed up front.

Regardless of the prisoner leaders' deeper psychological motives, the worsening conditions on prison grounds convinced many of the need for immediate action. On September 19, prisoner Li Xiaoguang in sub-compound No. 8 climbed over the fences and escaped into the protection of the authorities. He returned with troops and had Central Committee member Wang Huaying identified and arrested. On September 21, more than twenty prisoners on work detail were wounded by bayonet when they insisted on singing. According to *The Chronology*, in the week that ended on September 25, 54 prisoners were wounded by bayonet; more than six hundred prisoners were denied water and food supply for over 45 hours; more than one thousand prisoners were stripped naked and beaten.⁶⁵ These claims were roughly corroborated by the Camp Commander Boerem's testimony: between September 20 and 25, five of the ten compounds were "cleared of all PWs and given a thorough shakedown. The prisoners were marched into the administrative area under adequate guard, stripped of their clothing, and their clothing searched."⁶⁶ Clearly, the prison authorities were also expecting trouble on October 1, and had attempted to forestall it.

Finally, the underground Communist leadership came to a conclusion: drastic actions were required by the struggle in prison compounds and the larger war in Korea.

On September 23, the Central Committee issued an order entitled "Strike Back at the Enemy on October 1," calling on all sub-compounds to raise flags on that day. "In case the U.S. authorities intervenes, strike back at the enemy and resolutely protect the flags, even if it requires bloodshed and sacrifice." It also gave detailed instructions on

⁶⁵ Li Ziyang, *douzheng dashiji*, 38.

⁶⁶ Boerem's testimony, NARA/RG 554/Case 154, 22.

methods and procedures of resistance. Two days later, each branch committee began its mobilizations of the masses “from inner circles to outer circles,” i.e., mobilizing party members first, trusted non-party members second, and the less unreliable elements last. Quickly, “the masses were aroused. They expressed their wishes to join the Commando Squads and the Flag Protection Squads.”⁶⁷ The Commando Squad’s task was to attack the advancing troops with rocks and spears. It was expected that eventually the troops would prevail and approach the flagpoles, where the Flag Protection Squads were to make the last-ditch effort to safeguard the flags.

Prisoner leader Gu Zesheng recalled, “It was obvious to everyone that rocks and clubs could not kill the enemy, but machine guns bullets could kill us.”⁶⁸ Nevertheless, prisoners volunteered to sign up for these suicide fighter squads. Many exchanged their home addresses with their comrades, in apparent preparation for martyrdom. “Wash away the shame through struggle, fight for honor!” was the call to battle. Four or five months ago in Compounds 71 and 602 on Koje, motivated by the same slogan, many pro-repatriation prisoners operated on their own bodies to remove tattoos. However, the profound sense of guilt did not go away with their removed skin. The indoctrination program of underground Communists constantly reminded the prisoners that they had “committed sins” against the party and Chairman Mao. The guiltiest were those that once had anti-Communist tattoos forced upon them by the anti-Communist prisoners in Compounds 72 and 86. Aware of the grave danger entailed in protecting the flags on October 1, some prisoners saw it as “an opportunity to finally ‘wash away shame and win back honor.’” In religious terms Li Ziyong wrote, “Almost like solemnly making sacrifices before the altar, many prisoners were prepared to charge to the enemy’s guns with their

⁶⁷ Li Ziyong and Ding Xianwen, “Jizhoudao ‘shiyi’ daxue’an,” in *Kaoyan*, 237.

⁶⁸ Zhao Nianzhi 赵年智 and Gu Zesheng 顾则圣, interview by Wu Jinfeng, June 19, 1983, in *Andeshe Biji*, vol. 2, 38.

chests, under the red five-star flags on October 1.”⁶⁹ The fervor for martyrdom was running high.

In an air of anxious expectancy, prisoners began their preparation for the looming battle. They stockpiled rocks, which were broken down from large stones for construction. They stored kerosene, which was provided as fuels for cooking.⁷⁰ They even planned to boil hot water to be poured onto approaching troops. They also made spears out of tent poles, and wooden clubs with spikes and barbwire.⁷¹

As prisoners were just beginning their preparations for war, the underground Communist Central Committee made two important decisions on September 25. First, it had the compound representative send a notice to the Prison Command, informing the authorities that the prisoners planned to raise flags on October 1 in celebration of their National Day. It was phrased more like an ultimatum than a request for permission. According to Gu Zesheng, the de facto underground leader during this period, the notice stated, “According to the Geneva Conventions, prisoners enjoy the freedom of assembly to express political beliefs. Your party must observe the Conventions, otherwise your party will be held responsible for whatever negative consequences may result.”⁷²

To the authorities, this ultimatum must have sounded preposterous. In fact, few Chinese prisoners had ever heard of the Geneva Convention until they learned about it from the North Korean prisoners. Once they had heard of it, “Geneva Conventions” became their mantra in any instances of argument with the prison authorities. Not to mention the fact that the prisoners did not possess a copy of the Conventions, which was not supplied by the prison authorities. Gu’s reference to the “freedom of assembly to

⁶⁹ Li Ziyang and Ding Xianwen, “Jizhoudao ‘shiyi’ daxue’an,” in *Kaoyan*, 237.

⁷⁰ Li Ziyang and Ding Xianwen, “Jizhoudao ‘shiyi’ daxue’an,” in *Kaoyan*, 237.

⁷¹ Yu Jing, 380.

⁷² Gu Zesheng, interview by Wu Jinfeng, June 17, 1983, in *Andeshe Biji*, vol. 2, 17.

express political beliefs” was probably a misunderstanding or intentional misinterpretation of Article 34, which reads:

Prisoners of war shall enjoy complete latitude in the exercise of their religious duties, including attendance at the service of their faith, on condition that they comply with the disciplinary routine prescribed by the military authorities. Adequate premises shall be provided where religious services may be held.⁷³

In the entire Geneva Conventions, there is no mention of the right to political assembly. However, to the Communists, their faith or religion was Communism, which they considered to be a political belief. Therefore, they asserted that the Convention granted them the right to assemble. The Prison Command’s response the next day was no surprise to anyone. It rejected the prisoners’ plan to raise flags, and threatened that “any unusual activities on October 1 will be treated as a ‘riot’ and dealt with accordingly.”⁷⁴ Later Colonel Boerem explained his response to investigators, “They have been informed previously, numbers of times, they could not fly flags. They have been informed numerous times by many members of this command who personally told me, and in every instance when I was asked at an inclosure [sic] by the compound representative I told them they had received their instruction they would not fly flags prior to my arrival and I did not intent to change any of those instructions, and they would be expected to obey them.”⁷⁵

The Chinese prisoners had often argued that General Boatner had agreed to allow prisoners to fly flags to celebrate their holidays if they asked for permission first.⁷⁶ More specifically, prisoners claimed that Boatner sent a memorandum containing these promises to prisoners in Compound 602 on June 2, the same day when Boatner sent

⁷³ Convention (III) relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, Geneva, 12 August 1949, accessed March 30, <http://www.icrc.org/ihl.nsf/FULL/375?OpenDocument>.

⁷⁴ Yu Jing, 372-373.

⁷⁵ Boerem’s testimony, NARA/RG 554/Case 154, 22-23.

⁷⁶ Woodrow Chin’s testimony, NARA/RG 554/Case 154, 6.

tanks into 602 to confiscate the flag and destroy the flagpole in the morning.⁷⁷ Colonel Boerem stated that he had never heard of such order from General Boatner. Boerem's deputy Lieutenant Colonel Charles Helderma maintained, the prisoners "say he issued a memorandum. I have not seen it. I know of no one who has seen it."⁷⁸

However, Manhard maintained, "General Boatner established a policy in June whereby pro-Commie POWs would be permitted to display certain prescribed insignia and take the day off on recognized Commie holidays, provided they submitted proper written application in advance and stuck to the approved activities on the day in question."⁷⁹ The *TIME* magazine also reported that Boatner left a policy that "[p]risoners should be allowed to celebrate Red holidays if they were orderly and obeyed the rules."⁸⁰ In his papers, Boatner did not say anything about the purported memorandum and policy, probably for a good reason. Had he issued such a policy, it would have been an apparent compromise made in the early days of his reign on Koje. In view of the tragedy on October 1, certainly he would rather not to be implicated for giving prisoners false expectations.

In any case, even if Boatner had made the promise to prisoners back in June, it was evident that he never granted the permission to fly flags. Instead he cracked down twice on flag-raising demonstrations on August 1 and 15. The prisoners knew very well that the authorities, either Boatner or his successors, would not grant such permission. Their repeated reference to the alleged memorandum was largely a means to legitimize their claim to the right of political assembly. Ultimately, their decision had been made and they were determined to raise flags irrespective of the authorities' response.

⁷⁷ Li Ziyang, *douzheng dashiji*, 30.

⁷⁸ Lieutenant Colonel Charles Helderma's testimony, NARA/RG 554/Case 154, 40.

⁷⁹ Manhard, "Chinese POW Incident, Chejudo – Oct 1," 1.

⁸⁰ "Death in Compound 7," *TIME*, October 13, 1952, accessed Sept. 20, 2010, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,817025,00.html>.

On the same day the Communist leaders openly issued its notice to the Prison Command regarding their planned demonstration on October 1, they made a daring move in secret. The Central Committee decided to kill Camp Commander Duweiya (presumably Boerem's name in Chinese transliteration) and Captain Brooks prior to the October 1 demonstration. It was to serve as retaliation to the U.S. troops' abuse of prisoners and also as a warning to other U.S. officers who might intervene on October 1.⁸¹ At this point, the underground Communist leaders had raised an extraordinarily high stake.

September. Executing “Traitors” and Assassinating Enemies

Certainly the prisoner leaders were fully aware that assassination attempts on the lives of the prison commander and officers were essentially suicide missions for those assassins. Again, as in their decision to raise flags, the leaders actively sought bloodshed. They believed that the inevitable bloodshed and the possibly killing of the enemy commander would rally the spirit of the Chinese prisoners, so that their flag-raising demonstration on October 1 could have a much larger propaganda impact.

The Communist leadership selected sub-compound No. 7 to carry out the mission. Once the order was received by the party branch committee in No. 7, party secretary Han Zijian held an emergency meeting to develop an assassination plan. The prisoners had a spirited debate, as they were excited “to fight as the vanguards of the more than 5,000 Chinese prisoners.” Han personally assumed the role of the leader of the Monitors Squad (*jiuchadui*), which was to enforce discipline before and during the battle. In terms of an assassination plan, the prisoners came to the conclusion that the best opportunity would be the Monday roll call, when prisoners were required to

⁸¹ Li Ziying and Ding Xianwen, in *Kaoyan*, 237; Yu Jing, 372.

assemble and “salute” to Captain Brooks.⁸² Another plan was to kill Brooks during work detail outside the compound.⁸³ Immediately the masses were mobilized. Soon prisoners in No. 7 secretly made more than 100 daggers from kerosene barrels and metal pieces taken out from boots. The assassination squad rehearsed and perfected their plans. It appeared the death of Brooks was imminent.

Another urgent order was emitted from the Central Committee: “In order to secure victory on October 1, take strict measures to prevent traitors [from escaping]!” Monitors in each sub-compound were posted to guard all exits of the compound, 24 hours a day.⁸⁴ These 30 to 50 monitors in each sub-compound were under the Security Section (*baowe*), whose chief responsibilities included protecting leaders and flags, anti-traitor cleansing and intelligence gathering.⁸⁵ They were the crack troops of each compound. And they were to lead the fighting squads on October 1.

Certainly not every individual prisoner was enthusiastic over the prospect of imminent bloodshed and probably death. The overall Security Section Chief and Central Committee member Li Xi'er had made plans to deal with this type of prisoner. Following the Chinese Communist tradition, Li had secretly divided and ranked “the masses” into three tiers: those could be trusted (*yikao*), those could be “unified” (*tuanjie*), and those to be “consolidated” (*gonggu*). For those prisoners who were targets of consolidation, i.e., those who had displayed pessimism or cynicism toward struggle, the Security Section assigned its trusted men to educate them. In the meantime, Monitors prevented them from having any contact with U.S. personnel. Therefore, these questionable prisoners were prevented from joining work detail. Finally, there were “traitors” who betrayed “the motherland and comrades.” These men no longer belonged to “the

⁸² Yu Jing, 373.

⁸³ Li Ziyang and Ding Xianwen, in *Kaoyan*, 237.

⁸⁴ Yu Jing, 374.

⁸⁵ Li Xier, in *Kaoyan*, 210-211.

masses.” Later Li Xi’er summarized the Security Section’s handling of traitors, “Once concrete evidence was obtained, we overcame great difficulties and eliminated them at all cost.”⁸⁶

In repatriated prisoners’ memoirs, very few details of these anti-traitor cleansing activities are provided. However, in Yu Jin’s *Eyun*, some of the executions and intentional mutilations were recorded in detail. Moreover, she cites Li Xi’er’s report to the PLA headquarters upon his repatriation in 1953, in which Li claimed, “Following the party’s policy on anti-traitor cleansing, based on concrete evidence, seventeen traitors were sentenced to death” during the Chinese prisoners’ imprisonment in Korea.⁸⁷ Presumably these seventeen men were all executed.

One of the seventeen was a prisoner in sub-compound No. 2. He was named Zhou, a former Nationalist soldier. Many thought he was mentally ill. This man howled day and night, “Let me out. I was swindled to come here.” Days before October 1, the underground leadership decided to do away with him lest he escape and leak secrets. The tools of execution were “a large iron nail, one rope, and a short wall.”⁸⁸ He was murdered and buried under the fallen wall.

Pro-Communist prisoner activist Lin Mocong recalled, in his sub-compound No. 9 two prisoners were executed by the Security Section. One of them named Guo “often talked nonsense.” He was strangled to death first, then a rope was placed around his neck and his body suspended in mid air. A suicide scene was created and he was then declared dead from having committed suicide. Another victim was an ethnic Korean, Kim, who was emotionally distressed by all the struggles and demonstrations. He openly professed that he did not wish to return to China anymore. He also told others, “I am

⁸⁶ Li Xier, in *Kaoyan*, 212.

⁸⁷ Yu Jing, 367.

⁸⁸ Yu Jing, 367.

Korean, and I have many relatives in South Korea.” The sub-compound leader decided to take Kim’s life first and report to the Central Committee second.

