

**A Cold Conflict amid a Hot War:  
US-Chinese Indoctrination Contest over the Prisoners of War  
during the Korean War**

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Dedication

For my father, 渠云刚  
and my mother, 武桂杰

## Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	v
Introduction.....	1
Chapter One .....	16
Chapter Two.....	60
Chapter Three.....	102
Chapter Four .....	146
Chapter Five.....	187
Chapter Six.....	229
Conclusion .....	250
Bibliography .....	260

## Tables and Figures

## Tables

Table 1.....	221
Table 2.....	226
Table 3.....	235

## Figures

Figure 1.1.....	43
Figure 1.2.....	44
Figure 1.3.....	58
Figure 2.1.....	81
Figure 2.2.....	84
Figure 2.3.....	97
Figure 3.1.....	129
Figure 3.2.....	143
Figure 4.1.....	162
Figure 5.1.....	201

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#### Note on Romanization

The names and titles in Chinese and Korean are Romanized respectively. I use the Pinyin system to Romanize names of Chinese persons and locations from the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Republic of China (ROC) in Taiwan with the exception for those with conventional usages, such as Chiang Kai-shek and Manchuria. I follow the McCune-Reischauer system of Romanization for Korean names except for those that have their own specific conventions. For example, Kim Il-sung and Syngman Rhee. The PRC documents used in this study include many Chinese transliterations of Korean names. I use the Pinyin system to Romanize these transliterations but put them italics.

## Glossaries

I try to minimize the usage of jargon that crop up in writing about Chinese history, but there are a few exceptions. The word “cadre” refers to individual Chinese Communist Party (CCP) officials, not to a group as in the West. In this dissertation, I use this word to describe the CCP members. The United Nations Command (UNC) inaccurately translated *Wenhua Jiaoyuan* into “Cultural Officers” in its documentation. This term means “literacy instructors,” which is used in this dissertation. In addition, the UNC camp authorities essentially divided the Chinese POWs into two categories: “communist” and “anti-communist.” I use this categorization for the sake of convenience only. In this dissertation, “communist prisoners” include the CCP cadres, the *Paoge* brothers and all other prisoners who chose to return to the PRC. “Anti-communist prisoners” are those who chose to go to the ROC in Taiwan. In both cases CCP membership or not is not implied. Other important glossaries are listed as the following:

Anti-Communist and Resist Russia Youth Alliance, 反共抗俄爱国青年同盟会

Ch’angsōng-gun, 창성군, 昌城郡

China Youth Anti-Communist National Salvation Corps, 中国国民党反共青年救国团

Ch’ōngch’ōn river, 청천강, 清川江

Dayudong (Chinese Headquarters in North Korea), 大榆洞

General Political Department, 总政治部

Chirisan, 지리산, 智异山

Kuomintang Branch 63, 国民党六三支部

Literacy instructor, 文化教员



Onjŏng, 온정, 温井

Paoge, 袍哥

Pyŏktong, 벽동, 碧潼

*Qingshui Gou*, 清水沟

*Sanfu Gou*, 三福沟

Sŏngch'ŏn-gun, 성천군, 成川郡

Suan-gun, 수안군, 遂安郡

Supply Depot, 兵站

Usi-gun, 우시군, 云时郡

Wiwŏn-gun, 위원군, 渭源郡

### Abbreviations

ATIS Allied Translator & Interpreter Section

CCP Chinese Communist Party

CCPR Center for the Chinese POW Returnees

CFI Custodian Force of India

CGLT Chinese Government Liaison Team

CIC Counterintelligence Corps

CIE Civil Information and Education

CPV Chinese People's Volunteer

DOD Department of Defense

DPRK Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea)

EWS Enemy Work Section

FOD Field Operation Division (CIE)

FRUS Foreign Relations of the United States

FYJF Fangong Yishi Jiuye Fudaochu

GPD General Political Department

ICRC International Committee of the Red Cross

JCS Joint Chiefs of Staff

JJIPB Japan Joint Intelligence Processing Board

KKK Ku Klux Klan

KMT Kuomintang

KPA Korean People's Army (North Korea)

NNRC Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission

NSC National Security Council

OPMG Office of the Provost Marshal General

PLA People's Liberation Army

POW/PW Prisoner of War

PRC People's Republic of China

Psywar Psychological Warfare

ROC Republic of China (Taiwan)

ROK Republic of Korea (South Korea)

ROKA Republic of Korea Army

SCAP Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers

UN United Nations

UNC United Nations Command

US United States

VNR Voluntary Non-Repatriate

ZGLZX Zhongguo Renmin Jiefangjun Zhengzhi Gongzuo Lishi Ziliao Xuanbian

ZGQS Zhongguo Gongchandang Jundui Zhengzhi Gongzuo Qishinian Shi

ZZWX Zhonggong Zhongyang Wenjian Xuanji

## Introduction

On May 4, 1954, Corporal Edward S. Dickenson of the US Army was court-martialed at Fort McNair, Virginia. The court found him guilty of “collaborating with the Reds” while he was held as a prisoner of war (POW) during the Korean War.<sup>1</sup> As a result, Dickenson was sentenced to ten years of confinement at a hard labor camp, total forfeiture of pay, and a dishonorable discharge from the US military. During a media interview in 1957, Dickenson insisted that “the only difference between me and a lot of others is the others have not been caught.”<sup>2</sup> Similar with Dickenson’s experience, the 4,428 American POWs who returned from Korea all went through Counterintelligence Corps (CIC) interrogation and FBI investigations; some were eventually court-martialed.<sup>3</sup> While the American government suspected that these returned POWs were potential “communist infiltrators,” the People’s Republic of China (PRC) government conducted a one-year investigation of its 6,064 returned POWs in 1954 to screen out “imperialist agents.”<sup>4</sup> As a result, 5,300 received dishonorable discharges from the People’s Liberation Army (PLA), and among them, almost all the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) cadres lost their party membership. When writing his memoir in 2011, the ex-POW Zhang Zeshi bemoaned that “my only fault is that I have been captured by the enemy.”<sup>5</sup> Thus, this study begins with

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<sup>1</sup> “Dickenson Is Guilty: Gets 10 Years in Jail,” *Washington Post*, May 5, 1954.

<sup>2</sup> “Korea Turncoat Ends Jail Term,” *The New York Times*, November 24, 1957.

<sup>3</sup> The US Army recommended to court-martial 192 ex-POWs, but eventually reduced this number to 14. See Secretary of Defense’s Advisory Committee on Prisoners of War, “POW, the Fight Continues After the Battle” (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1955), vi.

<sup>4</sup> Nearly 2,800 out of the 2,900 CCP members lost their party membership. See Ming He, *Zhong Cheng [Loyalty]* (Zhongguo Wenshi Chubanshe, 1998), 138.

<sup>5</sup> Zeshi Zhang, *Wode Chaoxian Zhanzheng: Yige Zhiyuanjun Zhanfu De Liushinian Huiyi [My Korean War: A Chinese People’s Volunteer Veteran’s Memoir]*, 1st ed. (Beijing: Jincheng Chubanshe, 2011), Preface.

the question: Why did the American and the Chinese governments deplore the POWs returning from Korea as a group and despise them?

The story of the Korean War POWs began in the late Fall of 1950 when the regional civil war between the two halves of Korea escalated into an international conflict involving the United States and the newly founded People's Republic of China. Perhaps for the first time in history, both sides began systematic efforts for indoctrinating and converting enemy prisoners. By December 1951, 84.2% of the 16,541 Chinese POWs openly denounced communism and more than half of the 6,722 American POWs joined the World Peace Council, a communist front organization.<sup>6</sup> In addition to the alleged ideological conversion, these POWs surprisingly humiliated their own governments. Many Chinese POWs refused to return to their homeland or the "communist" China (i.e., the PRC) when an armistice would be concluded in the future; whereas some American POWs condemned the US' "imperialist aggressions" in Korea and demanded favorable peace terms for the PRC-North Korean side.<sup>7</sup> The POWs' actions forced the policy makers in Washington and Beijing to shift their focuses from the battlefield to the POW camps.

From November 1951 to July 1953, the POW issue deadlocked the peace negotiation and extended the war for two more years. When an armistice was finally signed on July 27, 1953, the PRC government accepted the "voluntary repatriation principle," a

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<sup>6</sup> The two petition letters collected 13,929 signatures from 16,541 Chinese POWs in December. See "Declarations from Compound 72" and "Petition from PW's Compound 86" in United Nations Command, "Civil Information & Education Section, General Correspondence 1951," 1951, RG 554/290/49/05/05 Box 2, National Archives at College Park; The CPV reported a membership of 6,722 American POWs on November 30, 1951. See *Zhongguo Renmin Jiefangjun Quanshi [The History of the Chinese People's Liberation Army]* (Beijing: Junshi Kexue Chubanshe, 2000), vol. 6: Appendix 3, chart 2 and chart 3; For American POWs' demand, see Chinese People's Committee for World Peace, *Shall Brothers Be: An Account Written by American and British Prisoners of War*, First Edition (Chinese People's Committee for World Peace and Against American Aggression, 1952).

<sup>7</sup> "Declarations from Compound 72" and "Petition from PW's Compound 86" in United Nations Command, "CIE General Correspondence, RG 554/290/49/05/05 Box 2."

policy that Beijing had staunchly resisted for eighteen months. Instead of an all-for-all exchange sanctioned by the Geneva Convention, POWs of the Korean War had to undergo an “explanation” process in which each prisoner could pick his desired repatriation destination. When the POW exchange was completed in early 1954, 14,342 Chinese POWs opted for the Republic of China in Taiwan and 7,110 returned to the PRC. On the other side, twenty-one Americans stayed in the PRC and 4,428 returned to the US.

Even though the Korean War ended more than seven decades ago, the POW issue has remained one of the conflict’s most controversial legacies and invoked many questions. As one of the Cold War’s first hot conflicts, each side wished to demonstrate its ideological supremacy to the other side by proselytizing the POWs and supposedly changing their political and ideological beliefs. How did Beijing and Washington indoctrinate the captured soldiers with their respective official ideologies? Specifically, how did the CPV tried to awaken a “class consciousness” among the American “proletariat?” And, how did the United Nations Command (UNC) make “democratic citizens” out of the Chinese “communists?”

The prisoners’ receptions of the indoctrination programs also deserve scrutiny. For the 6,000 American POWs who joined the World Peace Council, were they sincere in supporting the PRC government—an enemy they had been fighting on the battlefield only a few months earlier—and its communist ideology? Among the 16,000 Chinese POWs who denounced communism and demanded to go to Taiwan in late 1951, only two were of Taiwanese origin. Did these men truly insist on going to a place that they had never been to for the sake of democracy? Did the prisoners on both sides actually have a free choice?

The governments' decisions to persecute the POW returnees should be explained as well. Once the more than 7,000 Chinese POWs returned to the PRC, they came under a systemic investigation that aimed to eliminate "imperialist agents." Afterwards, they lived under a stigma of being held in Korea for the rest of their lives. On the other side, the 4,000 American returnees were viewed as potential "communist agents." They went through military interrogations and lived under an FBI surveillance program. After enduring all the hardships in POW camps, why did the POW returnees receive hostile treatment from their own governments? Above everything else, how can our understanding of the Cold War be enhanced through learning about these ordinary soldiers' experiences? This study seeks to answer these questions by investigating the ideological contests of the Korean War as embodied in the official indoctrination programs of the two sides as well as ordinary soldiers' struggles after they fell under the inglorious and abbreviated label, POWs.

### Literature Review

Previous studies discussing the Korean War POW issue tend to focus on the concerns expressed at the negotiation tables in Kaesong and Panmunjom, the two successive sites of armistice talk in Korea. These concerns were separately reflecting the supposedly humanitarianism of Western leaders and the stated anti-American imperialism of the communist side. A number of American scholars emphasize US leaders' humanitarian concerns for the Chinese POWs. In 1995, the historian William Stueck published *The Korean War: An International History*.<sup>8</sup> Reportedly, having learned that the Soviet government persecuted its returned POWs for their questionable political

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<sup>8</sup> William Stueck, *The Korean War: An International History* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997), chap. 7.

allegiances after World War II, the Truman administration suspected that the PRC government would do the same to the Chinese POWs of the Korean War. Under the name of human rights protection, Washington retained the Chinese POWs for transferring them to the “free” China (Republic of China, ROC) in Taiwan. In 2012, the historian Michael Hunt and Steven Levine co-authored *Arc of Empire: America’s Wars in Asia from the Philippines to Vietnam*.<sup>9</sup> Following Stueck’s analysis, the two authors argue that the US leaders regarded the POW issue as “part of a contest between freedom and slavery” and refused to accept the all-for-all exchange of POWs sanctioned by the Geneva Convention.

Western and Chinese scholars who examine the Chinese side mainly focus on the PRC leader Mao Zedong’s “anti-imperialist” dedication. According to this view, Mao pursued a “negotiating while fighting” strategy from the onset of the armistice negotiations, believing that the POW issue would be settled in China’s favor if the communist forces could gain an upper hand on the battlefield. In *Mao’s China and the Cold War* published in 2001, the historian Chen Jian argues that if China “yield[ed] to the enemy’s terms under political and military pressures” by accepting the voluntary repatriation principle, it would compromise China’s position in launching an international communist revolution.<sup>10</sup>

In a work published in 2003, the historian Shen Zhihua argues that the PRC lacked “good faith” at the negotiation table and merely used the POW issue as an excuse for extending the fighting. According to Shen’s investigation, in early 1952, Mao Zedong harshly criticized North Korean leader Kim Il Sung’s desire to accept the US proposal to

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<sup>9</sup> Michael H. Hunt and Steven Levine, *Arc of Empire: America’s Wars in Asia from the Philippines to Vietnam*, New edition (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

<sup>10</sup> Jian Chen, *Mao’s China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 109.



end the war as “surrenderism” in the face of American “imperialist aggressions.”<sup>11</sup> Mao was confident in his ability to defeat the US militarily in 1952. These scholars generally agree that high politics alone determine these POWs’ fate. They ignore, however, the dynamics between POWs’ activities and subsequent policy changes of the Chinese and American governments.

In recent years, the American indoctrination program has received some scholarly attention. Under the name of humane treatment sanctioned by the Geneva Convention, the US Army activated the Civil Information and Education (CIE) program for the Chinese POWs. So far there have been only a few scholars who explore the CIE program, who each draw opposite conclusions. In *The Hijacked War* published in 2019, the historian Chang Cheng briefly discusses the CIE program and suggests the futility of the program: “From a practical perspective, this program was fraught with unexamined assumptions about its effectiveness.”<sup>12</sup> Allegedly, these POWs’ political allegiances were determined by their pre-Korean War experiences and the CIE failed to influence their decision making. In contrast with Chang, the historian Tal Tovy argues in his 2017 article, “Manifest Destiny in POW Camps,” that the majority of Chinese POWs denounced the communist ideology because they were converted by the CIE program.<sup>13</sup> Despite the obvious contradictory interpretations, the Chinese POWs’ experiences and reactions toward the CIE program remain obscure.

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<sup>11</sup> Zhihua Shen, *Maozedong, Sidalin Yu Chaoxian Zhanzheng [Mao Zedong, Stalin and the Korean War]* (Guangdong: Guangdong Renmin Chubanshe, 2003), 457–61.

<sup>12</sup> David Cheng Chang, *The Hijacked War: The Story of Chinese POWs in the Korean War*, 1st edition (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2020), 129.

<sup>13</sup> Tovy analyzed this program with historian Odd Arne Westad’s developmental model approach and argued that the CIE program was a continuation of the US manifest destiny. See Tal Tovy, “Manifest Destiny in POW Camps: The US Army Reeducation Program During the Korean War,” *The Historian* 73, no. 3 (Fall 2011): 503–25.

In the meantime, the Chinese indoctrination program has mostly been forgotten by professional historians. One of the few studies paying some attention to the subject, *Broken Soldiers* published in 2000, was done by Raymond Lech, the former national director of the Navy League of the United States. In this book, Lech examines American POWs' experiences in Korea, calling the Chinese indoctrination programs "mere propaganda" and accusing the Chinese camp authorities of intentionally massacring and starving American prisoners.<sup>14</sup> As a former military officer, Lech views the POW camps as an extension of the battlefield and argues that the Chinese authorities purposefully used all means to torture and kill American POWs. Yet, Lech fails to examine American POWs' behaviors under Chinese indoctrination and ignores the twenty-one American POWs who chose to stay in the PRC after the Korean War. In sum, all previous studies take a top-down approach in viewing the POW question and none have paid close attention to ordinary soldiers' reception of the indoctrination programs.

### Sources

The declassification and publication of Chinese language materials in the PRC have made it possible for scholars to examine the Chinese POW policy, the Lenient Policy, from a more balanced perspective. In 2010, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) General Political Department (GPD) declassified and published several series of Korean War-related document compilations through an internal circulation system. For example, among the thirteen-volume *Selected Documents of the People's Liberation Army*, the last three

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<sup>14</sup> Lech examined the postwar trial records on the American GIs who returned home. He documented the brutal situation inside the POW camps and those who refused to sign the petition were simply executed or starved to death. See Raymond B. Lech, *Broken Soldiers*, First Edition (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000).

volumes are dedicated to the Korean War.<sup>15</sup> Thanks to the hardworking efforts of archivists at George Washington University, copies of these primary documents are available at the university's China Documentation Center. In addition, several volumes of the CPV Political Department documents and some administrative files of the Pyöktong POW camps are stored at the libraries of various military academies in Beijing. I have obtained copies of these documents for the purpose of this study.

Aside from these archival materials, personal recollections constitute another important source for this study. After 2000, a number of former CPV Political Department personnel who worked at the Pyöktong POW camps published their memoirs. For example, the former English language interpreters Cheng Shaokun, Huang Jiyang, and Guo Weijing publish their memoirs in the early 2000s.<sup>16</sup> The CPV Political Department veteran Ye Chengba published his memoir in 2006.<sup>17</sup> More importantly, the former CPV commissar Du Ping published his state-sanctioned memoir in 2008. These Chinese language materials from the PRC allow this author to examine the Lenient Policy from a Chinese perspective.

The publication of Chinese language materials from the Republic of China in Taiwan opens up new opportunities to examine the American POW policy, the CIE program, and brings in a new perspective from Taiwan. In 2005, the Academia Historica in Taiwan publishes a series of document compilations related to the ROC's involvement

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<sup>15</sup> *Zhongguo Renmin Jiefangjun Zhengzhi Gongzuo Lishi Ziliao Xuanbian [Selected Documents of the People's Liberation Army Political Work] (ZGLZX)* (Zhongguo Renmin Jiefangjun Chubanshe, 2002), vols. 11, 12, 13.

<sup>16</sup> Shaokun Cheng and Jiyang Huang, *Meijun Zhanfu-Chaoxian Zhanzheng Huoxian Jishi [American POWs in the Korean War]* (Beijing: Shishi Chubanshe, 2003); Weijing Guo, *Shijie Diyideng Zhanfuying-Lianheguojun Zhanfu Zai Chaoxian [First-Rate POW Camp in the World-UNC POWs in Korea]* (Beijing: Zhongguo Shehui Kexue Chubanshe, 2010).

<sup>17</sup> Chengba Ye, *Qinli Lianheguo Gaoceng [My Experience at the United Nations]*, 2nd ed. (Beijing: Shijie Zhishi Chubanshe, 2006).

in the UNC psychological warfare and the CIE program.<sup>18</sup> An additional number of declassified documents are digitized and published online. These materials underscore that the UNC devoted significant resources and efforts for the CIE program in terms of hiring, training and transporting ROC personnel from Taiwan to Japan and Korea since late 1950. Aside from these archival materials, a group of Taiwan-based historians initiates an oral history project in 1999, interviewing former ROC diplomats and Chinese linguists who worked for the UNC during the Korean War. These oral history interviews were published after the 2000s.<sup>19</sup> Such new information avails researchers a window for evaluating Taiwan's impact over the CIE program and the POW issue.

English language materials constitute the other half of the primary sources for this study. The National Archives at College Park holds the complete US Army record of the CIE program during the Korean War. The military record includes the CIE weekly reports, intra-section memoranda, reports of temporary duty, intelligence evaluations, teaching material and criminal investigation reports.<sup>20</sup> In 1954, Pentagon put all returned American POWs through a screening to eliminate potential "communist infiltrators." The US Army created personal dossier files, including the court-martial transcripts, for each prisoner. These records are also stored at College Park. The National Archives in St. Louis holds the

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<sup>18</sup> *Documentary Collection Foreign Affairs of Postwar Taiwan: The Korean War and the Chinese Communist Defectors (Document Collection of Postwar Taiwan)* (Taipei, Taiwan: Academia Historica, 2005), vols. 1, 2.

<sup>19</sup> See for example, Hsiu-huan Chou, ed., *Hanzhan Fangong Yishi Fangtanlu [The Reminiscences of Anti-Communist Defectors]* (Taiwan: Academia Historica, 2013); Yulin Shao, *Shihan Huiyilu: Jindai Zhonghan Guanxi Shihua [An Ambassador's Memoir: Diplomatic Relation Between the ROC and the ROK]* (Taipei, Taiwan: Biographical Literature Press, 1980); Fangshang Lu and Kewu Huang, *Lanjin Cangsang Bashi Nian: Chu Songqiu Xiansheng Fangwen Jilu [The Reminiscences of Mr. Tsu Sung-chiu]* (Taipei: Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica, 2001).

<sup>20</sup> See for example, "Civil Information & Education Section, General Records 1951-1952 (CIE General Records)," 1952, RG 554/290/49/05/04, National Archives at College Park; "Civil Information & Education Section, General Correspondence 1951 (CIE General Correspondence)," 1951, RG 554/290/49/05/05, National Archives at College Park; "Prisoner of War Incident Investigation Case Files, 1950-1953 (POW Incident Investigation File)," 1953 1950, RG 554/290/51/09/03, National Archives at College Park.

Official Military Personnel File of these POWs. Most of these files become available for public access in recent years.<sup>21</sup> I have consulted the above-mentioned materials for the purpose of this study.

I also obtained materials from two other archives. The Presbyterian Historical Society (PHS) at Philadelphia, PA holds the records for Reverend Earle Woodberry. During the Korean War, the US Army hired Rev. Woodberry to lead the CIE program among the Chinese POWs. From the PHS archives, I have obtained Rev. Woodberry's service records, correspondences with friends, and other written materials.<sup>22</sup> The Robert W. Fletcher papers from the Bentley Historical Library at Ann Arbor, MI is another important source for this study. Fletcher was an African American soldier who served the US military during the Korean War. He was held a prisoner in Korea from January 1951 to August 1953. In March 2017, the Fletcher family donates his papers to the Bentley Historical Library at the University of Michigan. This collection includes Robert Fletcher's personal journal written inside the POW camps, newspaper clippings, and photographs relating to his experience as a prisoner in Korea. The collection also contains several interviews (videocassette) of Fletcher conducted in the 1980s.

Lastly, some former American POWs have published their personal writings and accepted various media interviews to recount their experiences at POW camps upon their return to the US. To name a few, Clarence Adams, William Dean, James Thompson, Morris Wills, and Larry Zellers all published their autobiographies and memoirs since the 1950s.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> There was a fire in 1972 that destroyed approximately 80% of the OMPF files in St. Louis. Yet the remaining 20% is enough for the purpose of this study.

<sup>22</sup> Woodberry befriended many former Chinese POWs and paid several personal visits to Taiwan after the Korean War ended. Unfortunately, some of his visits' information were less than 50 years and therefore were still classified in the PHS archive.

<sup>23</sup> Clarence Adams, *An American Dream: The Life of an African American Soldier and POW Who Spent Twelve Years in Communist China* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007); William F. Dean,

A number of them also accept media interviews and participated in the production of documentaries related to their POW experience during the Korean War. These secondary sources serve as a useful supplement to this study.

### Organization and Chapter Outlines

With the sources described above, this dissertation argues that after the Chinese and the American POW camp authorities realized the futility of their established ideological indoctrination programs in 1951, both sides gradually changed to non-ideological techniques for administering the POW camps. While sharing the common goal of controlling the POWs, the two sides employed radically different approaches. The Chinese focused on controlling the prisoners' minds through alienation, self-punishment, and self-policing, whereas the US prioritized the control of the prisoners' bodies via crude violence. Thus, at the forefront of the Cold War, POW camp authorities on both sides devised non-ideological means to control the POWs.

The first two chapters examine the failures of the PRC's and the US' POW policies from October 1950 to mid-1951, a period in which both sides followed precedents respectively in dealing with POWs. Chapter one explores the CPV's Lenient Policy and Chapter two investigates the UNC's CIE program. It is important to note that both sides encountered difficulties in even carrying out their respectively established POW policies in Korea. Although in the past the Lenient Policy facilitated the CCP's efforts in the anti-

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*General Dean's Story - Korean War - Prisoner of War - Map & Photographs* (The Viking Press, 1953); James Thompson, *True Colors: 1004 Days as a Prisoner of War* (Port Washington, N.Y.: Ashley Books, 1989); Morris R. Wills, *Turncoat: An American's 12 Years in Communist China: The Story of Morris R. Wills as Told to J. Robert Moskin* (Prentice-Hall, 1968); Larry Zellers, *In Enemy Hands: A Prisoner in North Korea* (Lexington, Ky.: University Press of Kentucky, 1999).

Japanese and civil wars by converting captured Japanese and KMT troops into CCP soldiers, the policy proved ineffective in dealing with American POWs in Korea. Below the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, the CIE program also experienced much difficulty. During the World War II, the CIE program achieved the goal of denazification and demilitarization of German and Japanese POWs. In Korea however, the same program failed to persuade the Chinese prisoners that “democratic capitalism” was superior to “totalitarian communism.”

My argument is that the past experiences on both sides failed to handle the new challenges in the Korean War. While policy makers in Beijing and Washington were confident about converting the POWs with the “correct” ideology, neither side foresaw the peculiar situation in Korea. From late 1950 to mid-1951, the Chinese persistently attempted to convert American prisoners into “liberated soldiers” but lacked English linguists to deliver the message and failed to provide enough supplies to sustain the POWs’ lives. The Americans assiduously tried to make the “democratic citizens” out of the Chinese prisoners without a sufficient number of Chinese linguists who could promote the American political ideals and help manage a sustainable project to utilize the POWs’ labor power. Under these conditions, the idea that the enemy prisoners would immediately accept their captors’ political ideals was nothing more than wishful thinking.

Chapter three and four study the interactions between the POWs and their captors from mid-1951 to early 1953. Chapter three scrutinizes the changes made to the Lenient Policy and chapter four examines the modified CIE program. Inside the Chinese-run camps at Pyöktong, prisoners formed contentious groups on the basis of skin color, religion, and nationality. Prisoners’ resistance, particularly the Ku Klux Klan (KKK), plagued the relationship between American POWs and Chinese camp authorities. In the UN POW

camps on Kojima island, a mini-civil war essentially broke out between the communist prisoners and the anti-communist prisoners. Compounding the issue of division was traditional culture. Some Sichuan soldiers established a *Paogehui* and its members included affiliates of both communist and anti-communist.<sup>24</sup> Thus, the conflicts inside POW camps had little to do with the Cold War ideological contests between communism and capitalism, and dictatorship and democracy.

Chapter three and four demonstrate that after 1951, the POW camp authorities on both sides devised non-ideological means to control the POWs. The CPV engineered a “self-punishment” system to punish camp rule offenders and a “self-policing” technique to preempt potential transgressions. Under this new security apparatus, all UNC prisoners acted as if a Chinese camp guard was always watching over their activities. On the UNC side, a proper camp order was maintained with direct violence. Due to the lack of Chinese linguists, the US Army hired some 400 Department of the Army Civilians (DACs) from Taiwan to facilitate the CIE program.<sup>25</sup> In late 1951, the UNC camp authorities, the DACs, and the anti-communist POWs forged an “anti-communist” alliance and built a new camp order with violence. During such a process, the DACs and the anti-communist POWs started a defection campaign to Taiwan and pushed the Truman administration to uphold the voluntary repatriation principle on the negotiation table. Through mind manipulation

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<sup>24</sup> *Paoge* was a secret society originated from the southwest part of China in the early Qing dynasty. Its initial purpose was to “Anti-Qing, restore Ming” and eventually evolved into an organization with rigid leadership structures, code of conduct, and set of beliefs. According to the Chinese scholar Wang Di’s investigation, by the late 1940s, almost half men from Sichuan were *Paoge* brothers. For a more detailed discussion of *Paoge*, see Di Wang, *Paoge* (Beijing Daxue Chubanshe, 2018).

<sup>25</sup> Theoretically, these Chinese language experts from Taiwan were the employees of the Department of the Army and did not represent ROC’s interest. In reality, those who were recruited had deep affiliation with the KMT government.



and direct violence, camp authorities on both sides eventually established effective control of POWs by early 1953.

Chapter five and six investigate the resolution of the POW issue in 1954. Chapter five discusses the Voluntary Non-Repatriate (VNR) prisoners' choice-making under the explanation session and chapter six explores the fate of the Korean War POWs after they arrived at their chosen destinations. According to the Korean War armistice signed on July 27, 1953, Beijing yielded to Washington's demand for "voluntary repatriation." Consequentially, more than two-thirds of the 21,540 Chinese prisoners chose the ROC in Taiwan while the remaining returned home to the PRC. Just as the US media cherished this propaganda coup, twenty-one Americans openly denounced the US government and opted to stay in the PRC. After the prisoners arrived at their chosen destinations, the local government treated these ex-POWs with deep suspicion.

Chapter five and six illustrate the hysterics and insecurity mentality of policy makers on both sides. While the procedures of the POW exchange in 1953 seemed to provide a fair and just opportunity for each prisoner to make a free choice, the POW camp authorities' control persisted and largely pre-determined the POWs' choice-making. The prisoners on both sides were actually making a choiceless choice to fulfill their captors' designs. Although Beijing and Washington had attempted to convert the captured soldiers in Korea and failed, both sides shared a belief in their enemy's ability to recalibrate their own soldiers' minds. As a result, governments on both sides viewed the POWs of the Korean War as suspicious enemy agents and launched systemic investigations and political persecutions. Thus, having survived the hot and cold wars in Korea, the POWs were subject to a struggle in life under the official ideologies of their own governments and societies.

This study of the Korean War POWs unfolds in the wake of the Cold War in Asia.

## Chapter One

### The Lenient Policy and the Korean War, 1950-51

Six months after the People's Republic of China (PRC) entered the Korean War in October 1950, the American Prisoners of War (POWs) created an unprecedented issue for the Chinese People's Volunteer Army (CPV). In the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) previous struggles against the various domestic and foreign opponents from 1921 to 1949, the CCP General Political Department (GPD) developed the "Lenient Treatment Policy for Enemy Prisoners of War" (Lenient Policy hereafter) to educate and convert enemy POWs into recruits of the CCP armed forces, to be renamed as *Jiefang Zhanshi*, or "liberated soldiers." After the PRC was established in 1949, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Headquarters reported that among the 4.5 million captured Kuomintang (KMT, or the Nationalist Party) POWs, 1.7 million chose to serve the PLA as "liberated soldiers."<sup>1</sup> In contrast with its huge success in the Chinese Civil War, the Lenient Policy utterly failed in Korea. After recruiting a small number of "liberated soldiers" from the American POWs in late 1950, the Lenient Policy quickly descended into a fiasco and led to the death of approximately 2,600 American POWs (the death rate was around 37%) by April 1951.<sup>2</sup> The question is, how the Lenient Policy, which facilitated the CCP's war in the past two decades, quickly turned into a failure that not only was unable to convert many US POWs

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<sup>1</sup> The PLA reported a total number of 4,586,750 KMT POWs from July 1946 to June 1950. Among these KMT POWs, 1,773,490 joined the PLA as "liberated" soldiers. For detailed statistics, see *Jiefangjun Quanshi*, vol. 5: Appendix.

<sup>2</sup> According to CPV statistics, the Chinese captured 7,068 American POWs in the Korean War. By August 1955, the US Department of Defense received 4,428 POWs back to the US. For the CPV statistics, see *Jiefangjun Quanshi*, vol. 6: 302-303; For the US statistics, see Secretary of Defense's Advisory Committee on Prisoners of War, "The POW Report," vi.

into “liberated soldiers” but also responsible for the exorbitant death toll among American POWs in just six months.

Seven decades after the Korean War ended, in assessing the American POWs’ experience during the first winter between October 1950 and April 1951, American scholarship remains defined by a theme of atrocity that argues that the “barbarous” Chinese purposefully slaughtered defenseless American POWs. Based on the repatriated POWs’ interrogation, psychiatric evaluation and court-martial records, the independent scholar Raymond Lech published his *Broken Soldier* in 2000, essentially condemning the Chinese for gross negligence, systemic torture, and purposeful killing of American POWs.<sup>3</sup> As for the Lenient Policy, Lech simply dismisses it as the “Chinese decision to no longer kill, beat, or starve their captives.”<sup>4</sup> After interviewing a group of former POWs in Korea, the historian Lewis Carlson draws a similar conclusion in his *Remembered Prisoners of a Forgotten War* published in 2003, condemning the Chinese for the purposeful killing of the American POWs.<sup>5</sup> Without access to the Chinese language materials, however, these scholars rely solely on the information provided by repatriated POWs to discuss the general POW experience. As survivors of the POW camps, these ex-POWs, particularly those who were captured in late 1950, apparently testified with bitter memories of their harsh experience in the POW camps during the first winter.

By examining the materials produced by the repatriated American POWs, the official Chinese documents and the relevant Chinese personnel’s memoirs, this chapter summarizes the Lenient Policy during the Chinese Civil War and assesses why the same

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<sup>3</sup> Lech, *Broken Soldiers*.

<sup>4</sup> Lech, 87.

<sup>5</sup> Lewis H. Carlson, *Remembered Prisoners of a Forgotten War: An Oral History of Korean War POWs*, 1st Edition (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2002).

policy failed in handling the American POWs from October 1950 to April 1951. Although the CPV successfully recruited a small number of “liberated soldiers” in late 1950, its Lenient Policy did not work with the overwhelming majority of American POWs. A fundamental reason for the failure is that the CPV lacked personnel who could speak English and were familiar with American society and culture. The high death toll of the POWs was mainly caused by a severe material shortage in the POW camps before April 1951, connections of which to the Lenient Policy are also explored in the chapter.

### From Enemies to Friends: Lenient Policy before the Korean War

“Who are our enemies? Who are our friends? This is a question of the first importance for the revolution.”<sup>6</sup> After Mao Zedong raised this question in 1926, the CCP carried out a series of struggles against the various local warlords, the Imperial Japanese Army (IJA) and the KMT forces in the subsequent two decades. In the process of dealing with these opponents, the CCP developed the Lenient Policy to handle enemy POWs. Upon the completion of a pre-designed political training courses, prisoners who opted to stay would serve in the CCP armed forces as “liberated soldiers,” meaning that they were liberated from their class enemies’, or their previous authorities’, control. Those POWs who refused to serve the CCP, meanwhile, would be given travelling expenses and set free.<sup>7</sup> Thus, the CCP treated enemy POWs through a simple prism of “enemy” and “friend” based on class analysis. From the 1920s to 1949, all the policies and procedures of the Lenient

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<sup>6</sup> Mao Zedong, “Zhongguo Shehui Ge Jieji De Fenxi [A Class Analysis for the Chinese Society],” February 1, 1926. *Mao Zedong Ji [Collected Writings of Mao Tse-Tung]*, 2nd ed. (Tokyo: Sososha, 1984), vol. 1: 161-173.

<sup>7</sup> Lei Jingtian served as the chief of the CCP’s Justice Department during the 1930s. See his report Lei Jingtian, “Bianqu Sifa Gongzuo Baogao [A Legal Work Report in the Border Regions],” 1939. Cited in Shanghai Shehui Kexueyuan, *Chongshi Lishi De Jiyi Zoujin Lei Jingtian [A Biography for Lei Jingtian]* (Shanghai: Shanghai Shehui Kexueyuan Chubanshe, 2015), Appendix 11.

Policy built upon this dualism with an ultimate goal of converting enemy POWs into “liberated soldiers.”

The Marxist view on social classes provided the theoretical justification for the Lenient Policy. The core assumption was that enemy POWs and the CCP essentially belonged to the same social class—the proletariat. According to the *CCP Central Committee’s Work Plan for Enemy Foot Soldiers* issued in February 1928, foot soldiers serving the various local warlords consisted of “unemployed workers, bankrupted peasants, and some lumpen proletariat.”<sup>8</sup> From the class perspective, these foot soldiers were the CCP’s class brothers and sisters as these “dispossessed proletariat” were compelled to serve the warlords, the bourgeoisie, in order to make a living. The CCP Central Committee believed that they could convert these “enemies” into “friends” by awakening their class consciousness. The same rationale was applied to the foot soldiers serving in the Imperial Japanese Army and the KMT forces. On various occasions the CCP addressed them as “our proletariat brothers.”<sup>9</sup> By 1949, the CCP held a tested conviction that “liberated soldiers” could be made out of a POW population through a systematic process of awakening class consciousness.

The CCP engineered a four-step procedure to awaken the class consciousness of captured soldiers.<sup>10</sup> The first step was to ensure the physical security of all the POWs.

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<sup>8</sup> “Zhonggong Zhongyang Guanyu Bingshi Yundong Jihua [CCP Central Committee’s Work Plan for Enemy Foot Soldiers],” February, 1928. *ZGLZX*, vol. 1: 44-48.

<sup>9</sup> For CCP’s view on the Japanese Soldiers, see for example, “Gao Riben Luhaikongjun Shibing Xuanyan [An Open Letter to Japanese Soldiers],” September 25, 1937. *Zhonggong Zhongyang Wenjian Xuanji [Selected Documents of the CCP Central Committee]* (Zhonggong Zhongyang Dangxiao Chubanshe, 1989), vol. 11: 341-44; “Zhongguo Guomin Gemingjun Di Balujun Zong Zhihuibu Mingling-Dui Rijun Fulu Zhengce Wenti [CCP 8th Route Army Order on the Japanese POWs],” October 25, 1937. *ZZWX*, 11: 379.