Kim’s occasion of death came when all prisoners went to a mass meeting, but he chose to sleep in his tent alone. “Three monitors walked into the tent. With their hands wrapped in towels, they strangled Kim to death. No fingerprint was left on his body. That evening the leaders declared Kim had died from a case of acute meningitis.” When people died of meningitis, their tongues would stick out, similar to those who died of suffocation. The prisoners wrote a protest letter to the prison authorities, faulting them for not coming to Kim’s aid quickly enough. The masses were mobilized to improve sanitation and eliminate meningitis germs or viruses.⁸⁹

In sub-compound No. 7, the air was especially tense. Months ago, one Shanghainese prisoner was caught throwing rocks with wrapped notes. Monitor Ding Xianwen believed the suspect was a spy, as he had done this rock-throwing several times before. The suspect denied the charge and said, “I came here [pro-repatriation camp] by mistake. I hate struggles. I want democracy. I did not leak any secret.”⁹⁰ Certainly the monitors did not buy this. When the suspect tried to scream for the U.S. guards’ help, five Monitors buried him alive in an unoccupied tent. His body never left Cheju. However, soon the four Monitors other than Ding were killed in the battle on October 1.⁹¹ They, too, never left Cheju in the end.

On September 25, or one day before the planned assassination date, Cai Xingfu, the clerk (*wenshu*) in sub-compound No. 7, quickly inserted himself into the work detail

⁸⁹ Lin Mocong, telephone interview with author, September 21, 2010.

⁹⁰ Yu Jing, 354. In Chinese Communists’ vocabulary, “democracy” simply means a more relaxed environment where people are allowed to speak; it does not mean “liberal democracy” as it is commonly known.

⁹¹ Yu Jing, 354-355.

team, and marched out of the compound.⁹² The Monitor at the gate attempted to question him, but was “brusquely pushed aside.” Apparently, the Monitor hesitated to stop the compound clerk, whose position carried a certain prestige. At the end of the work detail, Cai did not return to his compound; instead he feigned illness and went to the hospital. If he could remain in the hospital for a week, then he could avoid the bloodshed on October 1. However, the doctors found him to be well. Acting upon this intelligence, Captain Brooks rushed to the hospital and interrogated Cai. Cai cracked and confessed the assassination plans.⁹³

The next day, Brooks led troops into sub-compound No. 7. Prisoners were marched into a new area and strip-searched. The troops found more than 100 homemade daggers and knives, which were made to kill Brooks. The assassination plan miscarried.⁹⁴ Although Cai did not come to the compound with Brooks, apparently he had described to the authorities prominent features of the leaders. Compound leader Han Zijian barely escaped the fate of being identified, thanks to the medicine he took earlier to make his face swell beyond recognition.⁹⁵

Following the search in No. 7, the Prison Command took drastic steps to clean up all sub-compounds of contraband and weapons. Colonel Boerem reported, “All compounds were cleared of all PWs and given a thorough shakedown. The prisoners were marched into the administrative area under adequate guard, stripped of their clothing, and their clothing searched. Each compound was subject to the procedure during the period 26 to 28 September, inclusive.”⁹⁶

⁹² Yu Jing, 375-376.

⁹³ Yu Jing, 375-376.

⁹⁴ Li Ziyang, *douzheng dashiji*, 39. And Yu Jing, 375-376.

⁹⁵ Yu Jing, 376.

⁹⁶ Boerem’s testimony, in Report of Proceedings by Board of Officers, RG 554 (Records of General Headquarters, Far East Command)/Incident Investigation Cases/Box 9/Case 154, 22.

After all compounds were thoroughly searched, Colonel Boerem “entered every compound, had the PWs assembled and reported to me [him] by their representative, and the UN proposal at Panmunjom read and copies posted on the bulletin boards.” In addition, he “prepared two messages for possible use” on October 1.⁹⁷ Although Boerem repeated the ban on flag-raising, he recognized that he might have to repeat his order multiple times on October 1.

In the meantime, Boerem, Commander of Prison Camp 3-A on Cheju, prepared his boss in Pusan for the upcoming clash with the Chinese prisoners. He had “several telephone conversations with PW Command Headquarters,” and he stated that he “was satisfied we [the prison authorities] could not avoid an incident sometime during the three days.” Special arms were requested and promptly supplied. Boerem reported, “Arrangements to have CNDN grenades flown in was made and the grenades arrived on September 29 by plane.”⁹⁸

Boerem also prepped his troops for combat action. On September 29, Boerem and Lieutenant Colonel Hesse, Commander of the First Battalion, 35th Infantry completed their plans to secure the enclosures “under any circumstances which could be foreseen. The battalion was oriented and the post reconnoitered.”⁹⁹ Addressing another unit under his command, the 11th MP Service Company, Boerem instructed officers and men concerning his “policies and desires in handling PWs and meeting an emergency situation.”¹⁰⁰

While his troops were getting ready, Boerem did not let up the effort to arrest Communist leaders. On the morning of September 30, “traitor” Li Xiaoguang identified

⁹⁷ Boerem’s testimony, NARA/RG 554/Case 154, 22.

⁹⁸ Boerem’s testimony, NARA/RG 554/Case 154, 22. CNDN: presumably a type of non-lethal grenade..

⁹⁹ Boerem’s testimony, NARA/RG 554/Case 154, 22.

¹⁰⁰ Boerem’s testimony, NARA/RG 554/Case 154, 22.

Du Gang, the Deputy General Secretary of underground Communists. At this point, all of the top four leaders were identified and segregated. However, the underground Communists were well-prepared for the inevitable. According to their succession plan, Gu Zesheng, the fifth-in-command assumed the leadership. Gu, a former Political Instructor in the 180th Division, was well disguised in sub-compound No. 8. Except to very few top Communist leaders, he was known as a cook and indeed he had always worked in the mess, until his final identification and arrest in July 1953.¹⁰¹ Immediately after the arrest of Du Dang, Gu issued an order on behalf of the Central Committee, reaffirming the plan to raise flags the next day.¹⁰²

Once again, sub-compound No. 7 was chosen to be the vanguard of action. This decision was based on three considerations. First of all, Gu Zesheng, the de facto leader, resided in the neighboring sub-compound No.8. From his compound, he could observe the situations in No. 7 with relative ease. Secondly, No. 7 was located on a slightly higher ground than the other compounds, so others could look to it for signals. Last but not least, No. 7 had been thoroughly mobilized and fully prepared.

That evening, from sub-compound No. 8, Gu issued “The Central Committee’s Final Order Regarding the Flag-Raising Struggle on October 1”: “The flag-raising struggle on October 1 will be carried out as planned. In each sub-compound, if there were any cases of cowardice or vacillation, they should be treated as desertion on the battlefield.”¹⁰³ Furthermore, “under no circumstance should the flags be seized by the enemy. As a final resort, they should be burned.”¹⁰⁴

Probably at the same time, “On 30 September, at 1945 hours,” Colonel Boerem “addressed the assembled officers of the First Battalion, 35th Infantry, and the 11th MP

¹⁰¹ Li Ziyang, interview by Wu Jinfeng, August 9, 1984, in *Andeshe Bijì*, vol. 2, 62.

¹⁰² Li Ziyang and Ding Xianwen, in *Kaoyan*, 237.

¹⁰³ Li Ziyang and Ding Xianwen, in *Kaoyan*, 237.

¹⁰⁴ Yu Jing, 380.

Service Company, concerning the problems we [the Prison Command] expected to encounter and the methods I [he] desired.”¹⁰⁵ On the eve of October 1, both sides were ready for war.

October 1, 1952. A Mass Prison Break or Massacre?

Before dawn on October 1, the Chinese prisoners rose quietly and had breakfast earlier than usual. According to their plan, they were to raise flags during the U.S. troops’ breakfast time, so that it would take longer for them to assemble.¹⁰⁶ As it turned out, just as Colonel Boerem and his Executive Officer Lieutenant Colonel Helderman finished breakfast, they were informed by Captain Brooks that “that all compounds had raised flag poles and Communist flags. The time was about 0730 hours.”¹⁰⁷ Captain Brooks’ recalled, “At 0730 hours, which was exact because Major Nemeth, the Inclosure [sic] Commander, with whom I was riding[,] stopped the jeep when we saw the flags first going up. We checked his watch to be absolutely sure of the time.”¹⁰⁸ In addition, First Lieutenant Woodrow Chin of the 704th Counter Intelligence Corps Detachment reported, “At 0715 this morning the enlisted men started entering all compounds to get head count, and all compounds refused to comply. At 0730 hours the Chinese Communist flag was raised simultaneously in all ten compounds.”¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ Boerem’s testimony, NARA/RG 554/Case 154, 22.

¹⁰⁶ Gu Zesheng, interview by Wu Jinfeng, June 17, 1983, in *Andeshe Biji*, vol. 2, 16.

¹⁰⁷ Boerem’s testimony, NARA/RG 554/Case 154, 19.

¹⁰⁸ Brooks’ testimony, NARA/RG 554/Case 154, 11.

¹⁰⁹ Woodrow Chin’s testimony, NARA/RG 554/Case 154, 4. In contrast to the Americans’ consistent report that the flags went up at 7:30, various Chinese prisoners claimed that the flags were raised at 6:00 a.m. However, this claim was contradicted by a *People’s Daily’s* article published in August 1953, which was apparently based on repatriated prisoners’ accounts and stated that the flag-raising occurred sometime shortly after 7:00. See Xiang Ming 向明 and Jiang Bo 江波, “Guoqi piaoyang zai Jujidao he Jizhoudao shang” 国旗飘扬在巨济岛和济州岛上 [National flags fly over Koje and Cheju Islands], *Renmin Ribao*, August 17, 1953, 4. Li Ziyang and Ding Xianwen, in *Kaoyan*, 238. And Zhao Nianzhi, interview by Wu Jinfeng, June 19, 1983, in *Andeshe Biji*, vol. 2, 37. Most likely the Americans’ version of 7:30 was more accurate.

Upon hearing this long anticipated development, Boerem and Helderman immediately rushed to the enclosure headquarters to assemble troops. Boerem instructed Lieutenant Colonel Hesse, Commanding Officer of the First Battalion, 35th Infantry Regiment, to put Plan Number 9 into effect.¹¹⁰ While the troops were amassing, at 7:40, Captain Brooks used a new interpreter, Mr. Kim, to broadcast a message, which was prepared by Boerem and translated by Kim the night before:¹¹¹

Attention. Attention. Your attention is directed to Article eighty-two (82) of the Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949. A prisoner of war shall be subject to the laws, regulations and orders in force in the armed force of the detaining power. You will not fly flags of any nature without proper authority. You have not, repeat not, been given that authority. You are ordered to take down all flags at once.¹¹²

The message was repeated twice. Ten minutes later, it was repeated three more times.¹¹³ Actually, Brooks had a second message ready, but Boerem had instructed him “the second message would not be given to the prisoners until the Infantry units were in place.”¹¹⁴ At about 8:00 a.m., the First Battalion arrived. Boerem “directed Lieutenant Colonel John W. Hesse not to follow his plan of attaching the tanks to platoons but to use the tanks to contain the perimeter, in accordance with pre-arranged plans.”¹¹⁵

Behind the barbed wires, the prisoners saw a menacing scene: “Fighter planes were circling above the prison camp. ... Eleven tanks rumbled into the administrative area [between sub-compounds]. Approximately two regiments of troops in full combat gears, with helmets and gas masks, manned their positions at the gates of each sub-

¹¹⁰ Boerem’s testimony, NARA/RG 554/Case 154, 19. The detail of Plan 9 is unknown.

¹¹¹ Brooks’ testimony, NARA/RG 554/Case 154, 12; Boerem’s testimony, Case 154, 19.

¹¹² Boerem’s testimony, NARA/RG 554/Case 154, 18-19.

¹¹³ Chin’s testimony, NARA/RG 554/Case 154, 4; Brooks’ testimony, Case 154, 12; Boerem’s testimony, Case 154, 18-19.

¹¹⁴ Brooks’ testimony, NARA/RG 554/Case 154, 12.

¹¹⁵ Boerem’s testimony, NARA/RG 554/Case 154, 19.

compounds. They were armed with submachine guns, automatic rifles, grenades, various gas bombs, and flamethrowers.”¹¹⁶

As units of the First Battalion took their positions and were issued CNDN grenades, Boerem claimed, he “personally instructed them, among other things, to consider the seriousness of their mission—that they must not kill people unless attacked, and that they must remember that under any circumstances they were under their platoon leader’s command and that control and obedience could be executed only by them looking to him frequently and complying with his order immediately.”¹¹⁷ Ironically, Boerem’s ostensible emphasis on discipline was disobeyed quickly.

Only minutes later, while on his way toward the eastern end of the compound, Boerem “heard a small number of shots fired in the vicinity of Compound Number 7.”¹¹⁸ His deputy, Helderman, reported, “Before we got down to the inclosure [*sic*] we were at the main thoroughfare and the alert platoon and some Infantry units were moving into position. We heard 8 to 10 to 12 shots [*sic*], M-1 or carbine. I do not know who fired them.”¹¹⁹ At this juncture, they did not take any measures to instruct troops to refrain from “spontaneous” shooting, effectively giving the green light to more killings that were to follow.

This first round of firing occurred at approximately 8:15 a.m. Those first fired were the “approximately 5 to 8 men” under the command of Second Lieutenant Robert S. Lyons of the 2nd Platoon.¹²⁰ They “started firing without being ordered to before they entered the compound.” The trigger was that Lyons’ troops were “attacked by a hail of stones from inside.” Lyons claimed, “My company commander and myself immediately

¹¹⁶ Li Ziyang and Ding Xianwen, in *Kaoyan*, 239. 冲锋枪: submachine guns; 自动步枪: automatic rifles.

¹¹⁷ Boerem’s testimony, NARA/RG 554/Case 154, 19.

¹¹⁸ Boerem’s testimony, NARA/RG 554/Case 154, 19.

¹¹⁹ Helderman’s testimony, NARA/RG 554/Case 154, 37.

¹²⁰ Second Lieutenant Robert S. Lyons’ testimony, NARA/RG 554/Case 154, 58.

gave orders to cease fire and fall back.” While Lyons admitted that these men actually disobeyed his order, later he still argued before investigators, “Sir[,] it is my understanding of the current SOP for the post that UN personnel, upon being attacked by prisoners, will *shoot to kill*. ... I have read the SOP, as published by the camp.”¹²¹ Evidently Lyons was not lying. The commander of the First Battalion Lieutenant Colonel Hesse confirmed that he was familiar with the “standing instructions by the post commander that troops will open fire on PWs who attacked them in any manner without an order to fire.” When he was asked the question “In other words, had the troops spontaneously opened fire on the PWs when they received a volley of rocks, they would have been following camp instructions?” “Yes sir, just following instructions,” Hesse replied.¹²² In essence, the troops were authorized to fire without explicit order from their superiors, had they been attacked in any form, regardless of the severity or nature of the attacks.

Upon his arrival at the gate of sub-compound No. 7, Boerem “decided that it would be the first one to be entered if necessary.” At about 8:10, Boerem ordered Brooks to call the compound representative to come to the gate. Brooks did “call several times, speaking Chinese. There was no response.” At this point, Boerem “used the services of a Chinese Nationalist,” Sun The Chen, “presently a resident of South Korea,” to broadcast the second prepared message to Chinese prisoners:¹²³

You have failed to observe a lawful order of the Commanding Officer, to wit, you will take down all flags at once. You are now being notified that in accordance with Article Forty-two (42) of the Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949 that armed forces and weapons will be used if necessary to effect compliance with this order.¹²⁴

¹²¹ Second Lieutenant Robert S. Lyons’ testimony, NARA/RG 554/Case 154, 58. SOP: Standard Operating Procedures. Italics added by author.

¹²² Lieutenant Colonel John W. Hesse’s testimony, NARA/RG 554/Case 154, 44.

¹²³ Brooks’ testimony, Case 154, 12; Boerem’s testimony, NARA/RG 554/Case 154, 19.

¹²⁴ Boerem’s testimony, NARA/RG 554/Case 154, 19.

When prisoners refused to comply, Boerem ordered the gate opened and the troops to enter. Brooks discovered that “the inner gate was secured by wire and rope fastenings.” Per Brooks’ request, Colonel Hesse sent Sergeant Titus with a wire cutter to cut open the fastenings. Brooks recalled, “While I covered him with a drawn pistol he proceeded to cut the rope fastener and had just begun to remove the wire fastener with wire cutter when the groups of prisoners behind the rock and cement structure which is intended to be their shower room, stood up and began throwing rocks at Sergeant Titus and myself.”¹²⁵ Standing outside the gate, firing with his “snub nose 38” pistol, Brooks “shot one prisoner through the head who stood up with a rock in his hand.”¹²⁶

Colonel Boerem ordered a squad to cover Brooks and Titus while they opened the gate. Boerem’s deputy Lieutenant Colonel Helderman described the scene:

The prisoners were squatting down behind a rock wall and throwing their rocks over. The air was full of them. They would rise up and throw and then duck back down. The squad of Infantrymen kept them down until they got the gate open. When the gates were opened the alert platoon entered. They did not just walk in. They were throwing rocks and shooting people throwing rocks [*sic*]. They kept firing. People kept throwing rocks from tents, barracks and the kitchen. The shooting probably lasted 10 minutes, then it was all over.¹²⁷

In 10 minutes, it was all over. Approximately 500 rounds of ammunition were expended by just one of the two platoons entering the compound.¹²⁸ “There is nothing outside the carbine and BAR” (Browning Automatic Rifle).¹²⁹ Basically, the troops went on a shooting rampage. Braving the firepower of bullets, prisoners fought back with a volley of rocks. Colonel Boerem estimated, “there were 250 [rocks] in the air pretty steady for a matter of minutes” when he entered the compound with the troops. And he was

¹²⁵ Brooks’ testimony, NARA/RG 554/Case 154, 12.

¹²⁶ Brooks’ testimony, NARA/RG 554/Case 154, 12. Sergeant Dean N. Titus’s testimony, Case 154, 35.

¹²⁷ Helderman’s testimony, NARA/RG 554/Case 154, 38.

¹²⁸ Second Lieutenant Robert S. Lyons’ testimony, NARA/RG 554/Case 154, 58.

¹²⁹ Lieutenant Colonel John W. Hesse’s testimony, NARA/RG 554/Case 154, 44.

“personally hit by one of the rocks.” He considered these rocks to be “dangerous”: “The average piece of rock thrown was probably five inches in diameter, and a rock that size, thrown by a man, could strike a man in the arm and break his arm. If it struck him in the face it would do considerable damage.”¹³⁰ Indeed one U.S. lieutenant was hit in the face by a rock, reported the Chinese prisoners. Moreover, the prisoners claimed that they repelled the first wave of enemy attack with rocks, spears, Molotov cocktails, bleach powder, and boiled water. But their casualties were high, and the 50-men Commando Squad was nearly annihilated.¹³¹

In contrast to the Americans’ account that the fighting was over in merely ten minutes, according to the prisoners the battle was longer, with three waves of enemy attacks repelled by prisoners. They claimed that after the first attack, the troops withdrew and then reentered sub-compound No. 7 after a ten-minute hiatus. During the second attack, the troops deployed flamethrowers, tear gas bombs, and machine guns to clear their way. The prisoners’ replacement Commando Squad rose up to attack the troops. Although they were weakened by tear gas and had lost their hiding positions, “they rushed at the troops and attempted to seize the enemy’s weapons.” According to the prisoners, the G.I.s were shocked by this “death-defying succession of fighting men” and their commander ordered a second withdrawal.¹³²

Leading the third and final assault, tanks finally rolled into No. 7, advancing toward the flagpole. In addition, “from a distance light machine guns fired at prisoners.”¹³³ Finally, tanks and troops approached the flagpole, which was “a 4x4,

¹³⁰ Boerem’s testimony, NARA/RG 554/Case 154, 21.

¹³¹ Li Ziyang and Ding Xianwen, in *Kaoyan*, 240.

¹³² Li Ziyang and Ding Xianwen, in *Kaoyan*, 240.

¹³³ Li Ziyang and Ding Xianwen, in *Kaoyan*, 240.

spliced in sections. Notched and joined together.”¹³⁴ While some of the 12 members of the Flag Protection Squad fought with the troops, others lowered the flag and burned it with gasoline. Their ultimate goal was to protect the flag and not allow it to be taken away by the troops. They accomplished their mission, at the cost of nine men killed in close-range fighting.¹³⁵ Following the signal in No. 7, flags in all other sub-compounds were lowered and hidden.

Regardless of possible exaggerations in the prisoners’ accounts, the bravery of the prisoner fighters could hardly be denied. Sergeant Dean N. Titus described one of these suicide attacks: “two PWs charged one platoon on the right with tent poles. ... They were shot.” To “illustrate the tenacity and fanaticism of the prisoners on that day,” Colonel Caldwell, the overall commander of the Prison Command, recounted a story to E. Allan Lightner, Jr., U.S. Charge d’Affaires to Korea: “a Chinese prisoner was shot down by one of our men with an M-1 rifle, but like a wild beast he rose from the ground after he was shot and still came on at the soldier. He shot him a second time and the prisoner dropped dead within a few feet of the soldier.”¹³⁶

As a result of the overwhelming firepower employed, in 10 to 15 minutes, 56 prisoners were killed and 96 severely wounded, yet only two of the 80 U.S. soldiers who entered sub-compound No. 7 were “wounded slightly.”¹³⁷ Later investigation found nine troops “received non-serious injuries, consisting of lacerations and bruises.”¹³⁸ Among the 56 slain prisoners, nearly half of them were Monitors or members of the Security

¹³⁴ Description of the flagpole is from Sergeant Dean N. Titus’s testimony, NARA/RG 554/Case 154, 36. Other details in this paragraph are all based on prisoners’ account.

¹³⁵ Li Ziyang and Ding Xianwen, in *Kaoyan*, 240.

¹³⁶ Memorandum of conversation, October 3, 1952, enclosed in Manhard Memo, “Chinese POW Incident, Chejudo – Oct 1,” NARA/RG 59/695A.0024/10-2052, 1-2.

¹³⁷ AP, “Officials Probe Cheju POW Riot: Furious Rebellion of 500 Chinese War Prisoners Second Most Deadly in Korea,” LAT, October 2, 1952, 11.

¹³⁸ Findings of Fact, in Report of Proceedings by Board of Officers, NARA/RG 554/Case 154, 100.

Section, as they formed the bulk of the Commando Squad.¹³⁹ One of them was Zhao Honglu (Jo Hoong Roo, ISN # 706001), who had participated in the killing of a Shanghainese traitor suspect several months earlier. His name appeared as No. 23 on the death certificate.¹⁴⁰ The other three Monitors involved in the execution were reportedly killed in this battle.¹⁴¹ However, no matching names were found in the death certificate. Probably they used aliases, or they were one of the three dead with “unknown” identities.¹⁴² Among the nearly 100 severely wounded were the 17-year-old Zhang Huizong (Tsiang Hwei Joong, ISN # 711151) and former reconnaissance man Cai Derong (Chai Doo Yoong, ISN # 711825).¹⁴³

The names of the top leaders of sub-compound No.7, Han Zijian, Zhao Nianzhi, and Shi Zhankui, were not on the list of those killed or severely wounded. However, according to two prisoners’ account, Han Zijian was wounded.¹⁴⁴ The commander of the Commando Squad Li Weiwen escaped the bloodbath unscathed, because he returned to the rear to report to the leaders between the final two waves of enemy attacks.¹⁴⁵ However, Zhao Guoxi, former Whampoa cadet and the Organizational Chief of sub-compound No. 7 who volunteered to join the Commando Squad, was among the injured and his name appeared on the injured list as Chou Kuo See (ISN 713175).¹⁴⁶

According to Captain Brooks’ account, which appeared in a Taiwan newspaper in September 1953, at the very end of the battle, Brooks found “the compound

¹³⁹ Li Xier, in *Kaoyan*, 211.

¹⁴⁰ Death Certificate, NARA/RG 554/Case 154, Exhibit I-1, 2.

¹⁴¹ Yu Jing, 354-355.

¹⁴² Death Certificate, in Report of Proceedings by Board of Officers, Case 154, Exhibit I-1, 3.

¹⁴³ Certificate of the injured, NARA/RG 554/Case 154, Exhibit I-2, 3. Li Ziying, *douzheng dashiji*, 41.

¹⁴⁴ Shi Zhankui 史占魁, “Wode naniannayue”我的那年那月, in *Fengyan Rensheng* 烽烟人生 [Lives in War], vol. 3, eds. Bai Juntao 白钧陶 and 许联炳 Xu Lianbing (Chengdu: unofficial publication, 2007), 217. Shi Zhankui was the deputy sub-compound leader.

¹⁴⁵ Zhao Guoxi 赵国玺, interview by Wu Jinfeng, October 20, 1983, in *Andeshe Biji*, vol. 2, 239.

¹⁴⁶ Certificate of the injured, NARA/RG 554/Case 154, Exhibit I-2, 3.

representative and other political leaders hiding in a tent far [from the battle scene], safely behind a large pile of rocks.” Brooks further claimed that he “utilized the barbwire-wrapped clubs made by prisoners to leave some permanent marks on the bodies of these prisoners.”¹⁴⁷ Beside the questionable reliability of Brooks’ story in a Nationalist newspaper, Brooks’ claim does not necessarily mean these leaders mentioned were the actual leaders of the underground Communists. First of all, the compound representative was only a front figure with no authority in the underground Communist hierarchy. More importantly, Brooks simply did not know who were the actual leaders. On his previous attempt on September 26, he had failed to identify Han Zijian. Therefore, judging from available sources, it can be concluded that the underground Communist leaders in No. 7 did command the resistance, but apparently not all of them led the charge during the battle, and certainly all of them survived the carnage, although some suffered injuries.

The Aftermath

As the dead were being counted, nearly all the injured prisoners were evacuated to Pusan by plane.¹⁴⁸ On the same afternoon, Major General Thomas W. Herren, commanding general of the Korean Communications Zone, and Col. C. V. Caldwell, head of the Prisoner of War Command, flew from Pusan to Cheju. A Board of Officers was appointed immediately and an investigation went underway. In the meantime, the Central Committee of the Communist Solidarity issued its commendations:

1. Sub-compound No. 7 to be renamed “The Steel Compound.”
2. All prisoners in No. 7 receive a first-class merit award; all members of the Commando Squad and those wounded receive a special-class merit award; All those killed are honored as “Flag Protection Heroes”; Those with special-class merit award will receive a “Medal for Protecting Flags.”

¹⁴⁷ Wang Liwen 王立文 [Brooks], *Xinshengbao* 新生报 (Taipei), September 5, 1953.

¹⁴⁸ Murray Schumach, “Fanatic Reds Riot on Cheju; 52 Slain,” *NYT*, October 2, 1952, 2.

3. All other sub-compounds should launch a campaign to learn from No. 7.¹⁴⁹

The next day, from the Close Confinement Stockade, top Communist leaders Zhao Zuoduan, Wei Lin, and Du Gang hung a large protest banner onto the barbwire fence. Captain Brooks led troops to seize the banner and “gave Zhao and his comrades a beating.”¹⁵⁰ “Prisoners Angry But Obedient,” reported *the New York Times*, “The prisoners wore white paper carnations in mourning for their dead but made no other effort to hold a demonstration. During the day, United States troops entered all ten compounds and carried out a thorough shakedown. At the end of the day the camp commander, Col. Richard D. Boerem, declared that hundreds of makeshift weapons had been found and that the prisoners had not tried to interfere with the search.”¹⁵¹ Brooks described some of the more inventive weapons:

There were flails made of numerous bends of barbed wire which had been removed from the inner fence. These flails were banded at one end and covered with cloth to provide a suitable handle. Grates had been wrenched from the fire boxes of the kitchen cooking stoves. Tent pole had been removed from the tents to be used as clubs or spears. A portion of the roof of the kitchen building had been removed. The lumber so obtained being broken into suitable clubs and studded with spikes driven through the larger end. These were some of the weapons which I can specifically recall which were removed and which were obviously prepared for close-in, hand-to-hand fighting.¹⁵²

However, Brooks admitted to the board of investigators, “To my knowledge none of these were used except 1 tent pole, of which the spear had been sharpened, thrust as a spear, wounding one American soldier in the hand.”¹⁵³ When asked the question “Were there a sufficient number of these weapons to equip each prisoner of war in the compound?” Brooks replied, “No. I would say approximately 60 or 70 such weapons

¹⁴⁹ Yu Jing, 386-387. And Li Ziyang and Ding Xianwen, in *Kaoyan*, 241.

¹⁵⁰ Li Ziyang and Ding Xianwen, in *Kaoyan*, 241.

¹⁵¹ Murray Schumach, “Fanatic Reds Riot on Cheju; 52 Slain,” *NYT*, October 2, 1952, 2.

¹⁵² Brooks’ testimony, NARA/RG 554/Case 154, 16-17.

¹⁵³ Brooks’ testimony, NARA/RG 554/Case 154, 16-17.

were found.”¹⁵⁴ Obviously, the prisoners were not in a position to launch a prison break with this few weapons in broad daylight. However, Brooks’ admission was not made public to the press, nor was it available to the State Department.