<sup>10</sup> For a detailed discussion of the four step procedure, see Mao Zedong, “Jinggangshan De Douzheng [The Struggles at Jinggang Mountain],” November 25, 1928. *ZGLZX*, vol. 1: 152-167; “Zong Zhengzhibu Guanyu Wajie Guizhou Baijun De Zhishi [General Political Department’s Order on the Disintegration of Guizhou Warlord Army],” January 1, 1935. *ZGLZX*, vol. 3: 3-4; “Zong Zhengzhibu Guanyu Duguo Daduhe Hou

Regardless of their military ranks, the CCP would provide food, shelter, and medical treatment to the captured soldiers. Physical abuse and confiscation of personal property were strictly forbidden. Prohibited items, such as knives and razors would be registered and taken care of by designated personnel. This step was intended to defeat a rumor that the “communist bandits kill everyone on sight” and to win over the gratitude from as many enemy foot soldiers as possible. On October 1, 1928, a group of 126 KMT soldiers surrendered to the CCP in Jiangxi amid a tight battle. These soldiers’ interest calculation was quite simple: To continue fighting might result in death, but to surrender to the CCP would guarantee safety. Commenting on the Lenient Policy, the KMT division commander Yang Chisheng exclaimed “how vicious!”<sup>11</sup> In the Sino-Japanese war, after being captured by the CCP in the fall of 1939, the Japanese Soldier Kobayashi Kiyoshi was quite amazed by the Lenient Policy and was curious to learn more about the CCP and its political ideals.<sup>12</sup>

The second step was political education. Depending on the situation, political education would take place at the front line or in the rear. All POWs would be required to attend a political education course under the supervision of CCP commissars. The duration of this process usually lasted between two and six months.<sup>13</sup> More than giving political lectures on Marxism and the promise of a communist utopia, the CCP focused on resolving the POWs’ real-life difficulties. For example, the political education directed toward KMT

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Liu Yuefen Zhengzhi Gongzuo De Zhishi [General Political Department’s Instruction on the PLA],” June 2, 1935. *ZGLZX*, vol. 3:121-122.

<sup>11</sup> *Mao Zedong Nianpu (1893-1949) [Chronicle of Mao Zedong, 1893-1949]* (Zhongyang Wenxian Chubanshe, 1993), vol. 1: 251.

<sup>12</sup> Kiyoshi Kobayashi, *Zai Zhongguo De Tudi Shang [On China’s Soil]* (Jiefangjun Chubanshe, 1985), 47–55.

<sup>13</sup> The duration for the political education increased from 2 to 4 weeks in the 1930s to 2 to 6 months in 1949. For more detailed discussion for the political education for the liberated ex-KMT soldiers, see “Intelligence Document File Publications (‘950000’ File), 1947-1962, 950054: ATIS Interrogation Report (ATIS),” 1951, Box 327, KG 0184, RG 319/631/34/19/3, NARA at College Park.

foot soldiers emphasized the harmonious relationships between soldiers and officers in the CCP armed forces, the Red Army. According to the CCP's investigation in February 1928, most KMT foot soldiers "received dismal wages, expended their lives as cannon fodder. Their lives are miserable...their experiences with the warlords are horrible."<sup>14</sup> By contrast, the CCP foot soldiers received a much better treatment. As one CCP leader reported in 1928,

The best phenomenon in the Red Army is equality. Foot soldiers could participate in the management of their daily affairs through the soldiers' committees. Officers could not abuse soldiers at will since corporal punishment was strictly forbidden. Whenever an officer committed wrong doings, soldiers could criticize him in the next general meeting of the soldiers' committee.<sup>15</sup>

Mao Zedong proudly declared that "our army and the KMT army are worlds apart."<sup>16</sup> By demonstrating the harmonious relationships in the Red Army, most KMT POWs would prefer to serve the Red Army as they could feel "spiritually liberated."<sup>17</sup>

After the training was completed, a choice between release and enrollment in the Red Army would be presented to the POWs as step three. For the KMT POWs, many forcibly conscripted peasant soldiers saw their capture by the CCP as a golden opportunity to return home and therefore preferred to accept travelling expenses and go home. But most of the career soldiers would join the CCP armed forces on a varying degree of voluntariness.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, some POWs chose to stay with the CCP out of the fear of

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<sup>14</sup> "Zhonggong Zhongyang Guanyu Bingshi Yundong Jihua [CCP Central Committee's Work Plan for Enemy Foot Soldiers]," February, 1928. *ZGLZX*, vol. 1: 44-48.

<sup>15</sup> Yang Kemin, "Yang Kemin Guanyu Xiangganbian Suqu Qingkuang De Zonghe Baogao, [Yang Kemin's Report on the Xiangganbian Soviet]," February 25, 1929. *ZGLZX*, vol. 1: 185-190.

<sup>16</sup> Mao, "Jinggangshan De Douzheng [The Struggles at Jinggang Mountain]," November 25, 1928. *ZGLZX*, vol. 1: 152-167.

<sup>17</sup> Mao, "Jinggangshan De Douzheng [The Struggles at Jinggang Mountain]," November 25, 1928. *ZGLZX*, vol. 1: 152-167.

<sup>18</sup> "Hongjun Diyi Juntuan Guanyu Xizhengzhong Zhengqu Baijun Gongzuo De Baogao [PLA First Field Army's Report on Winning Over White Soldiers]," July 5, 1936. *ZGLZX*, vol. 3: 398-403.



reprisals from their original military units. For example, many Japanese soldiers who joined the CCP armed forces stated that prior to their capture, they had witnessed executions of returned Japanese POWs in the Japanese Army.<sup>19</sup> In the eyes of the Japanese military authorities, a soldier's being captured alive was almost equivalent to treason. As the International Committee of the Red Cross's (ICRC) delegate to Japan, Dr. Fritz Paravicini reported in 1942,

The Japanese authorities were not concerned about their soldiers who had been captured, and the soldiers themselves were quite aware of being the subject of severe disapproval. Japanese prisoners of war therefore did not wish to write to their families, and even asked that their names not be communicated to their government.<sup>20</sup>

The Lenient Policy nevertheless provided these POWs with an option to evade prosecution from the Japanese authorities. But in return they had to serve the CCP under the title of "liberated soldiers," that was, to actually betray the Japanese Army.

All POWs would be properly disposed based on their choice as the last step. The "liberated soldiers" would be integrated into various branches of the CCP armed forces. For those POWs who chose not to stay, the CCP would usually host a farewell party, and give them travelling expenses and propaganda materials upon their departure. If the same POW were to be captured by the CCP again, he would go through the same four-step procedure again. During China's war with Japan, the chief of the CCP Justice Department Lei Jingtian argued that "Zhuge Liang captured Menghuo seven times before the latter pledged allegiance. We must learn from Zhuge Liang's patience and never kill or insult the

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<sup>19</sup> Harrison Forman, *Report from Red China*, First Printing (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1945), 40.

<sup>20</sup> For the complete report by Dr. Paravicini, see "ICRC in WWII: Activities in the Far East," February 2, 2005, <https://www.icrc.org/en/doc/resources/documents/misc/57jnwq.htm>.

POWs who were captured multiple times.”<sup>21</sup> Under the CCP’s Lenient Policy, “enemies” would eventually become “friends.”

From its first experiment in Jinggang Mountain in 1928 to the proclamation of the PRC in 1949, the Lenient Policy recruited “liberated soldiers” from both the domestic and foreign enemies of the CCP to fit the party’s various needs. For example, during the Jiangxi Soviet years (1931-1934), the CCP relied on POWs to operate telecommunication equipment to maintain contact among its organizations in various provinces.<sup>22</sup> By the end of the Anti-Japanese War (1937-1945), more than half of the CCP medical personnel in Manchuria were recruited from the Japanese POWs. At the PLA No. 9 Field Hospital in Harbin, all medical workers were Japanese. The CCP “merely dispatched several administrative staff” to supervise daily operations.<sup>23</sup> During the Chinese Civil War (1945-1949), the Lenient Policy achieved noteworthy effects in turning captured KMT soldiers around, or one of “quick capturing, immediate education, instant enrollment, and same-day battlefield fighting.”<sup>24</sup> The historian Odd Arne Westad estimated that “almost half of those serving with the regular PLA armies” were converted POWs from the KMT forces and the absolute number allegedly exceeded 1.7 million.<sup>25</sup> By the time when the PRC was founded in 1949, the Lenient Policy had facilitated the CCP’s war effort against various opponents.

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<sup>21</sup> In the Chinese novel *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, Menghuo was a tribal leader in the southern region. He was defeated and captured by Zhuge Liang seven times before he pledged allegiance to Zhuge Liang. For the description of the fourth step and Lei’s speech, see Ping Du, *Du Ping Huiyilu [Memoir of Du Ping]* (Beijing: Zhongguo Renmin Jiefangjun Chubanshe, 2008), 379; Shanghai Shehui Kexueyuan, *Zoujin Lei Jingtian*, Appendix 11.

<sup>22</sup> Ouyang Qing, “Ouyang Qing Guanyu Zhongyang Suweiai Quyu De Baogao [Ouyang Qing’s Report on the Central Soviet Region],” September 3, 1931. *ZGLZX*, vol. 1: 766-769.

<sup>23</sup> *Zhongguo Renmin Jiefangjun Disi Yezhanjun Weisheng Gongzuoshi (1945-1950) [The Medical Work History of the PLA 4th Field Army (1945-1950)]* (Beijing: Renmin Junyi Chubanshe, 2000), 218.

<sup>24</sup> *Mao Zedong Nianpu (1949-1976) [Chronicle of Mao Zedong, 1949-1976]* (Zhongyang Wenxian Chubanshe, 1993), vol. 1: 23-24.

<sup>25</sup> Odd Arne Westad, *Decisive Encounters: The Chinese Civil War, 1946-1950*, 1st edition (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2003), 113.

As a result, the mindset of the CCP's policy makers never transcended the enemy-friend dualism when dealing with the POW issue.

### Initial Success of the Lenient Policy

During the initial two months of the PRC's intervention of the Korean War, the CPV Political Department employed the Lenient Policy to treat the American POWs and successfully recruited a small number of "liberated soldiers." In mid-October 1950, Beijing's preparations started to convince the CPV personnel that the incoming American prisoners could become "liberated soldiers." In a public speech delivered to the divisional level officers on October 14, the CPV Commander General Peng Dehuai argued that "the Korean War brings huge profits to an extremely small number of American capitalists. Other than these capitalists, the war brings no good to ordinary Americans...the American people are essentially anti-war and the American soldiers in Korea also hate the war."<sup>26</sup> As the American soldiers lacked the class consciousness to fight their true enemies—American capitalists, it was the CPV's job to "enlighten" ordinary Americans with the "correct" ideology. Under this mindset, the Chinese leadership did not see American soldiers in Korea differently from the Japanese or the KMT soldiers in the CCP's previous wars and expected to convert them into "liberated soldiers" when captured.

Beijing also attempted to convince its North Korean allies that the incoming American POWs were essentially innocent victims of capitalism. Mao Zedong personally explained this point to the North Korean leader Kim Il Sung during a meeting in late 1950: "On the battlefield, we must focus on eliminating our enemies. But once they lay down

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<sup>26</sup> Peng Dehuai, "Zai Zhongguo Renmin Zhiyuanjun Shiyishang Ganbu Dongyuan Dahui Shangde Jianghua [Speeches at the Divisional Cadres' Meeting]," October 14, 1950. Dehuai Peng, *Peng Dehuai Junshi Wenxuan [Selected Military Writings of Peng Dehuai]* (Zhongyang Wenxian Chubanshe, 1988), 320–27.

their weapons, we need to treat them leniently...we must unify the majority of our allies so that we can isolate and struggle against the minority of our enemies.”<sup>27</sup> In the Chinese leaders’ minds, the role of the American soldiers changed from a deadly opponent on the battlefield to a potential class ally at the moment of their capture. Thus, the CCP’s revolutionary fervor to “liberate” the oppressed American proletariat paved the road for the Lenient Policy in Korea.

The CPV Political Department established a concrete policy of incentives for ordinary Chinese soldiers to execute the Lenient Policy. According to the PLA Military Award Regulation, any individual soldier who captured two or more UNC POWs would receive a First-Grade military citation and his family would be commended as the “Revolutionary Hero’s Family.”<sup>28</sup> Any platoon captured two or more UNC POWs would be pulled back in the rear and put into reserve status until the next round of major military operation.<sup>29</sup> Under the PRC government, this policy was almost a guarantee of good life for the CPV soldiers who captured two or more UNC POWs. The Chinese soldiers made a ditty with the lyrics of “*Yan bu hong [don’t kill], shou bu dong [don’t abuse], fu lu ren ge yao zun zhong [respect POWs’ dignity]*” to indicate their attitudes toward the POWs.<sup>30</sup> With these policies in place, the Korean War provided an occasion for the CCP to “liberate” the oppressed proletariat from the United States.

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<sup>27</sup> Conversation among Mao Zedong, Liu Shaoqi, Zhou Enlai, and Kim Il Sung, December 3, 1950. *Mao Nianpu, 1949-1976*, vol. 1: 254.

<sup>28</sup> This regulation was issued on January 21, 1952. However, according to the Chinese soldiers captured by the UNC in 1950, this regulation was enacted as soon as the CPV entered the Korean War. For the PLA regulation, see “Zhongguo Renmin Jiefangjun Ligong Yu Jiangli Gongzuo Tiaoli (Caoan) [PLA Military Award Regulation (Draft)],” January 21, 1952. *ZGLZX*, vol. 12: 5-22. For the Chinese POWs’ interrogation, see “ATIS,” Box 351, KT 3228.

<sup>29</sup> Captured documents from the CPV, see “ATIS,” Box 351, KT 3228.

<sup>30</sup> The Chinese characters are the following: “眼不红，手不动，俘虏人格要尊重。” See *Zhongguo Gongchandang Jundui Zhengzhi Gongzuo Qishinian Shi [The Seventy Year History of the People’s Liberation Army Political Work]*, vol. 04 (Zhongguo Renmin Jiefangjun Chubanshe, 1991), 142.

Immediately after the CPV crossed the Yalu River on October 19, its vanguard troops captured a number of American POWs. On October 25, the CPV launched the First Phase Offensive (October 25 to November 5, 1950) against the advancing ROKA (Republic of Korea Army) unit at Onjǒng, a North Korean village 80 km south of the Yalu River. The CPV successfully halted the ROKA forces and pushed the battle line 130 km to the south and stopped at the Ch'ǒngch'ǒn river.<sup>31</sup> When the South Korean forces finally realized that the Chinese had intervened and retreated in a hurry, the CPV 13<sup>th</sup> Field Army had captured 161 POWs. Among them was a group of Americans who were serving as the military advisors to the ROKA unit. The leader of the American advisors was Lieutenant Colonel Paul Liles.<sup>32</sup> The CPV Political Department immediately applied the Lenient Policy to this group of POWs.

The CPV's effort to ensure the POWs' physical security impressed the captured soldiers. The American POWs, officers and soldiers alike, appreciated the leniency they received. When Lieutenant Colonel Paul Liles was repatriated back to the US in September

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<sup>31</sup> The CPV 118 and 120 Division of the 40<sup>th</sup> Army under the 13 Field Army launched the first phase offensive against the ROKA II Corp, 6<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, 2<sup>nd</sup> Regiment. See glossaries for the Chinese and Korean transliterations for Onjǒng and Ch'ǒngch'ǒn River.

<sup>32</sup> There are some disputes over the name of the first American POW captured by the Chinese. The CPV Cadre Yu Zhongzhi remembered the first American POW's name as 琼斯, which spells as qionsi in pinyin and the English transliteration is Jones. Yu had personally interrogated this "Jones" on October 25, 1950. However, the NARA data base only has one American officer who had been captured by the Chinese with the name Jones (First Lieutenant Jones Wilber G Jr.) The military rank and capture date do not match Yu's memoirs. Furthermore, in other Chinese sources such as Cheng Shaokun's memoirs, the name of the first American POW was 奈勒斯, nailesi in pinyin. It sounds phonetically closer to Liles. Du Ping also remembered the first American POW was a WestPoint graduate. Lastly, Paul Liles' postwar interrogation by the CIC indicated that he was a WestPoint graduate. He was captured on October 25 and was subsequently detained and interrogated by the Chinese at a "coal mine." This "coal mine" should be the CPV headquarter in *Dayudong* which was actually an abandoned gold mine. Thus, Yu might have remembered the wrong name. The "Jones" in Yu's memoirs should be Paul Liles. See, Cheng and Huang, *Meijun Zhanfu*, 10; Du, *Memoir of Du Ping*, 57; Guo, *Diyideng Zhanfuying*, 39–41. For Liles' background information, see "Korean Conflict POW, MIA, and Detainee Intelligence Files, 1944-1976 (POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files)," n.d., Box 331, Paul Liles Dossier, RG 319/450/34/17/1, NARA at College Park. For the record of Jones Wilber, see NARA data base link at: <https://aad.archives.gov/aad/record-detail.jsp?dt=240&mtch=1&tf=F&q=jones+wilber&bc=,sl,sd&rpp=10&pg=1&rid=834>

1953, he told the Counterintelligence Corps (CIC) interrogators that other than taking away his weapon, “no physical violence or unnecessary roughness” was displayed at his capture scene. He had a minor injury that required no first aid, but the CPV medics treated him well and bandaged the wound meticulously.<sup>33</sup> Like their officers, foot soldiers received the similar treatment. During his interrogation by the CIC at a Tokyo hospital in 1953, Private Claude Batchelor described his experience as the following,

They [CPV] extended their hands of welcome, and instead of shooting us, they told us that they were our friends. That made a very good impression on most of the Americans who were captured, and if the man who received that kind of treatment at first, was never mistreated by the Chinese, it would be hard to prove to him that the Chinese were a ruthless people. This may sound silly to some, but it does not sound silly to those who faced the Chinese when they were first captured.<sup>34</sup>

The CPV commissars also made sure that the POWs’ personal belongings remain intact. During the CPV’s Second Phase Offensive (November 7 to December 24, 1950), a Chinese division captured 188 American POWs. A Chinese soldier took away one gold ring and two lighters from this group of prisoners. Upon discovering this, the division commissar immediately returned these items to the American prisoners and criticized the Chinese perpetrator.<sup>35</sup>

The CPV also intended to win over the POWs’ favor through giving lenient treatment to the severely wounded POWs. According to CPV Political Work Order No. 2, Chinese troops were instructed to place the severely wounded POWs in a safe location such

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<sup>33</sup> Phase II interrogation of Paul Liles, May 6, 1954. “POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files,” n.d., Box 331, Paul Liles Dossier.

<sup>34</sup> Batchelor was captured on November 5, 1950. For his statement, see Interrogation of Claude Batchelor, January 26, 1954. “POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files,” Box 30, Claude Batchelor Dossier.

<sup>35</sup> The incident took place in late 1950. The report was not submitted to the CPV Political Department until June 1952. See Du Ping, “Guanyu Jiaqiang Diweijun Gongzuo Wenti [On Strengthening the Discipline of POW Work Issue],” June 1952. *Kangmei Yuanchao Dijun Gongzuo Jingyan Huibian [Selected Documents of the CPV’s Enemy Work During the Korean War] (Dijun Gongzuo Jingyan Huibian)*, Zongzheng Neibuban, 1959, 27–49.

as a civilian household or an open ground. The Chinese field commander should then contact the UNC via radiobroadcast to fetch the POWs.<sup>36</sup> As the CPV commissar Du Ping explained, the CPV Political Department drafted this policy in November 1950 out of several considerations. First, treating the severely wounded POWs would consume CPV's already-limited medical supplies. Second, the severely wounded POWs would incur extra burdens for the CPV Political Department as these prisoners were unlikely to become "liberated soldiers." Third, returning them back with Chinese propaganda materials would promote the CPV's Lenient Policy and boost the PRC's international reputation.<sup>37</sup>

The CPV's execution of this policy impressed the American POWs. On November 29, 1950, two CPV divisions intercepted a US marine regiment on a road between Koto-ri and Hagaru-ri. The Associate Press correspondent Frank Noel was attached to the US marine unit to report the frontline story of General Douglas MacArthur's Home-by-Christmas campaign.<sup>38</sup> When the skirmish ended, the CPV captured 180 American POWs and 60 of them were severely wounded.<sup>39</sup> After the Marine officer Major John J. McLaughlin decided to surrender, Noel witnessed the Chinese soldiers come in and cover all the wounded Marines with blankets and sleeping bags to keep them warm. Then, they put the wounded soldiers on stretchers, placed them along the road curbs, and told them that the retreating UNC forces would pick them up.<sup>40</sup> The CPV's execution of the Lenient Policy at the frontline generally impressed the American POWs during the initial months of the Korean War.

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<sup>36</sup> "Zhengong Tongbao Dier Hao [CPV Political Work Order No. 2]," cited in Du, *Memoir of Du Ping*, 377.

<sup>37</sup> Du, 376–77.

<sup>38</sup> The Frank Noel Story, Circumstances of Capture, Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, G-2, "Final Report," October 1, 1953, 173, RG 319/270/84/20/2 Box 2, National Archives at College Park.

<sup>39</sup> The Frank Noel Story, Circumstances of Capture, Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, G-2, 176.

<sup>40</sup> The CPV 80<sup>th</sup> and 81<sup>st</sup> Division of the 27<sup>th</sup> Army, 13<sup>th</sup> Field Army intercepted the US 7<sup>th</sup> Marine Regiment. See the Frank Noel Story, Circumstances of Capture, Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, G-2, 174.

Having committed or witnessed the various atrocities committed by US troops in Korea, most American soldiers feared inhumane treatment before their capture. Looking back on their wartime experience, many US soldiers confessed that they expected immediate execution when captured.<sup>41</sup> In his memoir, James Thompson explained that since the US invaded the Korean peninsula and killed many innocent Asian people, he speculated “the minute you are captured it is then ass-kicking time” and that the Chinese were surely “out for blood.”<sup>42</sup> In a similar tone, Lloyd W. Pate described his desperate feelings after surrendering to the CPV on December 8. He imagined how the Chinese “could cut his tongue out, punch his eyeballs out, cut his privates off, sew them in his mouth with barbed wire, torture him in general... it’s much better to get a quick bullet through the head than go through all that.”<sup>43</sup> But the Lenient Policy proved American soldiers’ previous assumptions wrong, or at least convinced them that the Chinese were not “a ruthless people.”<sup>44</sup> While these American POWs cherished their luck to be alive and enjoyed protection under their Chinese captors, they were to experience the political education under the Lenient Policy.

In late 1950, the CPV conducted political education for American POWs through a case-by-case approach. At the time and throughout the war, Major General William Dean was the highest-ranking American POW captured in Korea. He was interned in a western-style house near the Kim Il Sung University. Always with him were a political commissar,

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<sup>41</sup> Adams, *An American Dream*, 40.

<sup>42</sup> Thompson, *True Colors*, 19.

<sup>43</sup> Pate thought his captors were North Korean troops before surrendering. In reality, Pate was captured by the CPV. See Lloyd W. Pate, *Reactionary! Sgt. Lloyd W. Pate’s Story as Told to B. J. Cutler* (Harper & Brothers, New York, 1956), 27.

<sup>44</sup> Interrogation of Claude Batchelor, January 26, 1954. “POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files,” n.d., Box 30, Claude Batchelor Dossier.



a language interpreter, and several North Korean guards.<sup>45</sup> The house had two rooms with a double door between them. Inside his living room there was a complete set of mattress, pillows, and sheets. During the night he and the interpreter would sleep in one room while the commissar and the guards in another. Interrogation and political education would be conducted in the other room during daytime. Although Dean had studied Marxism at the University of California, he admitted that the interpretation of Marxism he learned in Korea “was all new to me.”<sup>46</sup> Upon the completion of the course, he recalled that “I’m an authority now on the history of the Communist party and much of its doctrine.”<sup>47</sup>

During the same time period, the CPV administered the political education for ordinary American POWs through lectures and discussions held in Manchuria. Although the Geneva Convention forbade transferring the POWs to a third country, the PRC government did not recognize this Convention until July 1952.<sup>48</sup> Before that, it was a common practice to transport American POWs across the Yalu River into Manchuria. As Frank Noel recalled that all the Chinese instructors began their lectures with the statement: “You are not prisoners of war and we do not wish to address you as such. You are a student. Our aim and mission is to re-educate you completely.”<sup>49</sup> Besides the political education, the Chinese provided food, shelter, and medicine to the POWs. In certain instances, the American POWs asked the CPV to transfer them to Manchuria because the general living

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<sup>45</sup> William Dean, *General Dean’s Story, as Told to William L. Worden by Major General William F. Dean* (Viking Press, 1954), 115.

<sup>46</sup> Dean, 122.

<sup>47</sup> Dean, 123.

<sup>48</sup> Since neither the PRC nor the US formally declared war on each other, the Korean War was deemed as a civil conflict and therefore POWs should remain on the Korean peninsula. For the PRC’s recognition of the Convention, see *Zhou Enlai Nianpu (1949-1976) [Chronicle of Zhou Enlai, 1949-1976]* (Zhongyang Wenxian Chubanshe, 2007), vol. 1: 248.

<sup>49</sup> Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, G-2, “JJIPB Final Report, RG 319/270/84/20/2 Box 2,” 179–80.

conditions were much better than in Korea.<sup>50</sup> For example, on January 18, 1951, Paul Liles and Harry Fleming petitioned the CPV to send them to Manchuria.

In late October 1950, a group of eight American POWs arrived at Liaoyang, Liaoning province, for the purpose of political education.<sup>51</sup> A two-story distillery became their new home and each prisoner received a cotton-padded CPV uniform, a fur cap, and a pair of canvas shoes.<sup>52</sup> Their only obligation was to attend the political education on a daily basis. During their free time, they could walk around in the streets of Liaoyang without the company of Chinese guards. Locals reported that these Americans wore the CPV uniforms without markings or insignia and they “appeared neat and healthy.”<sup>53</sup> Other than Liaoyang, American POWs were also sent to Shenyang, Andong and Fengcheng for political education.<sup>54</sup> On November 21, the number of UNC POWs interned in Manchuria reportedly reached 1,800.<sup>55</sup> As their number grew, the Chinese authorities decided to relocate these Americans into the local CPV barracks. As a result, the American POWs faded away from the Chinese public’s view and were eventually transported back to Korea in early 1951.

By treating them leniently, the Chinese wanted the prisoners to become “liberated soldiers” in return. Following the political education, the last two steps of the Lenient Policy, presenting the POWs the options of stay and repatriation, and disposing them accordingly, ensued. A number of American POWs opted to stay and assisted the CPV’s

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<sup>50</sup> See Clinical Record of Paul Liles, September 3, 1953. “POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files,” n.d., Box 332, Paul Liles Dossier.

<sup>51</sup> The Chinese commissar did not know why these eight POWs were selected and sent to Liaoyang at this time. See “ATIS,” Box 331, KG 0872.

<sup>52</sup> “ATIS,” Box 330, KG 0689.

<sup>53</sup> “ATIS,” Box 331, KG 0872.

<sup>54</sup> Andong and Fengcheng belong to contemporary Dandong, Liaoning province. For more discussions of the POW camps in Manchuria see “ATIS,” Box 351, KT 3168, KT 3210, KT 3246, KT 3281, and KT 3308.

<sup>55</sup> “ATIS,” Box 330, KG 0689.

war effort. In late December 1950, the CPV assembled a truck driver squad with fifteen “liberated” American soldiers.<sup>56</sup> These “liberated” Americans provided their valuable driving skills to the CPV Logistics Department. Between October 1950 and August 1951, the CPV Logistics Department reported a loss of 1,188 supply trucks due to the Chinese drivers’ inadequate driving skills and poor mechanic knowledge.<sup>57</sup> To make the situation worse, some Chinese drivers stole the military supplies and sold them on black market. In May 1951, the CPV 45<sup>th</sup> Division reported that among its forty-five drivers, “at least a quarter of them committed embezzlement, gambling, and visited brothels.”<sup>58</sup> Yet without sufficient number of drivers, the CPV authorities refrained from punishing these drivers who committed these crimes.

In contrast, with superior driving skills and better mechanical knowledge, the “liberated” American drivers completed the transportation tasks efficiently and maintained the trucks in good condition. They dressed in CPV uniforms and performed their duties on a voluntary basis without being accompanied of Chinese guards. Their primary duty was to transport CPV personnel and supply materials in the border regions between Manchuria and North Korea. The CPV truck driver Li Peishan recalled that the only prohibition for his American colleagues was that they were not allowed to transport heavy military equipment.<sup>59</sup> The Chinese did not worry about their potential defection as the physical

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<sup>56</sup> Due to the lack of Chinese document, the exact number of “liberated” American soldiers remains unclear to the present. Yet the CPV frontline soldiers provided various eye witness accounts for these “liberated” American soldiers. These observations were made by CPV frontline soldiers who later became UNC POWs. During their interrogations, they described their observations about the American POWs. See “ATIS,” Box 331, KG 830; “ATIS,” Box 353, KT 3652.

<sup>57</sup> *Zhongguo Renmin Zhiyuanjun Kangmei Yuanchao Zhanzheng Ziliao Xuanbian [Selected Documents of the CPV]* (Houqin Xuyuan Houqin Xueshu Yanjiubu, 1978), vol. 3: 27.

<sup>58</sup> “Guanyu Shicha Zhongguo Renmin Zhiyuanjun Houqin Gongzuo De Zongjie Baogao [A summary report of the CPV logistics work],” May 25, 1951. *Zhiyuanjun Ziliao Xuanbian*, vol. 6: 55-73.

<sup>59</sup> Li Peishan was captured by the UNC in 1952. For his interrogation report, see “ATIS,” Box 331, KG 830; “ATIS,” Box 353, KT 3652.

distance between the CPV's supply bases and the UNC frontline was more than 400 km in December 1950. The unpredictable UNC air bombing, the CPV checkpoint at each supply depot and the terrible road conditions made defection virtually impossible. Among these "liberated" truck drivers, Richard G. Desautels was the most prominent member. Due to his pre-war education, the seventeen-year-old Desautels could speak fluent Chinese. He was promoted to become a jeep driver for the CPV officers and did not spend a single day in POW camps until late 1951.<sup>60</sup>

In addition to providing their driving skills, the "liberated" Americans also offered their services in the English language. On November 28, an American Officer Stanley helped a CPV regiment to persuade 148 American soldiers to surrender.<sup>61</sup> According to the CPV platoon leader Zhu Darong's report, two CPV companies surrounded a small unit of UNC forces at 2 pm on that day. After a couple hours of fierce fighting, Stanley shouted the Chinese Lenient Policy to the UNC soldiers on a high ground and demanded their capitulation. At 5 pm, the UNC troops dispatched three officers, two Americans and one

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<sup>60</sup> Richard Desautels was captured by the CPV on December 1, 1950. His experiences in Korea remains unclear to the present day. Many CPV soldiers and American POWs witnessed Desautels driving the CPV officers around in 1951. He was last seen in 1953 prior to the POW exchange. Desautels was not on the official list of POWs exchange out of unknown reasons. In 2003, the PRC government informed the Pentagon that Desautels passed away on April 29, 1953 due to "serious mental illness" and was buried in Shenyang, China. For the CPV witness' statement, see "ATIS," Box 353, KT 3652. For the meeting record, see "China Admits Taking, Burying US POW from Korea," June 19, 2003. [https://web.archive.org/web/20080620214110/http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20080619/ap\\_on\\_go\\_ca\\_st\\_pe/us\\_china\\_pow\\_revelation](https://web.archive.org/web/20080620214110/http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20080619/ap_on_go_ca_st_pe/us_china_pow_revelation)

<sup>61</sup> The Chinese unit was 179 Regiment, 60 Division, 20 Army, 9 Field Army. The Chinese record only had the last name 史坦利 or *shitānlì* in pinyin. Its English transliteration would be Stanley. The Chinese record also indicated that Stanley was in his late 20s and was an officer. Yet the Chinese record did not indicate Stanley's exact official rank. Based on the available information, there are two American officers with the last name Stanley fitted the Chinese description at the National Archives database. Zimmerman Stanley and Wegrzyn Stanley. For Zimmerman Stanley's record, see <https://aad.archives.gov/aad/record-detail.jsp?dt=240&mtch=19&tf=F&q=stanley&bc=,sl,sd&rpp=10&pg=2&rid=2712&rlst=2712,3743,302,281,2433,3836,4169,4182,4189>; for Wegrzyn Stanley's record, see <https://aad.archives.gov/aad/record-detail.jsp?dt=240&mtch=19&tf=F&q=stanley&bc=,sl,sd&rpp=10&pg=1&rid=2558&rlst=170,143,886,892,1197,1262,1328,1503,2282,2558>. For the Chinese unit's information, see *Siye Weisheng Gongzuoshi*, 20. For the number of surrendering UNC soldiers, see *Jiefangjun Quanshi*, vol. 6: Appendix 3, Chart 2.

South Korean, to negotiate with the CPV. The UNC officers proposed the following conditions: First, the CPV must promise not to execute them; Second, the CPV must repatriate them back to the UNC line immediately; Third, the CPV should allow all the UNC soldiers to write a letter home; and fourth, the CPV must allow them to have some good rest.<sup>62</sup>

After a ten-hour negotiation, Stanley convinced the three UNC officers to surrender. Since Stanley understood a little Chinese while the CPV commissar was completely ignorant of English, the message exchange between the two sides was painfully slow. The Chinese commissar managed to deliver the following message to the three UNC officers: The CPV accepted all conditions except the second. The Chinese commissar only promised to send all the POWs home once the war ended. In the next couple of hours, Stanley assiduously negotiated with the three UNC officers and finally persuaded them to surrender at 3 am on the next day. Shortly after, the remaining 145 UNC soldiers followed their officers' lead and surrendered to the Chinese.<sup>63</sup> Throughout the Korean War, this was the only occasion where the American soldiers surrendered on a voluntary basis. Such an achievement would not be possible without the "liberated soldier" Stanley's help.

In addition to Stanley's service, a group of "liberated" Americans toured the CPV frontline as English language instructors. They taught CPV frontline soldiers some simple English phrases such as "surrender," "no killing," "come out quickly," "stop," "follow me," "don't move," "hands up," "We are Chinese People's Volunteer Army," "if you surrender,

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<sup>62</sup> "Zai Xiannan Zhanyizhong Zhengqu Diren Jiti Jiaoxie Touxiang De Jingyan [Some Experiences in Convincing the Enemy Forces to Surrender in the Battle of Hamgyong]," March 15, 1951. *Dijun Gongzuo Jingyan Huibian*, 98–101.

<sup>63</sup> For more details of this episode, see "Zai Xiannan Zhanyizhong Zhengqu Diren Jiti Jiaoxie Touxiang De Jingyan [Some Experiences in Convincing the Enemy Forces to Surrender in the Battle of Hamgyong]," March 15, 1951. *Dijun Gongzuo Jingyan Huibian*, 98–101.

we go home.”<sup>64</sup> Despite the American instructors’ teaching effort, the quality of the study remained questionable as most CPV soldiers used Chinese characters to pronounce the English words. For example, one popular way to pronounce the English word “surrender” was “*Shui Yandai*” or “*Shua Liandao*” in Chinese.<sup>65</sup> Some Chinese soldiers had heavy accents and their pronunciation was almost incomprehensible to an English speaker. Nevertheless, the existence of this small number of “liberated” American POWs demonstrated the effectiveness of the Lenient Policy in Korea in late 1950.

The CPV also released a number of American POWs who refused to accept “liberation.” According to the CPV’s calculation, the returned POWs could propagate the Lenient Policy behind the enemy lines in the long run. A field report indicated that “the enemies are easy to defeat, but hard to capture.”<sup>66</sup> When the report reached the CPV Headquarters, the CPV commander, General Peng Dehuai, believed that measures should be taken to assuage the UNC soldier’s fear of becoming prisoners and lower their future resistance. In his telegram to Mao Zedong on November 17, Peng stated that “we plan to release 100 enemy POWs, (30 American POWs and 70 South Korean puppet force POWs), in order to disseminate our Lenient Policy and assuage our enemy’s fear of becoming prisoners.” In his reply on the following day, Mao endorsed Peng’s plan: “Your decision to release a number of enemy POWs is correct. You should release them as fast as you can.

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<sup>64</sup> “ATIS,” Box 354, KT 4006.

<sup>65</sup> The Chinese characters were 水烟袋 and 耍镰刀. According to the report from the CPV 15<sup>th</sup> Army, among the 23 CPV soldiers who learned English from the American POWs, only 2 CPV soldiers’ pronunciations were deemed as understandable. See “Liandui Xuexi Waiyu Hanhua De Fangshi Fangfa [CPV Company Level Experiences in Learning English].” *Dijun Gongzuo Jingyan Huibian*, 136–37.

<sup>66</sup> Du, *Memoir of Du Ping*, 57.

You should release enemy POWs whenever you feel appropriate and no future request is necessary.”<sup>67</sup>

On the same day of receiving Mao’s reply, General Peng directed the CPV frontline units to release a number of UNC POWs. An English language interpreter named Cheng Shaokun remembered that after giving a hurried political lecture, his CPV unit released 103 POWs on November 18 and another 132 POWs on the following day.<sup>68</sup> In his telegram to Peng on November 24, Mao urged Peng to release more POWs and stated that “your action of releasing American POWs has received some good attention from the international media. Please release another group of Americans, like three or four hundred.”<sup>69</sup> In responding to Mao’s command, the CPV began repatriating more UNC POWs. In order to guarantee their safe return, the CPV issued the “safe conduct pass” which allowed these prisoners to pass through the CPV frontline and return to the UNC’s control.<sup>70</sup> According to the military historian Charles Young’s research, the UNC received more than 500 American prisoners back in late 1950.<sup>71</sup>

Aside from the initial success of the Lenient Policy from October to December, the CPV’s misperception about the UNC POWs began to emerge. In December, the CPV 9<sup>th</sup> Field Army Political Department conducted detailed interrogations of twenty American POWs who were captured during the Second Phase Offensive.<sup>72</sup> According to CPV’s

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<sup>67</sup> Telegram to Peng Dehuai, November 18, 1950. *Jianguo Yilai Mao Zedong Wengao [Selected Works of Mao Zedong Since 1949]* (Beijing: Zhongyang Wenxian Chubanshe, 1987), vol. 1: 672.

<sup>68</sup> Cheng and Huang, *Meijun Zhanfu*, 23.

<sup>69</sup> Telegram to Peng Dehuai, November 24, 1950. *Jianguo Yilai Mao Wengao*, vol. 1: 685.

<sup>70</sup> Some were recaptured by the North Koreans and sent back to Pyöktong. See statements by Fang and Wu in Cheng and Huang, *Meijun Zhanfu*, 23.

<sup>71</sup> Charles S. Young, *Name, Rank, and Serial Number: Exploiting Korean War POWs at Home and Abroad*, 1 edition (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2014), 48.

<sup>72</sup> “Dui Dijun Zhengzhi Qingkuang De Diaocha [An Investigation for Enemy’s Political Situation],” March 15, 1951. *Dijun Gongzuo Jingyan Huibian*, 240–45.

analysis, twelve were unemployed workers, three were bankrupted peasants, and five were college students who could not afford their tuition. In its report submitted to the CPV Headquarters, the Political Department concluded: “Externally, the American troops were a strong and disciplined armed force with the most advanced weaponry. Internally, the American soldiers do not have any political belief and each soldier is merely a selfish individual... as long as we provide the captured prisoners with cigarettes, food, and a hot bed, they will divulge any information we ask for.”<sup>73</sup>

This assessment, however, was inaccurate. Although the Chinese did not view the UNC prisoners differently from the Japanese or the KMT POWs, the UNC prisoners hardly accepted the CPV’s conviction and were bewildered by the social class identification. Andrew Condron was clearly confused by his first “interrogation” by the CPV. By emulating the poor English of his Chinese interrogators, he recalled the following conversation:

An amiable Chinese officer sat on the floor, offered each man a glass of hot water, and asked: “What sort of work does your father do? What sort of work does your mother do?”