Brooks completed his testimony before the board of officers at 22:17, October 1, and the questioning of other witnesses, including four Chinese prisoners, lasted well past midnight.¹⁵⁵ It should have become abundantly clear by the next morning that the prisoners were not aiming for a mass break. However, the next day, General Herren stuck to the official line initially provided in the immediate aftermath on October 1, declaring that the “riot ... was to have been the signal for a mass break-out of nearly 6,000 Chinese prisoners on the island.”¹⁵⁶ Herren further asserted, “The elaborate plan to enable Communists to join guerrillas in the hills of Cheju had been known to the Army since August 24.”¹⁵⁷ Following this line of story, it was claimed, “American authorities got wind of the escape plot in August and were able to move quickly when the decisive hour arrived... U.S. infantry moved in so swiftly and sternly.”¹⁵⁸

Similarly, when queried by U.S. Charge d’Affaires E. Allan Lightner in Pusan, Colonel Caldwell insisted, “there was no question but that the whole thing had been planned as a concerted outbreak.”¹⁵⁹ In a memorandum to the State Department, Manhard questioned Caldwell’s claim: “He offers no tangible proof of this assertion in public or in private, apparently, except to point out that the prisoners refused to carry

¹⁵⁴ Brooks’ testimony, NARA/RG 554/Case 154, 16-17.

¹⁵⁵ Brooks et al.’s testimonies, NARA/RG 554/Case 154, 16-52.

¹⁵⁶ Schumach, “P. W. Killings Foil A Mass Break-out: U. S. General Says Cheju Riot Was to Have Been Signal for Uprising by 6,000 Captives,” NYT, October 3, 1952, 2.

¹⁵⁷ Schumach, “P. W. Killings Foil A Mass Break-out,” NYT, October 3, 1952, 2.

¹⁵⁸ UP, “Prisoners’ Mass Break Plot Seen in Cheju Riot,” LAT, October 3, 1952, 12.

¹⁵⁹ Memorandum of conversation, October 3, 1952, enclosed in Manhard Memo, “Chinese POW Incident, Chejudo – Oct 1,” NARA/RG 59/695A.0024/10-2052, 1-2.

out assigned jobs, raised flags and sang songs on that day.”¹⁶⁰ Apparently Manhard did not go to Cheju Island, nor did he meet with Caldwell.

Manhard’s disengagement was a far cry from the old days when he interacted freely with Boatner and the prisoners. Probably due to this disconnect, compounded by his deep suspicion of the Prison Command, Manhard made a poor judgment in his memorandum: “USIS [U.S. Information Services] photo later displayed at the Embassy here showed paper wreaths in the shape of Commie star and other paraphernalia lying around in the compound where the riot took place – highly unlikely equipment to prepare for a mass breakout.”¹⁶¹ The paper wreaths probably appeared after October 1, most likely during the funeral. In addition, certainly the Embassy should have had access to other photos showcasing improvised weapons. Perhaps Manhard was either selective in choosing his evidence or incapable of imagining his old friends’ capacity for war behind barbed wires.

Irrespective of Manhard’s opinions, which had little influence even before the departure of Boatner, the military men themselves were not sure if their version of the story would stick. In his conversation with Lightner, Caldwell “deplored the whole unfortunate [2-] incident as being bad propaganda.” But he insisted, “[H]e does not feel it could have been handled in any other way.”¹⁶² Clearly, the press, as well as the State Department people, had focused its doubt on the apparent excessive casualties of the prisoners in Compound No. 7. Highlighting the fact that “11% were killed and 25%

¹⁶⁰ Manhard Memo, “Chinese POW Incident, Chejudo – Oct 1,” October 20, 1952, NARA/RG 59/695A.0024/10-2052, 1.

¹⁶¹ Manhard Memo, “Chinese POW Incident, Chejudo – Oct 1,” October 20, 1952, NARA/RG 59/695A.0024/10-2052, 1.

¹⁶² Memorandum of conversation, October 3, 1952, enclosed in Manhard Memo, “Chinese POW Incident, Chejudo – Oct 1,” NARA/RG 59/695A.0024/10-2052, 1-2.

wounded,” Manhard concluded, “it is absolutely unbelievable” that such methods were warranted to achieve security control.¹⁶³

After a 15-minute battle between 500 prisoners and 80 troops, a death toll of 56 was staggering, especially compared to General Boatner’s crackdown on Compound No. 76. On June 10, after a two-hour gruesome battle between more than 6,400 prisoners and 750 troops and tanks, the death toll was 41, including some killed by the prisoners themselves. It was duly noted by the press that on June 10 bullets were not used, otherwise many more prisoners would have been killed. *TIME* lamented the departure of General Boatner.¹⁶⁴

Responding to the press’s doubts, Colonel Boerem said he had ordered his troops not to shoot unless they were attacked. “The soldiers were attacked twice and therefore opened fire.” Boerem asserted, “We have to maintain uncontested control at all times. The troops do not temporize with prisoners in anyway. They have been told, when they are assaulted, shoot.”¹⁶⁵ Actually, the reporters and Foreign Service Officers were not the only ones that questioned the disproportionate use of force. The Board of Officers questioned the sole reliance on bullets on this occasion. Although gas grenades were available, none was used. Boerem insisted, “There was no object to use gas, as the troops were attacked with rocks, handmade pikes, barbed wire flails and other missiles. The PWs continued to attack and attempt to get to our troops, and had to be stopped again.”¹⁶⁶

During the investigation, to justify the use of bullets instead of other methods, Major Francis E. Sheridan of the 1st Battalion confided to the board of investigators: “I

¹⁶³ Manhard, “Chinese POW Incident, Chejudo – Oct 1,” attached in Muccio’s memo to Acheson, October 20, 1952, NARA/RG 59/Decimal File 1950-1954/695A.0024/10-2052, 2.

¹⁶⁴ *TIME*, October 13, 1952, accessed September 20, 2010, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,817025,00.html>.

¹⁶⁵ Murray Schumach, “Fanatic Reds Riot on Cheju; 52 Slain,” *NYT*, October 2, 1952, 2.

¹⁶⁶ Boerem’s testimony, NARA/RG 554/Case 154, 20.

am sure there were others that could have been used, but under the circumstances we felt the method used was the correct one. We were assaulted and attacked, and had instructions when attacked, to shoot. There are other methods, yes. We could have thrown mortars or gas in there from a distance, but with all our units in there at one time this method was the best –the one we used.”¹⁶⁷ Clearly, to shoot attacking prisoners with bullets was according to the pre-arranged plan.

Indeed, “Shoot to kill” was a standard operation procedure (SOP) issued by the Prison Command. In “Special Orders for Prisoner Guards, Headquarters, UN Command, Prisoner of War Branch Camp 3A” published on September 12, 1952, paragraphs 17 and 18 unequivocally stated:

17. Any incident where Prisoners of War are observed attacking or threatening to attack UN Personnel by throwing any objects such as rocks, metal pieces, boards, Etc, which could injure, maim or kill such UN personnel, the Escort Guard will immediately *shoot to kill* the Prisoner(s) in order to Protect the UN personnel concerned.

18. In any incident where Prisoners of war are observed hitting, striking, kicking, butting, or in any other way observed doing injury to maiming or threatening to maim UN personnel, the Escort Guard will immediately *shoot to kill* the Prisoner(s) in order to Protect the UN personnel concerned.¹⁶⁸

In view of such policies, the finding of the Board of Officers was not a surprise. After meetings on October 1 and 13, “hearing evidence, and viewing the locality of the incident,” the six-member Board of Officers arrived at the findings of fact. Finding 8 was the most crucial: “That the amount of force used by members of the UNC was, under the circumstances, reasonable, and the deaths and injuries inflicted are deemed to be

¹⁶⁷ Major Francis E. Sheridan’s testimony, NARA/RG 554/Case 154, 50.

¹⁶⁸ Judge Advocate, report to PM FEC (Far East Command), in Report of Supplemental Proceedings by Board of Officers, Case 154, 16-17. Italics added by this author.

justifiable.” Consequently, their recommendation was: “That no disciplinary action be taken against any member of the UNC.”¹⁶⁹

However, one member of the board, Major Richard C. Lyons (not Second Lieutenant Robert S. Lyons, leader of the 2nd Platoon) “acquiesced in finding number 8, but made and signed a written reservation ... to the effect that he acquiesced in such finding after it was explained to him by the president that the action taken against the prisoners of war at the time and place in question was done so in accordance with the interpretation of existing instructions issued by the United Nations Command and Department of the Army.” The interpretation understood by Lyons was that “all extreme action against prisoners of war, for any action determined to be of an aggressive nature, is within reason and justifiable regardless of the retaliatory measures which maybe taken against UN prisoners of war in the hands of the enemy.”¹⁷⁰

When the Report of Proceedings by the Board of Officers reached General Clark’s headquarters of UN Command in Tokyo, Major Lyons’ reservation raised eyebrows. The UN Command struck back with a stern disclaimer: “This headquarter is unaware of any instructions which may be construed as to mean that *any and all* actions against prisoners of war are within reason merely because they are used to overcome aggressive action by the prisoners, ...”¹⁷¹ It rejected the report, and ordered the Board to reconvene and reconsider its controversial Finding No. 8 “with reference to the particular factual situation confronting UN Command personnel at the time involved, as shown by the evidence and *without* regard to the alleged UNC and Department of the Army instructions.” In addition, it specifically requested “Major Lyons be afforded the

¹⁶⁹ Findings of Fact and Recommendations, in Report of Proceedings by Board of Officers, NARA/RG 554/Case 154, 100-101.

¹⁷⁰ Donald C. Young, Major, JAGC, Assistant Staff Judge Advocate, Review of Report of Supplementary Proceedings of Board of Officers, December 17, 1952, NARA/RG 554/Case 154, 1. Underscore in original document.

¹⁷¹ Headquarters, UNC, letter to General Herren, in Report of Supplementary Proceedings of Board of Officers, December 1, 1952, NARA/RG 554/Case 154, 1. Italics added by this author.

opportunity to withdraw his ‘reservation’, if he so desires.”¹⁷² Interestingly, when the Board reconvened on December 11, all members except Lyons reaffirmed Finding No. 8 without altering a single word. Major Lyons obligingly withdrew his reservation, but instead he simply dissented to finding No. 8.¹⁷³ Obviously, he was not persuaded.

In the meantime, the original Proceedings raised more alarms in Washington. Lieutenant General Doyle O. Hickey, General Staff of the Chief of Staff wrote a personal letter to “Dear Tom,” Major General Thomas W. Herren, who was presumably an old friend of Hickey. General Hickey’s major concern was paragraphs 17 and 18 of the Special Orders. After expressing the obligatory sympathy for Herren’s difficult position, Hickey wrote,

I am sure you will agree that wording such as contained in paragraphs 17 and 18 would afford *very unfavorable publicity* were the text read by someone not familiar with the background of the POW situation and who did not understand fully the methods which have been taken to insure maintenance of order against continuing Communist harassment.¹⁷⁴

Hickey reminded Herren, “care must be exercised at all echelons to prevent any impression that we are being unnecessarily ruthless or that we are not fully cognizant of the gravity of death of injuries to POWs in any of the incidents which occur.” He then recommended a simple solution, “at an early date, and purely as a matter of routine, standing orders and written directives in all camps incorporating the above concept be modified.”¹⁷⁵ Evidently the top brass in Washington were aware of the gravity of the October 1 incident and had been haunted by bad press.

In a sense, the Chinese Communist prisoner leaders achieved their original goal of creating some “bad propaganda” for the U.S. However, it came at a very high human

¹⁷² Headquarters, UNC, letter to General Herren, in Report of Supplementary Proceedings of Board of Officers, December 1, 1952, NARA/RG 554/Case 154, 1. Italics added by this author.

¹⁷³ Donald C. Young, Major, JAGC, Assistant Staff Judge Advocate, Review of Report of Supplementary Proceedings of Board of Officers, December 17, 1952, Case 154, 1. Underscore in original document.

¹⁷⁴ Hickey, letter to General Herren, in NARA/RG 554/Case 154, 1. Italics added by this author.

¹⁷⁵ Hickey, letter to General Herren, in NARA/RG 554/ Case 154, 1.

cost—56 men dead and 96 injured, not to mention suspected traitors executed or maimed before and after the incident. Yet, Zhao Nianzhi, one of the prisoner leaders in sub-compound No. 7, summarized, “The enemy had gained nothing, except killing one hundred fifty to one hundred sixty of our men.”¹⁷⁶ This sounded strikingly similar to Stalin’s words to Zhou six weeks earlier, “The North Koreans have lost nothing, except some [human] sacrifices.”¹⁷⁷

To the Chinese prisoners, there was another small consolation. Although they had failed to assassinate the most hated Brooks, they were happy to see him transferred away soon after the October 1 incident.¹⁷⁸ Later in January 1953, Brooks left the army because he felt “fatigued by army life and the war.” He soon assumed another job as a reporter for a San Francisco-based magazine *Bi-Weekly*, and stationed in Taiwan. In a September 1953 article in *Xinshengbao*, or The New Life News, a newspaper run by the Taiwan provincial government, Brooks bragged about his valor on October 1, 1952, “I personally shot two men, then I ordered the troops to enter the compound. We had to shoot approximately 160 of them before order was restored.” In a morbid display of his hatred towards the Chinese Communists, Brooks claimed, “I still have one of their blood-stained flags covering a ‘shrine of hate’ in my room. It reminds me of my enemies.”¹⁷⁹

In retrospect, the pro-Communist Chinese prisoners on Cheju Island lived under a prison authority that required its guards to “shoot to kill” prisoners for *any and all* aggressive actions. They were confronted by an obsessively hostile officer Brooks. Equally dangerously, they were commanded by a group of Communist leaders who were

¹⁷⁶ Zhao Nianzhi, interview by Wu Jinfeng, June 19, 1983, in *Andeshe Biji*, vol. 2, 37.

¹⁷⁷ Memorandum of Conversation by Stalin with Zhou Enlai, August 20, 1952, in *Eguo dangangguan de jiemi wenjian*, ed. Shen Zhihua, 1200.

¹⁷⁸ Li Xi'er 李喜尔, petition statement, March 30, 1979, in *Andeshe Biji*, vol. 2, 77.

¹⁷⁹ Wang Liwen 王立文 [Brooks], *Xinshengbao* 新生報 (Taipei), September 5, 1953. 射殺: shoot. 半月刊雜誌: *Bi-Weekly*? Need to check.

seeking bloodshed in hope of scoring a propaganda coup. That was a combination too precarious, too deadly for any individual prisoner to survive unscathed

**Returning Home or “Returning to Taiwan”:
Prisoner Exchanges and “Explanation”**

In the wake of the violent crackdown on October 1, 1952, Chinese Communist prisoner leadership adopted a less confrontational approach toward the prison authorities. A period of relative calm lasted from October 1952 to summer 1953. Under the calm surface, however, life and death struggle continued within camps. Suspected traitors were persecuted and purged until the armistice agreement was signed in July and pro-repatriation prisoners were exchanged in August and September 1953. In the anti-Communist camps, a similar persecution campaign climaxed during the “Explanation” period between September and December 1953.

October 1952-Spring 1953. A Period of Relative Calm on the Surface

In the bloodbath on October 1, 1952, 56 pro-repatriation Chinese prisoners were killed and 96 severely wounded by U.S. guards. Zhao Guoxi, the former Whampoa cadet and the underground Organizational Chief of sub-compound No. 7, was one of the commandos who attacked the invading U.S. troops led by Captain Brooks. Zhao suffered severe bullet wounds in his arm, leg, and back, and fell unconscious during the battle. When Zhao was carried away in a stretcher by American GIs after the incident, his boss Han Zijian thought that Zhao had little chance of coming back alive. Luckily, Zhao recovered quickly in a U.S. army hospital in Pusan and soon returned.¹

¹ Certificate of the injured, NARA/RG 554/Case 154, Exhibit I-2, 3. Zhao Guoxi, interview by Wu Jinfeng, October 20, 1983, in *Andeshe Biji*, vol. 2, 239.

On October 7, in an arrangement similar to Wang Huayi's funeral sanctioned by General Boatner in May, Wei Lin, the chief representative of Chinese pro-repatriation prisoners, led a number of prisoner representatives to the cemetery. During the funeral, a U.S. major expressed regret for this "unfortunate" incident. It was ironic that the most hated Captain Brooks, the target of the prisoners' assassination attempt and also the culprit of October 1 incident, transported the prisoners to the funeral site.²

In the aftermath of the incident, the situation in pro-Communist camps became "very tense," according to Zhao Guoxi. Prisoners continued to escape from their leaders by climbing over the fences, and some escapees returned with the authorities to identify underground leaders. Soon all leaders in sub-compound No. 7, including Han Zijian and Zhao Guoxi, were arrested. They were imprisoned in the Close Confinement Stockade together with Zhao Zuoduan and other leaders. "Now it is impossible for our leaders to conceal their identities," Zhao Zuoduan told Zhao Guoxi. "You were a low-ranking former Cultural Instructor in the army and only a back-up cadre in prison camp. Now even you have been arrested, not to mention others [leaders]." In sharp contrast to his earlier bold calls for "counterattacks from the periphery" and even "seizing guns from the guards," now Zhao Zuoduan concluded, "In this long-term struggle, we should not easily expose our strength, or take any high-profile actions." As Zhao Guoxi diplomatically put it, Zhao Zuoduan "timely put forward a new tactic of 'moderate struggle.'"³ Apparently, Zhao Zuoduan had a second thought about the merit of the October 1 demonstration and assassination attempts.

With the benefit of hindsight, Zhang Zeshi, who did not participate in the October 1 struggle as he was incarcerated in a special prison on Kojé Island, reflected that

² Zhao Guoxi, interview by Wu Jinfeng, October 20, 1983, in *Andeshe Biji*, vol. 2, 239. Yu Jing, 390.

³ Li Ziying, *douzheng dashiji*, 34-35. Zhao Guoxi, interview, in *Andeshe Biji*, vol. 2, 239.

“perhaps our prisoner leadership was too ‘leftist’” in plotting assassinations and seeking confrontations.⁴ In Chinese Communist terminology, “leftism” often denoted radicalism, adventurism, and dogmatism. Another pro-Communist prisoner Cai Pingsheng, who witnessed the October 1 massacre in sub-compound No. 7 from a neighboring sub-compound, felt that “had we just cooperated with the UN authorities and not engaged in constant struggles, we could have just lived peacefully in prison and returned home safely.”⁵ Unfortunately, given the circumstance, the prisoners had little chance of living peacefully.

Externally, pro-Communist Chinese prisoners lived under an information blockade, and faced a hostile prison authority. Communist prisoner leaders were compelled to assume the worst intentions of their captors. Internally, Communist officers, like Zhao Zuoduan, Du Gang, and Wei Lin, shared a profound sense of guilt for having been taken prisoners in the first place and for failing to stand up and defeat the anti-Communist prisoners before the April 1952 screening. Therefore they were motivated by a strong desire to redeem their sins and failures. For these men, the inescapable logic was to generate a number of major incidents to “attack the Americans behind the enemy line,” and reestablish their own merits in the eyes of the Chinese Communist Party back home. The October 1 incident served this purpose, but the ferocity of the U.S. troops’ response went beyond anyone’s calculation. In effect the massacre and the subsequent arrests of prisoner leaders deterred the Communist underground from launching another major confrontation.

In sharp contrast to continued mass riots in pro-Communist Korean compounds on Koje and Pongam Islands, the situation in pro-Communist Chinese prisoners’ camps on Cheju Island was largely uneventful after the October 1 incident, despite a number of

⁴ Zhang Zeshi, email correspondence with author, June 26, 2011.

⁵ Cai Pingsheng, interview by author, September 2007, Chengdu, Sichuan.

small skirmishes between the prisoners and the authorities. Perhaps, this relative calm made some prisoners wonder about the necessity of their earlier struggles, even though such thoughts had to be kept private. Nevertheless, the absence of large-scale incidents did not mean the end of all struggles.

Despite the mass arrests of Communist leaders, their clandestine communication channels remained operational. Besides instructions on various innocuous campaigns, such as political studies and literacy programs, some of the most important orders emitted from the leaders involved the purge of suspected “traitors.” The leadership approved the executions of 17 “traitors” in total from 1952 and 1953, and some of the killings occurred after October 1, 1952.⁶ Had the armistice agreement been signed a few days later than July 27, 1953, An Baoyuan would have become the 18th victim. An was one of the main interpreters in the pro-repatriation camp, but had long been suspected of informing the Americans of the prisoners’ plots. In a coded message transmitted by Zhong Junhua, the Communist underground leadership gave orders to execute An. The verdict was based entirely on conjecture without any concrete evidence. An became a suspect, partly because of his unabashed friendship with certain American personnel, and partly because of his family background, particularly the fact that his parents went to Taiwan in 1949. The Communists found it implausible for An to choose repatriation while his parents were living in Taiwan. Therefore, An became a spy suspect. The plan was to strangle An to death with blankets and then create a suicide scene. Fortunately, the armistice agreement was signed one day after the execution order was issued, and the leaders decided to postpone An’s punishment. An was to be escorted back to China under close watch.⁷

⁶ The total number is from Yu Jing, 387. Li Ziyang, *douzheng dashiji*, 50-51.

⁷ Yu Jing, 365-366.

While An Baoyuan returned to China on death roll without knowing it, other “traitors” returned to China, aware of the danger they would be in. Cai Xingfu, the clerk in sub-compound No. 7 who had feigned illness before the October 1 incident and confessed to Brooks under pressure, was housed in a separate stockade near the main prison compounds. However, in August 1953, then 22-year-old Cai returned to China as one of the pro-repatriation prisoners. In 1958, he was sentenced to death by a military court.⁸ This outcome begs the questions why and how did Cai return to China? Did he choose to return even after he escaped from the pro-Communist sub-compound? Or was he forced to return by the UN Command?

The circumstances of Cai Xingfu’s repatriation to China remain unclear, as were those of other defectors from the pro-Communist compounds on Cheju Island. These defectors were housed in a small stockade next to the one for segregated Communist leaders, and they were not transferred to the anti-Communist prisoners’ camp 3-B, which was located some 20 miles apart from the pro-Communist camp 3-A. Certainly, many of these escapees were not anti-Communists, as they had chosen repatriation in April 1952. Perhaps they escaped out of the simple desire of seeking respite from the seemingly endless fanatic struggles. Nevertheless, there were exceptions. At least one prisoner, Sichuanese Li Erwa was transferred to the anti-Communist camp.⁹

After the armistice agreement was signed on July 27, 1953, prisoner exchange followed and some of these escapees returned to China. In addition to Cai Xingfu, another defector Chen Jinkui returned in 1953. Like Cai, Chen was sentenced to death in 1958.¹⁰ Perhaps he chose to return home, effectively taking a chance on the Communist government and hoping his punishment would not be too severe. Perhaps the UN

⁸ Yu Jing, 375-378.

⁹ Yu Jing, 399-400. However, Li reversed his decision and chose to return to China during the final “explanation” period.

¹⁰ Yu Jing, 349-350.

Command forced him to return. Either way, the consequence of their return was a death sentence.

Before the screening in April 1952, the UN Command emphasized the final nature of prisoners' decisions in its broadcast announcement: "Your decision in this matter will be considered final."¹¹ Once prisoners made their repatriation choice, few could reverse their decision and go to the other side, even if they climbed over the fences in desperate escapes. As it turned out, only 15 percent of the prisoners who had rejected repatriation in 1952 had a second chance during the "explanation" period from October to December 1953. In contrast, there was no mechanism extended to pro-repatriation prisoners to reverse their decisions. Therefore, the final repatriation outcome in 1953, or more specifically the breakdown of repatriates versus non-repatriates, was a foregone conclusion largely determined by the screening result in April 1952.

May-July 1953. Little Switch and the Armistice Agreement

One week after the October 1 incident, on October 8, 1952 UN's chief negotiator Harrison and his team walked out of the negotiation tent in Panmunjom, and armistice talks went into an "indefinite recess."¹² As Stalin supported Mao's hard-line position on recovering most of the Chinese prisoners, and the UNC insisted on non-forcible repatriation as a "final and irrevocable" position, the talks were suspended and the war continued. When Dwight D. Eisenhower became President of the United States and John Foster Dulles succeeded Dean Acheson as Secretary of State on January 20, 1954, U.S. policy on the Korean War remained largely unchanged. However, Eisenhower ended the U.S. neutralization of the Taiwan Strait in a move that was often referred to as the

¹¹ Telegram C67178, Ridgway to Department of the Army, April 19, 1952, *FRUS 1952-1954*, vol. 15, part 1, 162.

¹² Hermes, 282.

“unleashing” of Chiang Kai-shek’s forces to attack the mainland. Furthermore, the new administration spoke of escalating the war in Korea in order to bring a resolution to it. In the meantime, the Chinese forces were actually becoming increasingly well-equipped and well-supplied, and Mao was determined to inflict more casualties on UN forces so that the war could end on favorable terms to China.¹³ Mao declared that China was prepared to continue the war “until the imperialist U.S. is willing to give up, and until the people of China and Korea win a complete victory.”¹⁴ It seemed that peace was nowhere in sight.

Unexpectedly, less than one month after Mao made his combative speech, the Korean War came to its turning point, when Stalin suddenly died of a cerebral hemorrhage on March 5. Stalin’s successors, the ruling “troika” made of Georgi M. Malenkov, Lavrentiy Beria and Vyacheslav Molotov, quickly launched a peace offensive, or peace “defensive,” as Dulles termed it. When Zhou Enlai came to Moscow for Stalin’s funeral, Soviet leaders informed him of the new conciliatory approach in dealing with the West. They told the Chinese to give up their demand for recovering all Chinese prisoners in peace talks. Surprised by this “major policy change,” Zhou protested, “Our struggle over POW repatriation is just. We did not create any troubles, but the enemy did.” While Mao and Zhou were reluctant to accept this change, Kim Il Sung was elated by the Soviet Union’s willingness to end the war.¹⁵ Unlike half a year earlier when Stalin strongly backed Mao’s uncompromising position on POWs and rebuked Kim for his willingness to

¹³ Shen Zhihua 沈志华, “1953 nian Choaxian tingzhan: zhongsu lingdaoren de zhengzhi kaolu” 1953年朝鲜停战——中苏领导人的政治考虑 [Korean Armistice in 1953: Chinese and Soviet leaders' political considerations], *Shijieshi* 世界史 [world history], no. 2 (2001). Accessed June 28, 2011, <http://www.aisixiang.com/data/detail.php?id=4229> updated version.

¹⁴ Mao Zedong’s speech at the People’s Political Consultative Conference 政协, “Kangmeiyuanchao de douzheng bixu jixu jiaqiang” 抗美援朝的斗争必须继续加强 [We must reinforce the struggle of Resisting America and Aiding Korea], February 7, 1953, *Mao Zedong junshi wenji*, vol. 6, 341.

¹⁵ Shen Zhihua, “1953 nian Choaxian tingzhan.”

compromise, this time the new Soviet leaders sided with the North Koreans. However grudgingly, Mao had to oblige.

A breakthrough occurred on March 28, when Kim Il Sung and Peng Dehuai replied to UNC Commander Clark's request for the exchange of sick and wounded prisoners. In addition to agreeing to the UNC's proposal, they stated that the exchange of sick and injured prisoners should "lead to the smooth settlement of the entire question of prisoners of war, thereby achieving an armistice in Korea for which people throughout the world are longing." On March 30, Zhou Enlai issued a statement, which contained a major concession. Instead of demanding the return of all prisoners, Zhou proposed that both sides "should undertake to repatriate immediately after the cessation of hostilities all those prisoners of war in their custody who insist upon repatriation, and to hand over the remaining prisoners of war to a neutral state so as to ensure a just solution to the question of their repatriation." Asserting that most of the so-called anti-repatriation prisoners were "under the intimidation and oppression of the opposite side," Zhou expressed confidence that once these prisoners heard the explanation made by representatives from their motherlands, they would be disabused of apprehension and would choose to return home.¹⁶ In essence, this two-step approach was the same proposal made by India the previous November, but was rejected by the Chinese Communists.

The next day, Kim Il Sung seconded Zhou's proposal. Both sides were ready to resume negotiations. On April 6, the liaison officers' groups met at Panmunjom and quickly got down to business without the usual exchange of verbal attacks. On April 11, the agreement on the exchange of sick and wounded prisoners was reached. From April 20 to 26, in what the UNC dubbed as "Operation Little Switch," the UN side returned

¹⁶ Hermes, 412-413.

5,194 North Korean and 1,030 Chinese soldiers and 446 civilian internees, for a total of 6,670. The Communist side repatriated 684 UN, including 149 Americans. In goodwill gestures, both sides actually returned a small number of extra prisoners in addition to what was first agreed.¹⁷

Following the positive momentum generated by the Little Switch, the plenary sessions of the armistice negotiations resumed at Panmunjom on April 26. After much haggling, both sides came to an agreement on prisoners exchange. On June 8, the Terms of Reference on prisoner exchange were signed. Some of the key clauses were related to the disposition of anti-repatriation prisoners, especially item No. 8:

8. The Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission, after having received and taken into custody all those prisoners of war who have not exercised their right to be repatriated, shall immediately make arrangements so that within ninety (90) days after the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission takes over the custody, the nations to which the prisoners of war belong shall have freedom and facilities to send representatives to the locations where such prisoners of war are in custody to explain to all the prisoners of war depending upon these nations their rights and to inform them of any matters relating to their return to their homelands, particularly of their full freedom to return home to lead a peaceful life.¹⁸

In essence, the Communists accepted the principle of voluntary repatriation under the guise of a face-saving device, “explanation,” which entailed a period of “explanation” for non-repatriation prisoners under the custody of neutral nations. Clark optimistically informed Washington that an armistice could be signed as early as June 18. In fact, all the articles of the Armistice had been signed by June 18. A final truce “appeared so tantalizingly close,” Clark thought.¹⁹

Instead of signing the armistice agreement on June 18, Clark was awoken at 6 o'clock in the morning and told that South Korean President Syngman Rhee had ordered South Korean guards to release anti-repatriation Korean prisoners from UN prison

¹⁷ Hermes, 418-419.