“My mother does not work,” answered Andrew Condron.

“Why is your mother no work?”

“She is a housewife.”

“What is housewife?”

“She just stays home.”

“How much your land your family own?”

“There’s the back garden.”

“What you grow?”

“Potatoes, rhubarb.”

“How many cows have your family got?”

“We get milk from the dairy.”

“What is dairy? How many pigs you have? How many cows?”

At last, with a self-satisfied grin, the Chinese concluded, “Ah, your family very small land. You are poor peasant.”<sup>74</sup>

<sup>73</sup> “Dui Dijun Zhengzhi Qingkuang De Diaocha [An Investigation for Enemy’s Political Situation],” March 15, 1951. *Dijun Gongzuo Jingyan Huibian*, 240–45.

<sup>74</sup> Max Hastings, *The Korean War*, Reprint edition (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988), 333–34.



Such doctrinaire perception about the UNC POWs cost the lives of a number of Chinese soldiers. As the Chinese viewed the POWs as their proletariat brothers, they hardly implemented any security measures. Some POWs were even allowed to help carry their Chinese guards' guns, ammunitions, and grenade.<sup>75</sup> Lloyd Pate remembered that on his way to Pyöktong in January 1951, "we were carrying the Chinks' food and their ammo. A lot of the guys were even carrying the guards' weapons."<sup>76</sup> After a number of American POWs escaped by shooting their Chinese guards with the guards' weapon, the CPV Political Department ordered the CPV combat units to tighten up its security measures.<sup>77</sup>

Generally speaking, other than some minor offenses conducted by the CPV soldiers and their misperception of the UNC POWs, the Lenient Policy ensured the survival of most UNC POWs, successfully recruited a small number of "liberated" Americans, and promoted the public image of the PRC in late 1950 and early 1951. Rather than the American scholars' accusation of "barbarous" Chinese purposefully killing American POWs, many prisoners, such as Claude Batchelor, Paul Liles and the other "liberated soldiers," appreciated the Lenient Policy during the initial months of their captivity.

Although the Lenient Policy seemed to have worked in Korea, there were issues that persisted to endanger it. The first issue was the lack of English linguists. By late 1950, the CPV only had a few numbers of linguists who could communicate with the English-speaking POWs. As long as the CPV did not recruit an additional number of linguists, the

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<sup>75</sup> Report by the 67<sup>th</sup> Army Political Department, "Xiaji Fanji Zhanyi De Huoxian Zhengzhi Gongshi [Political Offense during the Summer]," July, 1953. *Dijun Gongzuo Jingyan Huibian*, 110–15.

<sup>76</sup> Pate, *Reactionary! Sgt. Lloyd W. Pate's Story as Told to B. J. Cutler*, 31–32.

<sup>77</sup> Report by the CPV Political Department Enemy Work Section, "Bayiwu He Zhongqiuqie Liangci Quanmian De Duidi Zhengzhi Gongshi Zongjie [A Summary for Two Political Offenses on 8/15 and Mid-Autumn Festival]," November, 1952. *Dijun Gongzuo Jingyan Huibian*, 74–80.

communication issue lingered. The second issue was ensuring an adequate supply of materials to support the POW Camps. Since the CPV procured materials from local communities, the Korean civilians could sustain the POWs with food, shelter and medicine as long as the prisoner population remained small. With the rapid increase of the prisoner population and the Korean civilians' ability to provide logistic materials depleted, the UNC POWs were to face the deadliest winter in early 1951.

### Failure of the Lenient Policy: Lack of Linguists, Material Shortages, and the Deadliest Winter

On December 24, 1950, the American POWs reached 3,781 and the CPV's capacity to administer the political education seriously lagged behind.<sup>78</sup> The PRC government halted the practice of transporting more prisoners to Manchuria in late 1950 and the CPV Political Department was compelled to handle the American prisoners in Korea, which required a huge amount of food, shelter, and medical supplies.<sup>79</sup> In addition, the CPV was in dire need of English linguists to educate the minds of these American "proletariat." Despite a small number of "liberated" Americans and the 500 repatriated, the remaining 3,000 American POWs never entered the second step of the Lenient Policy, or political education, by early 1951. These prisoners were not the CPV's "enemy" or "friend," but what I define as the "uneducated POWs" created by the CPV's inability to administer political education. After the CPV interned the "uneducated" UNC POWs at Pyöktong in

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<sup>78</sup> The total number of American POWs was 3,781 by December 24, 1950. The CPV captured 527 American POWs in its First Phase Offensive and an additional 3,254 in its Second Phase Offensive. For the POW statistics, see *Jiefangjun Quanshi*, vol. 6: Appendix 3, Chart 2.

<sup>79</sup> Due to the lack of documents, Beijing's motivation to stop accepting more POWs in Manchuria remains unclear. After the establishment of the 5 POW camps in April, 1951, these 1,800 POWs were immediately transported back to North Korea.

early 1951, the CPV's lack of English linguists and severe material shortages contributed to the collapse of the Lenient Policy and caused the death of approximately 37% of American POWs.

The CPV's first challenge was to find a secure location in Korea for implementing the political education for the "uneducated POWs." In the CCP's pre-Korean War experiences, political education could take place at both the frontline and the rear. But in late 1950, the battlefield situation could not afford this task as the CPV forces advanced more than 400 km during its First and Second Phase Offensives.<sup>80</sup> During this time period, more than 2,000 UNC POWs were scattered among the various frontline *bingzhan* or supply depots at the frontline.<sup>81</sup> These supply depots shouldered various military tasks such as delivering military supplies to the frontline and transporting the wounded Chinese soldiers back to the rear besides taking care of UNC POWs. The CPV Logistics Department complained to the CPV Political Department about the presence of American POWs and demanded that the frontline troops stop sending additional prisoners to supply depots.<sup>82</sup> As the frontline situation remained unpredictable, educating the POWs in the rear became the only viable option.

Therefore, the CPV Headquarters decided to intern all the UNC POWs (except the ROK POWs, which were the KPA's responsibility) in the rear. After the conclusion of the First Phase Offensive on November 5, General Peng's Security Section Chief Yu Zhongzhi received an order to take forty American POWs with him and find a secure location in the

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<sup>80</sup> The CPV advanced 160 km during the first phase offensive in November and an additional 300km during the second phase offensive. See *Jiefangjun Quanshi*, vol. 6: 27, 48.

<sup>81</sup> *Bingzhan*, or supply depot. For more detailed discussion for *bingzhan*'s function, see *Kangmei Yuanchao Zhanzheng Houqin Jingyan Zongjie, Zhuanye Qinwu* [Selected Documents for the Korean War, Professional Logistics] (Zhongguo Renmin Jiefangjun Chubanshe, 1986).

<sup>82</sup> *Jingyan Zongjie, Zhuanye Qinwu*, 13.

rear. Before the trip started, Yu put together a small work team consisted of a few guards and several English and Korean language interpreters.<sup>83</sup> The ensuing journey was extremely harsh. An English linguist named Guo Weijing described the journey this way,

With the assistance of our North Korean comrades, a few Chinese personnel escorted a number of UNC POWs without knowing when and where to stop. To evade the American air bombing, we were just wandering around in Korean mountains during night times without stable supplies. We were unable to treat the sick and the wounded and the work with POWs turned out to be total chaos during the trip.<sup>84</sup>

The work team first planned to settle the UNC prisoners among the North Korean civilian households in the rear. In its previous war experiences, the CCP established various institutes to conduct political education. For example, the CCP established the Japanese People's Emancipation League for Japanese POWs and created the Military and Political Academies for KMT POWs.<sup>85</sup> Most of these institutes were established in a pre-existing infrastructure such as a school, a hospital, or a temple. The POWs would attend classes during the daytime but lived in nearby civilian households at night.<sup>86</sup> Such precedents could not possibly be repeated in Korea.

As the CPV was fighting on a foreign soil, the central question was whether or not North Korean officials and civilians would cooperate. By early November, Yu negotiated with the North Korean party secretary at Pyöktong county to secure a temporary location for the prisoners. The Pyöktong county party committee initially agreed to host the prisoners inside Pyöktong city among civilian households. The North Korean officials also

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<sup>83</sup> Guo, *Diqideng Zhanfuying*, 40.

<sup>84</sup> Guo, 41–42.

<sup>85</sup> Forman, *Report from Red China*, 104.

<sup>86</sup> See for example, the ATIS interrogation reports. Many ex-KMT soldiers stated that they received political trainings between six and eight months before integrating into the PLA. While they were attending the academy, they lived in nearby villages.

dispatched a few soldiers to act as guards under the command of a KPA Colonel Kim. The possibility of accommodating all the future UNC POWs in other places in Pyöktong county also existed as the North Korean officials promised to find other locations in nearby villages to host the incoming prisoners.<sup>87</sup>

Unfortunately, an UNC bombing in mid-November immediately endangered this arrangement.<sup>88</sup> Just as the civilians of the Pyöktong city were preparing to host these prisoners, a UNC bombing burnt half of the city down. CPV language interpreter Zhao Da recalled that “after the bombing, the shops and local people’s residents on the main street were reduced into ashes. Since all the buildings in Pyöktong city are wood structure, the American bombing and the fire essentially consumed everything.”<sup>89</sup> Through the interrogation of American POWs, the CPV learned what the US used in the air strike was called napalm. Citing the lack of security, the Pyöktong county party secretary reversed his earlier agreement to host the POWs in Pyöktong city. Instead, he offered *Qingshui Gou*, an abandoned village 15 km east of Pyöktong city, as an alternate location to keep the POWs.<sup>90</sup> Yu was forced to relocate these prisoners to the abandoned village. A week later Yu decided to relocate these POWs again to another small village called *Sanfu Gou*, since it was closer to a CPV supply depot. Most importantly, the Korean villagers at *Sanfu Gou* agreed to let the UNC prisoners live among them and promised to provide food and medical

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<sup>87</sup> Guo, *Diyideng Zhanfuying*, 40.

<sup>88</sup> This bombing took place around November 10, 1951. Yu’s memoirs did not offer the exact date. Yu only stated that he took Liles and other POWs right after he conference in early November. During his postwar interrogation in 1953, Liles recalled that he was interned at *Dayudong* until November 9. Then he was transported to the Pyöktong region in the following week. For Yu’s memoirs, see Guo, 40. For Paul Liles’ interrogation records, see “POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files,” n.d., Box 331, Paul Liles Dossier.

<sup>89</sup> Zhao Da, “Zai ‘Lianheguojun Zhanfuying’ Yingdui Kongxi [The Air Strikes at the UNC POW Camps],” *Renmin Zhengxie Bao*, December 15, 2011.

<sup>90</sup> The Chinese transliteration is *Qingshui Gou*. Due to the lack of Chinese and North Korean documents, the official name of this location in Korean is unknown. See Yu Zhongzhi Memoirs, cited in Guo, *Diyideng Zhanfuying*, 40.

care to the prisoners.<sup>91</sup> During their initial days at the North Korean civilian households, Paul Liles recalled that “the Korean civilians were extremely friendly toward the POWs.”<sup>92</sup>

By December 1950, Pyöktong county became the common destination for all the incoming UNC POWs. The CPV Headquarters praised Yu’s effort and sanctioned that “all the future POWs must be settled down in Korean civilian households.”<sup>93</sup> Prisoners interned at the frontline supply depots were quickly transported to the Pyöktong county in the subsequent months.<sup>94</sup> Since the CPV successfully recovered the North Korean capital Pyongyang and re-captured the South Korean capital Seoul at this time, the Pyöktong

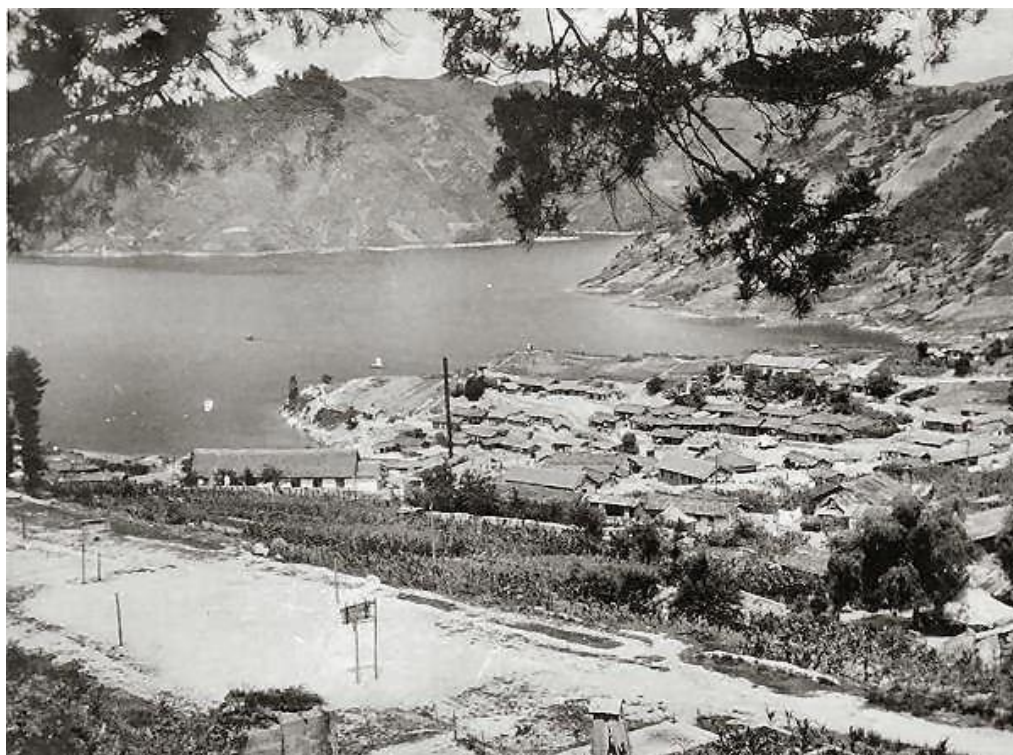


Figure 1.1 Pyöktong POW camp overview (National Archives and Records Administration)

<sup>91</sup> *Sanfu Gou*. Yu Zhongzhi Memoirs, cited in Guo, 40.

<sup>92</sup> Phase II interrogation of Paul Liles, May 6, 1954. “POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files,” n.d., Box 331, Paul Liles Dossier.

<sup>93</sup> Guo, *Diyideng Zhanfuying*, 40.

<sup>94</sup> Naiqing Wang, *Lianheguojun Zhanfu Jishi [The United Nations Prisoners of War]* (Beijing: Zhongguo Renmin Jiefangjun Chubanshe, 2000), 2.

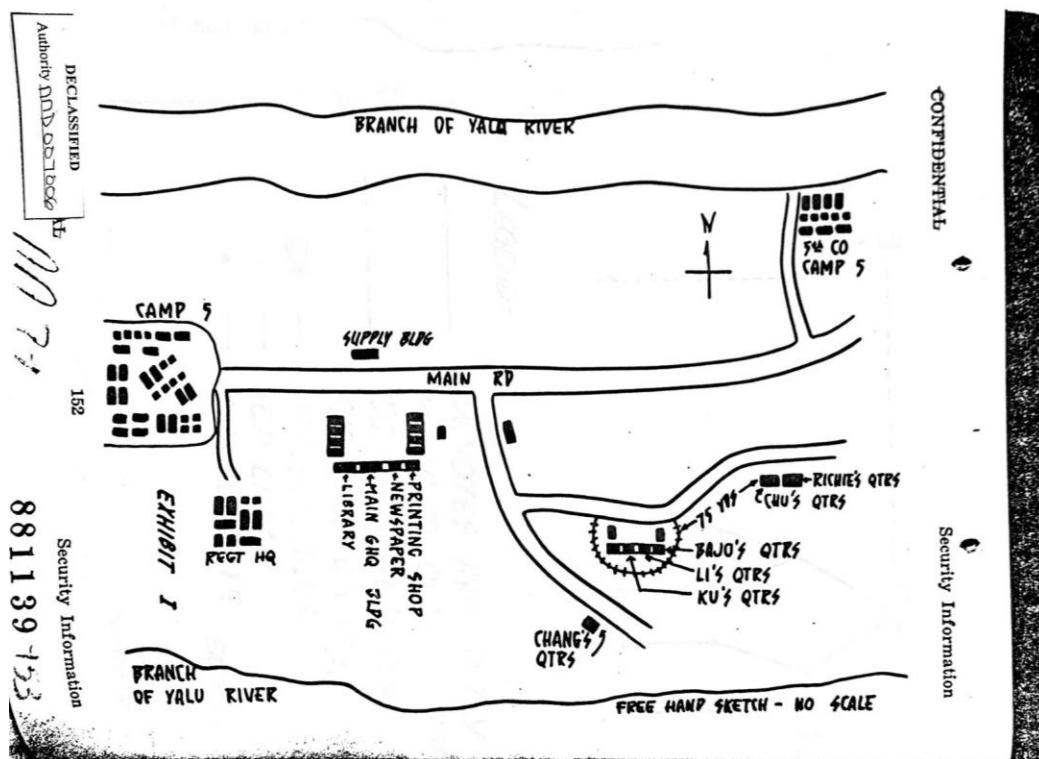


Figure 1.2 Drawings of the Pyöktong POW camps by American POW returnees (National Archives and Records Administration)

county provided an ideal place for interning the “uneducated” POWs without worrying about a possible UNC counter-offense. Nevertheless, although the CPV found secure locations to intern the UNC POWs, political education remained untenable as the communication issue quickly ensued.

During the CCP’s war against Japan from 1931 to 1945, language did not cause such a problem for two reasons. First, many CCP cadres spoke fluent Japanese as they studied in Japanese universities during the pre-war years and some even earned graduate degrees. In addition, the Comintern dispatched the founder of Japanese Communist Party Nosaka Sanzo to assist the CCP at Yanan in 1940.<sup>95</sup> Nosaka spoke fluent Chinese and worked in Yanan under the Chinese pseudo name Lin Zhe. When the CCP established the

<sup>95</sup> Forman, *Report from Red China*, 114.

Japanese Workers and Peasants School in November 1940, the ratio between Japanese-speaking CCP cadres and the Japanese POWs was approximately 2:1.<sup>96</sup> After the first class of the “liberated” Japanese graduated, many of them became instructors for incoming Japanese POWs for the remainder of the war. Second, the number of the Japanese POWs remained relatively small. For example, in Yanan alone the CCP completed the political education for a total of 1,000 Japanese POWs from 1940 to 1945. The largest training session the CCP ever held only included 130 Japanese POWs.<sup>97</sup>

The language barrier posted a much more complicated issue for the CPV in Korea. The exact number of the CPV’s English linguists in late 1950 remains unknown due to lack of information. Available evidence however demonstrates clearly that the CPV was unable to handle the influx of 3,000 English-speaking POWs by late 1950. The education level of the CPV troops was low in general. According to a survey conducted by the General Political Department in December 1951, at the time more than 80% of the PLA personnel (foot soldiers, officers, and party cadres) received an education less than 4 years, and, among them, 30% were completely illiterate.<sup>98</sup>

This situation could only be even worse in 1950 and it was impossible for the CPV to find among its ranks enough, if any, officers capable of communicating with the UNC POWs in English. According to Guo Weijing’s recollection, the ratio between American POWs and the Chinese interpreters at Pyöktong was approximately 230:1 in January

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<sup>96</sup> In November 1940, there were 9 Japanese POWs in the school and more than 20 Chinese instructors. All of the Chinese instructor spoke fluent Japanese. Hebei Shengwei Dangshi Yanjiushi, ed., *Zaihua Riren Fanzhan Jishi [A Documentary for the Anti-war Japanese in China]* (Shijia Zhuang: Hebei Jiaoyu Chubanshe, 2005), 18.

<sup>97</sup> Hebei Shengwei Dangshi Yanjiushi, 9.

<sup>98</sup> “Guanyu Quanjun Dierci Xuanchuan Wenhua Gongzuo Huiyi Xiang Mao Zhuxi De Zonghe Baogao [Report to Chairman Mao during the Second Propaganda Meeting],” December 1951. *ZGQS*, 04:201.



1951.<sup>99</sup> If Guo Weijing's memory is accurate, it means that at the time the CPV only had 14 or 15 English language interpreters. Resultantly, as for late December 1950, the CPV commissar Du Ping only received thirty-two detailed interrogation reports conducted in English.<sup>100</sup> The presence of 3,000 American POWs in December clearly exceeded the CPV's capacity.

One way for the CPV to communicate with the English-speaking POWs was through writing. Most UNC POWs captured in early 1951 merely filled out a questionnaire as their interrogation. The questionnaires listed six questions for each prisoner: "nationality, name, age, sex, rank, and remarks."<sup>101</sup> A CPV cadre Wang Naiqing, who had worked with the Japanese and KMT POWs before, bemoaned:

There were only a few cadres who spoke English at Pyöktong. We improvised the practice by producing some brochures. It included some commands and regulations in both Chinese and English. When we wanted the POWs to perform a certain task, we would point our fingers on the booklet. If we wanted the POWs to answer a question, they would have to write the answers down. If the POWs replied by talking, we could not understand.<sup>102</sup>

This brochure practice was adopted as a temporary substitution for language interpreters. By early 1951, the CPV frontline soldiers reported that nearly "all infantrymen had a copy of such literature."<sup>103</sup> As the prisoner population continued growing while the number of interpreters remained small, political education slipped further away.

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<sup>99</sup> Guo, *Diyideng Zhanfuying*, 46.

<sup>100</sup> Du, *Memoir of Du Ping*, 379.

<sup>101</sup> KG 0872 was a former CPV Enemy Work personnel at the Pyöktong POW camps. He was captured and interrogated by the UNC in late 1951. For the detailed interrogation report, see "ATIS," Box 331, KG 0872.

<sup>102</sup> Wang had rich experience dealing with the Japanese POWs during WWII. But he had no experience dealing with the American POWs before Korea. He later served as the Education Chief at the Pyöktong POW camp. Wang, *Lianheguojun Zhanfu*, 10.

<sup>103</sup> "ATIS," Box 331, KG 0872.

To remedy the dire shortage of English linguists in Korea, Beijing issued two rounds of mobilization orders successively in October and December in 1950 to conscript language interpreters from university campuses.<sup>104</sup> A couple of hundred college students responded to the mobilization orders and signed up for the CPV.<sup>105</sup> But instead of going to Korea directly, they were transported to Beijing. The Enemy Work Section (EWS) under the PLA General Political Department was in charge of POW-related affairs. It was upon the EWS' proposal that interpreters were conscripted from university students.<sup>106</sup> Unlike other PLA branches, the EWS only admitted the “most reliable,” and those deemed “unreliable,” such as “liberated soldiers” from KMT troops, were never allowed to join.<sup>107</sup> Since most of these students did not have prior association with the CCP, their political background required further scrutiny by the General Political Department.

Unsurprisingly, the General Political Department found that the backgrounds of many these recruited students were problematic. Some of them had personal connections with the KMT Central Committee members or pro-KMT university faculty. Some used to work as linguists for KMT ambassadors to foreign countries. A small number of them even worked for the US Office of War Information during World War II. Through scrutiny, many of these students received labels like the “sons and daughters of big capitalists,” and “devoted religious believers.”<sup>108</sup> Upon learning these students' backgrounds, the CPV

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<sup>104</sup> For the October mobilization order, see Cheng and Huang, *Meijun Zhanfu*, 26–28. For the December mobilization order, see *Zhou Enlai Nianpu, 1949-1976*, vol. 1: 103.

<sup>105</sup> Due to the lack of documents, the number of language interpreters signed up for the CPV is unknown. But the ending result is clear, some 200 of these students worked in Pyöktong in the end. See Cheng and Huang, *Meijun Zhanfu*, 34.

<sup>106</sup> “Dangde Jianshe Wenti Jueyan [Decisions on the CCP Development],” November, 1931. *ZZWX*, vol. 7: 464-484.

<sup>107</sup> For Liberated Soldiers' illegibility to join the Enemy Work section, see “ATIS,” Box 346, KT 1931.

<sup>108</sup> For example, Guo Weijing came from a landlord family in Shanxi. He was labelled the “Rightist” in the late 1950s. Liu Zenglu had similar class background. She was politically sidelined after she returned to China in 1954. Liu did not have a career until after 1978. See Zhenxia Bian, *Chaoxian Zhanzheng Zhongde Yingmei*

cadre Wang Naiqing protested to Beijing that “most of these students came from bourgeoisie families. They’ve never fought in a battle and are not revolutionary soldiers. They do not even understand the definition of enemy!”<sup>109</sup> The students’ problematic backgrounds constituted a dilemma for the EWS. Recruiting all the students would solve the communication issue, but their qualification to administer the political education was questionable. On the other hand, strictly enforcing the political background check would procrastinate the political education of POWs in Korea.

As a solution, Beijing decided to put the students through a political training course.<sup>110</sup> On December 5, the PRC Premier Zhou Enlai sanctioned that the CCP armed forces should “take the initiative to recruit more talent from college students.”<sup>111</sup> As a compensation for their supposedly weak political background, these students must complete a political training course prior to their departure for Korea. According to Wang Deliang, a member of the EWS, the students’ training emphasized the importance of Lenient Policy and its long-term benefits.<sup>112</sup> From December 1950 to January 1951, some 200 college students passed the political training and were sent to Pyöktong as English linguists in early 1951.<sup>113</sup> As the arrival of these student linguists solved the communication issue, the CPV launched an ambitious project to convert these POWs into “liberated soldiers.” However, the inappropriate teaching materials and the battlefield stalemate seriously undermined the political education effort.

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*Zhanfu Jishi [American and British POWs in Korea War]*, 2nd ed. (Beijing: Jiefangjun Wenyi Chubanshe, 2004), 50. For Liu Zenglu’s story, see Xinhuaawang, “Kengdaoli, Woshi Weiyi De Nvxing [In the Trench, I am the Only Female],” n.d., <http://www.haijiangzx.com/2015/1228/586934.shtml>.

<sup>109</sup> Wang, *Lianheguojun Zhanfu*, 12.

<sup>110</sup> *Zhou Enlai Nianpu, 1949-1976*, vol. 1: 103.

<sup>111</sup> *Zhou Enlai Nianpu, 1949-1976*, vol. 1: 103.

<sup>112</sup> “ATIS,” Box 346, KT 1931.

<sup>113</sup> Most of these interpreters arrived in January and February, 1951. Cheng and Huang, *Meijun Zhanfu*, 27.

With the assistance of the student interpreters, the CPV first introduced a classification system that put the POWs into three categories: “reactionary,” “neutral,” and “progressive.” This was a direct migration of the PLA’s classification system for the KMT POWs. The “reactionaries” were treated as class enemies and were segregated; the majority was in the “neutral” category and were deemed as convertible; and the “progressives” were pro-CCP and were mobilized to win over the “neutrals.”<sup>114</sup> In Korea, officers and the recalcitrant prisoners were labelled as “reactionaries,” and were transported to a special compound for “thought reform through hard labor.”<sup>115</sup> POWs who embraced the Chinese political education became “progressives,” or just “pro,” and were encouraged to persuade the “neutrals” into accepting the political education.

A prisoner could change his classification through words and deeds. The questionnaires filled out by the POWs in late 1950 helped the classification process. The Chinese initially treated the officers and the recalcitrant prisoners as “reactionaries,” but invited all POWs to become “progressives.” For example, a black prisoner named LaRance Sullivan was initially classified as a “reactionary” in February 1951 as he refused to show up for the morning roll call or the compulsory lectures.<sup>116</sup> Later, Sullivan contracted pneumonia and was admitted to the camp hospital. During his medical treatment, a CPV commissar gave Sullivan several reading materials on Marxism. Sullivan became interested in the idea of racial equality under communism and demanded to learn more about it after he was discharged from hospital in March. The CPV officials re-classified

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<sup>114</sup> “ATIS,” Box 327, KG 0184.

<sup>115</sup> Interrogation of Paul Liles, sea aboard the USNS Brewster, September 19, 1953. “POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files,” n.d., Box 185, Harry Fleming Dossier.

<sup>116</sup> Interrogation of Wesley Murray, August 3, 1955. “POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files,” Box 591, LaRance Sullivan Dossier.

him as a “progressive” and issued him a Mao Zedong badge.<sup>117</sup> The CPV organized POWs into squads of 20 to 25 men, each sharing the same room, and appointed Sullivan squad monitor as a reward for his “progressive leaning.”

As the case-by-case approach was impossible without a sufficient number of English linguists, the CPV experimented to convert these American POWs on mass scale through lectures. On March 18, the CPV General Political Department sent a directive to the POW camps, emphasizing that “as Chairman Mao pointed out to us, we must treat the political education for POWs as a serious political task.”<sup>118</sup> Since the arrival of language interpreters readjusted the ratio between prisoners and linguists to 16:1, the CPV began the political lectures on daily basis in February and March in 1951.<sup>119</sup> Each lecture would last two to three hours and a discussion session would continue until dinner time. Prisoners in the same squad belonged to one discussion group, and their contributions to discussions were recorded by the CPV-designated discussion monitor, or squad monitor, to be used by the CPV to supervise the POWs’ thoughts and the effect of the lectures.<sup>120</sup>

The CPV’s poor selection of lecture materials undermined the political education. Most of the Chinese lecture materials were designated for the Japanese and KMT soldiers and Beijing was yet to provide textbooks targeting the American POWs. William Cowart

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<sup>117</sup> Interrogation of Clarence C. Banks, July 28, 1955. “POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files,” Box 591, LaRance Sullivance Dossier.

<sup>118</sup> “Guanyu Zuzhi Fuguan Tuanshi De Tongzhi [Notification to Organize a POW Management Team],” March 18, 1951. Cited in Guo, *Diyideng Zhanfuying*, 39.

<sup>119</sup> The starting date of the political lectures varied from camp to camp, but generally in February and March of 1951. POWs also stated that the political lectures were never given “at individual level.” The only exception was the Turks, since the CPV was unable to find language interpreters in Turkish language. For the starting date of the lectures, see Cheng and Huang, *Meijun Zhanfu*, 39; Guo, *Diyideng Zhanfuying*, 39. For the POWs’ statement on the lecture approach, see “POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files,” n.d., Box 111, William Cowart Dossier.

<sup>120</sup> Phase IV interrogation of William Cowart, August 11, 1955. “POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files,” n.d., Box 111, William Cowart Dossier.

remembered that the lecture contents were mainly about East Asian history such as Japanese history, Korean history, and Chinese history with a special emphasis over Taiwan.<sup>121</sup> The UNC prisoners were generally uninterested in the lecture materials. Based on the various reports submitted by squad monitors in mid-1951, most American POWs were staunch about the idea that “the American way of life is the best, communism is only slightly better than fascism.”<sup>122</sup> Commenting on the Chinese politics, most American POWs thought that “there is no difference between Chiang Kai-shek and Mao Zedong. The CCP and the KMT are similar to the Democratic and Republican parties in the US.”<sup>123</sup> The lecture materials thus failed to demonstrate the superiority of communism.

Furthermore, most UNC prisoners were unfamiliar with Marxism and complained that the lectures included too much jargon. A number of POWs reported to their Chinese instructors that “we hear what you are talking about in lectures, but most of us were high school graduates and we just cannot understand these concepts.” Jargon such as “reactionary,” “monopoly,” and “exploitation” were simply too “arcane” to comprehend.<sup>124</sup> James Thompson simply dismissed the lecture materials in his memoirs: “That Third World stuff is fine for radicals preaching on the streets of New York,” but in Korea it “isn’t worth a good damn.”<sup>125</sup> The UNC prisoners simply did not see how Marxism related to their situation in POW camps and thus rejected the gospel of communism.

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<sup>121</sup> Phase IV interrogation of William Cowart, August 11, 1955. “POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files,” Box 111, William Cowart Dossier.

<sup>122</sup> Du, *Memoir of Du Ping*, 382.

<sup>123</sup> Du, 382.

<sup>124</sup> “Zong Zhengzhibu Digongbu Guanyu Kangmei Yuanchao Duidi Xuanchuan Gongzuo De Juti Zongjie [A General Summary for the Propaganda Work during the Korean War by the Enemy Work Section],” August, 1954. *ZGLZX*, vol. 12: 923.

<sup>125</sup> Thompson, *True Colors*, 108.

When the Korean War turned into trench warfare in early 1951, the battlefield stalemate also solidified the “reactionary” POWs’ recalcitrant attitude. The POWs learned about the development of the war from the newly arrived prisoners. In contrast with late 1950, the UNC was able to hold its ground in early 1951 and the battleline stabilized around the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. Some “reactionary” POWs even imagined that the “US forces would arrive to rescue us in a few weeks” and believed that punishment by the Chinese would serve as solid evidence of their patriotism.<sup>126</sup> During regular lectures, many prisoners behaved obnoxiously by making unnecessary noises and cursing their Chinese lecturers “to go to hell.”<sup>127</sup> Under their influence, some “neutral” POWs also started refusing to attend the lectures by faking ill or hiding in the latrines.

The conversion via lecture approach apparently fell short of the CPV’s expectations. The English language interpreters reported to the CPV Political Department that the prisoners had developed “a very strong and outrageous recalcitrant attitude.”<sup>128</sup> Cadre Wang Naiqing lamented: “Educating these western POWs is an unprecedented challenge to us...most of them come from developed countries and have different traditions, cultures, and thought patterns.”<sup>129</sup> He admitted that the lecture approach was unsuitable to convert the American POWs, but believed that the CPV could eventually come up with a persuasive program. In contrast with Wang’s optimism, interpreter Guo Weijing simply thought that Beijing’s goal to convert American POWs through lectures was “unrealistic.”<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Phase II interrogation of Paul Liles, April 29, 1954. “POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files,” n.d., Box 331, Paul Liles Dossier.

<sup>127</sup> Phase II interrogation of Paul Liles, April 29, 1954. “POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files,” Box 331, Paul Liles Dossier.

<sup>128</sup> Bian, *Yingmei Zhanfu Jishi*, 112.

<sup>129</sup> Wang, *Lianheguojun Zhanfu*, 66.

<sup>130</sup> Guo, *Diyideng Zhanfuying*, 45.

Nevertheless, both the experienced CCP cadres and the newly arrived student interpreters agreed that the political lectures were ineffective.

More than the failed lecture program, the severe material shortages began claiming POWs' lives as the cold winter crept in. In its past experiences of waging "people's war," the CCP procured supply materials from the locals.<sup>131</sup> In late 1950 and early 1951, Korean civilians remained the only source of supplies for both the Chinese personnel and the UNC POWs.<sup>132</sup> In *Sanfu Gou* alone the number of American POWs skyrocketed from 161 in November to over 1,000 by the end of December 1950.<sup>133</sup> The locals' capability to provide food virtually depleted in January 1951. Many Korean civilians simply refused to share their food with the POWs.

In the absence of sufficient supplies to sustain their lives during the harsh winter, the American POWs' initial good impression toward their Chinese captors quickly faded away. In March 1951, the "progressive" prisoner Claude Batchelor openly protested to the Chinese that "we were fed-up with the whole thing" and threatened to organize a strike on the lectures unless the Chinese could improve their living conditions.<sup>134</sup> However, the Lenient Policy offered no instruction for the CPV to secure food, shelter, or medicines from alternate sources once the locals' capacity depleted since the CCP never encountered such a scenario.

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<sup>131</sup> The CCP purchased the logistical from locals at the Military and Political Academy at Xindu. See more details in "ATIS," Box 327, KG 0184.

<sup>132</sup> Guo, *Diyideng Zhanfuying*, 41.

<sup>133</sup> These 1,000 POWs came from 13 different nations and were mainly American POWs. Additionally, these POWs did not include the ROK prisoners, who were taken away by the KPA. For the number of POWs, see Guo, 40. For the nationality of the POWs, see Wang, *Lianheguojun Zhanfu*, 2–3.

<sup>134</sup> Claude Batchelor statement at Tokyo, Japan, January 28, 1954. "POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files," n.d., Box 30, Claude Batchelor Dossier.



The CPV Logistics Department could not alleviate the situation either. When the CPV vanguard troops captured Seoul in January 1951, frontline commanders reported to Beijing that they only received a quarter of the daily rations.<sup>135</sup> The 26<sup>th</sup> Army reported to the CPV Headquarters that its 9<sup>th</sup> Company of the 226 Regiment was deployed into a defense position on a snowy mountain for seventy-two hours without any food supply. “Without firing a single shot, the entire company either starved or froze to death and only twenty-six survived.”<sup>136</sup> Under such circumstances, the CPV was compelled to continue the food conscription from the Korean civilians to sustain its frontline troops as well as the prisoner population in the rear.<sup>137</sup> In some extreme instances, the CPV soldiers seized food and livestock from Korean civilians by force.<sup>138</sup> On March 5, the CPV Headquarters reported to Beijing that the food conscription had “seriously deteriorated the relationship with Korean masses and generated negative political consequences” while the food shortage remained.<sup>139</sup>

At Pyöktong, petty crimes among the POWs such as stealing, robbing, and gambling over food became a daily phenomenon. Some prisoners would sneak into the camp kitchens during the night and steal “anything he could get his hands on.”<sup>140</sup> Violence

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<sup>135</sup> Each CPV soldier could only receive approximately 2.47 kg of food in Seoul. *ZGQS*, 04:72.

<sup>136</sup> Report of the 26<sup>th</sup> Army Logistics Department, January 18, 1951, *Zhiyuanjun Ziliao Xuanbian*, vol. 4: 10-34.

<sup>137</sup> The plan conscripted 5% of food from poor peasants; 20% from middle peasants; 30% from rich peasants; and 50% from landlords. See Telegram to the CPV Headquarter, December 1, 1950. *Jianguo Yilai Mao Wengao*, vol. 1: 759-760.

<sup>138</sup> The report stated that the 264 Regiment shot 4 cows for food; the 226 Regiment stole a cow and some food from the locals. See Report of the 26<sup>th</sup> Army Logistics Department, “Ershi Liujun Houqinbu Xianjingnandao Zhanyi Houqin Gongzuo Chubu Jiantao [A Reflection on the Logistics Work During the Battle of South Hamgyong],” January 18, 1951. *Zhiyuanjun Ziliao Xuanbian*, vol. 4: 10-34.

<sup>139</sup> Telegram to the CPV Headquarter, “Qing Sugei Wushijun Liangshi [Please Send Food to the 50<sup>th</sup> Army As Soon As Possible],” March 5, 1951. *Kangmei Yuanchao Zhanzheng Houqin Jingyan Zongjie, Junxu Lei [Selected Documents for the Korean War, Military Supplies]* (Zhongguo Renmin Jiefangjun Chubanshe, 1986), 43.

<sup>140</sup> Interrogation of Ellvert Mathew, July 23, 1955. “POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files,” n.d., Box 692, Clarence Adams Dossier.

over food was also prevalent. As Clarence Adams recalled: “We would fight viciously for any scrap of food and strip the dead of their clothing, boots, and anything else that might help the rest of us survive.”<sup>141</sup> Gambling was another popular means to acquire food.

According to Larry Zellers’ recollection,

Some of these men who were gifted at gambling had won so much food that they could not accept delivery of all of it at one time and were obliged to keep a calendar. On any given day, the winner would inform the loser that he wanted delivery of the food he had won. Together, they would march into the mess hall and sit next to each other at the table. The winner would eat his bowl of millet very quickly while the loser would pretend that he was not hungry. Then they would switch bowls.<sup>142</sup>

Commenting on prisoners’ behaviors over food, Morris Wills explained: “Everyone was just trying to exist to survive. No one was able to take charge. Every value you ever had, every standard, is slowly crushed...you became an animal.”<sup>143</sup>

While the food shortage posted grave danger to the POWs, shelter was another urgent issue. For most POWs, the only clothing they had was what they wore when captured. The CPV was unable to provide additional winter clothing to these POWs as even the Chinese combat troops suffered from the harsh winter. In early 1951, temperature at Pyöktong often plummeted to -30 degrees. The cramped living condition provided almost the only heating source—prisoner’s bodies. Clarence Adams was packed with another twenty-four fellow prisoners in an eight-by-ten-foot room in a small civilian household. “Because there was not enough space for everyone to lie down,” Adams recalled, “our legs would stretch over each other’s chests. The air smelled so bad that when it was my turn to lie down, I put my nose to a small hole in the wall to get some fresh air.”<sup>144</sup> The CPV

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<sup>141</sup> Adams, *An American Dream*, 50.

<sup>142</sup> Zellers, *In Enemy Hands*, 160.

<sup>143</sup> Wills, *Turncoat*, 40.

<sup>144</sup> Adams, *An American Dream*, 46.

initially planned to hold 1,000 POWs at Pyöktong. However, by early 1951, more than 3,000 POWs cramped in.

No less debilitating was the lack of medical supplies. Malnutrition and dysentery were the top killers. The inadequate diet caused severe malnutrition among the prisoner population. In its report to Beijing in early 1951, the CPV Political Department reported that “most of these dead POWs displayed no pre-existing conditions, no moaning, no struggling, no spasm, or other signs of disease.”<sup>145</sup> Without the presence of a single medical staff, the CCP cadres and student linguists were unable to determine the causes for death. It was only after the first medical team arrived in April 1951 that the Pyöktong authorities learned the cause for death was “severe malnutrition that developed into multiple organ failure.”<sup>146</sup> Equally concerning was the spread of dysentery. It knocked down both the POWs and the Chinese staff. In early 1951, two Chinese personnel contracted this disease.<sup>147</sup> However, they could not receive proper medical attention as there was no medical staff. The common treatment for dysentery was atabrine, a small yellow tablet which tasted bitter.<sup>148</sup> When the atabrine failed to control the disease, the two Chinese personnel were quickly transported to Manchuria for further treatment. While the Chinese personnel could be transported back to the PRC for medical treatment, the American POWs would have to rely on their luck.

Confronted with the lack of food, shelter and medical supplies, death became a daily phenomenon at Pyöktong. An American pilot arrived at Pyöktong in February 1951.

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<sup>145</sup> Bian, *Yingmei Zhanfu Jishi*, 54.

<sup>146</sup> Bian, 55.

<sup>147</sup> Jiang Ningsheng and Yu Zhongzhi’s wife contracted dysentery at this time. See Guo, *Diyideng Zhanfuying*, 45.

<sup>148</sup> “ATIS,” Box 330, KG 0754.

Based on his personal observation, he estimated the death number of American POWs as 1,600 and wrote the following poem titled “A Time to Remember” in POW camps:

Not a bugle is heard,  
 Not a funeral beat,  
 Not even a drum sounding retreat,  
 As over the ice the corpses were carried,  
 To that hill where our GIs were buried.  
 ...

There were no useless caskets to enclose their breast,  
 Only GI clothing for their last rest,  
 All colors of men black, brown and white,  
 Now sixteen hundred faded lights.

A pill, a powder or medicine of any kind,  
 May have save them from that yonder hill,  
 Those sixteen hundred now lying still.

In their illness, tossing and turning,  
 Most of them knew there would be no returning,  
 Some went easy, but most in pain,  
 Did these sixteen hundred die in vain?

For those of us who may go back to enjoy life’s fill,  
 They will still be there on that lonely hill,  
 Forgotten by some, yet remembered by most,  
 They will be the “sixteen hundred in their last post.”<sup>149</sup>

From late 1950 to April 1951, the exact death number of the American POWs remains unknown to the present day. But one undeniable fact shows that among the 7,068 American POWs, only 4,428 survived and returned home in 1954. Instead of the established scholars’ accusation of “barbarous” Chinese purposefully slaughtering defenseless American POWs, the high death toll was caused by the CPV’s severe material shortages. The CPV commissar Du Ping described the POW work as “chaotic” in a speech

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<sup>149</sup> Unpublished memoir of Sidney Eesensten, *Memories of Life as a POW – 35 Years Later*, 42-43. In Robert W. Fletcher, “Robert W. Fletcher Papers, 1950-2004,” 2004 1950, B-373-Q Box 1, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

delivered in June 1952.<sup>150</sup> According to Du, the lack of food, shelter, and medicine were the leading factors for the death toll. Despite the small number of the “liberated” American soldiers, the Lenient Policy largely failed to handle the novel challenge of the “uneducated” POWs during the Korean War.

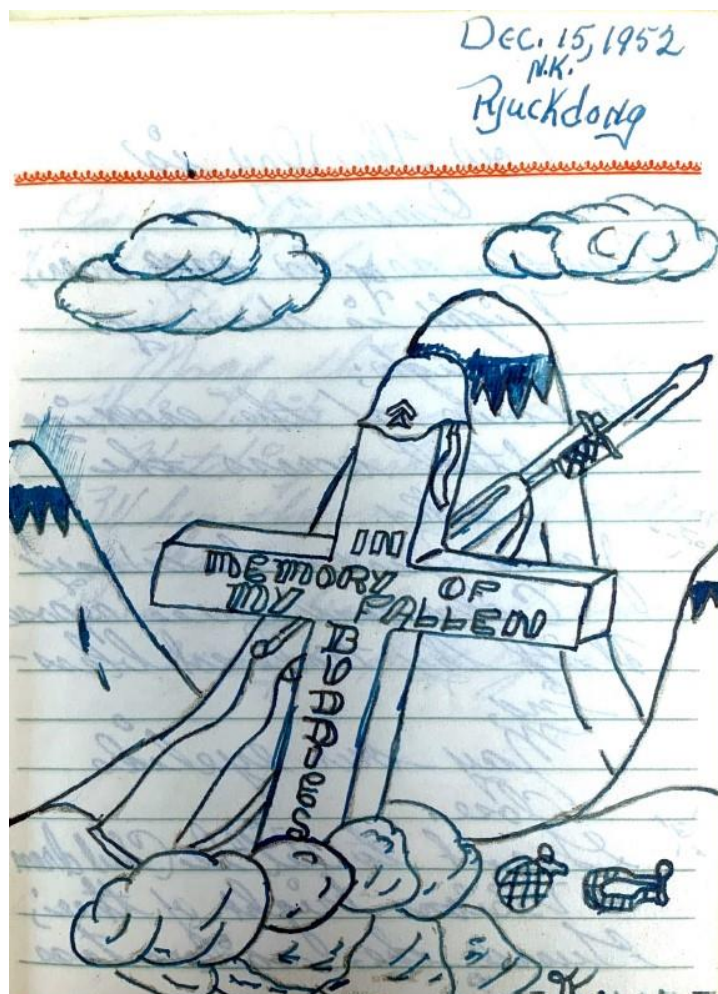


Figure 1.3 Comics drew by Robert Fletcher to commemorate the American POWs who passed away at Pyöktong (Bentley Historical Library)

In April 1951, the CPV commissar Du Ping petitioned the General Political Department in Beijing to adjust the Lenient Policy for the UNC POWs. In his telegram, Du suggested the establishment of permanent camps along the Yalu River to “take better

<sup>150</sup> Du Ping, “Guanyu Jiaqiang Diweijun Gongzuo Wenti [On Strengthening the Discipline of POW Work Issue],” June 1952. *Dijun Gongzuo Jingyan Huibian*, 27–49.

care of the POWs' livelihood and conduct appropriate political trainings."<sup>151</sup> On April 24, 1951, the CCP General Political Department endorsed Du's plan and ordered the establishment of five POWs camps along the Yalu River with the Pyöktong POW camp as the headquarter. By the founding of the Pyöktong POW Camp No. 5, the CPV essentially adopted the Geneva Convention to treat the UNC POWs and gave up the goal of converting them into "liberated soldiers." With the new policy guideline in place in April 1951, the CPV prioritized the controlling of the POWs.

Below the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, the UNC also captured a substantial amount of CPV POWs from late 1950 to early 1951. Following its precedents in World War II, the US Military viewed these Chinese POWs as "victims of radical ideologies" and attempted to convert them into "democratic citizens" with an indoctrination program called the Civil Information and Education (CI&E or CIE). In contrast with its prior successful experience in converting the Germany and Japanese prisoners however, the CIE program utterly failed by 1951. The next chapter explores the rationale of the CIE program and discusses why it failed in Korea.

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<sup>151</sup> Du, *Memoir of Du Ping*, 376.

## Chapter Two

### The Civil Information and Education Program and the Korean War

From October 1950 to December 1951, the United Nations Command (UNC) captured more than 20,000 Chinese Prisoners of War (POWs) during the Korean War.<sup>1</sup> As the undisputed leader of the twenty-two nation coalition forces, the United States orchestrated the UNC's POW policies. Shortly after the US intervened in the Korean conflict in 1950, the US Army planned to activate an ambitious program called the Civil Information and Education (CIE hereafter) to indoctrinate and convert the prisoners of the Korean War from "victims of a radical ideology" (i.e., communism) into "democratic citizens." As the CIE Field Operation Division (FOD) Chief Lieutenant Colonel Robert E. O'Brien explained the aim of this program, "specifically, we would like to see these people develop a conviction that they and their people will be better off, politically, and economically under a democratic rather than [a] totalitarian regime."<sup>2</sup> Similar with the People's Republic of China's (PRC) view of the American POWs, the US also viewed the Chinese soldiers as victims of an "evil" ideology and their "wrong" belief could be

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<sup>1</sup> These POWs were interned at Pusan and Kojedo, the two successive locations for the POW camps. Kojedo is present day Geoje-do or Geoje Island. By mid-1951, the number of Chinese POWs had reportedly reached 20,700. This number of 20,700 Chinese POWs was inflated. According to the POW name list exchanged during the Kaesong armistice negotiation in July 1951, there were 20,700 Chinese POWs under the UNC's control. However, the real number of Chinese POWs was lower according to a G-2 study completed in December 1953. The study listed two reasons for the inflated number. Translation was the first reason. As there was no standard Romanization system from Chinese characters into English, some Chinese POWs' names had been registered more than once under different English spellings. Fake identifies was the second reason. Some CCP cadres forged several fake identities out of the fear of persecutions under the UNC. These stated reasons contributed to the inflated number of Chinese POWs. For the detailed discussion for the number of Chinese POWs, see "Records of the Investigative Records Repository: Intelligence and Investigative Dossiers - Impersonal File, 1939-1980 (Investigative Records: Intelligence and Investigative Dossiers)," December 1953, Box 47, "A Study of the Administration and Security of the Oriental Communist Prisoners of War During the Conflict in Korea," RG 319/270/84/20/2, National Archives at College Park.

<sup>2</sup> Cited in William Chapman Bradbury, *Mass Behavior in Battle and Captivity: The Communist Soldier in the Korean War*, 1st Edition (University of Chicago Press, 1968), 219.

corrected with the “right” education. Like the GIs who experienced intensive communist indoctrination and conversion efforts at Pyöktong from late 1950 to early 1951, Chinese POWs of the Korean War also became subject of the Cold War contestation for the mind.

Contrary to the FOD Chief O’Brien’s wishful thinking, the FOD Evaluation Branch reported the failure of the CIE program in late 1951. On November 13, 1951, the CIE field officers lamented that after three months of CIE trainings, “these prisoners are far from being staunch believers in democracy. Probably most of them believe that communism is evil, but it is doubtful that many are convinced that democracy has much more to offer.”<sup>3</sup> In analyzing the failure of the program, the CIE Director Monta L. Osborne first blamed the “oriental” mentality of the POWs. In October, Osborne reported that there was a popular belief among the FOD personnel that the Chinese POWs “are stupid and uneducable. That the Oriental is set in his ways, and cannot change.”<sup>4</sup> Resonating with the American POWs’ racism toward their Chinese captors at Pyöktong, the CIE personnel held a similar racial contempt for the Chinese POWs and blamed it for the failure of the CIE.

More than blaming the “oriental” mentality, the CIE officials also blamed the communist ideology for undermining the CIE program. In 1953, the US Army intelligence branch (G-2) re-examined the CIE program and concluded that “the Oriental Communist prisoner of war is unique in many respects when we compare him with the conventional prisoner of war we have captured in previous wars.”<sup>5</sup> Drawing from its successful

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<sup>3</sup> Evaluation Branch to Chief, CIE, “A Report to the Materials Production Branch,” November 13, 1951. “CIE General Correspondence,” Box 1.

<sup>4</sup> The visit was on October 15 and the report was submitted on November 2, 1951. See Director, CIE/UNC Affairs to Chief, CIE Section, “Report of Temporary Duty,” November 2, 1951. “CIE General Correspondence,” Box 1.

<sup>5</sup> The Oriental Communist Prisoner of War, A Study From the Intelligence Viewpoint, “Investigative Records: Intelligence and Investigative Dossiers,” Box 47, “A Study of the Administration and Security of the Oriental Communist Prisoners of War During the Conflict in Korea,” 104.



conversion of 430,000 German, Italian, and Japanese POWs from “victims of radical ideologies” into “democratic citizens” during World War II, G-2 claimed that the communist ideology had a much deeper grip on human minds than Nazism, Fascism, and militarism. According to the G-2 report, POWs of the Korean War “is usually well indoctrinated in Communism” to the point that “he continues his fight with all the zeal” even in POW camps.<sup>6</sup> The Chinese POWs thus constituted an unprecedented challenge to the US Army in Korea. In 1950, the US Army attributed the failure of the CIE to the “oriental” mentality and the “evil” nature of communism.

Instead of blaming the unique characteristics of “oriental communist,” the military historian Charles Young attributes the failure of the CIE program to the incompetent FOD personnel in his 2014 book, *Name, Rank, and Serial Number*. According to Young’s investigation, in May 1951, there were only twenty CIE FOD officers in the Chinese POW camps on Koje-do, a small off-shore Korean island.<sup>7</sup> Having received the task to indoctrinate more than 16,000 Chinese POWs, FOD only selected nine instructors from the twenty officers. When asked why one member was assigned to CIE, “an officer scratched his head, gazed at the soldier’s file, and noted that he once coached grade-school basketball.” In the end, the officer justified his decision: “Somebody must have [taken the task].”<sup>8</sup> Given the enormity of the task and the CIE instructors’ spotty backgrounds, the POW reeducation program unsurprisingly failed in just three months. According to Young, the UNC Headquarters took the CIE program as a trivial matter and did not allocate enough manpower and resources.

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<sup>6</sup> “Investigative Records: Intelligence and Investigative Dossiers,” Box 47, “A Study of the Administration and Security of the Oriental Communist Prisoners of War During the Conflict in Korea,” 104-106.

<sup>7</sup> Young, *Name, Rank, and Serial Number*, 36.

<sup>8</sup> Young, 36.

By examining the American military records and the Chinese language sources from mainland China and Taiwan, chapter two examines the CIE program between October 1950 and December 1951. This chapter first summarizes the US POW program during WWII and then discusses why the same approach failed in Korea. My argument is that after the UNC psychological warfare successfully enticed a number of Chinese defectors in late 1950, the CIE lectures failed to intrigue the minds of the Chinese POWs due to the inappropriate lecture content and the UNC's lack of Chinese language linguists. During the same time period, the CIE labor program bankrupted due to the lack of economic opportunities to utilize the Chinese POWs' labor powers in a meaningful way.

#### From Soldiers to Laborers: CIE before the Korean War

In August 1942, under the pressure of the British government, the US agreed to accept an emergency batch of 50,000 German POWs to relieve London's wartime financial burdens.<sup>9</sup> In the next four years, the US received more than 430,000 German, Italian, and Japanese POWs within its borders. After the Pearl Harbor attack, the US State Department informed the German, Italian, and Japanese governments that it would comply with the Geneva Conventions of 1929 to treat POWs via the Swiss government. Then the Office of the Provost Marshal General (OPMG) under the War Department assumed the duty to administer the POW-related issues.<sup>10</sup> When the last Axis prisoner was repatriated in 1946, the US Army had developed a conviction that a "democratic citizen" could be made out of a prisoner population through a POW labor program and an education in democracy.

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<sup>9</sup> George Lewis and John Mewha, *History of Prisoner of War Utilization by the United States Army: 1776-1945*, Pamphlet No. 20-213 (Washington, D.C: Department of the Army, 1955), 84.

<sup>10</sup> Lewis and Mewha, 75.

The labor program occupied a central position in the US POW program of World War II. It was initially designed to remedy the wartime labor shortages in the continental US. In late 1942, the OPMG drafted the *Civilian Enemy Aliens and Prisoners of War* as a manual for utilizing POWs' labor powers at "the fixed rate of 80 cents a day per prisoner" employed.<sup>11</sup> The labor programs were initially designed on what the OPMG officials perceived to be the "national characteristics" of German, Italian, and Japanese prisoners. According to such a perception, "German industry is founded on the apprenticeship system. Germans are accustomed to good instruction... he has great pride in accomplishment. He is accustomed to discipline and works well as a member of a group."<sup>12</sup> The OPMG viewed the German prisoners as diligent and skilled factory workers. Under this characterization, most German prisoners were sent to work in urban centers under various American private contractors.

In contrast with the image of diligent German workers, the OPMG purposefully portrayed the Italian prisoners as a "happy-go-lucky" sort of men and reluctant soldiers. According to the historian Louis Keefer's investigation, the Department of the Army created the image of an easy-going, sometimes sloppy, and cheerful Italian prisoners in order to utilize them as auxiliary service units. Although Article 74 of the Geneva Convention forbade the employment of enemy prisoners "on active military service," the Department of the Army simply could not resist the economic gains.<sup>13</sup> In 1944 alone, the

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<sup>11</sup> The POWs would not receive the payment in US dollars. Rather, OPMG issued the payment in the form of coupons. POWs could only use these coupons to purchase the various necessities of life within the POW camps. It was only upon the POWs' repatriation back to their home counties that they could convert these coupons into actual dollars. For detailed payment system, see Lewis and Mewha, 77–78.

<sup>12</sup> Headquarters Army Service Forces, *Handbook for Work Supervisors of Prisoners of War Labor (Pamphlet M-811)*, Army Service Forces Manual (Washington, D.C, 1945), 8–9.

<sup>13</sup> "Treaties, States Parties, and Commentaries - Geneva Convention on Prisoners of War, 1929 (Geneva Convention, 1929)," International Humanitarian Law Databases, accessed November 2, 2021, <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/ihl/INTRO/305>.

Army reported a saving of \$80,000,000 by use of Italian POW-laborers on its installations.<sup>14</sup> Despite the fact that “the Italians seemed twice as prone to escape as the Germans: 1.2 escapes per thousand versus 0.5 escapes per thousand,” more than half of the 51,034 Italian prisoners served in the US Army service units from 1942 to 1945.<sup>15</sup>

The 5,413 Japanese prisoners constituted the smallest, yet the most controversial prisoner population.<sup>16</sup> During the Pacific War, there was a systematic effort to portray the Japanese as the “demonic other” who deserved no mercy but extermination.<sup>17</sup> As the American public generally viewed the Japanese as militarist fanatics, the OPMG tucked them away at two remote camps in the Midwest: Camp Clarinda in Iowa and Camp McCoy in Wisconsin.<sup>18</sup> Behind the barbed wires, the OPMG officials utilized the Japanese prisoners as agricultural laborers. According to the OPMG design in 1942, all Axis prisoners could find a place in American factories, military service units, or remote farmlands that fitted their respect “national characteristics.”

By the war’s end in 1945, the “national characteristic” vanished and the OPMG simply viewed all POWs as able-bodied man who could perform useful labor. When the labor program started in 1942, the OPMG reported POW statistics in three separate categories: German, Italian, and Japanese. In 1945, however, the OPMG simply reported

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<sup>14</sup> Headquarters Army Service Forces, *Pamphlet M-811*, 4.

<sup>15</sup> Louis Keefer, *Italian Prisoners of War in America, 1942-1946: Captives or Allies?* (New York, 1992), 142.

<sup>16</sup> For detailed POW statistics, see Table 2 in Lewis and Mewha, *Pamphlet No. 20-213*, 90–91.

<sup>17</sup> See Chapter 1 and Chapter 9 in John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (Pantheon, 1987).

<sup>18</sup> Camp McCoy held 2,313 Japanese POWs and the rest were held at Camp Clarinda. For a detailed breakdown of the Japanese POWs, see Historical Monograph of the Re-education of Enemy Prisoners of War, Japanese Program, in “CIE General Records,” Box 1.

that the prisoner employment rate went up from 60 percent in February 1944 to 91.3 percent in April 1945.<sup>19</sup> The Department of the Army exclaimed,

The prisoner of war's record of production is good!... In the South they picked cotton, citrus and other fruits, cut sugar cane, harvested peanuts, rice, tobacco and pulpwood. In the West they harvested sugar beets, corn and grain; detasselled seed corn, picked and packed vegetables and fruits. In the East and the North they cut pulp and chemical wood, harvest and packed vegetables and fruits. Many of these crops would have been lost had it not been for prisoner of war labor.<sup>20</sup>

In June 1945, the Assistant Provost Marshal General from the OPMG, Brigadier General Blackshear M. Bryan testified to the US Congress that “contractors have paid into the United States Treasury \$22,000,000 in cold cash.”<sup>21</sup> Had the United States government foresaw in 1942 that its arrangement with London would eventually become a lucrative business, Washington policy makers might have signed the agreement in a much earlier date. According to the US government's design, the conversion from soldiers to laborers was the first step toward becoming a “democratic citizen.”

Aside from being a useful laborer, a “democratic citizen” must also embrace the political democracy defined by their captors. In the spring of 1942, the US Office of Strategic Service (OSS) designed a political reeducation program to convert the minds of Axis POWs with “democratic values.” According to the historian Barry M. Katz's investigation, the ultimate objective of this program was to “provide ideological alternatives” to the Axis POWs.<sup>22</sup> The assumption was that the Axis prisoners were victims of radical political ideologies of Fascism, Nazism, and militarism. Through a thorough

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<sup>19</sup> Lewis and Mewha, *Pamphlet No. 20-213*, 125.

<sup>20</sup> Headquarters Army Service Forces, *Pamphlet M-811*, 4.

<sup>21</sup> Arnold Krammer, *Nazi Prisoners of War in America*, 1st edition (Lanham, Md: Scarborough House, 1996), 107; For the \$22,000,000 savings, see Headquarters Army Service Forces, *Pamphlet M-811*, 4.

<sup>22</sup> Barry M. Katz, *Foreign Intelligence: Research and Analysis in the Office of Strategic Services 1942-1945* (London, England: Harvard University Press, 1989).

reeducation, the minds of the Axis prisoners could be “corrected.” In Katz’s formulation, while the US government recruited natural scientists for the Manhattan Project, the humanist scholars from American universities contributed to the war effort by reeducating the minds of the Axis POWs.

Between 1942 and 1945, more than 900 American humanists contributed to this reeducation program. Some prominent humanists included the economist Moses Abramovitz, the anthropologist Gregory Bateson, the Sinologist John King Fairbank, and the historian Howard Mumford Jones.<sup>23</sup> The OPMG launched a lecture series on political democracy among the German POWs. As one humanist explained their mission,

All of us could agree on this: Whatever one’s analysis of the situation, and whatever one’s ultimate objective or hopes for postwar Germany, we knew that one had to start from a minimum requirement, namely, to restore, or create, in Germany that liberal-democratic framework of government and society which (a) would do away with “feudal”-authoritarian features that had characterized Germany throughout modern history, and (b) would form the basis upon which anything more far-reaching could subsequently be realized.<sup>24</sup>

The OPMG required the German POWs to attend lectures and take exams. The POW camps were transformed into what the historian Ron Robin called the “barbed-wire colleges” and the POWs became students who were to learn about democracy.<sup>25</sup> Upon their repatriation in 1945 and 1946, the German POWs allegedly forsook their Nazi ideology and embraced American democracy.

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<sup>23</sup> Katz.

<sup>24</sup> Katz, 44.

<sup>25</sup> Ron Robin, *The Barbed-Wire College Reeducating German POWs in the United States During World War II* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1995).

Meanwhile, the US Army developed a similar reeducation program called the Civil Information and Education (CIE) for the Japanese POWs.<sup>26</sup> As the OPMG explained, the purpose of the CIE program was to educate the minds of the Japanese POWs so that they would adopt a “favorable attitude toward the United States and of an understanding of American life and institutions.”<sup>27</sup> On September 25, 1945, the CIE commander at camp McCoy, Wisconsin, Lieutenant Colonel Rogers, held a private meeting with the highest-ranking Japanese officer among the Japanese POWs, a Navy Commander named Saito Jiro. Rogers was eager to find out the CIE program’s effect among the Japanese POWs. Saito confirmed the necessity of CIE in terms of combating the “fanatically patriotic” Japanese prisoners.

In addition, the Japanese Navy Commander expressed his concern for the Japanese POWs returning from China, especially those who had been captured by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and received trainings at the Japanese People’s Emancipation League at Yanan.<sup>28</sup> Saito warned Rogers that “Communism had attracted considerable numbers of follower in Japan in the past” and if the US did nothing to reeducate the Japanese POWs returning from China, “Japan might likely go Communist.”<sup>29</sup> To avoid such an unpalatable consequence, Saito suggested the US Army to implement the CIE program in Japan.

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<sup>26</sup> For a brief description of the program see for example, Japanese Public Opinion Agencies, February 4, 1946. In RG 319/270/8/12/7, Box 1.

<sup>27</sup> Historical Monograph of the Re-education of Enemy Prisoners of War, Japanese Program, December 15, 1945. “CIE General Records,” Box 1.

<sup>28</sup> During WWII, the CCP established the Japanese People’s Emancipation League at Yan’an for the Japanese POWs and their family members. The Comintern had dispatched the leader of the Japanese Communist Party Nosaka Sanzo (he took the Chinese pseudo-name Lin Zhe) to work with the CCP to reeducate the Japanese POWs.

<sup>29</sup> Reorientation Program of Japanese Prisoners of War, 25 September, 1945 in Historical Monograph of the Re-education of Enemy Prisoners of War, Japanese Program, December 15, 1945. “CIE General Records,” Box 1.

Between 1946 and 1948, the US occupation forces in Japan implemented the CIE program among the 30,000 Japanese soldiers and their family members who had returned from China. This group of Japanese had been captured by the CCP and experienced the “Lenient Policy.” Many of them served the CCP as “liberated soldiers” during the Anti-Japanese War and the Chinese Civil War. According to a screening conducted by the US Army, most of these Japanese repatriates were “pro-Soviet, pro-Japan Communist Party, anti-Emperor, anti-Yoshida Government, and anti-Occupation.”<sup>30</sup> After completing the CIE trainings, the CIE Chief in Japan reported that more than 90% of them forsook their beliefs in communism and embraced the American version of political democracy. In summary, the CIE program was an effective method to create “democratic citizens” out of the enemy prisoner population.

Prior to the Korean War, the US had developed a program to convert enemy POWs into “democratic citizens” through a labor program and a reeducation in democracy. Despite the fact that the US Army initially treated the German, Italian, and Japanese POWs differently in 1942, the reeducation program proved to be a panacea for all prisoners by 1945. While the US Army reaped handsome profits from the labor program, the reeducation in democracy promoted American political ideals. A “democratic citizen” therefore was an honest laborer who supported political democracy. Shortly after the US intervened in the Korean conflict, the US government decided to introduce the CIE program to the prisoners of the Korean War.

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<sup>30</sup> Exploitation and Screening of Japanese Repatriates, Undated Memorandum from the CIE HQ to the Secretary of Defense, in “Investigative Records: Intelligence and Investigative Dossiers,” Box 47, “A Study of the Administration and Security of the Oriental Communist Prisoners of War During the Conflict in Korea.”



### Cooperation with Taiwan and Initial Success of Psychological Warfare

Immediately after the United States intervened in the Korean War under the banner of the United Nations, the Truman administration decided to launch the POW reeducation program. The initial purpose was to convert the North Korean POWs so that they could “participate in activities looking to unification of the country.”<sup>31</sup> On September 9, the National Security Council (NSC) anticipated possible interventions from the PRC and the Soviet Union, suggesting that “depending on the role they play,” this program could be extended to the Chinese or the Soviets soldiers.<sup>32</sup> After Beijing dispatched the Chinese People’s Volunteer (CPV) forces to Korea in October 1950, the UNC immediately started the psychological warfare targeting the Chinese frontline soldiers. In late 1950, the UNC cooperated with the Republic of China (ROC) in the field of psychological warfare and successfully enticed more than 1,000 Chinese defectors on the battlefield.

Under the UNC commander General Douglas MacArthur’s orchestration, the UNC initially proposed military cooperation with the ROC in late 1950. As the PRC intervention bankrupted MacArthur’s Home-by-Christmas campaign, the UNC General prioritized military cooperation with Chiang Kai-shek by proposing to integrate the KMT ground troops with the UNC forces on the Korean battlefield. In November, General MacArthur “strongly recommended” President Truman to accept Chiang Kai-shek’s offer of 33,000 KMT infantry troops to Korea.<sup>33</sup> In a separate telegram to the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS),

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<sup>31</sup> “Report by the National Security Council to the President,” September 9, 1950. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1950 (FRUS 1950)* (Washington, D.C: United States Government Printing Office, 1977), 7: 712-721.

<sup>32</sup> When the NSC 81/1 was drafted in September, the NSC predicted possible Chinese or Soviet intervention. At the time, the US contemplated to expand the CIE program to both the Soviet and the Chinese troops if Moscow or Beijing decide to intervene in the Korean War. See “Report by the National Security Council to the President,” September 9, 1950. *FRUS 1950*, 7: 712-721.

<sup>33</sup> “The Commander in Chief, Far East (MacArthur) to the Joint Chiefs of Staff,” November 28, 1950. *FRUS 1950*, 7: 1237-1238.

the UNC commander explained that the KMT forces in Taiwan “represented the only source of potential trained reinforcements available for early commitment to the war in Korea.”<sup>34</sup> MacArthur clearly wished to hold the UNC position with the possible reinforcements from Taiwan.

Many Washington policy makers disliked MacArthur’s proposal and feared that the regional “police action” might escalate into another full-scale war with the PRC. During his meeting with President Truman on November 28, the Secretary of Defense George Marshall explained that the situation in Korea was a “carefully laid Russian trap.”<sup>35</sup> According to Marshall’s analysis, a full-scale war with China would tie down the US resources and manpower in Asia, giving Moscow an upper hand in Europe. Marshall warned the president that “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.”<sup>36</sup> In conclusion, he suggested that the US should prioritize “a more rapid military build-up” in Europe while strictly “localizing” the Korean War.<sup>37</sup>

Besides, a number of Washington officials questioned the capability of KMT forces. Citing the KMT soldiers’ poor performance during the Chinese Civil War (1945-1949), a consultant to the Secretary of State John Foster Dulles expressed his “very complete loss

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<sup>34</sup> Although the JCS replied to MacArthur’s message on November 29, MacArthur had proposed to bring the KMT forces to Taiwan in another undated proposal. This proposal was likely made in early November. See Proposal C 50021 in “The Commander in Chief, Far East (MacArthur) to the Joint Chiefs of Staff,” November 28, 1950. *FRUS 1950*, 7: 1237-1238.

<sup>35</sup> “Memorandum of Conversation, by the Ambassador at Large (Jessup),” November 28, 1950. *FRUS 1950*, 7: 1241-1249.

<sup>36</sup> “Memorandum of Conversation, by the Ambassador at Large (Jessup),” November 28, 1950. *FRUS 1950*, 7: 1241-1249.

<sup>37</sup> “Memorandum of Conversation, by the Ambassador at Large (Jessup),” November 28, 1950. *FRUS 1950*, 7: 1241-1249.

of confidence in the will of the Nationalist [KMT] forces to fight” during a meeting between Dulles and a ROC diplomat.<sup>38</sup> Washington policy makers quickly reached the consensus to reject MacArthur’s proposal. In an irritated tone, Truman wrote in his memoir: “MacArthur rejected my policy of neutralizing Formosa [Taiwan] and that he favored a more aggressive method”<sup>39</sup> On November 29, the JCS rejected MacArthur’s proposal and pointed out that by introducing KMT forces to Korea, “it might extend hostilities to Formosa and other areas.”<sup>40</sup>

Nevertheless, the cooperation between the US and Taiwan in the field of psychological warfare started in November. On November 2, a radio program called the Voice of Free China in Taipei began broadcasting messages that demanded CPV soldiers’ capitulation on the Korean battlefield.<sup>41</sup> UNC aircraft carried loudspeakers and loomed over the CPV-occupied territories to broadcast the messages from Taipei. On November 13, the ROC President Chiang Kai-shek made the following speech via this radio program,

My fellow countrymen, the Zhu [De] Mao [Zedong] red bandits send you to fight the Korean War not to defend our motherland China or to assist our neighboring country Korea. Rather, you’ve been used as cannon fodder for the benefits of imperialist Russia... When you arrive at the battlefield, you should lay down your weapons, surrender to the United Nations Command and fight alongside with our true allies under the United Nations banner. When you encounter the UNC troops, you must make a clarification statement that: You are a loyal soldier to the Republic of China, your political allegiance belongs to Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek. After you make such a statement, you will be under the protection of the ROC government and the UNC Supreme Commander MacArthur will also

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<sup>38</sup> “Memorandum of Conversation between Mr. Hollington Tong and Mr. John Foster Dulles, by Mr. John Foster Dulles, Consultant to the Secretary of State, Washington,” May 25, 1950. *FRUS 1950*, 6: 343.

<sup>39</sup> Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs by Harry S. Truman*, First Edition, vol. Two: Years of Trial and Hope (Doubleday & Company, Inc, 1956), 354.

<sup>40</sup> “The JCS to the Commander in Chief, Far East (MacArthur),” November 29, 1950. *FRUS 1950*, 7: 1253-1254.

<sup>41</sup> *Fangong Yishi Fendou Shi [The Struggle of Anti-Communist Righteous Persons]* (Taiwan: FYJF, 1955), 15.

protect you. You will soon be allowed to re-join your old KMT military units. Your old brother-in-arms are waiting, hurry up!<sup>42</sup>

In addition to the radio broadcasting, the UNC also hired a number of Chinese linguists from the ROC for the purposes of the psychological warfare. Theoretically, the Chinese linguists recruited from the ROC were hired on individual basis and they worked for the UNC under the status of the Department of the Army Civilians (DACs). This arrangement was to avoid the appearance of the KMT's involvement in the war.

Yet in reality, the DAC officers hired in Taiwan had deep affiliations with the KMT leadership. Tsu Sung-chiu was Chiang Ching-kuo's assistant in the KMT Political Department when the Korean War broke out. According to him, SCAP had approached Chiang Ching-kuo in November 1950 to request Chinese linguists.<sup>43</sup> Two western journalists picked up the story and reported that the ROC government had dispatched some one hundred personnel from its Defense Department to Korea as linguists.<sup>44</sup> In his memoir, the ROC Ambassador to the ROK Shao Yulin, complained that the news report exposed the identities of KMT agents.<sup>45</sup> A number of the KMT agents had to return to Taipei in early 1951 since their identities were exposed. In a 1971 interview, the US Ambassador to the ROK during the Korean War, John Muccio, also pointed out the connection between the DAC officers and the ROC government, calling them "Chiang Kai-shek's Gestapos."<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Fangong *Yishi Fendoushi*, 15–16.

<sup>43</sup> Lu and Huang, *Tsu Sung-chiu Fantanlu*, 53–54.

<sup>44</sup> Burchett and Winnington named two agents from the ROC Defense Department Security Bureau: Chang Hsing-teng and Chang Chi-the. See Wilfred Burchett and Alan Winnington, *Koje Unscreened*, First Edition edition (Britain-China Friendship Association, 1953), 26.

<sup>45</sup> Shao, *Shihan Huiyilu*, 354.

<sup>46</sup> "John J. Muccio Oral History Interview," February 18, 1971, The Harry S. Truman Library, <https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/library/oral-histories/muccio2>.

Despite the DACs' status as civilian employees, the ROC government had entered the psychological warfare of the Korean War in November 1950.

From late 1950 to early 1951, the KMT government organized several additional recruiting missions in Taipei for the UNC. As one of the recruited DAC officers during this time, Huang Tiancai recalled that he received a letter from the KMT Combined Logistics Command in February 1951.<sup>47</sup> In the letter, the KMT Army requested his service in Korea. After graduating from National Chengchi University in 1947, Huang was initially assigned to work for the KMT government in Qingdao, Shandong province. Just prior to his departure, the CCP seized the city. Huang then became an English language interpreter and worked with the American military advisor to the KMT army. In late 1947, Huang followed the American military advisors to Taiwan. When he reported to Taipei in early 1951, he found dozens of young men like him. After a brief interview by the US Army at the US Embassy in Taipei, this group of KMT associates signed a one-year renewable contract as DAC officers and prepared their departure for Korea.

On the night of March 9, a US jet plane carried a group of DACs from Taipei to Tokyo. After a 10-hour flight, the DACs landed at the Camp Drake where everyone received a US Army uniform and an ID card that read "Department of the Army Civilian."<sup>48</sup> At Tokyo, the G-2 divided these Chinese linguists into two groups. One group remained in the Tokyo G-2 Headquarters and the other group was assigned to the Korean frontline under the Allied Translator and Interpreter Section (ATIS).<sup>49</sup> Tsu Sung-chiu was retained

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<sup>47</sup> Tiancai Huang, *Wozai 38 Duxian De Huiyi [My Memories at the 38th Parallel]* (Taipei: Ink Book, 2010), 38.