¹⁸ Hermes, 534.

¹⁹ Clark, 276.

camps, which they guarded. In Clark's words, "all hell broke loose, by Rhee's order." In two days, 27,000 Korean POWs were "freed in a dramatic, well-planned operation."²⁰ Amid the chaos, a small number of Chinese prisoners who were interned near Pusan also escaped from their enclosures. While Clark suspected that "Rhee was not interested in them," the South Korean police was nevertheless sympathetic to these anti-Communist Chinese prisoners. The U.S. Embassy reported, "In [the] past few days about 200 Chinese anti-repatriates have fled camps but most now recovered. Over 40 still AWOL under protection Korean Police."²¹ In fact, more than 40 Chinese escapees managed to hide with local Chinese families in Pusan. Soon the Nationalist embassy established contact with them. Eventually, on October 8, two days before the October 10 National Day celebration, 63 escaped Chinese prisoners were flown to Taipei. They were known as the first group of "Anti-Communist Righteous Men" arriving in Taiwan.²²

On Cheju Island, the main body of anti-Communist Chinese prisoners interned at Mosulpo quickly learned of the agreement on POWs signed on June 8. Defying the prison authorities' increasingly stringent censorship, Nationalist teachers in the CIE secretly smuggled information into the camps.²³ Understandably, anti-Communist prisoner leaders and activists became very worried, as the agreement stipulated that they were to be put under the custody of neutral nations during an "explanation" period. In the eyes of the prisoners, India, which was to provide the custodian forces, was far from neutral, as it was among the first countries to abandon the Nationalist government and recognize Communist China in 1950. Citing U.S. counter-intelligence officers who had just returned from Cheju, Foreign Service Officer Manhard reported, "The anti-

²⁰ Clark, 277, 280-281.

²¹ Clark, 281. Telegram, Briggs to Dulles, June 29, 1953, NARA/RG59/Decimal Files/695A.0024/6-2953.

²² Chiang Diaries, October 8, 1953.

²³ *Fangongyishi fendou shi* 反共義士奮鬥史, 129.

repatriation Chinese POWs are in a state of considerable agitation and their POW leaders extremely fearful of their fate under a neutral commission. In recent weeks this camp has seen an upsurge in beating and killings by self-styled anti-Communists of those accused of wavering in their attitude toward Formosa.”²⁴

Two days after the mass prison break of the Korean prisoners, anti-Communist Chinese prisoners launched a mass protest in their camps at Mosulpo. U.S. Ambassador Ellis O. Briggs reported that “they demonstrated for equal consideration and immediate release to Formosa and refused perform routine tasks.” In response, prison authorities “forced compliance by severe gassing of about one-third of total 14,000.”²⁵ According to the prisoners, on the third day of their protest, fully armed UNC soldiers wearing gas masks entered one of their compounds, drove prisoners out of their barracks with tear gas, and destroyed all their anti-Communist decorations.²⁶ Clearly, the anti-repatriation Chinese prisoners were becoming a hindrance to the U.S. government’s wish for a clean and rapid resolution of the POW issue. Had the Chinese prisoners meekly followed the orders of the prison authorities, there would not have been any POW issue. The Chinese prisoners, particularly the anti-Communists, had demonstrated potent agency that often defied the wishes of the U.S. Soon the U.S. government would have to ask Taiwan for help.

On the 38th parallel, the Chinese forces launched their last big push against the UNC line on July 9. However, in the meantime, armistice talks resumed on July 10. As a punishment for Rhee’s release of prisoners, the Chinese forces mainly attacked South Korean positions, inflicting near 30,000 casualties on the UNC side, mostly South

²⁴ Memo by Manhard to U.S. Ambassador, “Recent development in the UNC POW camps,” June 16, 1953, NARA/RG 59/Decimal File 1950-1954/695A.0024/6-1653, 1.

²⁵ Telegram, Briggs to Dulles, June 29, 1953, NARA/RG59/Decimal Files/695A.0024/6-2953.

²⁶ *Fangongyishi fendou shi* 反共義士奮鬥史, 130-133.

Koreans.²⁷ As a show of force, this operation did not end until July 27, the day when the armistice agreement was signed. On that day, Clark “gained the unenviable distinction of being the first United States Army commander in history to sign an armistice without victory.”²⁸ The Korean War had come to an end, finally. However, the war over Chinese prisoners, particularly the anti-repatriation prisoners, was to continue. Soon the Chinese Communist government would confront these prisoners directly for the first time.

August 1953-January 1954. Return to China and “Return to Taiwan”

Soon after the armistice was signed, the exchange of prisoners began. During “Operation Big Switch,” which lasted from August 5 to September 6, the UN Command transferred 75,823 prisoners to the Communist side in the demilitarized zone at Panmunjom. Among them, 5,640 were Chinese, including the only female Chinese prisoner Yang Yuhua. She was received by General Du Ping, the Political Department Director of the Chinese People’s Volunteer Army. The final group of prisoners returned on September 6; they were high-ranking officer prisoners and prison leaders charged with “post-capture crimes,” including the Wu Chengde, the Acting Commissar of the 180th Division, Wang Fang (Zhao Zuoduan), Wei Lin, Sun Zhenguan, and Zhang Zeshi.²⁹

Combined with the 1,030 sick and wounded Chinese prisoners exchanged in April, the total number of repatriated Chinese prisoners reached 6,670, which was slightly higher than 6,400, the number last offered by the UNC in July 1952, soon after the screening in April.³⁰ Therefore, it could be argued that the final number of repatriates in 1953 had largely been determined by the April 1952 screening. Although pro-Communist prisoners believed that they fought bravely since the screening and thus

²⁷ Hermes, 477.

²⁸ Clark, 1.

²⁹ Zhang Zeshi, *Wo de Chaoxian Zhanzheng*, 208-209. *Renmin Ribao*, September 8, 1953, 4.

³⁰ Hermes, 274.

secured their right to return home, in fact their return to China was never an issue in peace talks. The UNC never intended to retain the pro-Communists. The contention in the preceding 12 to 15 months was over the fate of their anti-Communist compatriots, who had refused to return home. The war was fought over these some 14,000 Chinese men. And the struggle over their fate was not over yet.

Table 2. Exchange of Pro-Repatriation Prisoners in 1953³¹

Nationality	LITTLE SWITCH	BIG SWITCH	Total
Communist POWs	6,670	75,823	82,493
North Koreans	5,640	70,183	75,823
Chinese	1,030	5,640	6,670
UNC POWs	684	12,773	13,444
U.S.	149	3,597	3,746
ROK	471	7,862	8,321
U.K.	32	945	977
Turkey, Philippines, Canada, etc	32	369	400

To implement the armistice agreement, the UN Command had to transfer non-repatriation prisoners from their current camps under UNC custody to the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission (NNRC) in the demilitarized zone under the Custodial Forces of India (CFI). However, the more than 14,000 anti-repatriation Chinese prisoners presented a major challenge to the UNC. Manhard reported that the anti-Communist Chinese POW leaders “now maintain they will resist the takeover of the camp by Indian forces – ‘with words if the Indians use words, with force if they use force.’” They also claimed that they were ready to sacrifice many prisoners’ lives “in order

³¹ Hermes, 514. Or <http://www.history.army.mil/books/korea/truce/appb.htm>.

to . . . maintain anti-Communist discipline over the mass of prisoners.”³² Basically, they refused to be transferred to the demilitarized zone and controlled by the Indians. Now the U.S. had to turn to Chiang Kai-shek for help.

In a memorandum delivered to Chiang by U.S. Ambassador Karl L. Rankin on July 28, the U.S. government first praised Chiang’s “helpful attitude during the weeks preceding the signing of an armistice,” acknowledging that he “has been under great pressure of public opinion, both at home and abroad, to oppose a truce in Korea.” After making the sweet-talk that “the solicitude of the President for the Chinese prisoners of war in Korea who look to him for leadership is fully understood,” the U.S. asked Chiang to issue a statement to Chinese prisoners, “express[ing] confidence in the UN Command’s assurance that the rights of the prisoners of war will be fully protected, and urg[ing] their full cooperation with the UN forces and with the NNRC.” The U.S. wished Chiang to assure the POWs that “no coercion or force will be used against them and that they will be free men within a relatively short time.” After Rankin made the assurance “regarding non-exclusion of Formosa as a possible eventual destination of the POW’s and the possibility of a visit to the Mosulpo Camp of a Chinese delegation from Formosa proved persuasive,” Chiang gave the project “top priority and within 48 hours handed the Embassy the Chinese text and translation, a tape recording of the statement and the photograph of President Chiang.”³³ After suffering abuse and negligence by the Americans for years, suddenly Chiang was showered with accolades. Clearly, the U.S. found itself impossible to dismount from the tiger of anti-Communist prisoners that it had “reoriented.”

³² Memo by Manhard to U.S. Ambassador, “Recent development in the UNC POW camps,” June 16, 1953, NARA/RG 59/Decimal File 1950-1954/695A.0024/6-1653, 1.

³³ Memo in Telegram, Rankin to State Dept, August 5, 1953, NARA/RG59/Decimal Files/695A.0024/8-553, 1-2.

In his statement on July 30, Chiang urged the “anti-Communist compatriots” in Korea to cooperate with the UN Command, and vowed to make sure that the UN would fully implement the principle of voluntary repatriation and facilitate the prisoners’ eventual repatriation to Free China on Taiwan.³⁴ By August 5, leaflets bearing the reproduction of Chiang’s brush handwriting had been distributed to each prisoner on Cheju.³⁵ In late August, two Nationalist delegations flew to Cheju to reassure the prisoners that once they completed their “explanation” in the demilitarized zone, the UNC would release them to Taiwan.³⁶ After meeting with Nationalist officials, anti-Communist prisoner leaders agreed to cooperate with the UNC. Chiang noted in his diaries, “The message to anti-Communist prisoners had a major impact. The loyalty displayed by prisoners greatly impressed the Americans . . . The U.S. is becoming increasingly firm and proactive in its dealings with the Communist bandits.”³⁷

Soon the UNC began to transport anti-Communist prisoners from Cheju to Panmunjom. As of September 23, the UNC had turned over 22,604 non-repatriates, including 14,704 Chinese, to the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission in the demilitarized zone; the Communist side delivered 359 UNC non-repatriates to the NNRC the following day, including 23 Americans, one Briton, and 335 Koreans.³⁸ Once they were in the prison camp under Indian custody in the so-called Indian Village, the Chinese prisoners could no longer turn to the Nationalist interpreters and teachers for help as they had done on Cheju Island. However, they maintained close contact with the Nationalist intelligence apparatus through clandestine means.

³⁴ Chiang, accessed July 8, www.chungcheng.org.tw/thought/class07/0027/0006.htm.

³⁵ *Fangongyishi fendou shi* 反共義士奮鬥史, 141.

³⁶ *Fangongyishi fendou shi* 反共義士奮鬥史, 142-146.

³⁷ Chiang Diaries, August 31, 1953.

³⁸ Hermes, 515. Or <http://www.history.army.mil/books/korea/truce/appb.htm>.

As early as June, Chiang Kai-shek had conferred with Chen Jianzhong, the deputy director of the Sixth Section of the Nationalist Party Central Committee, which was in charge of counter-intelligence against the Communists.³⁹ Soon Chen was sent to Korea under the identity of Chen Zhiqing, the Deputy Army Attaché to the Nationalist embassy. Operating from the old embassy compound in Seoul, Chen directed all Nationalist intelligence efforts related to the POWs. While former CIE teachers and interpreters could no longer enter the prison camps controlled by the Indian army, they became interpreters for the UNC, working on the peripheries of the camps. Ma He, probably the best-known CIE teacher, and trained by Nationalist counter-intelligence official Chen Jianzhong before he left Taiwan in autumn 1951, now worked as an administrator in the U.S. military hospital, which actually operated as an intelligence hub for anti-Communist prisoners and the UNC psychological warfare unit.⁴⁰ The Commander of the Indian Custodian Force General Kodendera Subayya Thimayya suspected that the DACs (Department of the Army Civilians) “organized the prisoners and trained leaders. None of the DACs accompanied POWs into our custody, although the Neutral Commission may still believe that they did.”⁴¹

“From a rather unfortunate source,” General Thimayya learned that the POWs had radio equipment. At a party in the demilitarized zone one night, an American psychological warfare officer, “inspired by pride and bourbon,” bragged to the Indian general that he “broadcast every evening in code to the POWs. Each compound . . . had a

³⁹ Chiang Diaries, June 3, 1953.

⁴⁰ This charge was made by alleged anti-Communist prisoners who escaped or chose repatriation during the explanation. He Ming 贺明, *Jianzheng: Chaoxian Zhanzheng zhanfu qianfan jieshi daibiao de riji* 见证: 朝鲜战争战俘遣返解释代表的日记 [Witness: Diaries of an “Explanation” representative during the POW repatriation in the Korean War] (Beijing: Zhongguo wenshi chubanshe, 2001), 206. However, Ma He has remained silence on his exact duties in Korea.

⁴¹ Kodendera Subayya Thimayya, *Experiment in Neutrality* (New Delhi: Vision Books, 1981), 124.

receiver, sacks of potatoes were used to smuggle in fresh batteries.”⁴² His claim was apparently true, as the Nationalist accounts confirmed this radio link.⁴³ When General Thimayya unofficially told UNC chief negotiator Harrison what he had learned from the psychological warfare officer, Thimayya found that “the general was genuinely shocked.”⁴⁴ Was this incident merely an anecdotal event or a sign of systematic involvement of the U.S. military to sabotage the “explanation”?

It is difficult to ascertain if higher levels in the U.S. military and government were aware of this particular intelligence collaboration among the Nationalist DACs, anti-Communist prisoners, and the U.S. psychological warfare unit. Not surprisingly, the UNC and the U.S. government were interested in keeping the number of prisoners who reverse their repatriation decisions to the minimum. Unlike the situation during the screening in April 1952, when the U.S. was keen to maximize the number of repatriates in order to reach a settlement, now in 1953 a large number of alleged anti-Communist prisoners choosing repatriation would deal a major blow to the credibility of the screening result of 1952, and to the morality of the voluntary repatriation principle, to which the U.S. had so closely identified with. Therefore, it was in the interest of the U.S. to see prisoners resist “explanation” and refuse repatriation.

As the anti-Communist prisoner leaders had controlled the majority of Chinese prisoners for more than two years, their control only became more thorough and violent. Thimayya was shocked on the first day. In front of the Indians’ eyes, a group of prisoners tried to kill two men who attempted to escape and ask for repatriation. Soon he came to the conclusion that “No prisoner was allowed to escape, even for a moment, from the iron discipline imposed by the organization. This discipline, we actually learned, was

⁴² Thimayya, 127.

⁴³ *Fangongyishi fendou shi* 反共義士奮鬥史, 170, 225.

⁴⁴ Thimayya, 128.

imposed also for the purpose of preventing any member of the group from choosing repatriation.”⁴⁵ Facing such organized resistance, the explanation procedures could not possibly proceed well.

By December 23, 1953, when the 90-day explanation period terminated, only ten days had been used for explanations, and some 3,500 men out of 22,000, or 15 percent of the Chinese and Korean prisoners, had been explained to. Of these 3,500 men, less than 150, or slightly more than 4%, asked for repatriation. “This was a much smaller number than the total who sought repatriation by escape from the compounds,” Thimayya noted.⁴⁶ Among the 14,704 Chinese prisoners, only 15 percent were interviewed, and only 136 explainees chose repatriation during the “explanation.” And another 304 escaped and sought repatriation, including the 70 men who did so on January 20 and 21, when more than 14,200 Chinese prisoners were sent to Taiwan.

Table 3. Disposition of Non-Repatriation Prisoners in 1953 and 1954⁴⁷

Disposition	Chinese	Korean	Total
Total	14,704	7,900	22,604
Returned to Communist control	440	188	628
Asked for repatriation during “Explanation”	136 ⁴⁸		
Escaped and asked for repatriation during “Explanation”	234 ⁴⁹		
Escaped and asked for repatriation on Jan 20-21, 1954	70 ⁵⁰		
Escaped and missing	2	11	13
Died in custody of Custodial Forces of India (CFI)	15	23	38
Went to India with CFI	12	74	86
Returned to UNC control and went to Taiwan	14,235	7,604	21,839

⁴⁵ Thimayya, 122.

⁴⁶ Thimayya, 190.

⁴⁷ All numbers are from Hermes, 515, unless otherwise noted. Or <http://www.history.army.mil/books/korea/truce/appb.htm>.

⁴⁸ He Ming, *Jianzheng*, 374.

⁴⁹ 440-136-70=234.

⁵⁰ Lai Mingtang 賴名湯, *Fangong Yishi jiejyun xiaozu baogao*, 25.

During the internment under Indian custody, 15 Chinese prisoners died. At least two were shot by Indian guards.⁵¹ And a number of suspected waverers were murdered by anti-Communist prisoners. The most infamous case was the murder and dismemberment of Zhang Zilong, which was widely reported in the Communist press and memoirs by repatriated prisoners. It was claimed that Zhang's heart and liver were cut out and eaten by other prisoners.⁵² When an escaped witness returned with the Indian guards to identify the perpetrators, he pointed out seven alleged murderers and an additional 15 or 16 witnesses. "Oddly enough," Thimayya later found, "every one of the alleged murderers were compound leaders. Every one of the witnesses opted for repatriation."⁵³ Apparently the witness tried to rescue his friends from the clutches of the anti-Communist prisoners. Nevertheless, the actual murder did occur, as several anti-Communist prisoners received commendations after their arrival in Taiwan, specifically for their murder of Zhang Zilong and the burning of his corpse to destroy evidence.⁵⁴

On the morning of January 20, more than 14,000 non-repatriation prisoners were returned to the custody of the UNC and immediately they embarked to Taiwan. However, before and during the transfer, 70 prisoners broke ranks and asked the Indian guards to return them to China. Thimayya maintained, "There is no doubt that there were a few more prisoners who would have chosen repatriation if they had an opportunity to do so."⁵⁵ Moreover, 12 Chinese prisoners asked to go to neutral nations and they were taken to India. One of these men was Cheng Liren, the former policeman from Guizhou and an early anti-Communist prisoner leader. His choice of neutral nations instead of Taiwan probably had much to do with the persecution he suffered

⁵¹ *Fangongyishi fendou shi* 反共義士奮鬥史, 187-188.

⁵² *Renmin Ribao*, October 16, 1953. Yu Jing, 412-413.

⁵³ Thimayya, 201-202.

⁵⁴ TWGFB No. 0001671500050100w, 0001671500050121w.

⁵⁵ Thimayya, 205.

under Wang Zunming when he lost out to Wang in power struggles.⁵⁶ Not surprisingly, the Nationalist government branded these men who chose repatriation or neutral countries as “Communist agents.”⁵⁷

Finally, on January 23, a group of 48 Chinese prisoners who had served in U.S. special forces were released and flown to Taipei. Out of roughly 400 Chinese prisoners secretly drafted by the U.S. and whose names were removed from prisoners’ rosters, only 65 survived.⁵⁸ While men like Li Da’an and Wang Jiati had been parachuted into North Korea and captured by the Communists, Gao Wenjun was one of the survivors. After Gao boarded the plane at Pusan, a Nationalist officer handed him a new uniform. When Gao put on the new uniform, tears rolled down Gao’s face. From the day when he shed his Whampoa cadet uniform in Chengdu in January 1950, it had been four years and 23 days. For Gao, he finally “returned” to the embrace of Chiang Kai-shek in Taiwan.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Wang Beishan 王北山, interview by author, April 22, 2010, Taoyuan, Taiwan.

⁵⁷ *Fangongyishi fendou shi* 反共義士奮鬥史, 219.

⁵⁸ Gao Wenjun, *Hanzhan yiwang*, 274.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 276.

Conclusion

From the time when truce talks began in July 1951 to the signing of the armistice agreement in July 1953, 12,300 Americans were killed and 45 percent of total American casualties were suffered during the final two years of the Korea War.¹ For the most part of the two years, the struggle was over the repatriation of Chinese prisoners, or more precisely the some 14,000 anti-repatriation Chinese prisoners. Finally, on January 20, 1954, the UNC handed over 14,235 Chinese prisoners to Nationalist Taiwan. In a sense, for the “freedom” of one alleged Chinese anti-Communist prisoner to “return to Taiwan,” roughly one American soldier was killed in Korea.

Stressing the cost that “thousands of casualties had been suffered . . . in the fight to protect the defectors from communism,” U.S. army historian Hermes concluded, “the UNC had kept faith with the nonrepatriate prisoners and won a psychological victory.” He further asserted that although Communist prisoners’ “disobedience, riot, and rebellion had taken some of the luster from this victory,” the Korean example of voluntary repatriation was “bound to have an influence upon future conflicts and their settlement.”² However, many others who were intimately involved in this ideological struggle would disagree.

General Boatner reevaluated the principle of voluntary repatriation circa 1968:

As Commandant of the POW camp at Koje Do, I never could become an enthusiastic supporter of the principle of voluntary repatriation. It struck me as unrealistic to expect a free and voluntary decision from men being held by those they had been fighting only a few months earlier—men,

¹ Acheson, *The Korean War* (New York: Norton, 1971), 129.

² Hermes, 432.

moreover, who had never had the experience of choosing a political leader or a form of government. So it seemed like a propaganda exercise to me.³

General Thimayya believed what these prisoners really were had little resemblance to the “Anti-Communist Righteous Men” image given to the Western world. He argued, “The truth was that if one of the POWs fitted the propaganda picture we never saw him or were able to find him.” In fact, the majority were “motivated by fear, not of communism as such but of going home. The most important reason for this fear was that it had been implanted among and taught to the prisoners while they were in the camps.”⁴

As in previous chapters I have argued and demonstrated that the majority of the prisoners were largely followers of their compound leaders. They followed their leaders either because of native ties, secret society brotherhood, interest calculation, fear of intimidation from the leaders, or fear of reprisal by the Communist government. Fear and opportunistic calculations, rather than ideology, made up the rationale behind prisoners’ decisions. That was probably true for the majority of the prisoners.

Nevertheless, the core group of prisoner leaders did demonstrate a high-level of political consciousness and skills. Opportunistic display of ideological fervor was probably part of the game, but that maneuver in itself was a sophisticated political behavior. While most common prisoners were not necessarily ideological initially, their leaders had strong political beliefs in the first place prior to their capture. Strong political beliefs and leadership skills were the necessary but not sufficient conditions for a prisoner leader to emerge out of thousands. As the civil war in prison camps quickly evolved along the fault line of repatriation versus anti-repatriation, and the prisoners’ choices were limited to either pro or anti-Communist positions, even non-political prisoners were forced to take sides. Prison compounds became a completely politicized

³ Boatner, “Prisoners of War: Have U.S. Policies Protected Americans in Asia?” circa 1968, Hoover Archives/Boatner Papers/Box 2, 19.

⁴ Thimayya, 105.

and high-voltage battlefield. Native ties, secret society brotherhood and other non-political identities were all subsumed by ideological stances. In view of the dominance of prisoner leaders and the lack of choices for common prisoners, the struggle in prison camps after all became a grand ideological battle.

What differentiates this study from previous scholarship is the central importance I attributed to prisoner leaders and activists. Most studies based on diplomatic and military documents treat prisoners as mere numbers, who were to be horse-traded in Panmunjom. However, when prisoner riots, protests, and campaigns surprised military and political leaders, and defied their wishes, the prisoners were often described as Communist or anti-Communist fanatics, or inscrutable Orientals who blindly followed their leaders. In this study, I seek to clearly demonstrate the coherent logic behind prisoners' decisions and actions. Their seemingly fanatic and often brutal behaviors were tragic in readers' eyes, but they felt compelled to take these actions given the circumstance and information they had in hand.

While traditional scholarship has largely focused on the roles of generals and politicians, I believe the agency of these prisoners, especially the anti-Communist Chinese prisoners, is the key to understanding the POW issue in the Korean War. This episode presents a rare case in history where the decisions and choices made by the downtrodden interacted with and counteracted the designs of world leaders. These prisoners, situated at the intersection of macro geopolitical powers and micro grassroots forces, caught in the crossfire of ideological struggles, frustrated and aided by contingency, nevertheless made decisions and took actions that changed history.

In the following sections, I shall examine what does this study reveal about U.S policy-making in the Korean War, Nationalist China and Chiang Kai-shek, and Communist China.

The U.S.

Like Hermes, most U.S. historians consider President Truman's decision to uphold the principle of voluntary repatriation as a high-minded decision that protected the interest of Chinese prisoners even at the cost of American lives. However, few ask what was the alternative. Although the screening process was originally devised to produce a *fait accompli* for the Communists, it generated such a hugely lopsided result that in effect it constituted a *fait accompli* for the U.S. government. From a moral standpoint, how could the U.S. possibly return these declared anti-Communist prisoners to Communist China, after the U.S. had tried to "reorient" them to become avowed anti-Communists in its psychological warfare programs, namely the CIE?

From a practical standpoint, how could the U.S. force the return of thousands anti-Communist prisoners, who knew that their return guaranteed certain death? It was certainly true that probably only a minority of the some 14,000 anti-repatriation prisoners were die-hard anti-Communists. Assuming the minimum estimate made by repatriated Communist prisoners that 3,000 were die-hard anti-Communists, it would be equally difficult for the U.S. to force the return of 3,000 or 14,000 prisoners.⁵ It would have become the worst propaganda nightmare if the U.S. forced any number of Chinese prisoners to return to the Communists to be slaughtered. In fact, many prisoners did threaten to prefer to be killed by the Americans in Korea, rather than by the Communists back in China.

Some had argued, including Manhard and Joy, with the removal anti-Communist trustees, after a period of reindoctrination, Chinese prisoners should be rescreened and more would choose repatriation. However, without adequate manpower, especially a

⁵ Xu Yan 徐焰, *Diyici jiaoliang: Kangmeiyuanchao Zhanzheng de lishi huigu yu fansi* 第一次较量: 抗美援朝战争的历史回顾与反思 [The first duel] (Beijing: Zhongguo guangbo dianshi chubanshe 中国广播电视出版社, 1990), 290.

sufficient number of non-Nationalist Chinese linguists, the efficacy of this scheme would be highly dubious. And it was precisely on this ground General Ridgway sided with General Van Fleet, and dropped the idea of a thorough rescreening. Instead, a half-hearted surprise rescreening before the anti-Communists were transported from Kojé to Cheju only produced a paltry 415 cases of prisoners changing repatriation decisions.

In fact, by the time the U.S. had realized that the anti-Communist prisoners could pose a threat to armistice talks, it was already too late, as they had dominated all major prison camps, especially Compounds 72 and 86. This dominance was firmly established by October 1951, which was two or three months before the policy of voluntary repatriation was first proposed in Panmunjom in January 1952, and half a year before the screening in April 1952. And this dominance was a product of the policy preference of the military intelligence G-2, psychological warfare unit CIE, and the prison authorities, all of which relied on the anti-Communist prisoners to control the Communists.

Therefore, regardless of Truman's motivation behind his insistence on voluntary repatriation, there was practically no way the U.S. could force the return of a large number of Chinese prisoners without bloodshed. Some of the U.S. militarymen's frequent attempts to backtrack from this policy only demonstrate their lack of clear thinking.

In retrospect, the only opportunity that could have prevented the dominance of anti-Communists in prison camps was in the initial stage of taking prisoners. When Chinese defectors trickled into the UN side, the UNC should have segregated those defectors from captured prisoners. Instead, the UNC lumped all prisoners together in the same camps. In many cases, the UNC utilized prisoners and defectors for psychological warfare purposes. Upon completion of their tasks, these men were disposed to prison camps as regular prisoners. It was a dishonorable practice.

In a sense, the U.S. military's unprincipled use of defectors and its disregard for their requests for asylum led anti-Communist prisoners to feel cheated and insecure; therefore they felt compelled to organize and control as many prisoners as possible, even through violent means. Had the UNC segregated anti-Communists prisoners initially and promised them freedom from returning to China, much of the intra-camp violence could have been averted. And the number of anti-repatriates would definitely be much smaller than 14,000, and much more acceptable to the Communists. The problem was that no military leader had the political foresight, and no political leader had the political courage to take such a responsible step.

To a degree, the U.S. government and military could be partially excused for not being aware of the cruelty of Communist governments in treating repatriated prisoners. In fact, even the majority of the repatriated Chinese prisoners did not anticipate their government's cruelty, which had been much propagated by the anti-Communist prisoners and the Nationalist government. At the time, most pro-repatriation prisoners thought that was pure propaganda with no truth to it.