<sup>48</sup> Huang, 42–43.

<sup>49</sup> Huang, 53.

at Tokyo and worked for the G-2 Psywar Section.<sup>50</sup> His primary duty was to translate the English language materials into Chinese. Throughout the Korean War, Tsu and his colleagues assisted the UNC to produce more than 3 million copies of the “Safe Conduct Pass” (aka., the MacArthur Safety Pass) which promised food, clothing, shelter, humane treatment and detailed instructions on the surrendering process in Chinese language.<sup>51</sup> Instead of dispatching KMT soldiers to Korea, the ROC government entered the Korean War with Chinese linguists.

Between late 1950 and early 1951, the UNC radio broadcast and psywar materials reached most CPV frontline soldiers. The UNC aircrafts used loud speakers to broadcast the radio speeches and dropped copies of the psywar leaflets at the battlefield. Without sufficient anti-air fire power, the CPV officers usually ordered the Chinese soldiers to sing out loud when a UNC airplane began broadcasting. This method was ineffective as many Chinese soldiers feared that their singing might expose their locations and invite UNC bombing and strafing.<sup>52</sup> Meanwhile, most Chinese soldiers picked up at least one copy of the “Safe Conduct Pass.” The CPV field officers initially organized CPV soldiers to gather the leaflets and burnt them at once.<sup>53</sup> This practice quickly stopped as there were too many leaflets. A number of Chinese soldiers who were captured during this time told the UNC that they could easily pick up a copy of the “Safe Conduct Pass” on the battlefield.<sup>54</sup>

The psywar operations successfully shook up the morale of the Chinese frontline troops. A number of the Chinese soldiers, especially the ex-KMT soldiers who were

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<sup>50</sup> Lu and Huang, *Tsu Sung-chiu Fantanlu*, 54–55.

<sup>51</sup> John Campbell, *Sling the Bull in Korea* (University of New Mexico Press, 2010), 31.

<sup>52</sup> “ATIS,” Box 350, KT 2949; “ATIS,” Box 338, KG 1489.

<sup>53</sup> “ATIS,” Box 350, KT 2949; “ATIS,” Box 338, KG 1489.

<sup>54</sup> “ATIS,” Box 350, KT 2949; “ATIS,” Box 338, KG 1489.

serving the CPV as “liberated soldiers,” began questioning Beijing’s motivation to send them to fight in Korea.<sup>55</sup> After hearing the radio speeches, the “liberated soldier” Zhang Buting thought that “the CCP made a smart move by sending us former KMT soldiers to fight in Korea.” He and several other “liberated soldiers” began discussing that “if they [CCP] did not send us to Korea as cannon fodder, our existence alone created security issues for the Beijing government.”<sup>56</sup> The suspicions of the “liberated soldiers” were gradually accumulating at the Korean frontline. The UNC psywar speeches thus drove a wedge between the “liberated soldiers” and the PRC government.

The suspicion of the “liberated soldiers” quickly fermented rumors that the KMT forces were fighting in Korea. One of the most popular rumors implied that the KMT General Bai Chongxi was leading three KMT divisions in Korea under the banner of the UNC.<sup>57</sup> Some CPV field commanders tried to turn these rumors into their own advantage. According to the “liberated soldier” Wang Futian, his platoon leader in the CPV claimed that since the American “imperialists” could not win the war by themselves, “the Nationalist government had dispatched thirty-three thousand men to assist UN troops in attacking Korea.”<sup>58</sup> While the CPV field officers tried to alleviate the CPV soldiers’ fear to fight American troops, Wang Futian thought otherwise. For an ex-KMT soldier like him, he believed “this was a chance for me—maybe I could meet the Nationalist soldiers.”<sup>59</sup> Shortly after, Wang made up his mind to defect.

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<sup>55</sup> “ATIS,” Box 350, KT 2975.

<sup>56</sup> Interview of Zhang Buting in Chou, *Fangong Yishi Fangtanlu*, 98.

<sup>57</sup> Huang, 38 *Duxian De Huiyi*, 80.

<sup>58</sup> Bradbury, *Mass Behavior in Battle and Captivity*, 52–53.

<sup>59</sup> Bradbury, 53.

In early 1951, the UNC psywar operation successfully enticed a number of CPV defectors. In February 1951, a CPV truck driver Li Da'an surrendered to the UNC with a truckload of CPV ammunitions and a copy of the "Safe Conduct Pass." Li was born into a landlord family in Andong, Liaoning province and received a decent education afforded by his family in the early 1940s. During the Chinese Civil War, he joined the KMT in Shenyang and became an underground KMT agent after the CCP seized Manchuria in late 1948. After his identity was exposed in 1949, he was imprisoned at the local police station.<sup>60</sup> As the CPV Logistics Department was in dire need for truck drivers, Li was dispatched to the Korean battlefield as a driver on February 27, 1951. In return for his service, the local police chief promised to reduce his sentence duration after his return from the war. In Korea, the CPV assigned a security guard to keep a close watch over for Li. On March 24, Li assaulted his security guard, who was asleep, with a hammer. Afterwards, he dropped the dead body and surrendered to the UNC at 5:30 am.<sup>61</sup>

Another CPV soldier Gao Wenjun surrendered to the UNC on May 29, 1951. Born in 1930, Gao was a Whampoa graduate of the 23<sup>rd</sup> class. After the CCP captured Chengdu in late 1949, most of his classmates were integrated into the PLA 60<sup>th</sup> Army. The CCP's initial plan was to utilize the ex-KMT officers' expertise for the postwar economic reconstruction. When the Korean War broke out, the CCP quickly demobilized those who were deemed as unfit to fight (aged 40 and above) and integrated the rest to its combat troops. Gao was assigned to the CPV 60<sup>th</sup> Army as a literacy instructor. Upon hearing the

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<sup>60</sup> When the Korean War ended, Li was retained by the US. In 1954 he was parachuted back to the PRC for intelligence collection mission. He was immediately arrested by the local police and executed by the Beijing government. For more information about Li, see the police investigation report, cited in Jing Yu, *E Yun [Nightmare]* (Hong Kong: Tianditushu Inc., 1992), 89.

<sup>61</sup> "ATIS," Box 329, KG 0486; *Fangong Yishi Fendoushi*, 86.



rumor that the KMT forces were in Korea, Gao decided to defect. After several failed attempts in late May of 1951, Gao surrendered to the UNC with a copy of the “Safe Conduct Pass.”<sup>62</sup>

Although the UNC radio broadcast and the “Safe Conduct Pass” clearly promised the ex-KMT soldiers to re-join the KMT forces and many “liberated” CPV soldiers defected under this impression, the US Army had yet developed a plan to fulfill such a promise by early 1951. On May 24, 1951, the chief of the US Army Psychological Warfare, Major General Robert McClure, established five goals for the CIE program in Korea:

- a. To develop on the part of these prisoners of war an understanding and appreciation of the political, social, and economic objectives and activities of the United Nations.
- b. To give these prisoners of war some understanding of and skills in democratic procedures in group section through the activities of camp life.
- c. To assist these prisoners of war in developing vocational and technical skills which will enable him to participate now and in the future in the reconstruction of their countries, and which at the same time will improve their living conditions in the camps they are held in as prisoners of war.
- d. To develop such knowledge, understanding, and attitudes among North Korean prisoners of war as will influence them toward participation in and support of an independent, unified Korean Nation.
- e. To train North Korean prisoners of war as a nucleus for the orientation of the people of North Korea to the objectives and activities of the United Nations.<sup>63</sup>

Among the five goals, the first three goals dealt with both the Chinese and North Korean POWs. These goals revealed that the US Army at the time merely wished to convert the POWs into “democratic citizens” and repatriate them back to the communist bloc as

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<sup>62</sup> Gao was assigned to the CPV 60<sup>th</sup> Army, 180 Division, 538 Artillery Regiment. “ATIS,” Box 329, KG 0482.

<sup>63</sup> “Communication between the CINCUNC and Chief, FOD, CIE section,” May 24, 1951. “CIE General Records,” Box 3, Annex A.

political dissidents. By mid-1951, the US Army did not have a plan to let the ex-KMT POWs rejoin the KMT, or send them to the ROC in Taiwan.

The CPV defectors quickly felt a sense of betrayal upon their arrival at the UNC POW camps. Several days after Gao Wenjun surrendered, he and a group of other Chinese prisoners were transported to Pusan in early June. Upon their arrival, all of them received an identification card that read “PW.” Gao immediately protested to the American guards and insisted that he should not be treated like a normal prisoner. He claimed to be an ex-KMT soldier who sought to rejoin the KMT forces. Instead of translating Gao’s words to the American guards, his Chinese language interpreter, who was also a defector, replied in Chinese: “You go out there and check by yourself. If you ever find the KMT troops, let me know!”<sup>64</sup> Upon hearing these words, Gao felt his hope to rejoin the KMT in Korea “completely quenched” and realized that there was no KMT forces in Korea. Years later, Gao Wenjun wrote the following in his memoir: “Honestly speaking, sometimes I hate the Americans more than the communist bandits.”<sup>65</sup>

By early 1951, other than the CPV defectors’ demand to rejoin the KMT, the UNC psywar was generally successful as it induced many Chinese defectors. According to a ROC government survey in 1954, approximately 1,000 CPV soldiers defected during this time.<sup>66</sup> A closer look at these defectors’ background revealed that most of them belonged to the “politically unreliable” social class defined by the PRC government. For example, Beijing labelled landlords and merchants as “bourgeoisie,” which was a “counterrevolutionary” class under a socialist government. Although the CCP promised a

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<sup>64</sup> Wenjun Gao, *Hanzhan Yiwang: Yuxue Yusheng Huarenquan [A Reminiscent for the Korean War]* (Taipei: Shengzhi Wenhua Shiye, 2000), 153.

<sup>65</sup> Gao, 254.

<sup>66</sup> Chou, *Fangong Yishi Fangtanlu*, 38.

“New Democracy” and was preparing to organize a coalition government to include the “bourgeoisie,” the “liberated soldiers” at the Korean frontline questioned Beijing’s true intention of sending them to fight in Korea. Thanks to the Chinese DACs’ assistance, the UNC psywar operation deepened the ex-KMT soldiers’ suspicion toward Beijing and enticed more than 1,000 defectors on the battlefield.

#### CIE Procrastination and the Communist POWs’ Dominance in POW Camps

In early 1951, the number of DAC officers seriously lagged behind the rapid increase of the Chinese POWs. In September 1950, the UNC transformed a field hospital at Pusan into a POW camp with the maximum capacity to intern 4,000 prisoners. By the end of September, the UNC reported the number of POWs as 3,319. However, the situation at Pusan quickly went out of hand after the Chinese intervention in October. By the end of October, the prisoner population skyrocketed to 38,250 due to the KPA’s quick collapse and the influx of Chinese prisoners. The number of POWs kept growing and reached 81,765 in November and 113,873 in December.<sup>67</sup> By the end of December, the Pusan POW camp authorities reported to the SCAP Headquarters in Tokyo that “the presence of large numbers of captured enemy personnel, combined with thousands of Korean refugees, resulted in a condition of confusion.”<sup>68</sup> The Camp authorities further complained that the “scanty records” produced by the DACs were meaningless for camp management.

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<sup>67</sup> “Investigative Records: Intelligence and Investigative Dossiers,” Box 47, “A Study of the Administration and Security of the Oriental Communist Prisoners of War During the Conflict in Korea,” 12-15.

<sup>68</sup> “Investigative Records: Intelligence and Investigative Dossiers,” Box 47, “A Study of the Administration and Security of the Oriental Communist Prisoners of War During the Conflict in Korea,” 12.



Figure 2.1 April 1951, Chinese POWs at Pusan waiting to be processed by the UNC (National Archives and Records Administration)

In addition, the SCAP Headquarters were unwilling to dispatch an additional number of linguists to Korea due to the expectation for a quick end to the war. On July 10, 1951, the first Korean War truce talks started at Kaesong, a small Korean town on the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. Many UNC personnel at the time developed “the belief that an Armistice would soon be signed” and peace was “just around the corner.”<sup>69</sup> Under such an expectation, the UNC camp authorities were reluctant to intervene in the internal conflict among the Chinese POWs. The American camp guards usually encouraged the Chinese POWs to settle their own affairs. By August 1951, the UNC’s lack of Chinese linguists procrastinated the CIE program and the expectation for a quick end to the Korean War perpetuated the communist POWs’ dominance in POW camps.

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<sup>69</sup> “Investigative Records: Intelligence and Investigative Dossiers,” Box 47, “A Study of the Administration and Security of the Oriental Communist Prisoners of War During the Conflict in Korea,” 63.

Although the Truman administration decided to activate the CIE program in Korea, the UNC struggled to find a candidate to lead this program. In December 1950, the US Army hired the Reverend Earle J. Woodberry to lead the CIE program among the Chinese POWs, which was scheduled to begin on June 1, 1951. Born in 1892, Rev. Woodberry came from an American missionary family stationed in Shanghai. After completing his theological training in New York in the early 1920s, the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in New York dispatched him to Shanghai as a missionary.<sup>70</sup> In July 1929, Rev. Woodberry left Shanghai and started a new church at Dachixia village, Shandong province to “serve God in a special way” and battled with several local “cults.”<sup>71</sup> After the Marco Polo Bridge incident in 1937, Woodberry was forced to leave China. He resumed his service in Shandong after the Japanese surrendered in 1945. As the CCP emerged victorious in the Chinese Civil War in 1949, Woodberry left for Pusan, South Korea to continue his missionary work in Asia and started learning the Korean language.

In late 1950, when the US Army Chaplain Corp found Woodberry in a language institute at Pusan, he quickly accepted the offer to work among the Chinese POWs. The Chief of Chaplain Corp in Korea explained that Rev. Woodberry’s Chinese language proficiency and his “complete understanding of the oriental philosophies” made him an ideal candidate to lead the CIE program. Beginning in December 1950, Rev. Woodberry started welcoming the Chinese prisoners at the gate of the Pusan POW camp. In a letter to his friends dated January 18, 1951, Woodberry explained that “these first days are ou[r] best opportunities to befriend them and ease their minds with a warm heart, a smile and a

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<sup>70</sup> Personal Record of Earle John Woodberry, “Earle John Woodberry (1892-1981) Dossier (Earle Woodberry Dossier),” n.d., RG 360, The Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA.

<sup>71</sup> “Letters to the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church,” July 31, 1939. “Earle Woodberry Dossier.”

word in their own language... then a tract or Gospel to read. There is almost always a relaxation of features and many surprised ejaculations— ‘Say, listen-He's talking Chinese?’” Such a strategy won Woodberry a good impression among the Chinese prisoners. However, the hardworking efforts of Rev. Woodberry only reached a limited number of Chinese POWs and was by no means a solution to the UNC’s lack of Chinese linguists.

By March 1951, there were only seventy-five DAC linguists working for the UNC.<sup>72</sup> The small number of DACs simply could not handle the surging Chinese prisoner population, which allegedly exceeded 20,700 at the time.<sup>73</sup> In March, the ATIS dispatched the first three DAC officers to the 163 Military Intelligence Service Detachment (163 MISD) under the US First Marine Corp at the Korean frontline. Upon their arrival, the DACs found that the American frontline troops could not even tell the difference between the North Koreans and the Chinese.<sup>74</sup> The common practice was to send all the captured personnel, soldiers and civilians alike, back to the rear without knowing their names, nationalities, or military units.<sup>75</sup>

Rev. Woodberry and the small number of DACs were quickly overwhelmed by the Chinese POWs. The ratio of Chinese linguists to the CPV POWs in early 1951 was 1:276. As one of the first three DAC officers to the US First Marine Corp, Huang Tiancai complained that he and his two colleagues had to “write interrogation reports all night long. But only to find more Chinese prisoners coming in the next morning.”<sup>76</sup> To meet the sudden

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<sup>72</sup> Chang, *The Hijacked War*, 132.

<sup>73</sup> “Investigative Records: Intelligence and Investigative Dossiers,” Box 47, “A Study of the Administration and Security of the Oriental Communist Prisoners of War During the Conflict in Korea.”

<sup>74</sup> The three DACs were Huang Tiancai, Lu Yizheng and Zheng Xian, see Huang, *38 Duxian De Huiyi*, 64.

<sup>75</sup> Huang, 54.

<sup>76</sup> Huang, 70.

need of a large number of Chinese linguists, the State Department hastily started the Chinese language courses at Yale and Georgetown University. But the first class would not graduate until the summer of 1952.<sup>77</sup> In May and June 1951, the State Department orchestrated another round of recruiting missions for Chinese linguists in Hong Kong,

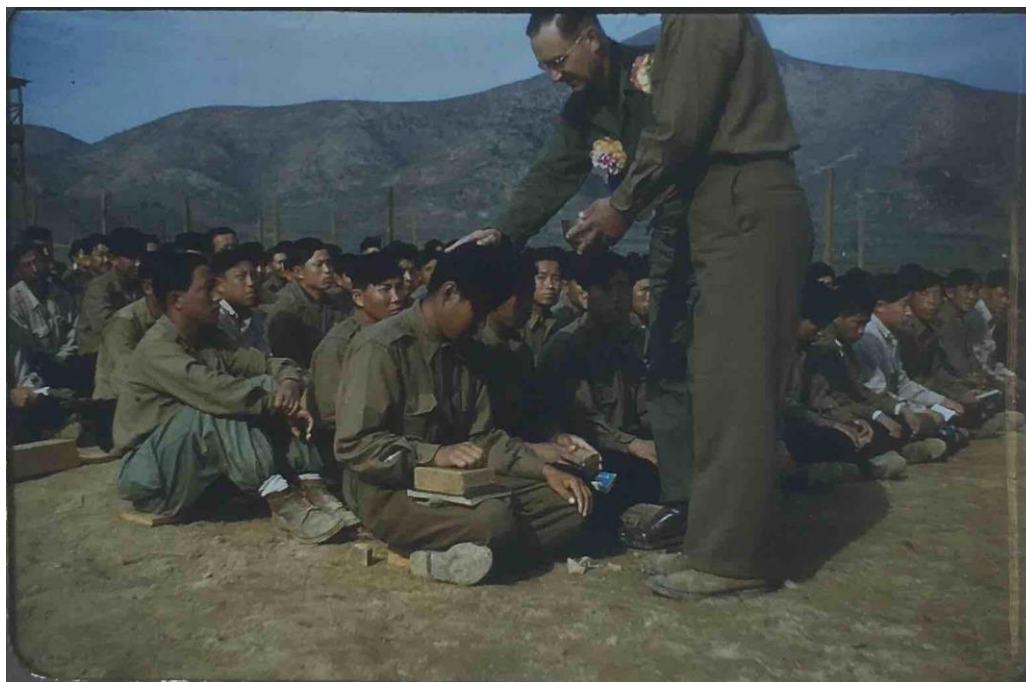


Figure 2.2 A Sunday service held by Rev. Woodberry (Presbyterian Historical Society)

Taipei and Tokyo.<sup>78</sup> However, these measures were too little and too late.

The lack of Chinese linguists postponed the activation of the CIE program for two months. The UNC's initial plan was to activate the CIE program for both the North Korean and the Chinese POWs on June 1, 1951. Benefitting from its alliance with the ROK government, the UNC never lacked Korean linguists. On June 1, the UNC activated the CIE program for the North Korean POWs as scheduled. However, the Chinese program

<sup>77</sup> The first class of 86 American soldiers graduated from Georgetown in the summer of 1952. Instead of going to Korea, they remained in the US to train more American military personnel. See Alan K. Abner, *Psywarriors: Psychological Warfare During the Korean War* (Shippensburg, Pa: Burd Street Pr, 2000), 50.

<sup>78</sup> "Report of Activities & Progress CIE/UNC," June 10, 1951. "CIE General Correspondence," Box 1.

could not start due to the lack of textbooks, radio broadcasting materials, vocational training guides, movies and other education materials in Chinese language. On June 4, the CIE Headquarters in Tokyo only had eight Chinese DACs who could “translate an average of two pages each per day.”<sup>79</sup> This situation did not improve for the next three months. While the CIE Headquarters produced 1,149 pages of Korean instructional materials for the week ending on September 14, it only produced 33 pages of Chinese instructional materials during the same week.<sup>80</sup> The FOD chief, Lieutenant Colonel O’Brien, complained to the CIE Headquarters that “we are faced with the realization that it may be necessary to translate the English for Lesson 1 for the reason that you [CIE HQ] may not be able to get it ready for us.”<sup>81</sup> As a consequence, the CIE program for the Chinese POWs did not start until August 6, 1951.

From June to August, the CCP cadres and the CPV officers retained their authorities among the Chinese POWs at Pusan. Between April and May, the UNC frustrated the CPV’s Fifth Phase Offense and captured more than 5,000 CPV soldiers. Most of them belonged to the CPV 60<sup>th</sup> Army, 180 Division. Among them, the division-level commissar Wu Chengde was the highest-ranking CPV officer captured by the UNC during the Korean War.<sup>82</sup> In addition to commissar Wu, the UNC also captured five regiment-level officers, and more than thirty battalion-level officers.<sup>83</sup> After these Chinese POWs were delivered

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<sup>79</sup> Lt. Col Robert O’Brien to Chief of Section, CIE, “Intra-Section Memorandum,” June 4, 1951. “CIE General Correspondence,” Box 1.

<sup>80</sup> FOD to Chief, CIE and GHQ, UNC, “Report for Week Ending 14 Sep 1951,” September 14, 1951. “CIE General Correspondence,” Box 1.

<sup>81</sup> The US Army planned to activated the CIE program for both Chinese and Korean POWs on June 1, 1951. Yet the lack of instructional materials postponed the Chinese program for two months. See FOD to Chief, CIE and GHQ, UNC, “Report for Week Ending 31 May 1951,” May 31, 1951. “CIE General Correspondence,” Box 1.

<sup>82</sup> “ATIS,” Box 353, KT 3680.

<sup>83</sup> Document cited in Zeshi Zhang, *Kaoyan: Zhiyuanjun Zhanfu Meijun Jizhongying Qinliji [Ordeal: CPV POWs’ Experience in American Concentration Camps]* (Zhongguo Wenshi Chubanshe, 1998), 1.



to Pusan, their original chain of command was preserved and the CCP cadres and the CPV officers continued exercising their authorities in POW camps.<sup>84</sup>

At Pusan, the CPV defectors received poor treatment under the communist prisoners' leadership. Li Da'an bemoaned that "after we learned each other's reason for becoming a prisoner, I discovered that the POW camps were under the control of the communists."<sup>85</sup> During his first interrogation, Li bragged about his defection experience and asked for rewards since he killed a CPV guard and defected with a truckload of supplies.<sup>86</sup> After the interrogation was completed, his Chinese language interpreter Zhang Zeshi, who was a CCP cadre, warned him in Chinese: "If you continue such kinds of misconduct in POW camps, watch out for your life!"<sup>87</sup> As the UNC lacked Chinese linguists, it relied on whoever was available in the camp and created opportunities for CCP cadres like Zhang to occupy the interpreter position. Under the communist prisoners' leadership, confirmed defectors like Li Da'an could only receive one meal a day as their "punishment" while all other POWs received three meals a day.<sup>88</sup>

In mid-1951, the Chinese and North Korean POWs even conspired for a prison-break. Sun Zhenguan was a battalion-level commissar of the CPV 20<sup>th</sup> Army before his capture. In his memoir, Sun recalled that the North Korean prisoners established an underground communist party organization at the Pusan POW camp hospital and maintained secret communications with a KPA guerrilla force at Chirisan since March

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<sup>84</sup> The CCP cadres were CCP party members. However, the CPV officers were not necessarily CCP members.

<sup>85</sup> *Fangong Yishi Fendoushi*, 87.

<sup>86</sup> "ATIS," Box 329, KG 0486; *Fangong Yishi Fendoushi*, 86.

<sup>87</sup> Zhang Zeshi was a literacy instructor of the CPV 60<sup>th</sup> Army before his capture. As a graduate from the Tsinghua University, he spoke fluent English and served as a language interpreter for the UNC camp authority. For more about his personal information, see Zeshi Zhang and Yansai Gao, *Gu Dao: Kangmei Yuanchao Zhiyuanjun Zhanfu Zai Taiwan [The Lonely Island: CPV POWs in Taiwan]* (Jincheng Chubanshe, 2012), 20.

<sup>88</sup> *Fangong Yishi Fendoushi*, 86.

1951.<sup>89</sup> In May, the North Korean prisoners received Marshal Kim Il-Sung's order for "self-liberation," which encouraged the KPA POWs to escape from the UNC POW camps. A KPA officer Choi approached Sun and asked if the Chinese communist prisoners would be interested in joining their "self-liberation" movement. After Sun gave positive answers, the North Korean and Chinese prisoners collaborated to obtain some maps, compasses, and even some weapons and ammunitions. Their planned prison-break would take place in June.

In early June, the UNC camp authorities discovered the prison-break plan and relocated most POWs from Pusan to Koje-do. Rev. Woodberry learned the prison-break scheme and immediately reported to the UNC camp authorities.<sup>90</sup> In order to preempt future prison-breaks, the UNC decided to relocate most POWs, except the female prisoners and the severely wounded, to Koje-do on June 11.<sup>91</sup> Koje-do was twenty miles southwest of Pusan and was surrounded by the ocean. In June, the UNC transported more than 150,000 Chinese and North Korean POWs to the small island. Among them, the Chinese POWs constituted more than 16,000 of the prisoner population. After the relocation, the UNC built up two designated Chinese POW compounds: compound 72, which held approximately 72,000 Chinese prisoners; and compound 86, which held some 86,000 Chinese prisoners.<sup>92</sup>

Although the relocation prevented the prison-break in mid-1951, the US Army's expectation for an armistice perpetuated communist prisoners' dominance in POW camps. On July 20, a FOD officer W. G. Piersel reported to the CIE Headquarters in Tokyo that

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<sup>89</sup> See Sun Zhenguan memoir, cited in Zhang and Gao, *Gu Dao*, 18.

<sup>90</sup> The UNC commended Rev. Woodberry as his reports "were the decisive factors in averting riot and revolt" in June 1951. See Chief of Chaplains, February 2, 1954. "Earle Woodberry Dossier."

<sup>91</sup> TDY report by Monta Osborne, Director, CIE, June 11, 1951. "CIE General Correspondence," Box 1.

<sup>92</sup> TDY report by Monta Osborne, Director, CIE, June 11, 1951. "CIE General Correspondence," Box 1.

there was an urgent need to “combat the communist organizations within the compounds.”<sup>93</sup> But this report was ignored. In a postwar report to the Department of the Army, the UNC Headquarters explained that in mid-1951, many UNC personnel believed that peace was “just around the corner and all echelons became ‘Laissez Faire’ because of the belief that an Armistice would soon be signed.”<sup>94</sup> A Chinese prisoner named Song Zhenming recalled, during their initial days on Koje-do, “the Americans did not bother visiting our compounds. Even when they came, they only talked with those well-educated prisoners who could speak English.”<sup>95</sup> When the CPV defectors complained to the UNC camp authorities about their poor treatment under their fellow communist prisoners, the Americans refused to intervene and encouraged the Chinese prisoners to settle their own affairs.

In mid-1951, the communist prisoners’ expectation for a quick end to the war turned into a nightmare for the defectors. Zhang Zeshi recalled that one day in June, an American officer approached him with a copy of *The Stars and Stripes* and the headline read “Cease-Fire Parley Opens in Kaesong: Gen. Ridgway Optimistic as Officers Confer.”<sup>96</sup> Zhang quickly spread the words among the Chinese POWs and most of them at the time believed that the war would be over soon and they could return home in the near future.<sup>97</sup> When the first truce talks started in Kaesong on July 10, the communist prisoners openly threatened the defectors to “rethink about your decision to surrender and what will

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<sup>93</sup> W. G. Piersel to O’Brien, “Memorandum,” July 20, 1951. United Nations Command, “Civil Information & Education Section, General Records 1951-1952,” 1952, RG 554/290/49/05/04 Box 3, National Archives at College Park.

<sup>94</sup> “Investigative Records: Intelligence and Investigative Dossiers,” Box 47, “A Study of the Administration and Security of the Oriental Communist Prisoners of War During the Conflict in Korea,” 63.

<sup>95</sup> Chou, *Fangong Yishi Fangtanlu*, 150.

<sup>96</sup> Zhang, *Wode Chaoxian Zhanzheng*, 37.

<sup>97</sup> Zhang, 37.

happen to you when we return home.”<sup>98</sup> The verbal threats quickly turned into persecuting actions against the defectors.

According to Zhang Zeshi, they mocked the defectors and forced them to sing pro-PRC songs such as *Wang Dama Yaoheping* [*Auntie Wang Demands Peace*], *Bai Maonv* [*The White-Haired Girl*], and *Liu Hulan*.<sup>99</sup> Written in 1950, *Wang Dama Yaoheping* portrayed a Shanghai “auntie” who volunteered for extra working hours and encouraged his neighbors to sign peace petitions to support the “Anti-US, Aid-Korea” campaign. The other two songs denounced the “counterrevolutionary” KMT regime in Taiwan and supported the CCP government in Beijing. The communist prisoners forced the defectors to denounce the KMT regime and failure to comply with such requests would lead to maltreatment and even physical violence.

Before August 1951, the UNC camp authorities could not even start the CIE program due to the lack of Chinese linguists. Rev. Woodberry and the limited number of DACs were apparently overwhelmed by the 20,000 Chinese prisoners. Throughout the Korean War, the linguist issue persisted and was never resolved. In addition to that, the UNC personnel’s expectation for a quick end to the Korean War perpetuated the communist prisoners’ dominance in POW camps. As the UNC camp authorities anticipated a quick end to the war, it became unwilling to crack down the communist prisoners’ leadership or to intervene in the Chinese POW camps. When the Kaesong truce talks bogged down in late 1951, the UNC activated the CIE program as a crashing course in democracy for the Chinese POWs.

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<sup>98</sup> Zhang, 65.

<sup>99</sup> Zhang, 65.

### Failure of the CIE: Inaccessible Market, Raw Material Shortages, and the Severe Financial Situation

On August 6, 1951, after a two-month procrastination, the UNC launched the CIE program for Chinese POWs on Kojedo. Contrary to the FOD's expectation of a quick conversion to "democratic citizens," neither the labor program nor the education in democracy fulfilled its goal by December 1951. Although the contemporary UNC officials blamed the unique characteristics of the "oriental communist" for the program's failure, this assessment was inaccurate comparing with the precedents in WWII. From 1942 to 1946, the Axis prisoners were interned on continental US and worked inside American factories and farmland under the labor program. As the US Army reaped some handsome profits in the past, it expected to gain economic profits from the POWs of the Korean War. However, the Chinese POWs were interned at an isolated island which lacked the necessary economic infrastructure and the access to raw materials was limited. Because of these predicaments, the FOD struggled to find a profitable project to utilize the Chinese prisoners' labor power. Between August and December 1951, the CIE labor program proved to be economically unsustainable and experienced severe financial hardships.

In late 1951, the FOD drafted several plans to utilize the Chinese and the North Korean POWs as laborers. The initial plan was to train the prisoners to manufacture office supplies. According to a FOD investigation report on October 18, the US Army had a monthly demand for 28,000 grosses of pencils and 5,451 boxes of blackboard chalks.<sup>100</sup> Contemporary supply of pencils and chalks came from four different South Korean companies. Although the combined production capacity satisfied the US Army's demand, many US personnel complained that the ROK-made pencils "are of very low quality" and

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<sup>100</sup> See Director, CIE/UNC Affairs to Chief, CIE Section, "Report of Temporary Duty," November 2, 1951. "CIE General Correspondence," Box 1.

“the chalk now being made in Korea is of a very inferior quality.”<sup>101</sup> In addition to pencils and chalk, the Army personnel also complained about the low-quality office paper and notebooks made by their South Korean suppliers. The FOD envisioned that if the POWs could produce higher quality office supplies, the CIE labor program could earn some profits as the POWs’ labor cost was substantially lower than the South Korean companies.

The FOD also planned to train the POWs to make furniture. In October, the FOD also discovered that there was a huge demand for office furniture through its communications with the US Army logistics department and the ROK government. To list a few, the US Army needed 60,000 desks, 1,200 blackboards, 600 office partitions, 30,000 kilograms of nails and 300 hectograph duplicators. The ROK government needed 500,000 desks, 10,000 blackboards, and 600 hectograph duplicators.<sup>102</sup> The FOD expected to take some of the furniture projects for its labor program. The FOD even proposed that, after the POWs acquired the necessary labor skills by completing the furniture projects, the CIE could lease out these skillful prisoner-laborers to the ROK government for other public construction projects. In late 1951, the FOD proposed various labor programs with the hope to reap some handsome profits like those programs in WWII. However, such a wishful thinking was never fulfilled due to some particular conditions in Korea.

After communicating with the US Army logistics department and the ROK government, the FOD scrapped these proposals for economic reasons. In late October, the CIE Director Lieutenant Colonel O’Brien organized a series of meetings among the FOD

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<sup>101</sup> See Director, CIE/UNC Affairs to Chief, CIE Section, “Report of Temporary Duty,” November 2, 1951. “CIE General Correspondence,” Box 1.

<sup>102</sup> In addition to these listed items, the US Army and the ROK government demanded other supplies. For a complete list, see Director, CIE/UNC Affairs to Chief, Civil Information and Education Section, Report of TDY to Korea, November 2, 1951. “CIE General Correspondence,” Box 1.

officers, the representatives from the US Army logistics department and several ROK government officials. During these meetings, the FOD realized that their proposals for the labor program could hardly make a profit. As most of the POWs were interned on Koje-do, transportation of raw materials and shipping of finished products incurred extra costs. Lieutenant Colonel Doverspike from the UNCACK (United Nations Civil Assistance Command Korea) questioned “whether it could be economically justified to ship the lumber to Albany [Koje-do].”<sup>103</sup> After the POWs made furniture, pre-fabs, and other office supplies from lumber, the shipping fee was still too expensive to ignore. Similarly, the transportation cost for pulpwood increased the price for the POW-made office paper. Lastly, the principal component of chalk was gypsum, which was an imported product unavailable in Korea. A ROK government official pointed out that even if the POWs could make better quality chalk, the price could not compete with the Korean product due to the extra transportation cost.

Furthermore, the Minister of Education of the ROK, George Paik, stated that South Korean companies would improve the quality of their office supply products in the near future. Perhaps fearing to lose the UNC business, Minister Paik personally promised that the South Korean companies would soon purchase machinery from Japan that could produce better pencils with faster speed. The FOD personnel realized that if the POW laborers were to compete with the Korean companies, CIE would have to purchase the same type of machine from Japan. One FOD official pointed out that, “the principal

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<sup>103</sup> See Director, CIE/UNC Affairs to Chief, CIE Section, “Report of Temporary Duty,” November 2, 1951. “CIE General Correspondence,” Box 1.

drawback to this type of activity is that it is mostly a machine process, employing relatively few people.”<sup>104</sup>

The representatives from the US Army logistics department discouraged FOD’s suggestion to use prisoner-laborers for Korean construction projects. He argued that most Korean families prefer to construct their own houses since it was a cheaper option. In addition to that, a UNC officer expressed his security concerns for employing prisoner-laborers on the Korean peninsula. He worried that prisoners, especially the North Korean prisoners, might be prone to escape, which was the very reason that the UNC relocated the POWs to Kojedo in June. After these meetings ended on October 31, the CIE Director bemoaned that “although several possibilities were discussed, no conclusion as to a feasible project was reached.”<sup>105</sup> The FOD thus failed to find a profitable project for the CIE labor program.

Having failed to find a profitable labor project, the FOD turned to an agriculture project. In early November, the FOD launched an agricultural education program to teach the POWs how to use chemical fertilizers to improve food production. As most of the Chinese POWs were peasants, the FOD argued that the “cumulative effect” of the agriculture program might “over a period of time, be considerable” in terms of keeping them away from communism.<sup>106</sup> The FOD explained the agricultural program with the following,

It has often been stated, and rather well demonstrated, that a man who is skilled in some occupation, who is satisfied with his occupation and who

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<sup>104</sup> See Director, CIE/UNC Affairs to Chief, CIE Section, “Report of Temporary Duty,” November 2, 1951. “CIE General Correspondence,” Box 1.

<sup>105</sup> See Director, CIE/UNC Affairs to Chief, CIE Section, “Report of Temporary Duty,” November 2, 1951. “CIE General Correspondence,” Box 1.

<sup>106</sup> TDY Report, December 21, 1951. “CIE General Correspondence,” Box 1.



feels absolutely secure of his ability to make a decent living, is poor target material for the Communists in their propaganda campaign.<sup>107</sup>

The FOD had high expectations for this program as the number of agriculture instructors reached twenty by December. In contrast, the labor program only kept two personnel to keep searching for profitable labor projects.<sup>108</sup> However, as the winter arrived with sub-zero temperatures, FOD suspended all outdoor activities. On December 21, FOD reported that the only active part of the agriculture program was the showing of motion pictures.

By the end of 1951, the CIE labor program experienced financial hardships and could not even pay off its employees. On October 20, the FOD paid each Chinese DAC officer \$45 for their monthly salary. After this payment, the FOD reported to Tokyo that they did not have enough financial resources for the next paycheck in November.<sup>109</sup> In December, although the CIE switched its salary payment from US dollars to Korean currencies, the CIE could not meet its financial obligations. The regular paycheck for an American FOD employee was 750,000 Korean won per month. Many FOD officers complained about their payment in Korean currencies and demanded an increase of their salary for the next fiscal year in 1952. Most American FOD personnel demanded a monthly salary between 1,000,000 won and 3,000,000 won. Otherwise, they threatened to resign.<sup>110</sup> The situation for the Korean employees were even worse. Many Koreans worked for the

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<sup>107</sup> Proposed Operational Memorandum for Evaluation Branch, FOD. "CIE General Correspondence," Box 1.

<sup>108</sup> Instructional Positions staff table, TDY Report, December 21, 1951. "CIE General Correspondence," Box 1.

<sup>109</sup> See Director, CIE/UNC Affairs to Chief, CIE Section, "Report of Temporary Duty," November 2, 1951. "CIE General Correspondence," Box 1.

<sup>110</sup> TDY Report, December 21, 1951. "CIE General Correspondence," Box 1.