Nationalist China and Chiang Kai-shek

As easy as it is easy to put all the blame on MacArthur for all things that went wrong in Korea, it is just as common to blame Chiang Kai-shek for all things that went wrong in China, especially for "losing" China to the Communists. In the case of Korean War POWs, Chiang again became the easy scapegoat for many of the U.S. policy failures. U.S. ambassador to Korea Muccio attributed much of the prison camp chaos to the 75 "Chiang Kai-shek's Gestapos." As demonstrated in Chapter 4, this charge was simply false because the 73 interpreters were hired long before prisoners became an issue in armistice talks. While it is understandable that American diplomats were frustrated by

MacArthur's secretive dealings with Chiang, it is still disappointing to see an experienced diplomat making such a misguided, ahistorical accusation.

As a non-believer of any kind of conspiracy theories, I have not found any evidence suggesting MacArthur and Chiang as co-conspirators in the POW issue. When MacArthur was dismissed in April 1951, less than 10 percent of the 21,000 Chinese prisoners had been captured. Available evidence suggests that the collaboration between MacArthur and Chiang was in the areas of intelligence gathering, including code-breaking and prisoner interrogation, and psychological warfare, such as propaganda leaflet design. However, half a year after MacArthur's departure from Asia, under the reign of Ridgway, the CIE hired teachers from Taiwan, and some of these men did serve as Nationalist agents. But this had nothing to do with MacArthur.

After all, Chiang did nothing out of the ordinary. When MacArthur asked for linguistic help, the Nationalist government happily obliged and provided interpreters. While some of these interpreters were from the Nationalist military, such as Gao Qingchen, others were not, such as Huang Tiancai. It was not unexpected if these men had pro-Nationalist sympathies. When the CIE requested reorientation teachers, Chiang Ching-kuo provided the CIE with propaganda specialists. While some of these teachers, such as Ma He, certainly carried instructions related to POWs, it was not surprising. Since the U.S. was sorely incapable of providing a sufficient number of Chinese linguists, it had to rely on Nationalist Taiwan. As a sovereign country fighting for its survival, certainly Taiwan had its own objectives during the war.

Most fundamentally, this POW episode raises the important question regarding Chiang Kai-shek and the Nationalist government's legitimacy in China. No doubt Chiang lost the civil war to the Communists. Historians have often emphasized Chiang's loss of popularity among the intellectuals and peasants as the main reasons for his regime's

demise. However, in a recent interview, noted historian Gao Hua makes a provocative assertion that Chiang's loss on the mainland was mainly a military failure, and all other failures stemmed from it.⁶ Gao argued that the Communist's victory was ultimately a military victory. Once the Communists controlled a territory, they controlled the population, and they could demand and generate popular support. As demonstrated in Chapters 2 and 3, the Communists could effectively command the submission and even active support of defeated former Nationalist personnel, who were considered much more recalcitrant than the common people or young students.

Under the surface of complete submission and feigned ideological conversion, at least a portion of the population still identified with Chiang and the old regime. If the prisoners' population was a rough proxy, the percentage of anti-Communists could be as high as 15 percent. As the Communists moved to persecute supporters of the Nationalist government, some sought to escape from Communist China, and being taken prisoner in Korea afforded them such an opportunity.

Communist China

Chinese prisoners' decisions and actions in UN prisons were directly related to their divergent pre-Korean War experiences in China under both the Nationalist and Communist regimes. The struggle over POW repatriation was an ideological battle, or more precisely a propaganda battle, that the Chinese Communists lost, and it occurred at the heels of their seemingly unstoppable victories in China. The mini-civil war between the pro-Communist and pro-Nationalist prisoners revealed much of the suppressed social tensions within China, which exploded into life-and-death struggles in UN prison

⁶ Gao Hua 高华, *Jiang Jieshi weihe zai dalu shibai* 蒋介石为何在大陆失败 [Why did Chiang Kai-shek lose on the mainland], September 14, 2009, Dongfang Zaobao 东方早报 [Eastern morning post] accessed July 10, 2011, <http://www.aisixiang.com/data/detail.php?id=30388>.

camps in Korea. While the Communists in China chose only to engage in battles in which they enjoyed numerical superiority over the enemy, they did not have such control in UN prisons in Korea, and they lost miserably. In this section, I will first compare the composition and characteristics of anti- and pro-Communist prisoners. Then I will examine certain relevant features of the Chinese Communist methods.

If we use the minimum estimate made by repatriated Communist prisoners, a core group of 3,000 prisoners were die-hard anti-Communists, which comprised of nearly 15 percent of the entire prisoner population. According to the official Communist military line, these men were mostly former low-ranking Nationalist officers and party or youth corps cadres, or those whose families had been struggled against in land reforms.⁷ As discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, this description was largely accurate. However, the Communists had alienated not just the landlord class, but also some of the true proletariats, such as Zhejiang native Jin Yuankuai who was appalled by excessive Communist executions. Once he was captured in Korea and realized that he had a fighting chance to escape from the Communists, Jin remained steadfast in his choice of non-repatriation.

It must be stressed that for this core group of anti-Communist prisoner leaders and activists, the risk they faced was actually greater than the pro-repatriation prisoners. Until the day of the anti-repatriates' final release on January 20, 1954, the UNC never extended any assurance to them that they would be sent to Taiwan. During the screening in April 1952, the UNC emphatically repeated that the UNC could not indefinitely house and feed anti-repatriation prisoners. These prisoners were fully aware of the risk that the UNC might repatriate them back to China in order to secure the return of UNC prisoners. Having witnessed or suffered Communist brutalities before the Korean War, they knew

⁷ Xu Yan, 289.

that their repatriation would definitely bring death. Moreover, by choosing non-repatriation and hoping to go to Taiwan, they took the additional risk that in the event Taiwan was “liberated” by the PLA, they were to become prisoners again. This calculation had deterred some prisoners from refusing repatriation. The anti-Communists nevertheless chose Nationalist Taiwan. This was a powerful indication of their loathing of the Communists being so strong that they would repeatedly risk their own lives to escape from the Communists.

As for pro-Communist prisoners, Communist senior officers who had their careers and futures in the China; there was little incentive for them to refuse repatriation. Moreover, while in POW camps, they were ruthlessly persecuted by anti-Communist prisoners, so there was no mechanism for them to defect to the anti-Communist camp. For certain, the U.S. government did not attempt to effect defections.

Many educated youths were attracted to the Communists because the Communists exhibited discipline, purposefulness, and efficiency; others were appalled by thought control and the gradual loss of individual freedom. While most Communist officers had no choice but to remain faithful to the party, a small number of them became disillusioned and looked for escape. However, for the majority of the educated youth from the cities and the south, having lived under the Communists only for a year, they had not yet experienced or witnessed the diabolic side of the Communist system. Therefore, they saw the Communists in a very different light than those whose families had been persecuted or “suppressed.”

For many idealistic youths, and even common people, the Communists’ discipline and efficiency was a major improvement over the Nationalists’ corruption and ineptitude. While some had witnessed Communist brutalities, they tended to believe that they were necessary evils for the short term. As long as these brutalities were not inflicted on one’s

own family, many had the illusion that they would be spared. As Gao Wenjun had incisively analyzed, the Communists always operated with the method of “fully utilizing the progressive elements, uniting the middle elements, and isolating and attacking the backward elements.” In each political campaign, only a minority was attacked. The majority was [mis]led to believe that if they performed actively, they could become part of the “active/progressive elements,” which were to be rewarded materially and psychologically. As long as the party could define the parameters of each battle, or demarcate who belonged to active, middle and backward elements, it could extract or generate the popular support it needed to isolate and attack the minority enemy.

In Compounds 72 and 86 on Kojé Island, however, the magic of Communist methods failed. As the Communist prisoners failed to organize and did not enjoy numerical superiority in any of the battles against the anti-Communists, they could not command the popular support to isolate the enemies, not to mention attack them. In contrast, the anti-Communist prisoners had gone through the thought reform process under the Communists and acquired some of the Communist techniques of organization and thought control. “Using Communist methods to control the Communists” became their mantra. Lectures, small group discussions, mutual surveillance, and mandatory participation and performance were thoroughly implemented in Compounds 72 and 86. In addition to this type of relentless physical and psychological control, anti-Communist prisoners also employed some of the worst practices of the Nationalist army: physical and verbal abuses, torture, and tattoos. In a sense, anti-Communist prisoners combined the worst aspects of the Communist and Nationalist methods, which nevertheless proved to be very effective in extracting compliance. And the Communist prisoners were roundly defeated.

Epilogue

On the day of the screening in April 1952, pro-repatriation Chinese prisoner Gao Jie walked into the interview tent and was greeted by Captain Joseph Brooks. Brooks asked Gao, “Have you thought it over? Where do you want to go?” “I came from the mainland, and I will go back. My home is on the mainland,” Gao replied. Brooks cautioned Gao, “Have you considered the consequence of your decision?” “What consequence?” Gao asked back. Brooks said, “You had served as the English interpreter in Compound 86, and now you are the interpreter for the 64th Field Hospital. When you return to China, how could you prove [to the Communists] that you had not collaborated with the Americans? If you go back, the Communists will kill you!” Gao confidently answered, “I have no collaboration with you Americans, and I have nothing to explain. You don’t need to worry about me.” Years later, Gao lamented, “How true was Brooks’ prediction!”⁸

Although Gao Jie was not killed by the Communists after his return to China, he suffered 26 years of stigma and persecution until 1980. And Gao was not alone. All repatriated prisoners shared similar fate, and those who returned in later stages of their captivity suffered even more. While the UNC’s record shows that 7,110 Chinese prisoners were repatriated, including 1,030 sick and wounded in Little Switch, 5,640 in Big Switch, and 440 during the final “explanation” period. The best record available in China only shows 6,064 prisoners; the remaining 1,046 remain unaccounted for.⁹ Perhaps some of the 1,046 were the severely sick and wounded, and some were those who returned during the “explanation” period.

⁸ Gao Jie 高子, interview by Wu Jinfeng, June 10, 1984, in *Andeshe Biji*, vol. 2, 163-164.

⁹ He Ming 贺明, *Zhongcheng: Zhiyuanjun zhanfu guilai renyuan de kanke jingli* 忠诚：志愿军战俘归来人员的坎坷经历 [Loyalty: the difficult experiences of repatriated POWs of the Korean War] (Beijing: Zhongguo wenshi chubanshe 中国文史出版社, 1998), 138.

Upon the prisoners' return to China, they went through a one-year investigation in Changtu county, Liaoning province. By May 1954, their verdicts were struck down. Among the 2,900 Communist party members, 91.8 percent were expelled from the party, and only some 120 kept their party membership. Out of the 6,064 men, some 700 were expelled from the army, and 4,600 were considered decommissioned since the date of their capture.¹⁰

On July 5, 1954, Zhang Zeshi bid farewell to his former prisoner comrades in Changtu, Liaoning. As Zhang was considered decommissioned from the army since 1951, he was allowed to wear his army uniform without badges and insignia. However, those expelled from the army were not allowed to keep their uniforms, and they had to wear blue civilian clothes. Former Whampoa cadets Zhang Jiliang and Guo Naijian were expelled and they wore blue jackets. Zhang Zeshi did not anticipate that that would be his last sight of Zhang Jiliang. Zhang Jiliang, who had served as Zhao Zuoduan's English interpreter in the Close Confinement Stockade on Cheju Island, was sent home to Hunan province. Only a year later, he was arrested and soon died in prison.¹¹

Gao Pan, the Prison Guard Squad leader in Compound 70, had led 1,217 men or the 86 percent of the prisoners in that compound to choose repatriation during the screening in April 1952. He was also expelled from the army and sent home. During the "Anti-Rightist Campaign" in 1957, Gao Pan was arrested as a "counterrevolutionary" and sent to labor camps in Qinghai, where he died in 1976.¹²

An Baoyuan, the prisoner who returned to China on death roll, was imprisoned for three years after investigations in Changtu.

¹⁰ He Ming, *Zhongcheng*, 138.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 186.

¹² *Ibid.*, 179.

Zhang Zeshi, the Tsinghua student-turned-underground Communist, was branded a Rightist in 1957, and his father died in a Communist prison in 1959. During the Cultural Revolution he was sent to labor camps, and he was tortured by student rebels in ways “more cruel than what he had experienced in UN prisons in Korea.”¹³ In 2009, Zhang Zeshi wrote an essay entitled “Reflections on my life at 80,” describing his conversion to Communism in his youth and his struggle to reconcile his past with his beliefs in his old age.

After I came across Marxism at Tsinghua University in 1946, a thin booklet of the *Communist Manifesto* captivated youths like me who were eager to overthrow the old world. In summer 1947 I joined the Communist party. Now it seemed that it was the Nationalist government’s corruption that drove me into the ranks of the Communists. In summer 1948, I lived in the “liberated areas” in central Hebei for three months, where the government was clean and the people were happy. That experience made me a firm believer that “only the Communists could save China.” At the time I could never imagine that after national liberation our Communist party could become more dictatorial than the Nationalists. Nor could I imagine after several decades our Communist party officials would become even more corrupt than the Nationalists.¹⁴

Nevertheless, Zhang still believes that it was the Communist party that had changed, and the Communist party he had first known was different from that of today. And he still hopes the Communist party can eventually evolve into “a clean and democratic party that acquires power by popular vote.”

Zhang Zeshi’s strong belief or romanticism in the Communist Party he saw in the late 1940s demonstrates the powerful spell of the Chinese Communist Party. The Chinese brand of Communism at once appeals to the sublime and base; it attracts both the idealists and opportunists. Zhang believes that it was the party that changed, but chooses not to consider the possibility that the party never changed, and he could have

¹³ Zhang Zeshi, *Wo de Chaoxian Zhazheng*, 357.

¹⁴ Zhang Zeshi, 八十載南柯一夢？--耄耋之年的一點人生感悟 [A dream of eighty years? My reflections at age 80], accessed July 1, 2011, <http://blog.163.com/ydrjyw@126/blog/static/622814732009102961556635/>.

been fooled since the very beginning in 1947. Certainly the mere reading the *Communist Manifesto*, or spending three months in a showcase “liberated area,” doesn’t make one learn about Communism, in theory or practice.

The party is the same political-military organization whose power is based on its monopoly of state violence and propaganda. In the Chinese Communist Party’s own terminology, the party has to control two barrels: the barrels of the gun and of the pen. As the Communists’ power comes from the barrel of the gun, it is reinforced by the control of ideology. Perhaps, the essence of the Chinese Communist Party has not changed.

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TWGFB The Ministry of Defense Archives, the Republic of China (Taiwan)
 TWJSS Archives of the Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica, Taipei
 TWKMT Archives of the Kuomintang, Taipei
 TWGSG Academia Historica 國史館, Taipei

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