CIE program with essentially no pay because the ROK government was “maintaining pressure on their people to remain on the island [Koje-do], regardless of the pay.”<sup>111</sup>

Without a profitable project, the CIE labor program failed to utilize the Chinese POWs’ labor power in a meaningful way. During the remainder of the Korean War, the most common task for the CIE labor program was to procure supply materials from the Koje-do port. The US Army dispatched LSTs (Landing Ship, Tank) to deliver food, clothing and other materials to Koje-do on weekly basis. Zhang Buting recalled that “the Americans dumped everything at the port at once and left immediately.”<sup>112</sup> The prisoners had to carry these materials into their compounds. At the end of the war, Zhang Buting received a salary coupon of \$800.<sup>113</sup> Other than the few lucky prisoners who performed the labor task, most Chinese POWs never performed any meaningful labor. Years later, as one Chinese prisoner recalled the labor program: “We were ordered to break rocks on the beaches of Koje-do. After we break the big rocks into small rocks, we were ordered to break the small rocks into smaller ones.”<sup>114</sup> In contrast with WWII, the CIE labor program in Korea failed due to the transportation cost, lack of raw materials and machinery, and the prisoners’ tendency to escape.

While the labor program was struggling with financial hardship, the CIE lecture program on democracy also failed. On August 6, a CIE lecture series started with the purpose of indoctrinating the Chinese POWs with democratic values. The lectures and the after-class discussions lasted 25 hours a week and required all Chinese prisoners to attend.

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<sup>111</sup> TDY Report, December 21, 1951. “CIE General Correspondence,” Box 1.

<sup>112</sup> Chou, *Fangong Yishi Fangtanlu*, 101–2.

<sup>113</sup> Zhang never received any cash payment. After his arrival at Taiwan in 1954, the US Army and the ROC government declined the payment. See Chou, 101–2.

<sup>114</sup> Yu, *E Yun*, 154.

Inside the POWs' living quarters, a radio was also installed to blare content from Voice of America, Radio Free China, and various other pro-American radio stations. The prisoners were required to listen to 5 hours (later expanded to 20 hours) of radio program per week.<sup>115</sup> On November 13, after three months of CIE training, the FOD concluded that "these prisoners are far from being staunch believers in democracy" and recommended a major revision to the CIE lecture program.<sup>116</sup> The inappropriate lecture content and the lack of Chinese linguists were responsible for the failure of the CIE lecture program.

The poor lecture content failed to intrigue the minds of the Chinese POWs. For example, during the first CIE lecture on August 6, the instructional materials asked the Chinese POWs to discuss the following two questions:

1. What idea of equality was endorsed by the famous scholar Confucius? Why is it difficult to exterminate imperialist?
2. Which country has the most just laws, a democratic or a communist country? What are the four great freedoms?<sup>117</sup>

These types of questions might provoke sufficient intellectual discussions among college level students, but hardly meant anything to the Chinese prisoners of the Korean War. According to a US Army survey, more than 40% of the Chinese prisoners were illiterate and some 20% received an education for less than three years.<sup>118</sup> Only 2% of Chinese prisoners had received college level education. On August 14, the CIE Director Monta Osborne paid a personal visit to the CIE classrooms in compound 72 and 86. After

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<sup>115</sup> Field Operation Division (FOD) to Chief, CIE and GHQ, UNC, "Report for Week Ending 12 Oct 1951," October 12, 1951. "CIE General Correspondence," Box 1.

<sup>116</sup> Evaluation Branch to Chief, CIE, "A Report to the Materials Production Branch," November 13, 1951. "CIE General Correspondence," Box 1.

<sup>117</sup> "Report for Week Ending 31 August 1951," August 31, 1951. "CIE General Correspondence," Box 3.

<sup>118</sup> The survey was conducted in July 1951. The detailed composition of Chinese POWs' education backgrounds is as the following: Illiterate: 40%. 1-3 years of education: 20%. 4-6 years of education: 11%. 7-9 years of education: 17%. 10-12 years of education: 12%. 13 years plus years of education 2%. See Lt. Col Robert O' Brien to Chief of Section, CIE, "Intra-Section Memorandum," July 7, 1951. "CIE General Records," Box 1.



Figure 2.3 CIE exams for the Chinese POWs. Questions are written in Chinese and the standard answers are written in English (National Archives and Records Administration).

attending several lectures, he reported that many Chinese prisoners “simply withdraw from the class into a doze or daydream.”<sup>119</sup> Rather than promoting the merit of democracy, the CIE lectures only bewildered the majority of the Chinese prisoners.

The after-lecture discussion was non-existent as prisoners were more interested in other activities. In mid-August, a FOD officer complained to an American journalist that fighting and gambling became the daily activities among the Chinese prisoners.<sup>120</sup> As the prisoner Jin Yuankui recalled the gambling activities after the CIE lectures: “We made Mahjong by ourselves. The Americans gave us one pack of cigarettes for every two days and allowed us to keep the paper wraps. We collected these wraps and turned them into Mahjong to kill time.”<sup>121</sup> For the majority of Chinese prisoners, gambling was apparently more attractive than discussing the merit of democracy.

The UNC’s lack of Chinese linguists also undermined the CIE lectures. As the DACs were either stationed in Tokyo SCAP Headquarters or attached to the ATIS unit at the frontline, the FOD improvised to hire a number of CIE lecturers from the Chinese POWs. According to the DACs’ report to Taipei, among the 16,768 Chinese POWs on Koje-do, there were “four to five hundred ex-KMT officers, and nearly one hundred Whampoa graduates.”<sup>122</sup> In another telegram to the ROC Foreign Minister Yeh Kung-Chao (George Yeh), the DACs reported that there were eighty-five Whampoa graduates in Koje-do POW camps.<sup>123</sup> For the UNC camp authorities, these ex-KMT prisoners were their natural allies to promote the gospel of democracy among the Chinese POWs.

On July 9, the FOD Chief Lieutenant Colonel O’Brien sanctioned the cooperation with the ex-KMT POWs and authorized the recruitment of twenty prisoner-lecturers.<sup>124</sup> On

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<sup>120</sup> Conversations between CIE personnel and an American reporter, August 3, 1951. “CIE General Records,” Box 2.

<sup>121</sup> Interview of Jin Yuankui, cited in Hsin-Yi Shen, *14,000 Witnesses: A Study on the “Anti-Communist Defectors” During the Korean War* (Taipei, Taiwan: Academia Historica, 2013), 151.

<sup>122</sup> Report from the ROC Embassy to the ROC Foreign Ministry, January 3, 1952. *Document Collection of Postwar Taiwan*, 1: 179-180.

<sup>123</sup> Report on the Eighty-five Whampoa graduates, January 25, 1952, file no. 00725. *Document Collection of Postwar Taiwan*, 2: 2-5.

<sup>124</sup> Telephone call between O’Brien and Nugent, July 9, 1951. “CIE General Records,” Box 2.

August 6, after completing a rigorous background check, the UNC hired the first group of eleven prisoner-lecturers for the CIE program. As one of the eleven lecturers, Gao Wenjun recalled that,

Two DAC officers, Ma and Zhang, recommended me to the position of prisoners-lecturer to the Americans because I was a graduate from the Whampoa Military Academy... the CIE school principal, dean and many other positions were filled by Whampoa alumnus, and almost all of them came from Taiwan.<sup>125</sup>

The UNC camp authorities thus hoped to resolve the linguist issue through hiring the prisoner-lecturers.

However, the communist prisoners' dominance in POW camps at the time prevented the prisoner-lecturers' indoctrinating efforts. In mid-August, the UNC camp authorities recorded a number of violent incidents in which the prisoner-lecturers were beaten by communist prisoners for their cooperation with the UNC. After investigating into these incidents, the CIE Director concluded that the prisoner lecturers were "directly under the control of the POWs in the compounds. They do not dare say anything that does not meet with the approval of the clique which rules a particular compound."<sup>126</sup> When the UNC personnel retreated from POW camps during night time, the prisoner-lecturers were "subject to beatings" by communist prisoners and many were "afraid of adverse reports that may go to the... Chinese Communist authorities."<sup>127</sup> The hiring of prisoner-lecturers was apparently a poor solution to the linguist issue.

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<sup>125</sup> Gao, *Hanzhan Yiwang*, 160.

<sup>126</sup> Monta L. Osborne to Chief, CIE, "Report of TDY in Korea," August 14, 1951. "CIE General Correspondence," Box 1.

<sup>127</sup> Monta L. Osborne to Chief, CIE, "Report of TDY in Korea," August 14, 1951. "CIE General Correspondence," Box 1.

More than the prisoner-lecturers, the UNC also hired a number of Chinese-speaking Koreans as CIE lecturers. Although the Chinese Compound Commander Captain Bernard Booth instructed the Korean lecturers to “speak slowly and clearly,” their poor Chinese pronunciation generated unsatisfactory results.<sup>128</sup> On August 31, the FOD reported that the Chinese-speaking Korean lecturers followed textbook closely and never asked any questions to students.<sup>129</sup> In the next few months, the Chinese-speaking Koreans proved to be disqualified Chinese linguists. In late 1951, the UNC hired a number of American educational experts to assess the CIE program on Koje-do. During his mission, the educational expert W. D. Stout noticed the awkward communications among the Chinese prisoners, the Chinese-speaking Korean linguists and the American personnel. He reported that the translation from Chinese to Korean then to English were “often more than mildly amusing and less than adequately informative.”<sup>130</sup>

The Chinese prisoners also complained about the skewed communications with the American personnel through the Korean linguists. In addition to the Chinese-speaking Korean lecturers, the UNC camp authorities also hired a number of Koreans nurses and cooks who barely spoke any Chinese or English. Wang Shuyuan recalled that the communication among Chinese prisoners, Korean employees and American personnel often ended in confusion as no one knew what the other two parties wanted.<sup>131</sup> As most people on Koje-do did not speak a second language, communication became the most urgent issue. On August 21, the FOD requested “at least six English-speaking Chinese sent

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<sup>128</sup> W. D. Stout to Chief, CIE, “TDY in Korea, 21 August 1951 to 29 August 1951,” August 31, 1951, 1951. “CIE General Correspondence,” Box 1.

<sup>129</sup> “Report for Week Ending 31 August 1951,” 31 August, 1951. “CIE General Correspondence,” Box 3.

<sup>130</sup> W. D. Stout to Chief, CIE, “TDY in Korea, 21 August 1951 to 29 August 1951,” August 31, 1951. “CIE General Correspondence,” Box 1.

<sup>131</sup> Chou, *Fangong Yishi Fangtanlu*, 115..

to Albany [Koje-do] as soon as possible.”<sup>132</sup> However, such a request was never fulfilled in 1951.

By December 1951, the CIE program failed to achieve the goal of ideological conversion among the Chinese POWs of the Korean War. While the UNC psywar operation experienced an initial success by enticing more than 1,000 Chinese defectors from late 1950 to early 1951, the lack of Chinese language linguists procrastinated the CIE program for two months. During the two-month delay in June and July, the UNC personnel’s expectation for a quick end to the war ironically perpetuated the communist prisoners’ dominance in POW camps. Although the US Army launched the CIE program in August, both the labor program and the lecture on democracy failed by the end of 1951. The UNC’s effort to convert the Chinese “communists” into “democratic citizens” thus failed and required the UNC camp authorities to adjust its POW policies toward the Chinese POWs.

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<sup>132</sup> W. D. Stout to Chief, CIE, “TDY in Korea, 21 August 1951 to 29 August 1951,” August 31, 1951. “CIE General Correspondence,” Box 1.



### Chapter Three

#### Manipulating the Mind: The Chinese Management of US POWs, 1951-53

While several thousand men had been captured and were being held in small villages that reconnaissance had shown to be without fences, guard towers, dogs, or large numbers of armed guards, not a single one of the thousands of men in those village camps had ever escaped and made it back to our lines. This stood in such marked contrast to our experience in WWII, when some of our men escaped from supposedly escape-proof prison camps and even dungeons in ancient castles in central Europe, that it had generated the most serious concern among our leadership. We needed to know why this had happened.

William E. Mayer, Assistant Secretary of Defense<sup>1</sup>

When writing his memoir in 2010, the former Chinese People's Volunteer (CPV) Army English language interpreter Guo Weijing confidently declared that the CPV had built "the first-rate POW camp in the world" at Pyöktong, the designated North Korean town that interned more than 4,000 American prisoners from 1950 to 1954.<sup>2</sup> One prominent feature of this "first-rate" camp was the authorities' effective control of prisoners with a relatively small number of armed guards—the CPV only deployed 130 camp guards at Pyöktong.<sup>3</sup> By comparison, the US Army deployed more than 12,000 guards in the UNC POW camps on Kojé-do for the 16,000 Chinese POWs.<sup>4</sup> Given such a disproportional guard-prisoner ratio at Pyöktong, there was neither a successful prisoner escape, nor an outbreak of mass riots against camp authorities.

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<sup>1</sup> William Mayer, *Brainwashing, Drunks & Madness: Memoirs of a Medical Icon* (Westerville: Winterwolf Publishing, 2004), 257.

<sup>2</sup> Guo, *Diyideng Zhanfuying*.

<sup>3</sup> The total number of Chinese personnel was approximately 430. CPV had 130 armed guards, 100 cadres dispatched by GPD in Beijing, and 200 interpreters conscripted from Chinese universities. A Pyöktong guard was later captured by the UNC in 1952. He told the UNC interrogators about the guard situation at Pyöktong. For the number of CPV guard at Pyöktong, see "ATIS," Box 350, KT 3065; For the number of American POWs at Pyöktong, see Guo, *Diyideng Zhanfuying*, 55–57; *ZGLZX*, 11: 435.

<sup>4</sup> Matthew Ridgway, *Soldier: The Memoirs of Matthew B. Ridgway* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956), 233.

Rather, more than half of the American POWs joined their Chinese captors in condemning the US “invasion” of Korea and the alleged use of bacteriological weapons through anti-American articles, radio broadcast, and various peace petitions. In March 1952 alone, the CPV Political Department reported that more than 80% of American POWs produced such propaganda materials.<sup>5</sup> This claim can be corroborated by official documents from the American side. According to a US Department of the Army study in 1956, except the “die-hard counterrevolutionary” prisoners classified by the Chinese, more than 70% of American POWs produced propaganda materials at some point during their internment.<sup>6</sup> Seven decades after the conclusion of the Korean War, the American POWs’ “collaboration” with their Chinese captors remains a bewildering issue.

One of the most popular themes that emerges from the studies of American POWs’ experience was “brainwashing.” This term was initially coined by a CIA operative Edward Hunter in 1951. After interviewing a number of Chinese refugees in Hong Kong between 1949 and 1950, Hunter published his popular, yet highly controversial, study—*Brainwashing in Red China* in 1951. In this book, Hunter defined “brainwashing” in this way:

[A] person's specific recollections of some past period in his life are wiped away, as completely as if they never happened. Then, to fill these gaps in memory, the ideas which the authorities want this person to ‘remember’ are put into his brain. Hypnotism and drugs and cunning pressures that plague

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<sup>5</sup> According to a CPV Political Department report in March 1952, more than 80% of American POWs produced propaganda materials for the CPV. “Zong Zhengzhibu Guanyu Yijiu Wuyinian Chaoxian Zhanchang Dijun Gongzuo Qingkuang Jianbao [A General Political Department Report for Enemy Work in Korea in 1951],” March 19, 1952. *ZGLZX*, vol. 12: 39-43.

<sup>6</sup> In a Department of the Army study in 1956, the US side estimated that more than 70% of American POWs produced propaganda materials for the Chinese. Considering the Department of the Army was conducted 3 years after the war and some POWs might deny their actions in POW camps, the actual percentage should be higher than 70%. For the Department of the Army statistics, see Julius Segal, “Factors Related to the Collaboration and Resistance Behavior of US Army POWs in Korea” (The George Washington University Operating under contract with the Department of the Army, 1956), 7.

the body and do not necessarily require marked physical violence are required for a brain-changing.<sup>7</sup>

In the following years, the CIA claimed that the American GIs were the latest victims of communist “brainwashing.” In a speech delivered at the Princeton University in April 1953, the CIA Director Allen Dulles asserted: “The Communists are now applying the brainwashing techniques to American prisoners in Korea, and it is not beyond the range of possibility that considerable numbers of our own boys there might be so indoctrinated as to be induced, temporarily at least, to renounce country and family.”<sup>8</sup> With the benefit of seventy years in hindsight, it is apparent that the CIA invented the term “brainwashing” to portray the fiendish nature of a communist enemy who possessed the dark magic to control the mind.

Serious historians have rejected the “brainwashing” argument in recent years, but they remain speculative over American POWs’ behavior in POW camps. On the basis of the repatriated POWs’ court-martial records, Counterintelligence Corps (CIC) interrogations, FBI investigations, and memoirs, American scholars focus on the Cold War ideological contest narrative. As the military historian Elizabeth Lutes Hillman argues in *Defending America* published in 2005, the American POWs defended “American ideological superiority by spurning communist indoctrination—even under the duress and deprivation of a remote POW camp.”<sup>9</sup> In Hillman’s analysis, although most American

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<sup>7</sup> Edward Hunter, *Brain-Washing in Red China: The Calculated Destruction of Men’s Minds*, 1st edition (Vanguard Press, 1951), 10–11.

<sup>8</sup> Arthur Krock, “In the Nation: Allen W. Dulles Describes ‘Warfare for the Brain,’” *The New York Times*, April 16, 1953.

<sup>9</sup> Elizabeth Lutes Hillman, *Defending America: Military Culture and the Cold War Court-Martial*, First edition (Princeton University Press, 2005), 47–48.

POWs produced propaganda materials under coercion, they asserted the “ideology superiority” of American democracy and never truly embraced the communist ideology.

In *Name, Rank and Serial Number* published in 2014, the historian Charles Young argues that the Chinese political cadres “considered American GIs to be humble laborers forced to fight against fellow workers” and successfully convinced some American POWs to accept the gift of “revolutionary thought.”<sup>10</sup> In Young’s formulation, the CPV political cadres convinced a number of American POWs with the message that “poor peasants in Asia could not possibly threaten the American homeland, so GIs were really there to serve their masters in Washington and Wall Street.”<sup>11</sup> A number of American POWs saw the “injustice” of the Korean War and accepted the Chinese narrative on class struggle to explain the Korean War.<sup>12</sup> The Chinese had successfully proselytized some American POWs’ worldview according to Young.

The central theme of most American scholarship thus revolves around the “communism vs. capitalism” and “democracy vs. dictatorship” narratives inside the Chinese-run POW camps. Since an overwhelming majority of the primary sources in the US are produced by the repatriated POWs, this previous scholarship is heavily influenced by these ex-POWs. As the direct participant of this hot conflict in Korea, the ex-POWs’ thoughts were obviously influenced by the Cold War politics and therefore prevented American scholars from providing an objective assessment.

By examining the Chinese language sources declassified in recent years and the materials produced by the American POWs, chapter three of this study explores the

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<sup>10</sup> Young, *Name, Rank, and Serial Number*, 46.

<sup>11</sup> Young, 47.

<sup>12</sup> Young, 57.

interactions between the CPV Political Department personnel and the American POWs between April 1951 and early 1953. This chapter demonstrates that for controlling the POWs at Pyöktong, the CPV Political Department devised the non-ideological tactics of alienation, self-punishment, and self-policing, to produce coerced compliance among the POWs.

### Geneva Convention and the Pyöktong POW Camps

On April 24, 1951, the CPV Political Department announced the establishment of five permanent POW camps along the Yalu River and two temporary POW collection facilities at the battle front. As the Lenient Policy failed to handle the UNC POWs in the past winter, the PLA General Political Department (GPD) in Beijing decided to adopt the Geneva Convention as an “important supplement” to the Lenient Policy in early 1951.<sup>13</sup> In a telegram to Mao Zedong, the GPD Director Luo Ronghuan and Deputy Director Xiao Hua explained: “Unlike our previous struggles with the KMT, the Korean War is an international struggle... in order to meet the need of our international struggles in Korea, we need to adopt the Geneva Convention to manage the UNC POWs.”<sup>14</sup> Mao was intrigued by this explanation as he commented: “Your suggestion is very good. Our Enemy Work must be strengthened.” After a brief training of its cadres in March, the CPV implemented the Geneva Convention as the new guiding principle. By June 1951, the CPV Political Department successfully controlled the death rate among the American POWs as the CPV

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<sup>13</sup> *Dijun Gongzuo Jingyan Huibian*, 6.

<sup>14</sup> Unfortunately, the currently available Chinese documents do not reveal much information about the CPV’s decision-making process in 1951. *Dijun Gongzuo Jingyan Huibian*, 6.

Logistics Department replaced North Korean civilians to provide food, shelter, and medical supplies to the POWs.

On April 24, 1951 the CPV declared the foundation of five POW camps in North Korea. Headquartered in Pyöktong, the full title for the POW camp was the Chinese People's Volunteer Army Political Department POW Management and Training Center. There were eight sub-Sections for each camp: Secretary Section, Interrogation and Disposition Section, Education Section, Organization Section, Investigation Section, News Sections, Security Section, and Literacy Section.<sup>15</sup> The five permanent camps were located at Ch'angsöng-gun (Camp 1 and camp 3), Usi-gun (Camp 2), Wiwön-gun (Camp 4), and Pyöktong (Camp 5). Other than the five permanent camps, there were also two temporary POW collection facilities at the front line. One was located at Suan-gun and the other at Söngch'ön-gun. The two collection facilities were in charge of transporting the captured UNC POWs from the battlefield to one of the five permanent camps in the rear.

Inside the POW camps, the UNC POWs were organized into a company-platoon-squad system. Each POW camp included five to ten companies. Under each company, there were platoons and squads. A squad was the basic unit that typically included twenty to twenty-five prisoners who lived in the same room. The classification system of "reactionary," "neutral," and "progressive" was retained. To each platoon, the CPV camp authorities dispatched a platoon leader and an English language interpreter while vice platoon leaders, squad leaders, and squad monitors were selected from the "progressive" prisoners.<sup>16</sup> The vice platoon leaders and squad leaders were in charge of daily activities

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<sup>15</sup> The Interrogation and Disposition Section (*shencha chuli ke*) and the Education Section (*jiaoyu ke*) were later renamed as the Registration Section (*dengji ke*) and the Entertainment Section (*wenhua yule ke*). See Bian, *Yingmei Zhanfu Jishi*, 123.

<sup>16</sup> Cheng and Huang, *Meijun Zhanfu*, 40–41; Guo, *Diyideng Zhanfuying*, 41.

such as morning rollcall and food distribution, and the squad monitors were responsible for leading the after-lecture discussion and reporting each prisoner's performance to the Chinese instructors. The CPV cadres held the power of promoting and dismissing prisoner leaders. Most of such POW leaders would keep their positions unless they seriously failed CPV's expectations, like becoming "reactionaries."

For managing the system, the GPD appointed an experienced Enemy Work Section (EWS) veteran Wang Yanggong as the Director of Pyöktong POW camp.<sup>17</sup> Born in 1913, Wang studied at the Fu Jen Catholic University in Peiping (Beijing, 1928-1949) during the 1930s. When Japan launched full-scale invasion of China in 1937, he quit school and went to Yanan where he joined the CCP and started working with Japanese POWs until 1945. During the Chinese Civil War, he was promoted to the Chief of EWS in Manchuria in 1947. After the founding of the PRC in October 1949, most EWS units were dissolved and its staff were reassigned to other branches of the PLA.<sup>18</sup> Wang became the head of the Production Department of the Northeast Military Region in early 1950. As Wang had rich experiences dealing with "liberated soldiers" from both the Japanese and KMT POWs, the GPD transferred him to Pyöktong in April 1951.

Arriving at his new post, Director Wang Yanggong's top priority was the food issue. He secured the POW camps' food supply from the CPV Logistics Department.<sup>19</sup> Rather than continuing the food conscription from Korean civilians, Director Wang requested

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<sup>17</sup> American POWs called him General Wang. However, this title was incorrect as Wang never acquired the military rank of general. His official level in the Chinese system was *zhuren*, director. In this dissertation, I will use Director Wang instead of General Wang.

<sup>18</sup> "Zhongguo Renmin Zhiyuanjun Kangmei Yuanchao Zhanzheng Zhengzhi Gongzuo Zongjie [A Summary Report for the CPV Political Work during the Korean War]," February, 1955. *ZGLZX*, vol. 13: 241.

<sup>19</sup> "Treaties, States Parties, and Commentaries - Geneva Convention (III) on Prisoners of War, 1949 (Geneva Convention on POWs, 1949)," Chapter II, Article 26, International Humanitarian Law Databases, accessed January 27, 2021, <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/INTRO/375?OpenDocument>.

funding from the CPV Logistics Department for purchasing food for the POWs. Yu Zhongzhi recalled that “comrade Wang secured sufficient funding to sustain the POW camps. Since then, our cadres at Pyöktong started crossing the Yalu River and purchased cooking oil, salt, meat, and vegetables for prisoners from local markets in the Northeast.”<sup>20</sup> After each purchase, a CPV supply truck would deliver the supply materials to the closest supply depot for each POW camp.

The CPV cadres would then organize POWs to procure the supplies. According to Corporal Shimomura Saburo who was detained at camp 5, the closest supply depot to Pyöktong was five miles away and such a trip occurred twice week.<sup>21</sup> With the food purchased from China, the CPV was able to maintain the *zhongzao* (medium-level, or the CPV battalion officer level) food standard for all prisoners, which included 875g staple food, 50g sugar, 50g meat, and 50g fish per day.<sup>22</sup> Besides the regular *zhongzao* food, CPV delivered the captured C-rations, canned beef and pork, powdered milk and coffee to the UNC POWs as supplement diet.<sup>23</sup> Sick prisoners received food doubling the usual amount during their recuperation.

Wang Yanggong also improved the food standard for Chinese staff to placate their grievances. Many lower-level Chinese officers protested the decision to feed the POWs with *zhongzao*. As one Chinese platoon leader complained,

I just don't understand it. I joined the CCP for seven years, received five military medals, and was shot by the American imperialist in Korea. Yet I am still a platoon leader [who could not enjoy the *zhongzao* food standard]. These American devils were defeated by us. But we feed them with

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<sup>20</sup> Yu Zhongzhi Memoirs, cited in Guo, *Diyideng Zhanfuying*, 65.

<sup>21</sup> The UNC POW Shimomura Saburo was captured by the CPV on November 30, 1950 and repatriated to the UNC on Mary 31, 1951. “ATIS,” Box 342, KT 0505.

<sup>22</sup> For the CPV's food standard, see Guo, *Diyideng Zhanfuying*, 65.

<sup>23</sup> “ATIS,” Box 348, KT 2502; “ATIS,” Box 328, KG 0464.



*zhongzao* and protect them as if they were some kinds of buddha. What did they do to deserve this treatment?<sup>24</sup>

Wang was well aware of his comrades' complaints. He made *zhongzao* the universal food standard for the Pyöktong staff and *xiaozao* (high-level, or the CPV division officer level) for language interpreters.<sup>25</sup> With the upgraded food standards, complaints from lower-level CPV officers quickly disappeared. As the CPV stopped the food conscription from Korean civilians, tensions between the CPV and the Koreans also eased. The CPV cadres allowed the presence of a small black market inside the Pyöktong city where the POWs could trade their surplus food or personal belongings, such as fountain pens, watches, and dollars, with the locals for tobacco. In late 1952, some Turkish prisoners even managed to develop a secret marijuana trade with Korean civilians.

The CPV also provided clothing and shelter to the POWs according to the Geneva Convention. Before April 1951, the CPV only issued a new set of CPV uniform to the “liberated” UNC soldier while keeping the rest of the POWs in their original clothing. After Director Wang took his office, the Pyöktong authorities provided each POW with a new cotton-padded uniform, a set of blankets, and a pair of sneakers.<sup>26</sup> Article 23 of the Geneva Convention ordained that the POWs have shelters “to the same extent as the local civilian population.”<sup>27</sup> In April the CPV Political Department secured a batch of bricks, timber, cement, and lime from the PLA Logistics Department from the Northeast Military Region.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Bian, *Yingmei Zhanfu Jishi*, 58.

<sup>25</sup> Bian, 58.

<sup>26</sup> “Geneva Convention on POWs, 1949,” Section II, Chapter II, Article 27; *Dijun Gongzuo Jingyan Huibian*, 36.

<sup>27</sup> “Geneva Convention on POWs, 1949,” Section II, Chapter I, Article 23.

<sup>28</sup> Jiyang Huang, “Wozai Zhiyuanjun Zhanfuying Gongzuo De Nanwang Jingli [My Unforgettable Working Experience at CPV POW Camps],” *Wenshi Chunqiu*, no. 11 (2012).

When the building materials arrived at Pyöktong, the CPV mobilized the KPA guards and hired some Korean civilians to construct new living quarters for the UNC POWs. The project was completed in less than a month and provided 1,000 additional living spaces.<sup>29</sup> The cramped living conditions were relieved as the average number of prisoners living in one room lowered from twenty to ten. A CPV camp guard Zhao Yunlong, who served at Pyöktong in early 1951 and was captured by the UNC in December, told his American interrogators that “in most cases, they [POWs] were treated better than the CCF [Chinese Communist Forces, i.e., the CPV] troops.”<sup>30</sup>

Lastly, Director Wang requested and received two medical teams from the GPD. In March, Beijing dispatched two division-level medical teams, No. 7 and No. 10, from Shanghai to administer a General Camp Hospital in Pyöktong. A typical CPV divisional medical team consisted of 76 medical workers with the capacity of treating between 300 and 500 patients per day.<sup>31</sup> These two medical teams helped build a general camp hospital at Pyöktong and three branch hospitals at other camp locations. More than administering medical treatment at camp hospitals, the medical teams also inoculated the POWs against Cholera, Typhoid, and Scrub typhus.<sup>32</sup>

After implementing a series of measures sanctioned by the Geneva Convention, the CPV significantly improved the general condition of the POW camps. In a speech delivered in June 1952, the CPV commissar Du Ping declared that the initial chaotic situation and the abnormal deaths among POWs essentially stopped in April 1951.<sup>33</sup> As far as the

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<sup>29</sup> Cheng and Huang, *Meijun Zhanfu*, 39.

<sup>30</sup> “ATIS,” Box 348, KT 2502.

<sup>31</sup> *Kangmei Yuanchao Zhanzheng Weisheng Gongzuo Zongjie [Korean War Medical Works]*, First Draft, 1986, 12.

<sup>32</sup> Guo, *Diyideng Zhanfuying*, 60.

<sup>33</sup> Du Ping, Du Ping, “Guanyu Jiaqiang Diweijun Gongzuo Wenti [On Strengthening the Discipline of POW Work Issue],” June, 1952. *Dijun Gongzuo Jingyan Huibian*, 27–49.

American POWs were concerned, the death toll plummeted to almost zero after the first harsh winter was gone. As Corporal Harold Dunn told the *Pageant* correspondent Henry Lee in January 1954, after April 1951, “our situation changed wonderfully... After 1951, we lost only one GI, and he was struck by lightning.”<sup>34</sup> By following the Geneva Convention in early 1951, the CPV quickly restored order at Pyöktong.

### Racism and POW Resistance

While the CPV improved the general living conditions for the UNC POWs, a corrosive racism plagued Pyöktong POW camps. Contrary to CPV cadres’ initial expectation of a political struggle around ideologies (i.e., communism vs. capitalism), they experienced a different kind of struggle over race through their interactions with American prisoners. For most CPV cadres, race was a rather strange topic as their past experiences with Japanese and KMT POWs had little to do with it. They were startled to observe the racial clashes in POW camps and were unable to placate the racism between white and non-white POWs. Meanwhile, Chinese personnel found themselves to be subjected to the POWs’ racial stereotyping. Having dealt with a number of potentially explosive racial incidents in mid-1951, the CPV Political Department realized that neither the Lenient Policy nor the Geneva Convention was able to deal with the race issue properly. When the CPV cadres requested policy instructions from Beijing, the GPD reacted indifferently to the various reported racial incidents, including the emergence of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) in the POW camps. The GPD’s such initial attitude derived from the fact that the number of white prisoners far exceeded the non-white prisoners. In its reply, the GPD ordered the

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<sup>34</sup> Henry Lee, “I Was A ‘Progressive.’ By Corporal Harold M. Dunn, as Told to Henry Lee,” *Pageant*, 1954, 87.

Pyöktong camp authorities to “educate the black POWs properly and help them overcome the paranoid sense of racial inferiority.”<sup>35</sup> Thus, deviating from Beijing’s anticipation for waging an ideological struggle among the POWs, the issue of race became the dominant theme at Pyöktong in mid-1951.

The seriousness of racism among American POWs dawned on CPV cadres only gradually. The CPV initially interned all UNC POWs at Pyöktong without segregation.<sup>36</sup> Having shared a room with white prisoners from December 1950 to June 1951, the black prisoner Clarence Adams wrote in his memoir that, “for the first time in my life, I felt I was being treated as an equal rather than as an outcast.”<sup>37</sup> Yet this equal treatment offended some white Americans who were accustomed to a segregated society. Upon their arrival at Pyöktong, many white Americans protested to the CPV camp authorities and demanded racial segregation. The CPV interpreter Guo Weijing recalled that in early 1951, “many white prisoners refused to live with black prisoners. They demanded a separate living space and kitchen.”<sup>38</sup> On one occasion, a white prisoner told his Chinese instructor that he was “not accustomed to living and eating with black boys.”<sup>39</sup> Although the US President Truman signed the Executive Order 9981 to end racial segregation in the US military in 1948, white American soldiers in the Korean War upheld the idea of racial segregation, even under captivity.

The CPV rejected such a request out of hand and labelled it as “counterrevolutionary.” As the Geneva Convention only endorsed separate living quarters

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<sup>35</sup> The report was drafted in July 1952. But the directive was about the situation in early 1951. See “Guanyu Jinhou Dui Waifu Jiaoyu Gongzuo De Fangzhen [On the Education of Foreign POWs],” July, 1952. *Dijun Gongzuo Jingyan Huibian*, 181–83.

<sup>36</sup> Bian, *Yingmei Zhanfu Jishi*, 78.

<sup>37</sup> Adams, *An American Dream*, 59.

<sup>38</sup> Guo, *Diyideng Zhanfuying*, 51.

<sup>39</sup> Thompson, *True Colors*, 47.

for male and female prisoners, American POWs could not find a legitimate excuse to support their segregation demands other than blatant racism.<sup>40</sup> Although the CPV authorities labelled the request for racial segregation as “counterrevolutionary,” such requests were initially not deemed as a serious matter. The CPV prohibited many trivial or unfamiliar things among the POWs for being “counterrevolutionary.” For example, singing jazz music and wearing a crooked hat were also classified as “counterrevolutionary” activities at the time.<sup>41</sup>

Naively, the CPV cadres assumed that, without other “counterrevolutionary” behaviors, racism was correctable and would disappear once prisoners accepted theories of communism. In many CPV instructors’ mind, individual behaviors on the basis of nationality, race, and religion were nothing but the capitalists’ trick to hide the class struggle between bourgeoisie and proletariat. Class, after all, was the only true identity. However, such wishful thinking underestimated the impact of racism. The CPV Political Department’s refusal to segregate the camp soon led to a series of deadly racial incidents in the POW camps during the first half of 1951.<sup>42</sup>

In February 1951, American POWs at Pyöktong experienced several deadly incidents that involved both white and black perpetrators. A black prisoner named John William Jones arrived at Pyöktong at this time and developed a high fever. His roommates suspected him of contracting pneumonia, a widely-spread infectious disease at the time. When the light went out that night, his roommate James Gallagher (white) dumped Jones into the 30-below zero temperature outside and let him freeze to death. Afterwards,

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<sup>40</sup> “Geneva Convention on POWs, 1949,” Chapter II, Article 25.

<sup>41</sup> *Dijun Gongzuo Jingyan Huibian*, 6.

<sup>42</sup> CPV began to segregate POW camps in June 1951. First in camp 5 and later to all other camps. The completion of segregating camps varied from camp to camp, but was mostly done by early 1952.

Gallagher brandished his action as an effective means for disease control in front of his white roommates.<sup>43</sup> White prisoners also fell victim to such racial hate murder. A black prisoner named Rothwell Floyd (aka., Tiny) was over six feet tall and weighed over 200 pounds. He was recognized as “the most able bodied” by his peers in the camp.<sup>44</sup> A white prisoner named Piper Walter, with an injured and infected ankle, was assigned to Tiny’s room in late February. Without much hesitation, Tiny threw Piper outside the room and let him freeze to death.<sup>45</sup>

CPV officials conducted sketchy investigations and hastily declared the two incidents as accidents. Both Gallagher and Tiny happened to be squad leaders, and unsurprisingly the Chinese investigation “failed” to identify the perpetrators.<sup>46</sup> Interpreter Guo Weijing bemoaned that the CPV’s lack of manpower and resources in early 1951 prevented a more careful investigation. It was unknown what they told CPV investigators, and both men went unpunished.<sup>47</sup> Prisoners tried to resolve these issues among themselves after the Chinese investigation failed to punish the perpetrators. According to Gallagher’s roommates, Gallagher was later beaten on multiple occasions for murdering Jones.<sup>48</sup> A few days after Piper’s death, a group of white prisoners confronted Tiny at the camp sports field. According to Robert Bishop Dean, one in the group, Tiny acknowledged his behavior

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<sup>43</sup> Interrogation of Lloyd W. Pate, August 30, 1953. “POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files,” n.d., Box 203, James Gallagher Dossier.

<sup>44</sup> “POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files,” Box 187, Rothwell Floyd Dossier.

<sup>45</sup> Interrogation of Robert Dean Bishop in “POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files,” Box 187, Rothwell Floyd Dossier.

<sup>46</sup> “POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files,” Box 203, James Gallagher Dossier; “POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files,” Box 187, Rothwell Floyd Dossier.

<sup>47</sup> Gallagher allegedly told the Chinese that he suffered a “mental duress” and was unaware of his murdering behavior. See Interrogation of Lloyd Pate, August 30, 1953. “POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files,” n.d., Box 203, James Gallagher Dossier.

<sup>48</sup> Interrogation of Lloyd Pate, August 30, 1953. “POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files,” Box 203, James Gallagher Dossier.

and denounced Piper as a “stinking bastard.”<sup>49</sup> After striking a white officer Lieutenant Colonel John W Keith Jr. in the face, Tiny broke the encirclement and ran away. As racial confrontation set in motion by these cases, more incidents would occur in the subsequent months.

In March, several additional incidents stirred up the racial confrontation among prisoners. When the CPV commissar Du Ping visited the camp hospital, he noticed a group of white prisoners sitting around a bonfire to keep warm at the waiting area while a black prisoner crouched in a cold corner of the room. Du dispatched a Chinese nurse to lead the black prisoner to the bonfire and left the scene. Later, the nurse reported to Du that immediately after the Chinese staff left the waiting room, the white prisoners beat the black prisoner to the ground and kicked him out from the bonfire.<sup>50</sup> Other than sympathizing with the black prisoner’s experience, the CPV commissar could not think of any remedy for the incident.

In the same month, a murder took place and further escalated the racial confrontation. A seventeen-year-old black prisoner nicknamed “Aggie” had been hit in both legs by American planes on his march to Pyöktong.<sup>51</sup> When he arrived at Camp 5, his wound became infected and the discharge smelled terrible inside the living quarter. A white prisoner slept next to Aggie complained about the presence of “a filthy nigger” to his Chinese instructors.<sup>52</sup> One night after the lights went out, the white prisoner started kicking Aggie’s wounded legs, a move that infuriated other black prisoners in the room and a fist

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<sup>49</sup> Interrogation of Robert Bishop Dean, October 4, 1956, “POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files,” Box 187, Rothwell Floyd Dossier.

<sup>50</sup> *Dijun Gongzuo Jingyan Huibian*, 45.

<sup>51</sup> The Chinese did not register the full name of this prisoner. Clarence Adams recalled this prisoner’s name in his memoirs. See Adams, *An American Dream*, 50.

<sup>52</sup> Guo, *Diyideng Zhanfuying*, 51.

fight ensued between white and black prisoners.<sup>53</sup> The next morning, CPV guards discovered two dead bodies—one was Aggie and the other was the white prisoner. The camp authorities investigated the case but did not find anything since all witnesses refused to talk.<sup>54</sup> Thus, instead of a familiar and tidy situation of class struggles, what the American POWs presented to the CPV authorities was an ugly wound of the American society. As American soldiers fought a hot war for the Cold War's sake, they unexpectedly carried the wound with them to a new perplexing arena of international contest, the POW camps.

Apparently, with the class-struggle “panacea,” the CPV was unable to heal the American wound. Although the CPV investigation conclusively characterized the various murdering incidents as “accidents,” interpreter Guo Weijing acknowledged in his memoir that he and his Chinese colleagues knew these crimes were motivated by racism. For example, after Aggie was murdered, the Chinese investigation quickly discovered that the white prisoner involved in the case openly cursed his black roommates as “filthy niggers” on various occasions. Guo recounted that “there’s no question in my mind that the black prisoners killed him as a retaliation.”<sup>55</sup> Instructor named Ye Chengba expressed his frustration to Clarence Adams that he “did not understand how, even under the most adverse of conditions, this racial hatred and inability to cooperate with one another still dominated so many white Americans.”<sup>56</sup>

Not only was racism brutally visible among the POWs, it was also an organized force. Many white prisoners rallied around a Ku Klux Klan cell. According to Thomas

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<sup>53</sup> For more detailed discussion for the murder, see Adams, *An American Dream*, 50; Guo, *Diyideng Zhanfuying*, 51.

<sup>54</sup> Guo, *Diyideng Zhanfuying*, 51.

<sup>55</sup> Guo, 51.

<sup>56</sup> Adams, *An American Dream*, 53–54.



Bayes' interrogation by the CIC in 1953, the KKK was founded by eight American prisoners from the first company in camp 3 and quickly developed its branches to the other 4 camps.<sup>57</sup> One morning in 1951, a CPV interpreter discovered an image of a "huge flaming cross" bearing the signature of "KKK" on a blackboard in camp 5 lecture hall.<sup>58</sup> On the same day, a number of black prisoners immediately reported the presence of the KKK to the Chinese and sought protection from the camp authorities.<sup>59</sup> Without prior knowledge of the race issue, the CPV interpreters as well as the CCP cadres at Pyöktong were simply unable to solve the racial tensions in POW camps. Their past training never covered the topic of race and therefore left the Chinese camp authorities in a total helpless situation.

The CPV Political Department acquiesced to racism with the hope to maintain a manageable camp order. In a policy instruction issued to the 65<sup>th</sup> Army, the CPV Political Department explained that "surely, we must show our sympathy toward the black people... however, simply denouncing the white prisoners will cause their resentment toward us."<sup>60</sup> After all, black prisoners only constituted less than 10% of the prisoner population. Criticizing white prisoners would precipitate more disturbance. Even though the CPV dismissed the idea of race as a bourgeoisie category used to hide the class struggle, the political education in communism in the past winter only appealed to a few American prisoners. For the overwhelming majority of the POWs, the CPV could not change their "counterrevolutionary" thought on race. By early 1951, the CPV cadres of the Political Department could do nothing but hoped the race issue would not deteriorate further.

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<sup>57</sup> Thomas Bayes Phase II Interrogation, October 21, 1953. "POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files," n.d., Box 33, Thomas Bayes Dossier.

<sup>58</sup> "Investigative Records: Intelligence and Investigative Dossiers," Box 2, "Final Report," 232.

<sup>59</sup> Ye, *Qinli Lianheguo*, 22.

<sup>60</sup> "Wajie Dijun De Jidian Tihui [Some Experiences on Disintegrating Enemy Forces]," December 1953. *Dijun Gongzuo Jingyan Huibian*, 126–30.

The CPV Political Department's appeasement failed to put a bridle on white prisoners' racism. This racial drama even began eroding the relations between prisoners and their Chinese captors. In late April, the CPV cadres at Pyöktong called up POWs to celebrate the International Workers' Day (the May First), which commemorated Chicago workers' general strike in 1886. One CPV Enemy Work official explained that "as most of these Americans come from working class families and are expected to become workers after the war, they surely have the right to celebrate the May First."<sup>61</sup> The Pyöktong Headquarters sanctioned a May First Gala and invited POWs to perform for the show.

Yet, the gala went into a direction that caught the CPV cadres off guard. The anti-Chinese racial stereotypes among American POWs loomed out to the public when a white prisoner openly cursed "let all the rice-eating gooks go to hell!" in his talk show.<sup>62</sup> While most Chinese staff did not understand this slang and maintained their composure, a Chinese interpreter named Shen Jinguang caught the phrase and immediately called off the show.<sup>63</sup> As most prisoners left the mess hall where the gala was held, a group of white Americans refused to leave. They demanded resumption of the show and insisted that the performer was "merely joking."<sup>64</sup> In the next couple of hours, they staged a protest at the Pyöktong Headquarters and chanted the slogan "we want the Sgt. We want the Sgt. [the performer was a sergeant]" repeatedly.<sup>65</sup> The gala was nevertheless terminated and the CPV camp authorities launched an investigation into the matter. In racializing the Chinese into a

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<sup>61</sup> Bian, *Yingmei Zhanfu Jishi*, 100.

<sup>62</sup> Bian, 101.

<sup>63</sup> Shen Jinguang is an extended family member of Shen Chong, a female student who was raped by two American GIs in Beijing on the Christmas eve of 1946.

<sup>64</sup> Bian, *Yingmei Zhanfu Jishi*, 102.

<sup>65</sup> The American journalist Frank Noel also had a brief description for this incident in his interrogation. See "POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files," n.d., Box 2, "Final Report," 233.

category similar to the “niggers,” the event rendered the CPV’s race-blind approach to the POWs untenable.

The Pyöktong camp Director Wang Yanggong ordered the Interrogation and Disposition Section to investigate into this matter. He intended to find out the sources of antagonism between POWs and Chinese personnel. In its final report delivered in early June, the investigation team pointed out that many American prisoners maintained a “racial pride and looked down upon the Orientals.”<sup>66</sup> Although the investigation team identified the race issue, it was unable to recommend a policy solution. “Such a belief,” the Chinese investigators concluded in a pessimistic tone, “is a part of American culture which has a deep root in its society and military and cannot be eliminated in a short term.”<sup>67</sup> In a CPV Enemy Work staff meeting, Director Wang distributed this investigation report with other CPV cadres and lamented that “our comrades have not identified a means to educate the prisoners objectively and effectively.”<sup>68</sup> Other than reporting the race issue to the GPD in Beijing, the CPV cadres at Pyöktong were unable to resolve the race issue.

During their postwar interrogations by the CIC, American prisoners frankly acknowledged their racial contempt toward their Chinese captors. For example, American POWs addressed Director Wang Yanggong as “General Wong” in public, but nicknamed him “shaky” who “had to be treated as a small boy” in private. According to Frank Page, he and his fellow prisoners believed that as an oriental, Wang’s mental capacity was limited.<sup>69</sup> American POWs described the Chinese camp guard leader Zhang Zhisun as a

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<sup>66</sup> Guo, *Diyideng Zhanfuying*, 67.

<sup>67</sup> Guo, 67.

<sup>68</sup> Guo, 67.

<sup>69</sup> “Intelligence Document File Publications (‘950000’ File), 1947-1962, 950774: ASCIR (ASCIR),” n.d., Box 1025, Frank Page Dossier, RG 319/631/35/35/1, National Archives at College Park.

person who “spoke in high girlish voice, particularly when excited; walked with feminine air.”<sup>70</sup> Another instructor Wang Weiyuan earned the nickname “Ragmop” because POWs claimed the unique structure of his “slant eyes” enabled him to “look in three directions at the same time.”<sup>71</sup> Other than these specific nicknames, prisoners generally used “gooks” and “Chinks” to describe CPV personnel in private conversations. The ramification of racism was clear: the racially inferior Chinese could not possibly provide the “correct” education to a superior race. The panacea of class struggle was rejected out of hand on a racial ground.

As the CPV Political Department awaited Beijing’s instruction, another explosive incident occurred between a group of white American prisoners and Turkish prisoners in May 1951. The Pyöktong camp guard leader Zhang Zhisun recalled that one day at dinner time, a Chinese interpreter rushed to the Pyöktong Headquarters and reported a “violent fist fight” in the camp mess hall.<sup>72</sup> The small number of Chinese interpreters at the scene was unable to control the situation and requested armed guards. Zhang quickly took a squad of Chinese soldiers and rushed to the scene. Upon entering the hall, he saw food spilled on the ground while all the prisoners engaged with someone in a physical duel. At hall center, some Turkish prisoners circled a dozen of Americans and beat them to the ground. The Turkish prisoners apparently gained the upper hand while showing no sign to stop. Zhang ordered the Chinese guards to stop the fighting and began investigating the case.

Zhang quickly discovered that a group of white American prisoners was responsible for provoking this incident. He initially interrogated a group of British prisoners who were

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<sup>70</sup> Interrogation of Michael Lorenzo, April 27, 1954. “ASCIR,” Box 1025, Michael Lorenzo Dossier.

<sup>71</sup> Pate, *Reactionary! Sgt. Lloyd W. Pate’s Story as Told to B. J. Cutler*, 84.

<sup>72</sup> Zhang was the camp guard leader for the second platoon at camp 5. Bian, *Yingmei Zhanfu Jishi*, 80.

standing outside the mess hall spectating and cheering while the fighting took place. The British prisoners refused to provide information and suggested Zhang to interrogate those involved in the fighting. The Americans who were beaten to the ground insisted on going to camp hospital first and refused to disclose any information. After the Turkish language interpreter Malik arrived, Zhang found out the reason for this fight.<sup>73</sup> Before dinner time on that day, a group of white American prisoners smuggled a large piece of pork into the camp kitchen and buried it at the bottom of Turkish prisoners' rice wok. Only when the Turks were about to finish dinner did they discover the piece of pork. They became infuriated and could not be placated by the Americans' quick admission that they did this for "joking." The British realized the explosive potential of the situation and immediately retreated from the mess hall. A fist fight ensued until Zhang's arrival with Chinese guards. Afterwards, Zhang separated the two groups and promised a satisfactory resolution to this "pork incident."

The Pyöktong camp authorities commenced an emergency meeting that night to discuss possible solutions. According to the CPV statistics, among the 244 Turkish prisoners, more than 200 were "devoted Muslims." Zhang Zhisun reported that after he controlled the scene, he conversed with a Turkish officer, who was also an Akhoond. The Turkish officer insisted that the incident was "a purposeful insult" to their nation and religion, and threatened vengeance if the CPV authorities could not deliver severe punishment to the American perpetrators.<sup>74</sup> The "pork incident" put the CPV camp

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<sup>73</sup> Malik was the only Turkish language interpreter in the camp. As a citizen of the Soviet Union who studied abroad in Turkey, Malik only spoke Turkish and Russian. In order to assist Malik's work, the PLA General Political Department dispatched a Russian language interpreter Hua Manli from the Beijing Foreign Studies University to Pyöktong. See Bian, 79.

<sup>74</sup> Bian, 81.

authorities in a dilemma. Punishing the American prisoners would further deteriorate the already strangled relations between the CPV and the American POWs. However, refusal to punish American POWs would surely precipitate another round of violence between the Americans and the Turks. Thus, the CPV camp authorities needed a solution that could prevent American prisoners from provoking another “pork incident” while placate Turkish prisoners’ present grievances.

Camp authorities’ final solution was to offer appeasement to both sides. The CPV issued a “stern warning” and reduced their food rations for a month to all American POWs who had orchestrated the incident without mentioning any name. To placate Turkish prisoners, the CPV provided fresh halal food and slackened control over their religious activities. Before the “pork incident,” the CPV delivered frozen chicken, beef, and lamb to Turkish prisoners and only permitted them to conduct religious prayers once a week (on Sundays).<sup>75</sup> After the incident, the CPV purchased live chicken and sheep from China’s northeastern markets and delivered to the Turkish Akhoond. In addition, CPV also permitted the celebration of the Eid al-Fitr and the Eid al-Adha for the remainder of their internment.<sup>76</sup> The Turkish prisoners were satisfied with these arrangements and the Akhoond promised not to pursue the American prisoners who had instigated this incident.

Having placated these racial clashes by mid-1951, CPV camp authorities realized that while helpful in solving some early difficulties in the camps, the Geneva Convention provided no guidance in dealing with the race issue. In a telegram to Mao Zedong in January 1953, the GPD acknowledged its failure in handling the POW work in early 1951: “We have seriously underestimated the racial and religious conflicts among the prisoners.

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<sup>75</sup> *Dijun Gongzuo Jingyan Huibian*, 6; Bian, *Yingmei Zhanfu Jishi*, 82.

<sup>76</sup> Bian, *Yingmei Zhanfu Jishi*, 82.

We wrongly attributed these issues to our enemies' 'counterrevolutionary' nature."<sup>77</sup> Meanwhile, the "counterrevolutionary" organizations continued posing grave threats to camp order. In addition to the main clique of the KKK, the CPV identified the following "reactionary" groups: the Faithful Hearts of America, Future Fathers of America, Free Masons, the Cannibal Group, the Black Diamond Society, and the American Legion. Many CPV instructors reported that "neutral" prisoners were often caught in the mini wars between "progressive" prisoners and "reactionary" organizations. As the race issue plagued Pyöktong, the CPV Political Department began to seek policy alternatives to establish control of the POW camps in June 1951.

#### Non-ideological Control by Self-Punishment

From June 15 to 27, 1951, the CPV Political Department convened the First Enemy Work Conference at Pyöktong. From Beijing, the GPD dispatched its Deputy Director Xiao Hua and Enemy Work Section Director Huang Yuan to attend the conference. During the twelve-day meeting, CPV personnel discussed the hitherto working experiences with UNC POWs and broached potential policy changes for the future. While the conference confirmed the merits of the Lenient Policy and the Geneva Convention, CPV cadres recognized the challenge of racism posed by the various "counterrevolutionary" organizations. From late June to December 1951, the CPV cadres' first priority was to crack down the various resistance groups and devised the new tactic of alienation and self-punishment.

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<sup>77</sup> *Dijun Gongzuo Jingyan Huibian*, 6.

Instead of mastering a “brainwashing” technology as alleged in Edward Hunter’s book, the CPV’s new tactics for managing American POWs ironically took a page from the US psychological warfare in the Korean War. During the CPV’s second phase offensive in November 1950, Chinese troops defeated the US 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division at Ch’ongch’ön River and seized a batch of psychological warfare documents.<sup>78</sup> During the early phase of war, approximately 1,000 Chinese soldiers defected to the UNC side. Hoping to understand these defections, the CPV Political Department organized research into these seized documents.<sup>79</sup>

In the resultant report to Beijing, the CPV Political Department concluded that “alienation” was the most effective tactic used by the US Army to induce Chinese soldiers to defect. The report pointed out that the US utilized various means such as frontline radio broadcasting, loud speakers, and leaflets to “alienate the Sino-Korean relations, Sino-Soviet relations, CCP-mass relations, officer-soldier relations, and ordinary soldier-‘liberated soldier’ relations.”<sup>80</sup> The US strategy in nutshell was to “use Asians to fight Asians.”<sup>81</sup> Resonating with the imperial China’s old tactic of “use the barbarians to control

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<sup>78</sup> “Zong Zhengzhibu Guanyu Yijiu Wuyinian Chaoxian Zhanchang Dijun Gongzuo Qingkuang Jianbao [A General Political Department Report for Enemy Work in Korea in 1951],” March 19, 1952. *ZGLZX*, vol. 12: 40.

<sup>79</sup> Several prominent anti-communist Chinese soldiers defected during this time. See for example, Cheng Chang, “Defector from the New China: The Perilous Escapes of Anti-Communist Prisoners in the Korean War,” *Chinese Studies* 34, no. 2 (n.d.): 245–80.

<sup>80</sup> “Zong Zhengzhibu Guanyu Yijiu Wuyinian Chaoxian Zhanchang Dijun Gongzuo Qingkuang Jianbao [A General Political Department Report for Enemy Work in Korea in 1951],” March 19, 1952. *ZGLZX*, vol. 12: 40.

<sup>81</sup> “Zong Zhengzhibu Guanyu Kangmei Yuanchao Sannianlai Dijun Gongzuo De Chubu Zongjie He Jinhou Dijun Gongzuo De Fangzhen Yu Renwu [A General Political Department Report on Enemy Work in the Past Three Years],” May 7, 1954. *ZGLZX*, vol. 12: 779.



the barbarians,” in June 1951 the CPV Political Department made a decision to adopt the alienation strategy for “isolating and disintegrating [“reactionary”] Americans.”<sup>82</sup>

The CPV implemented a divide-and-rule approach to administer the POW camps. From June to September 1951, a camp segregation project was launched. All UNC prisoners, regardless of their previous classifications of “progressive,” “neutral,” or “reactionary,” were reorganized into new companies on the basis of their skin colors, religious beliefs, and nationalities. Five new companies were formed at Pyöktong camp 5. Company 1 was made up by black prisoners. A CPV officer explained that as the black people were treated as second-class citizens in the US, the Chinese planned to elevate them into the “Number One” position in prison camps.<sup>83</sup> Company 2 consisted of the Turkish prisoners with a separate kitchen and mess hall to prevent another “pork incident.” Caucasian American and British prisoners were assigned to company 3 under different platoons. Non-English speaking Caucasian prisoners, such as French, Belgians, and South Africans, constituted company 4. Company 5 was established for white Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs).<sup>84</sup> Lastly, the CPV Political Department established a special “reactionary” camp near the Pyöktong Headquarters. For the remainder of the Korean War, the confirmed “reactionary” prisoners were continuously sent into this camp and were physically isolated from the other prisoners.

The CPV exploited the racial clash by preparing different lecture contents and turned the racial tension into its own advantage. In October, a modified lecture series was

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<sup>82</sup> “Zong Zhengzhibu Guanyu Yijiu Wuyinian Chaoxian Zhanchang Dijun Gongzuo Qingkuang Jianbao [A General Political Department Report for Enemy Work in Korea in 1951],” March 19, 1952. *ZGLZX*, vol. 12: 39-43.

<sup>83</sup> Thompson, *True Colors*, 28.

<sup>84</sup> “POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files,” n.d., Box 158, Harold Dunn Dossier, Appendix A.

prepared for African-American prisoners. In a document dated 1954, the GPD concluded that the most effective means to win over the black prisoners was to promote messages on the solidarity between black Americans and Asian peoples and their suffering similarly under white supremacy in the past several centuries.<sup>85</sup> The Chinese document further stated that, in the past, black Americans had participated in various American wars with a hope to induce rapid changes to the US system so as to eliminate the systemic racism, but the hope was never fulfilled. Now in the Korean War, the black people remained “the first-class soldier at battlefield, but the second-class citizen at home.”<sup>86</sup> As the lectures contended, the Korean War was also a race war as the black people’s struggle at home. When the Chinese and Korean people were fighting the white man’s encroachment in Asia, black Americans should return home and “fight for their rights and liberation, rather than come to Asia and kill other colored peoples.”<sup>87</sup> Thus the CPV began to purposefully forge a racial solidarity with black prisoners while targeting the white American as a common enemy.

This new lecture theme successfully won over a number of black prisoners. Clarence Adams remembered that in late 1951, “when some of the American-educated lecturers talked about specific conditions in the [United] States, such as racism, that I

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<sup>85</sup> “Zong Zhengzhibu Digongbu Guanyu Kangmei Yuanchao Duidi Xuanchuan Gongzuo De Juti Zongjie [A General Summary for the Propaganda Work during the Korean War by the Enemy Work Section],” August, 1954. *ZGLZX*, vol. 12: 907-935.

<sup>86</sup> “Zong Zhengzhibu Digongbu Guanyu Kangmei Yuanchao Duidi Xuanchuan Gongzuo De Juti Zongjie [A General Summary for the Propaganda Work during the Korean War by the Enemy Work Section],” August, 1954. *ZGLZX*, vol. 12: 916.

<sup>87</sup> “Zong Zhengzhibu Digongbu Guanyu Kangmei Yuanchao Duidi Xuanchuan Gongzuo De Juti Zongjie [A General Summary for the Propaganda Work during the Korean War by the Enemy Work Section],” August, 1954. *ZGLZX*, vol. 12: 916.

became interested.”<sup>88</sup> On several occasions, he even invited white prisoners from other companies to attend the lecture and study the race issue carefully.<sup>89</sup> Instructor Ye Chengba noticed Adams’ interest and promoted him to the position of squad monitor with a primary duty of leading the after-lecture discussions. Adams retained that position until the summer of 1952, when he was promoted to the position of camp librarian.<sup>90</sup> One of his squad members, Amos McClure, recalled that Adams promoted the message that the black people “as a whole was being mistreated.” Through his activities and education acquired while he was in the POW camp, Adams hoped that “he would be able someday to be of some help to his peoples[sic].”<sup>91</sup> Instructor Ye was impressed by Adams and commended him in his memoir: “He had a personal experience of racism in the American South and was very enthusiastic to change black people’s unfair treatment.”<sup>92</sup>

Under Adams’ influence, a number of other black prisoners joined their Chinese captors in condemning the white people for their sufferings. William White was a black prisoner who served as the camp 5 mail clerk since early 1952.<sup>93</sup> As CPV allowed each prisoner to write one letter home per week, White travelled around different companies to collect and to distribute mails. During his weekly visits to different companies, he engaged in conversations with both black and white prisoners arguing the “atrocities, discrimination,

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<sup>88</sup> It was unclear which Chinese instructor Adams was talking about. A number of the Chinese interpreters were educated in Europe and the US. For example, interpreter Qiu Kean received a MA from Oxford, Ji Chaozhu received a BA from Harvard. Adams, *An American Dream*, 54.

<sup>89</sup> Interrogation of Norman Crawford on July 21, 1955. “Korean Conflict POW, MIA, and Detainee Intelligence Files, 1944-1976 (POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files),” n.d., Box 692, Clarence Adams Dossier, RG 319/650/900/67/1, NARA at College Park.

<sup>90</sup> Interrogation of Frederick N. Muldrow on July 7, 1955. “POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files,” Box 692, Clarence Adams Dossier.

<sup>91</sup> Interrogation of Amos McClure on July 11, 1955. “POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files,” Box 692, Clarence Adams Dossier.

<sup>92</sup> Guo, *Diyideng Zhanfuying*, 328.

<sup>93</sup> Interrogation of Roscoe Perry on June 30, 1955. “POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files,” n.d., Box 777, William White Dossier.

segregation of Negro in the South.”<sup>94</sup> Many white prisoners disliked his message, but they had to rely on him to deliver their letters. Under most circumstance, white prisoners simply ignored what White had to say about the race issue or attempted to talk about something else.<sup>95</sup> In contrast, many black prisoners welcomed such a conversation and realized the bitter fact that “we were permitted to share fox holes with the white men, but when we returned home, these same white men wouldn’t let us in their homes.”<sup>96</sup> By the end of each conversation, White always told black prisoners that instead of fighting the communist troops in Korea, they should join the communist bloc to launch a “colored man’s crusade for freedom.”<sup>97</sup>



Figure 3.1 Black POWs learning about the Chinese lectures (Bentley History Library)

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<sup>94</sup> Interrogation of Frank James on July 3, 1955. “POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files,” Box 777, William White Dossier.

<sup>95</sup> FBI agent Nicholas Obuhanich report from Buffalo, New York on November 29, 1956. “POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files,” Box 778, William White Dossier.

<sup>96</sup> Interview of Lawrence H. McShan on August 23, 1956. “POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files,” Box 778, William White Dossier.

<sup>97</sup> Interview of Lawrence H. McShan, August 23, 1956. “POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files,” Box 778, William White Dossier.

In addition, the CPV manipulated the relations among white prisoners by promoting the antagonism between “progressive” and “reactionary” prisoners, black and white included. After the camp segregation project was completed in late 1951, “progressive,” “neutral,” and “reactionary” prisoners got the chance to live together while knowing one another’s classification. By early 1952, resistance against the CPV authorities virtually stopped as prisoners were pre-occupied with factional struggles. As a result of the segregation policy, the relationship between an overwhelming majority of the white prisoners and the black prisoners deteriorated. The joy of living in the all-white men’s compound did not last long as the white prisoners noticed that a growing number of black prisoners were turning “Red.” Some white prisoners approached the Chinese and demanded de-segregation. This request in turn served the CPV’s purpose to exploit the racial clash. Having learned from his CPV instructors about the white prisoners’ demand for de-segregation, a black POW recalled years later,

I knew damn well that these same “concerned whites” would be the first to demand our ouster from their neighborhoods back home. But, in North Korea in 1951, 52 and 53 they needed us very close to them. Very close! Not because of love, mind you, but because of a need to “keep an eye on us.”<sup>98</sup>

As the Chinese refused to rescind their segregation decision, white prisoners began spreading the rumor that the black prisoners were conducting “immoral homosexual activities” in the all-black company.<sup>99</sup>

Even some “progressive” white prisoners were impressed by the CPV’s lectures on race. The white prisoner Claude Batchelor acknowledged that “during this period, the

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<sup>98</sup> Thompson, *True Colors*, 80.

<sup>99</sup> Guo, *Diyideng Zhanfuying*, 51.

Chinese probably made their best impression on the prisoners.”<sup>100</sup> Another white prisoner Morris Wills recalled that the Chinese lecturers “would hit you with the Negro problem... I couldn’t explain a lot of these things. In the camp this happened constantly with everyone.”<sup>101</sup> During his interrogation with the CIC in 1954, Batchelor estimated that “about one-third (1/3) of the prisoners believed, in varying degrees, what the Chinese Communists taught... Many of the prisoners never ‘expressed’ themselves publicly one way or the other, but would say in private that they thought the Chinese had the right ‘slant.’”<sup>102</sup> As a lead “progressive,” Batchelor might have exaggerated the influence of the CPV lectures on race; his words nevertheless reflected its effectiveness.

Just as the alienation strategy began to win over the black prisoners and some “progressive” white prisoners, the CPV introduced a self-inflicted torture mechanism to crack down prisoners’ collective resistance and obtain their compliance. According to the French philosopher Michel Foucault, prison embeds the technological power to “discipline” individuals via body and mind. Such techniques can also be found in hospitals, schools, and military. In this study, the Korean War POW camps are the examples of the “Panopticon” prison where a prisoner has to act as if a guard is watching over him all the time. By the end of the Korean War, prisoners at Pyöktong essentially became their own guards.<sup>103</sup> The self-inflicted torture, or self-punishment, used a prisoner’s body as an instrument to obtain his obedience. Following the Pyöktong conference in June 1951, the CPV Political Department issued a camp regulation that explicitly prohibited the use of

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<sup>100</sup> Interrogation of Claude Batchelor, January 20, 1954. “POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files,” n.d., Box 30, Claude Batchelor Dossier.

<sup>101</sup> Wills, *Turncoat*, 59.

<sup>102</sup> Interrogation of Claude Batchelor, January 20, 1954. “POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files,” n.d., Box 30, Claude Batchelor Dossier.

<sup>103</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995).

*rouxing*, corporal punishment, over the POWs.<sup>104</sup> Chinese cadres were only authorized to administer what the CPV Political Department termed “disciplinary corrections” over prisoners. After June 1951, when a prisoner refused to produce a propaganda material such as signing a peace petition, making a radio broadcast, writing a propaganda article, or ceasing his “counterrevolutionary” activities, “disciplinary corrections” in the form of self-inflicted torture would ensue. The two most common techniques were solitary confinement and standing at attention for an extremely long duration.

Solitary confinement was the first commonly used technique. After camp authorities decided to put a prisoner into solitary confinement, he would be placed in a small room, in which he was instructed to sit up or maintain other unnatural postures during the daytime. At night the prisoner would be taken out and permitted to lie down to sleep in a more spacious prison cell. On June 30, 1952, a lead “reactionary” prisoner Lloyd Pate was put under solitary confinement for suspected KKK activities. He described the process as the following in his memoir,

For about eighteen hours a day I had to sit cross-legged on the floor with my back straight. It was painful to sit like that and my knees still tell me about it. When the guard came to check on me, he’d poke me with the butt of his rifle or with his bayonet if I’d changed the position of my legs. They checked on me every fifteen minutes. After a while I learned to watch for the guard’s shadow through the cracks in the door. Then I could lay down and relax until I saw him coming. But this cat-and-mouse game finally got me. Even when I was permitted to sleep, I couldn’t because every time the guard came to check, I would automatically sit up and cross my legs.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> In 1954, a group of repatriated British POWs smuggled out a copy of this regulation. In this regulation, the CPV commissar Du Ping used the Chinese word *rou xing*, which literally means torment on the flesh. For the details of the camp regulation, see Ministry of Defence, *Treatment of British Prisoners of War in Korea* (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1955); Du, *Memoir of Du Ping*, 382.

<sup>105</sup> Pate was a lead “reactionary” and the CPV had suspected him as one of the founders of the KKK. Although Pate never acknowledged his association with this organization, several of his close friends were confirmed KKK members by the CPV. His activities would be discussed later in this chapter. Pate, *Reactionary! Sgt. Lloyd W. Pate’s Story as Told to B. J. Cutler*, 108.

After experiencing the solitary confinement for a few days, most prisoners would yield to CPV's demand, whether that demand was to produce a piece of propaganda material or to stop "counterrevolutionary" activities.

Solitary confinement proved to be an effective means to get the prisoners compliance in terms of producing the various propaganda materials. In July 1951, the first round of Korean War armistice negotiation took place at Kaesong. The CPV negotiators wished to use the UNC POWs as a leverage to get more favorable peace terms. The Chinese camp authorities orchestrated "progressive" POWs to draft two peace petitions and encouraged all POWs to sign.<sup>106</sup> As William Banghart remembered, when a prisoner refused to sign a petition "the usual methods were to call the POW down to headquarters, talk to him, cajole him [,] try flattery and any other method they could think of to persuade him without force. If POW still refused, they would let him think it over in solitary confinement."<sup>107</sup> After a two-week confinement, most prisoners would put their names on the petition just to end their miseries. John D. Hayes remembered that the agony of solitary confinement was so intense that "one might confess—and believe—almost anything."<sup>108</sup>

Solitary confinement was also an effective means to crack down prisoners' resistance. As a lead "reactionary," Lloyd Pate remembered that he and his gang "beat up a couple of dozen men, maybe a little more" to discourage them from signing their names on the propaganda materials.<sup>109</sup> He was placed under solitary confinement between June

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<sup>106</sup> One petition was sent to UN and the other was sent to the Peace Crusade Convention in Chicago. See interrogation on January 26, 1954. "POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files," n.d., Box 30, Calude Batchelor Dossier.

<sup>107</sup> Phase II Interrogation, "POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files," Box 25, William Banghart Dossier.

<sup>108</sup> John D. Hayes was a Presbyterian missionary and a former civilian internee in Korea. He made this statement during his interview with Dr. Leon Freedom who was hired by the Department of the Army to assess the repatriated POWs' psychiatry. See Interrogatories and Deposition on June 19, 1954, in "POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files," Box 31, Calude Batchelor Dossier.

<sup>109</sup> Pate, *Reactionary! Sgt. Lloyd W. Pate's Story as Told to B. J. Cutler*, 97.



and August of 1952. By late 1952, Pate capitulated and wrote a 17-page confession to the CPV, promising to cease all “counterrevolutionary activities.”<sup>110</sup> Afterwards, Pate and his “reactionary” fellows were transferred to the “reactionary” camp. For the remainder of the war, they were physically quarantined from the “neutral” and “progressive” prisoners and performed harsh labors as a means to correct their “reactionary thoughts.” Other “reactionary” prisoners had similar experiences. For example, a confirmed KKK member Robert Shamwell had the longest record of solitary confinement at Pyöktong. After a one-year solitary confinement, Shamwell eventually gave up his resistance and wrote a lengthy confession to the CPV. Afterwards, he was transferred to the “reactionary” camp.<sup>111</sup>

Standing at attention was another technique of self-inflicted torture to secure a prisoners’ compliance. A prisoner would usually be required to stand at attention under the scorching summer sun or at the center of a frozen lake bare-footed during winter night.<sup>112</sup> A camp guard would stand nearby spectating the process, which usually lasted between four and six hours. Sometimes the guard would offer a cigarette to the prisoner and told him: “It’s nothing personal. As soon as you agree with our demand, both of us could return to the camp.” Sometimes the guard would make verbal threats to kill or to inflict severe bodily injuries over the prisoner if he continued resistance. A prisoner was subjected to both the actual self-inflicted torture over his body and the fear of additional torture administered by the guard in his mind. Under most circumstances, a prisoner would agree to cooperate with the CPV.

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<sup>110</sup> Pate, 108–9.

<sup>111</sup> Phase II Interrogation of Glenn Pickard, August 18, 1953. “POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files,” n.d., Box 454, Glenn Pickard Dossier.

<sup>112</sup> For example, Lloyd Pate recalled that his friend Milton Peters was forced to stand in the snow for a couple of hours for refusing to sign a peace petition. Pate, *Reactionary! Sgt. Lloyd W. Pate’s Story as Told to B. J. Cutler*, 82–83.

Many prisoners yielded to the CPV's demands after standing at attention. In mid-1951, CPV Political Department started a radio program called Radio Peking on daily basis. Prisoners made radio speeches to describe the good spirit of the POWs, expressed their gratitude for the lenient treatment, food, and clothing they received, and urged the American government to sign an armistice to end the war. By March 1952, more than 600 American prisoners made such radio speeches.<sup>113</sup> After Jefferson Erwin refused to make the radio speech during the winter of 1951, he was asked to stand at attention at the center of a frozen lake from midnight to dawn. At sunrise, the Chinese instructor threatened that "there was the possibility of [him] not being returned to the United States" if he continued resistance.<sup>114</sup> To most POWs, this threat "was tantamount to a death sentence" and Erwin finally agreed to make the radio speech.<sup>115</sup> A number of prisoners recalled that nothing was more excruciating than hearing this threat while their physical capability nearly exhausted. When presented with the choice between cooperation and resistance, most prisoners, including Erwin, chose the former.

After a few months of self-inflicted torture, a prisoner's fear of "disciplinary corrections" compelled him to capitulate without actually experiencing "disciplinary corrections." Following his first propaganda speech for Radio Peking in late 1951, Jeff Erwin made five more speeches without any additional "disciplinary corrections" in 1952 and 1953. When Erwin was repatriated in 1953, he acknowledged that no additional coercion was applied when he made the last five speeches. The CIC agent who interrogated

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<sup>113</sup> "Zong Zhengzhibu Guanyu Yijiu Wuyinian Chaoxian Zhanchang Dijun Gongzuo Qingkuang Jianbao [A General Political Department Report for Enemy Work in Korea in 1951]," March 19, 1952. *ZGLZX*, vol. 12: 41.

<sup>114</sup> Interrogation of Jefferson Erwin, April 4, 1955. "POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files," n.d., Box 169, Jefferson Erwin Dossier.

<sup>115</sup> Phase III interrogation of Harry Fleming, September 8, 1953. "POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files," Box 185, Harry Fleming Dossier.

him wrote the following comment: “He [Erwin] was always afraid of death. This fear was exaggerated to such a degree within his own mind that he felt as if everything the Chinese told him to do was with the threat of death.”<sup>116</sup> After experiencing the self-punishment, a prisoner became his own camp guard. The Chinese did not have to take any actions, the prisoner would automatically threaten himself within his own mind.

Erwin was not alone in cooperating with the CPV under the fear of self-inflicted torture. In August 1951, Claude Batchelor “began to question the claim that only people who believed in Communism could fight for peace” and attempted to quit the “voluntary study group,” a group for “progressive” prisoners’ ideological training in communism. When his Chinese instructor asked him to re-consider this decision, he voluntarily wrote a lengthy self-criticism denouncing his own “backward thinking” and remained in the “progressive” group. Like Erwin and Batchelor, many other American POWs yielded to CPV’s demand without actual “disciplinary corrections.” A prisoner’s fear of punishment then became a powerful weapon to obtain his cooperation.

On a few occasions, the self-inflicted torture failed to obtain the prisoners’ compliance. In the winter of 1951, a black prisoner named Clifford Allen refused to sign a peace petition and was asked to stand at attention in the center of a frozen lake with only “fatigue uniform” while the temperature was below zero.<sup>117</sup> After four and half hours, a guard brought a pair of shears and threatened to cut off his scrotum if he still refused to sign the petition. After Allen rejected the demand, the CPV instructor transferred him to the harsh labor camp. James Thompson was once asked to dig his own “grave” for his

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<sup>116</sup> Phase II interrogation summary, April 1954. “POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files,” Box 169, Jefferson Erwin Dossier.

<sup>117</sup> Phase III interrogation of Clifford Allen, October 15, 1953. “POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files,” n.d., Box 695, Clifford Allen Dossier.

refusal to write a propaganda article. After he completed digging, a Chinese instructor gave him “one last chance.” After Thompson refused, he was also transferred to the harsh labor camp. Both Allen and Thompson spent the remainder years of the war in the “reactionary” camp and were repatriated back to the US in 1953.<sup>118</sup> However, both men were sent directly to the “reactionary” camp, leaving their roommates speculating what might have happened to them. This fear for the unknown scared most POWs into cooperating with the Chinese.

The only means to overcome this self-inflicted torture system was a prisoner’s individual will. Specifically, a prisoner had to go through self-punishment, overcome the verbal threats of camp guards, accept the “fact” that he might not be repatriated, and live in a separate harsh labor camp for an unknown duration. Until their scheduled date of repatriation in late 1953 and early 1954, nobody in the “reactionary” camp knew the development of the war or the progress of the peace negotiation.<sup>119</sup> Their fear for the unknown future persisted as James Thompson described his mental state in mid-1953: “Deep depression began to set in. We felt crushed! Drained! ... We were in the pits!”<sup>120</sup> Another senior officer who experienced a lengthy self-punishment pleaded his fellow prisoners not to let him learn about resistance activities because he feared he would be unable to keep from revealing them if given the same treatment again.<sup>121</sup> Meanwhile, a popular ditty that read “Golden Gate; Fifty-Eight!” began circulating among the prisoners.<sup>122</sup> They pessimistically predicated that their repatriation would not take place until 1958. According to the US Department of the Army statistics, only 5% (or 166) of

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<sup>118</sup> Thompson, *True Colors*, Ch. 15 Dig! You Dig Your Grave!

<sup>119</sup> POWs from the other camps could learn the news on the war from the camp libraries, family letters, and conversations with the CPV instructors.

<sup>120</sup> Thompson, *True Colors*, 128.

<sup>121</sup> Albert D. Biderman, *March to Calumny: The Story of American POWs in the Korean War* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1963), 50.

<sup>122</sup> Bian, *Yingmei Zhanfu Jishi*, 169.

the 3,323 American prisoners at Pyöktong refused cooperation with the CPV and ended up in the so-called “reactionary” camp.<sup>123</sup> The remaining 95% of American POWs capitulated to the Chinese on a varying degree of fear.

By late 1951, the self-inflicted torture system effectively eliminated POWs’ collective resistance and individual resistors were transferred to the “reactionary” camp. While racism still lingered in many POWs’ minds, the racial hate motivated activities essentially stopped as the CPV camp authority forbade any form of violence. Comparing with the traditional guards inflicting torture over prisoners, the self-inflicted torture put up the prisoner against his own will. As long as the prisoner could endure, the punishment went on until his physical capability exhausted or he agreed to cooperate. Other than securing a prisoner’s immediate cooperation, self-inflicted torture also had propaganda values for the CPV. When the CIC agents, journalists, and their families asked these repatriated POWs whether they were physically abused by their captors, their answers were often a no. Under the Chinese design, the punishment was carried out by the prisoner and against the prisoner. The Chinese guard was merely spectating from a distance. As the self-punishment ended the “reactionary” prisoners’ dominance in POW camps, the CPV established effective control of POW camps with another technique.

### A New Order of Self-Policing

By late 1951, having cracked down POWs’ resistance with self-punishment, the CPV Political Department began to exercise effective control of POW camps with a technique of self-policing. While self-punishment focused on the prisoners’ body, self-

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<sup>123</sup> Segal, “Factors Related to the Collaboration and Resistance Behavior of US Army POWs in Korea,” 22–23.

policing targeted the prisoners' mind. As one American prisoner described the CPV technique: "The mind—the thought processes of the individual—is as much a target as the flesh."<sup>124</sup> The CPV Political Department introduced the so-called "brother's keeper" system among prisoners. It was a secret informing network with the goal of making the POWs watch over each other. Rather than relying on a few informers to keep surveillance over a certain group of POWs, the "brother's keeper" system clearly designated a "brother" (informed) and a "keeper" (informer). It was the "keeper's" responsibility to report his "brother's" suspicious activities to the CPV authorities. While a prisoner served as the "keeper," he was also the "brother" of some other unknown "keeper." The uncertainty created by such a surveillance system compelled prisoners to act as if an omnipresence Chinese guard was always watching over them.

Prisoners began self-policing their words and deeds after realizing the existence of informers. Jeff Erwin remarked that "the Chinese relied heavily, and with considerable success, upon the use of informants... even private conversations invariably came to the attention of the Chinese."<sup>125</sup> An example to illustrate the Chinese control was William White who often advocated the CPV's message of racial equality. But, as his roommate Rogers Herndon remembered, "White would occasionally speak against the Communists when he knew he was among friends."<sup>126</sup> White ceased expressing his "counterrevolutionary" opinions as soon as the CPV introduced the "brother's keeper" system. Under this system, most POWs served the double role of the "brother" and the

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<sup>124</sup> Thomas Harrison, "Why Did Some GIs Turn Communist?," *Collier's*, November 27, 1953, 25.

<sup>125</sup> Phase II interrogation of Jefferson Erwin, "POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files," n.d., Box 169, Jefferson Erwin Dossier.

<sup>126</sup> FBI interview with Rogers Herndon on October 17, 1956, "POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files," n.d., Box 778, William White Dossier.

“keeper” simultaneously. After repatriation back to the US in 1953, Ortho G. Bell revealed his identity as the “keeper” to his “brother” John Dixon during a private conversation.<sup>127</sup> The lead “progressive” prisoner Claude Batchelor also named several pairs of “brothers” and “keepers” during his postwar interrogation.<sup>128</sup> Nevertheless, by the end of 1952, most prisoners essentially stopped their “counterrevolutionary” words and deeds.

The self-policing system effectively prevented all prison escapes. In late 1952, the prisoner Lawrence McShan planned an escape. He clipped three maps of the Korean peninsula from the Time magazine in the camp library while his friends managed to store some potatoes into a secret storage hole inside their living quarters. Just when they gathered enough food and figured out an escaping route in February 1953, they were dragged out by their Chinese instructors to make a “self-criticism” in front of the whole company.<sup>129</sup> As the planner this escape, McShan was placed into a two-week solitary confinement while his friends were exonerated. McShan suspected his friends, but never knew for sure who leaked out the information to the camp authorities. In a similar manner, CPV authorities successfully preempted two other escape plans made separately by Teddy Sprouse in 1952 and Paul Liles in 1953.<sup>130</sup> During their postwar interrogations, in general POWs could not identify informers. They usually told CIC interrogators: “I suspect XX to be an informer,”

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<sup>127</sup> Phase IV interrogation, “POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files,” n.d., Box 146, John L. Dixon Dossier.

<sup>128</sup> Batchelor named the following “keepers” during his post war interrogation: James Veneris was the “keeper” of Rufus Douglass, Morris Wills, and Edward Dickenson. Rufus Douglass was the “keeper” for James Veneris. Albert Constant Belhomme was the “keeper” for Howard Adams and Aaron Wilson. Howard Adams was the “keeper” for Albert Constant Belhomme. Richard Corden was the “keeper” for Lowell Skinner, Arlie Pate, and John Dunn. Lowell Skinner was the “keeper” for Andrew Cordon. See Report of Finding on January 30, 1954. “POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files,” Box 30, Claude Batchelor Dossier.

<sup>129</sup> McShan planned the escape with his three friends. Their names were: John Orr, Peter Cutry, and Harold Neal. Interrogation of Lawrence H. McShan on August 23, 1956. “POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files,” n.d., Box 778, William White Dossier.

<sup>130</sup> Phase II interrogation of Paul Liles. “POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files,” n.d., Box 331, Paul Liles Dossier.

or “XX might be ratting on his fellow prisoners.” Under this surveillance system, not a single UNC prisoner escaped from Pyöktong between 1950 and 1954.

Other than the “brother’s keeper” system, CPV camp authorities purposefully facilitated the impression of informers everywhere inside the camp. While the prisoner leaders were required to make weekly reports to the CPV Political Department, the Chinese instructors summoned random prisoners to the Headquarters for no particular reason. Sometimes, a Chinese instructor and a prisoner would engage a casual conversation, typical questions were like these: “Is XX sincere in lectures?” or, “Who are the ‘progressive’ and who are the ‘reactionary’ in your company?” Sometimes, the CPV would lavish a party for a certain group of prisoners. For example, James Thompson was once called into the Pyöktong office for lunch. He recalled in his memoir that on his way out of the Headquarters, the Chinese “tried their best to give the impression that we all had been having a delightful luncheon chat. The Chinese instructors demanded that we shake their hands on the step out of the room, in full view of the white POWs in the distance.”<sup>131</sup> Despite the fact that Thompson was later categorized as a “reactionary” and was transferred to the “reactionary” camp in November 1952, his fellow prisoners suspected him as an informer for the CPV.<sup>132</sup> After interviewing a number of Thompson’s fellow prisoners in September 1953, the CIC remarked: “It was not possible to determine in all finality his essential loyalty.”<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Thompson, *True Colors*, 61.

<sup>132</sup> Phase II interrogation on September 13, 1953. “POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files,” n.d., Box 609, James Thompson Dossier.

<sup>133</sup> JJIPB report to the Department of the Army on September 24, 1953. “POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files,” Box 609, James Thompson Dossier.



Although the actual number of informers remains unknown, available documents suggest that it is very small. For instance, CPV instructors only acknowledged the role of Bobby DeGraw in preventing prison escapes.<sup>134</sup> Despite the small number of the informers, to most prisoners the presence of such informers was enough to preempt their collective resistance to the camp authorities. As Larry Zellers recalled, “even if there is only a handful of informers in the entire group, you don’t know who they are.”<sup>135</sup> The impression of informers being everywhere essentially facilitated the CPV’s effective control of the POWs. Under such mutual suspicions, the safest strategy for the POWs to adopt was to cooperate with the CPV camp authorities.

The climax of the CPV’s effective control of the POW camps was the Pyöktong POW Camp Olympics in late 1952. From November 15 to November 26, the CPV Political Department organized a camp-wide intramural sports events. All UNC POWs, including some Chinese instructors, were allowed to compete at Pyöktong in soccer, basketball, volleyball, baseball, football, boxing, wrestling, gymnastics, and etc. Most importantly, the “progressive” prisoners gained the trust of their fellow prisoners. As stated in a CPV document: “Previously, the ‘progressive’ prisoners cooperated with us in secret. They usually report their works through the backdoors of our offices. Our initial concern was to protect the ‘progressives’ from the ‘reactionaries.’ However, such a ‘backdoor’ approach isolated the ‘progressives’ from the prisoner masses.”<sup>136</sup> This was changed by the camp Olympics. The CPV Political Department decided to let the “progressive” prisoners plan

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<sup>134</sup> Bian, *Yingmei Zhanfu Jishi*, 83–87.

<sup>135</sup> Zellers, *In Enemy Hands*, 161.

<sup>136</sup> “Fuluying Qiuji Yundonghui De Qingkuang [Report on the Camp Olympics in the Fall],” February 1953. *Dijun Gongzuo Jingyan Huibian*, 218–20.

and organize this sports event and thus openly promoted their leadership among the POWs.<sup>137</sup>



Figure 3.2 Pyöktong Camp Olympics (Bentley Historical Library)

<sup>137</sup> “Fuluying Qiuji Yundonghui De Qingkuang [Report on the Camp Olympics in the Fall],” February 1953. *Dijun Gongzuo Jingyan Huibian*, 218–20.

The Camp Olympics turned out to be a huge success. During this sports event, the CPV appointed “progressive” prisoners to key positions such as reporters, photographers, and umpires.<sup>138</sup> The CPV merely dispatched a small number of security guards at the outer perimeter. At the closing ceremony, the UNC POWs shouted slogans “all hail Chairman Mao” and sang songs such as “the East is Red” and “the Song of General Kim Il Sung.” The CPV Political Department pointed out that in the past, under the influence of “reactionary” prisoners, most “neutral” prisoners dared not to shout these slogans or sing these songs. But after the Camp Olympics, the CPV camp authorities won the confidence of most “neutral” prisoners.<sup>139</sup> The CPV had regained the trust of most POWs. The bitter memory of the deadly winter between late 1950 and early 1951 faded away.

After the conclusion of the Camp Olympics, the CPV Political Department commenced a meeting at Pyöktong attended by “progressive” representatives from all POW camps. As some of these representatives recalled later, the mutual suspicion was so prevalent at the meeting that “for days we talked the ‘party line’ to each other,” praising the CPV’s Lenient Policy, and denouncing the American “aggression” in Korea.<sup>140</sup> Afterwards, the CPV selected a group of forty American prisoners to visit Pyongyang and to make radio speeches about the Camp Olympics. During the visit, Paul Liles recalled that “everyone had to speak in favor of their captors” as they feared the presence of secret informers.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> “Zenyang Zuohao Dui Fulu De Xingzheng Guanli Gongzuo [How to Improve the Administrative Works for POWs],” May 5, 1953. *Dijun Gongzuo Jingyan Huibian*, 221–24.

<sup>139</sup> “Fuluying Qiuji Yundonghui De Qingkuang [Report on the Camp Olympics in the Fall],” February 1953. *Dijun Gongzuo Jingyan Huibian*, 218–20.

<sup>140</sup> Phase II interrogation of Paul Liles. “POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files,” n.d., Box 331, Paul Liles Dossier.

<sup>141</sup> Phase II interrogation of Paul Liles. “POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files,” Box 331, Paul Liles Dossier.

From June 1951 to March 1953, after the Geneva Convention failed to tackle the surging racism, the CPV Political Department experimented with several new techniques to administer the POW camps. While the Chinese personnel bragged about the “first-rate” POW camp system they had built, the American government also confirmed the CPV’s effective control of the POWs. According to a US Department of the Army study in 1956, approximately “70 per cent of the returned POWs had contributed to some degree—wittingly or unwittingly—to the Communists’ psychological warfare efforts in Korea.”<sup>142</sup> Rather than the communist “brainwashing” alleged by the CIA, after 1952 the non-ideological techniques of alienation, self-punishment and self-policing facilitated the CPV camp authorities’ effective control of the POWs. Interestingly, about the same time a shifting from ideological indoctrination to non-ideological control also took place in the UNC POW camps.

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<sup>142</sup> The 1956 study blamed the American POWs’ “lack of esprit de corps, cohesiveness, and mutual concerns.” See Segal, “Factors Related to the Collaboration and Resistance Behavior of US Army POWs in Korea,” 7–8.

## Chapter Four

### Controlling the Body: The US Management of Chinese POWs, 1951-53

Prisoner of war shall be released and repatriated without delay after the cessation of hostilities.

Geneva Convention of 1949, Article 188.

We will not buy an armistice by turning over human beings for slaughter or slavery.

Harry Truman, May 7, 1952.<sup>1</sup>

On October 31, 1962, the Government Information Office of the Republic of China (ROC) organized the first Taipei Golden Horse Film Festival and Awards. During this film festival, director Wang Hao's *Yiwan Siqian Ge Zhengren*, or *14,000 Witnesses* won the best drama award.<sup>2</sup> Inspired by the Korean War prisoners of war (POWs), the film illustrated that among the 21,540 Chinese prisoners, 14,342 had "witnessed" the various atrocities committed by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and rejected repatriation back to the "evil" communist regime in mainland China. After a series of deadly struggles with communist agents in POW camps, these "witnesses" eventually won their right to go to the "free" China, the ROC in Taiwan. At the ending scene, the ROC government accepted these "witnesses" as the "anti-communist righteous person." Their arrival date in the ROC, January 23, 1954, was declared as the "One-Two-Three, World Freedom Day."

Aside from this ROC propaganda characterization, American leaders at the time provided similar explanations as to why more than two-thirds of the Chinese POWs chose Taiwan as their repatriation destination. The US President Harry S. Truman explained in his memoir that the Chinese prisoners refused to go home in the "communist China"

<sup>1</sup> Truman, *Memoirs by Harry S. Truman*, Two: Years of Trial and Hope:461.

<sup>2</sup> *14,000 Witnesses* (Overseas Chinese Film Company, 1957), <https://memory.culture.tw/Home/Detail?Id=020-090401-0111&IndexCode=drnh>.

because “communism is a system that has no regard for human dignity or human freedom.”<sup>3</sup> In a similar tone, the United Nations Command (UNC) Commander General Mark Clark recounted that the Chinese prisoners “preferred to fight to the death rather than to return to homes behind the Iron Curtain.”<sup>4</sup> According to the American leaders, more than two-thirds of the Chinese POWs detested the People’s Republic of China (PRC). these POWs voluntarily chose the Republic of China in Taiwan to pursue freedom.

Instead of promoting the POWs’ “struggle for freedom” argument, the diplomatic historian Rosemary Foot focuses on the hypocrisy of the US government in her book published in 1990, *A Substitute for Victory*.<sup>5</sup> In Foot’s formulation, the PRC’s intervention in the Korean War frustrated the US effort to conquer the Korean peninsula. Having failed to defeat the Chinese on the battlefield, the substitute victory on the POW repatriation issue would deliver a humiliating political defeat for Beijing. The US government forcibly retained a large number of Chinese POWs in the “free” world to prove its ideological supremacy. Although Foot sympathizes with the Chinese POWs and calls them the “victims of the Cold War,” the POWs’ activities hardly had any impact over Washington’s policy-making.<sup>6</sup> Besides the meticulous analysis, Foot only utilizes the sources from US archives. According to Foot, the American policy makers in Washington unilaterally cemented the fate of the Chinese POWs of the Korean War.

By examining the Chinese language sources in both the PRC and the ROC, and the materials produced by the US Army, chapter four of this dissertation explores the situation inside the UNC POW camps from mid-1951 to March 1953. The UNC essentially divided

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<sup>3</sup> Truman, *Memoirs by Harry S. Truman*, Two: Years of Trial and Hope:460.

<sup>4</sup> Mark W. Clark, *From the Danube to the Yalu* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954), 36.

<sup>5</sup> Rosemary Foot, *A Substitute for Victory* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990).

<sup>6</sup> Foot, Chapter 5.

the Chinese POWs into two categories in its documentation: “communist” and “anti-communist.” This author uses this categorization for the sake of convenience only. In this dissertation, “communist” prisoners included all those who chose to return to the PRC. “Anti-communist” prisoners are those who chose to go to the ROC in Taiwan. In both cases, CCP membership or not is not implied. This author uses the word “cadre” to describe the CCP members. Rather than Foot’s argument that Washington policy-makers cemented the fate of the Chinese POWs, the Chinese language materials clearly demonstrate how the anti-communist POWs affected the US policy-making from 1951 to 1953.

This chapter argues that the anti-communist POWs pushed the Truman administration to uphold the voluntary repatriation principle. This chapter first demonstrates that between late 1951 and April 1952, the UNC camp authorities established indirect control of POW camps through collaborating with the DACs and the ex-KMT POWs. While successful in controlling the POW camps, the ex-KMT POWs claimed to be staunch anti-communists and started a defection campaign to Taiwan. From April to June 1952, while the US policy makers attempted to exploit the POW issue as a bargaining chip on the negotiation table, the anti-communist POWs’ activities pushed the Truman administration to uphold the voluntary repatriation principle. Although the UNC established direct control of POW camps in June 1952, the Truman administration had no policy alternative but to solidify its position on voluntary repatriation.

#### Ascendance of Anti-Communist POWs

During the second half of 1951, the UNC’s need for maintaining a proper camp order remained. The US Army had recommended a guard-prisoner ratio of 1:20 in order to

maintain an effective control of the POW camps. Although the training efforts increased on Koje-do, the problem of deploying an adequate number of camp guard persisted. In September, the UNC camp authorities reported a guard-prisoner ratio of 1:188, which was far below the Army's recommendation.<sup>7</sup> Lacking the necessary manpower to establish direct control of POW camps, the UNC camp authorities conceded to establish indirect control through collaborating with the DAC officers and the ex-KMT POWs.

Under the UNC's orchestration, the DAC officers approached the ex-KMT POWs. The earliest known record of the DACs' activities is dated May, 1951, when the Chinese prisoners were still interned at Pusan. According to the ex-KMT prisoner Li Da'an, a "Japanese journalist" approached him at the Pusan POW camp and told him: "I sympathize your situation as you and I both came from Manchuria. However, to earn your freedom and a good life, you must stand up and fight the communists."<sup>8</sup> Li quickly learned that the "Japanese journalist" was actually a DAC officer with the last name Bai, who worked for the US Eighth Army. Bai suggested Li to declare himself as a "staunch anti-communist" who came from a wealthy landlord family and served as a KMT officer during the Chinese Civil War.<sup>9</sup> Although Li came from a small landlord family and was an ex-KMT, his family was not wealthy and his rank in the KMT was merely a foot soldier. Nevertheless, Li accepted Bai's suggestion and promised to cooperate with the DACs in POW camps. The DACs thus recruited anti-communists from the ex-KMT prisoners.

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<sup>7</sup> Bradbury, *Mass Behavior in Battle and Captivity*, 257.

<sup>8</sup> Li Da'an later received intelligence training with G-2 at Tokyo in 1952. When the Korean War ended, the US Army parachuted Li back to China to gather intelligence in 1954. Li was immediately captured by the local police and sent to Beijing for trial. His interrogation in 1954 was produced by Chinese police. See interrogation of Li Da'an, cited in Yu, *E Yun*, 116.

<sup>9</sup> Interrogation of Li Da'an, cited in Yu, 116-17.



In early June, the anti-communist POWs established a Prisoner Guard (PG) organization as a supplement to the UNC camp guards. When Li Da'an arrived at compound 72 on Kojedo, a UNC officer held a private meeting with him. Having received a reference letter from Bai, the UNC officer was delighted to learn that Li Da'an was a dedicated anti-communist. The UNC officer issued Li a bayonet for "self-defense" purpose and appointed him as the camp sanitary inspector. With this appointment, Li could move freely on Kojedo and recruited anti-communists from the ex-KMT prisoners.<sup>10</sup> By late June, a PG squad under Li Da'an's leadership was assembled in compound 72 and its primary responsibility was to maintain camp order with the UNC guards.<sup>11</sup> Simultaneously in compound 86, Rev. Woodberry instructed an ex-KMT officer named Zhou Yanda to assemble another PG squad.

In the next few months, the PG squads launched a series of assaults over the communist POWs. For example, on September 17, the UNC recorded a violent incident between the PG squad and the communist cadres. A group of PG members attacked a communist cadre named Xia Shusheng at the camp latrine. As Xia developed into a critical condition that night, his roommates rushed him to the camp hospital. Witnesses reported to the UNC that the attack was led by a PG member named Sun Deyun.<sup>12</sup> After a three-month investigation, the UNC concluded that the incident was merely a "personal alternation" and exonerated all the perpetrators as the attack was deemed as "non-serious."<sup>13</sup> An anti-communist named Liu Chengqing recalled that most victims remained

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<sup>10</sup> Interrogation of Li Da'an, cited in Yu, 115.

<sup>11</sup> *Fangong Yishi Fendoushi*, 65.

<sup>12</sup> Report of Proceedings of a Board of Officers, November 2, 1951. "POW Incident Investigation File," Box 1-6.

<sup>13</sup> Office of the Command Staff Judge Advocate, December 16, 1951. "POW Incident Investigation File," 1-6.

silent because “the UNC did not care, unless someone was beaten to death.”<sup>14</sup> More than attacking the confirmed communist cadres, the PG also attacked many POWs who were suspected to be communists. The UNC dismissed a number of violent incidents which involved the PG perpetrators.<sup>15</sup>

The communist cadres quickly retreated from the leadership positions and went into hiding. While the PG attacked the communist cadres, the UNC camp authorities began replacing the known communist cadres from leadership positions. For example, the prisoner leader in compound 86, a communist cadre named Ma Xingwang, was replaced by an ex-KMT police officer Cheng Liren. Other communist cadres quickly went into hiding and faked new identities to avoid potential persecution. Years later, one communist cadre explained: “Our CCP cadres and CPV officers remain muted and went into hiding. We lived under an unexplainable fear at the time.”<sup>16</sup> Three months after the UNC decided to establish indirect control of POW camps, the DACs and the anti-communist POWs fulfilled this goal. However, such a cooperation quickly fermented a defection campaign to Taiwan.

While successful in establishing indirect control in POW camps, the collaboration between the DACs and the anti-communist POWs fostered a defection campaign to Taiwan. In early 1951, although the US had yet considered to deliver the Chinese POWs to Taiwan, the ROC government seriously contemplated receiving the ex-KMT prisoners. According to the ROC ambassador to the ROK Shao Yulin, more than assisting the UNC camp authorities, Taipei also instructed the DACs to “win over the Chinese prisoners and take

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<sup>14</sup> Chou, *Fangong Yishi Fangtanlu*, 161.

<sup>15</sup> See for example, “POW Incident Investigation File.”

<sup>16</sup> Yu, *E Yun*, 117–18.

them back to the free China [ROC].”<sup>17</sup> Without the knowledge of the UNC camp authorities or the US government, the DAC officers from Taiwan started abetting a defection campaign among the ex-KMT prisoners.

Stemming from the PG organization, three prominent anti-communist organizations emerged on Kojedo. From June 3 to 27, a group of 179 ex-KMT POWs held a series of meetings to discuss the establishment of an anti-communist organization in compound 72. Since their first meeting was convened on June 3, an ex-KMT officer Dong Zhongqian suggested to name their organization as the KMT Branch 63. A former KMT officer Wei Shixi was elected as the leader of this organization. On June 27, the organization passed its first resolution:

- 1) Struggle against all communist bandit activities.
- 2) Report our activities to the ROC Ambassador Shao Yulin and petition our government to rescue us patriotic prisoners to Taiwan.
- 3) Pledge our political allegiance to President Chiang Kai-shek.
- 4) Investigate and absorb former KMT soldiers and officers into our organization.
- 5) Conduct anti-communist propaganda.
- 6) Schedule regular meetings to elect leaders of our organization.<sup>18</sup>

According to this resolution, the anti-communist organization only admitted ex-KMT prisoners and the participation in the defection campaign was voluntary. For the CCP cadres and CPV officers, the anti-communist prisoners planned to launch “struggles” and “anti-communist propaganda.” In addition to the KMT Branch 63 in compound 72 (Branch 63), two additional anti-communist organizations were also established on Kojedo: the China Youth Anti-Communist National Salvation Corps in compound 72 (Salvation Corps);

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<sup>17</sup> Shao Yulin served as the ROC ambassador to the ROK from 1949 to 1951. His tenure as the ambassador ended in September 1951. He made the statement during a meeting with Chang kai-shek in 1953. See Shao, *Shihan Huiyilu*, 353.

<sup>18</sup> *Fangong Yishi Fendoushi*, 65.

and the Anti-Communist and Resist Russia Youth Alliance in compound 86 (Youth Alliance).<sup>19</sup>

In July, the leader of the Youth Alliance Wang Zunming started a tattoo movement among his followers. He dictated that “all members of the Youth Alliance must have the tattoo of “*Fan Gong Kang E* [Anti-communist, resist Russia]” on his left arm.<sup>20</sup> To prevent communist infiltration, Wang implemented a rigorous background check procedure. An applicant needed to submit an autobiography and reference letters from two to three Youth Alliance members. Once accepted, the applicant must tattoo the anti-communist slogan. In late 1951, the Youth Alliance members competed to prove their dedication to go to Taiwan by tattooing more slogans on their bodies. The winner was a prisoner named Wang Fulin, who tattooed 136 Chinese characters.<sup>21</sup> While the tattoo was voluntary, it also served as a means for controlling purpose. Once a prisoner joined the anti-communist organization, quitting was not an option as the tattoo could not be removed easily. As the KMT Branch 63 and the Youth Alliance recruited anti-communists from ex-KMT prisoners, the Salvation Corps publicized their demand to go to Taiwan through a series of blood petitions.

The Salvation Corps in compound 86 orchestrated a series of blood petitions, demanding the US government to deliver them to Taiwan. Under an ex-KMT officer Ren Ruliang’s leadership, the Salvation Corps collected blood signatures from the anti-communist POWs and submitted several petitions. On July 2, the Salvation Corps submitted its first blood petition with 179 signatures to the UNC camp authorities and the ROC embassy in the ROK. The petition included the following demands:

One – we are resolved to go to Formosa [Taiwan];

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<sup>19</sup> *Fangong Yishi Fendoushi*, 51–68.

<sup>20</sup> *Fangong Yishi Fendoushi*, 49.

<sup>21</sup> *Fangong Yishi Fendoushi*, 49.

Two- we will never return to a Chinese mainland under communist control;  
Three – we will serve the Chinese nationalist Government with loyalty and honesty;  
Four – we will help the free world fight communism;  
Five – we will cooperate with the UN staff while in POW camps.<sup>22</sup>

In August, the Salvation Corps drafted two additional blood petitions with the same demands and collected 1,009 and 1,500 signatures. The increasing number of signatures revealed that the anti-communist organizations had expanded quickly in just two months. More than the UNC camp authorities and the ROC embassy, the petitions were also sent to the US President Truman. Although the recipients did not respond to the petitions, the defection campaign provoked heated discussions among American policy makers.

The head of the Army Psychological Warfare, Brigadier General Robert A. McClure and the JCS Chairman Omar Bradley were intrigued by the blood petition and endorsed the voluntary repatriation for Cold War propaganda purpose. On July 5, 1951, after receiving the first blood petition, McClure suggested the JCS to adopt the principle of voluntary repatriation for the Chinese POWs in Korea. He warned that if the US decided to repatriate all the Chinese prisoners back to the PRC, future inducements of European communists to surrender “will be meaningless.”<sup>23</sup> The JCS Chairman General Omar Bradley concurred with McClure. He argued that the US should deliver the Chinese POWs who claimed to be “democratic citizens” to the ROC in Taiwan. By contrast, the Secretary of Defense George Marshall and the UNC Commander Ridgway objected the voluntary repatriation as it breached the Geneva Convention and would obstruct the ongoing peace

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<sup>22</sup> “Zhuhan Dashiguan Zhidian Waijiaobu Jiansong Gebao Baodao Guanyu Zhonghan Fulu Qingxing [Telegram from Embassy in Korea to the Foreign Ministry about the POWs’ Situation],” January 16, 1952. *Document Collection of Postwar Taiwan*, vol. 1: 182-186.

<sup>23</sup> McClure to Army Chief of Staff, “Policy on Repatriation of Chinese and North Korean Prisoners,” July 5, 1951. Cited in Young, *Name, Rank, and Serial Number*, 60.

negotiation. The Secretary of State Dean Acheson initially objected to the voluntary repatriation, but later conceded to it.<sup>24</sup>

In October, the US President Truman had determined to exploit the POW issue as a bargaining chip on the negotiation table. In his memoir, Truman claimed that “we will not buy an armistice by turning over human beings for slaughter or slavery... this was not a point for bargaining!”<sup>25</sup> Despite such claims, Truman actually utilized the anti-communist POWs as a bargaining chip. On October 29, the Undersecretary of State James Webb debriefed Truman about the Chinese POWs’ defection campaign and the blood petitions. According to Webb, the president initially “does not wish to send back those prisoners who surrendered and have cooperated with us because he believes they will be immediately done away with.”<sup>26</sup> But at the end of the meeting, Truman concluded that “he certainly would not agree to any all for all settlement unless we received for it some major concession which could be obtained in no other way.”<sup>27</sup> After Truman made such a decision, the UNC camp authorities strengthened their support for the anti-communist POWs. Had the American negotiators failed to obtain “some major concession” from the PRC at Panmunjom, the US would have delivered the anti-communist POWs to Taiwan for a propaganda victory. Thus, by October 1951, the US President Truman decided to exploit the POW issue.

### Paoge and Communist POWs’ Resistance

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<sup>24</sup> For a more detailed discussion for each US official’s position and argument, see Young, 59–65.

<sup>25</sup> Truman, *Memoirs by Harry S. Truman*, Two: Years of Trial and Hope:460.

<sup>26</sup> James E. Webb, “Meeting with the President,” October 29, 1951. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1951*, vol. 7, Part 1 (Washington, D.C: United States Government Printing Office, 1983), 1073.

<sup>27</sup> James E. Webb, “Meeting with the President,” October 29, 1951. *FRUS, 1951*, 7, Part 1:1073.

As the defection campaign was gaining its momentum, many Chinese POWs worried that they might not be able to return home after the war. A secret society called *Paoge* was formed in compound 86 to defend the Chinese POWs' right to return home.<sup>28</sup> In July 1951, a group of Chinese prisoners, mainly from Sichuan province, established a *Paoge* organization. Under the Cold War narrative of "communism vs. capitalism" and "democracy vs. dictatorship," the UNC camp authorities perceived the Chinese POWs to be either a communist or an anti-communist. However, the *Paoge* brothers did not fit into this Cold War dichotomy as their members included both communist cadres and ex-KMT. The beliefs of *Paoge* brothers went beyond partisan politics and rooted in Chinese native traditions.

Originating from southwest China during the early Qing dynasty (1644-1912), *Paoge* was an underground mafia organization with the initial purpose of "anti-Qing, restore Ming." Instead of pledging loyalty to Mao Zedong or Chiang Kai-shek, *Paoge* brothers only worshipped the ancient Chinese hero Guan Yu, who represented traditional Chinese values such as benevolent treatment of brothers, righteous and bravery. Additionally, *Paoge* brothers did not celebrate the national day of the PRC (October 1) or the ROC (October 10). They only celebrate the lunar calendar May 13 to commemorate Guan Yu. According to the Chinese scholar Wang Di's research, by the late 1940s, "more than half of Sichuan men were *Paoge* members."<sup>29</sup> On Kojedo, the UNC statistics showed that 29% (or 4,853) of the Chinese POWs came from Sichuan.<sup>30</sup> Given the popularity of

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<sup>28</sup> *Paoge hui* is also known as *Gelao hui*.

<sup>29</sup> Wang, *Paoge*, 45.

<sup>30</sup> Report of Results of General Survey Conducted in Chinese Compound, March 28, 1952. "Civil Information & Education Section, Field Operations Division, Subject File 1952 (Activity Report to Indigenous Rations/Intelligence to Utilization)," 1952, Box 1, RG 554/190/31/06/04, National Archives at College Park.

this organization and the presence of Sichuan prisoners, it was no surprise to see *Paoge* in POW camps.

At its establishment in July 1951, *Paoge* brothers' central demand was to return to their homeland Sichuan. Rather than returning to the "communist" China to build communism, *Paoge* brothers' decision to go home was motivated by the traditional value of filial piety to parents. According to the UNC interrogation of a CPV literacy instructor Li Qiaoliang, who was also *Paoge* brother, their leader was called *Zong Tuo Ba Zi*, or General Steering Wheeler.<sup>31</sup> In compound 86, a prisoner named Dai Yushu was elected as the *Paoge* General Steering Wheeler. Born into a poor shoemaker family in Sichuan, Dai never received any formal education. He grew up as a street strong man and earned his reputation as a high-ranking *Paoge*. During the Chinese Civil War, Dai was inducted into the KMT 126 Division and, after his capture by the PLA, became a "liberated soldier" in December 1949.<sup>32</sup>

In 1950, Dai's military unit under the CCP was converted into the CPV 180 Division. In mid-1951, Dai was captured by the UNC and transported to Koje-do. At *Paoge*'s establishment ceremony in July, Dai made the following speech:

Today, our ill-fated brothers gathered in this foreign land, far away from our parents and relatives. In the name of our ancestors, we swear the following: Although we were not born on the same date, we suffered the same fate as captured soldiers on this foreign soil. We swear to return home together so that we can fulfill our filial piety duty to our parents. Fearing no bloodshed or sacrifice, from today on, we are all *Paoge* brothers!<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Li Qiaoliang served the CPV 60 Army, 179 Division, 536 Regiment before his capture. See Interrogation of Li Qiaoliang, June 11, 1952. "ATIS," Box 335, KG 1157.

<sup>32</sup> Yu, *E Yun*, 169–71.

<sup>33</sup> Yu, 175.



Dai also announced three regulations for all *Paoge* members: first, equal distribution of food; second, watch out for each other's back in prison camps; third, return home together to fulfill filial piety duty to our parents.<sup>34</sup> Afterwards, all *Paoge* brothers drank blood wine to conclude the ceremony.

The UNC camp authorities were bewildered by *Paoge* and did not know how to handle this organization. On July 17, Colonel Nugent and Colonel O'Brien discussed the secret society in a telephone conversation.<sup>35</sup> The UNC officials worried that its "gang rule" among the Chinese prisoners might disrupt the camp order. However, other than describing *Paoge* as "cryptic," neither knew anything about this organization or its demands. As the UNC officials could not draw a conclusion, they ordered Captain Bernard Booth to keep a close watch for the secret society. Thus, by seeing the Chinese POWs through the lens of "communist vs. anti-communist," the UNC camp authorities were unable to explain the presence of *Paoge* except adopting a wait and see policy.

The Chinese POWs developed two opposite opinions toward *Paoge*. Although *Paoge* brothers and communist cadres shared the same goal of returning to the PRC, the communist cadres detested *Paoge*. As one CPV officer explained: "the *Paoge* organization is made up by thugs and roving bandits. They have no political beliefs and do not understand the difference between the CCP and the KMT. All *Paoge* members care about are food squandering and opium-smoking."<sup>36</sup> The *Paoge* brothers were politically untrustworthy in the eyes of the communist cadres. By contrast, the anti-communist prisoners hoped to win over *Paoge* to join their defection campaign. As one *Paoge* member

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<sup>34</sup> Zhang, *Wode Chaoxian Zhanzheng*, 66–67.

<sup>35</sup> Intra-section memorandum, July 17, 1951. "CIE General Records," Box 1.

<sup>36</sup> Yu, *E Yun*, 172.

explained, during the anti-Japanese War in the 1940s, *Paoge* had close associations with another two mafia organizations, *Qingbang* and *Hongmen* in Chongqing. Both organizations had close ties with the KMT top leadership.<sup>37</sup> Due to this precedence, in the POW camp some anti-communist leaders approached *Paoge* with the hope to reconnect with the *Paoge* brothers and persuade them to join the defection campaign to Taiwan.

Ordinary Chinese POWs were caught in the crossfire amid the factional struggles among communist, anti-communist, and *Paoge*. Ordinary Chinese POWs were hesitant to discuss the postwar repatriation issue to avoid unnecessary trouble. Jiang Hongqing had no prior association with the KMT or the CCP prior to the Korean War. After graduating from middle school in 1950, he joined the CPV in his hometown Shandong. Jiang recalled that in POW camp, his only wish was to return home to attend his family. As the eldest son, Jiang had the obligation to take care of his aging parents and his six younger siblings.<sup>38</sup> However, Jiang dared not to reveal his true intention in public as his squad leader was an established anti-communist. The squad leader declared that anyone chose the PRC was a communist and would be executed.<sup>39</sup>

While the communist prisoners were too terrified to reveal their choices, the anti-communist prisoners were not in a better position. Like the anti-communists, the communist cadres and *Paoge* brothers also used violence to discourage the Chinese POWs from joining the defection campaign. Li Maoren was an ex-KMT who wished to go to Taiwan. In POW camps, he simply preferred not to talk with strangers, because a “wrong answer could cost me my life.”<sup>40</sup> More than the POWs’ testimonies, the novelist Ha Jin’s

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<sup>37</sup> Interrogation of Li Qiaoliang, June 11, 1952. “ATIS,” Box 335, KG 1157.

<sup>38</sup> Chou, *Fangong Yishi Fangtanlu*, 110–11.

<sup>39</sup> Chou, 111.

<sup>40</sup> Chou, 138–39..

*War Trash* published in 2005 also revealed the violence that permeated the POW camps. By late 1951, Koje-do was like a gasoline tank and single spark would cause a massive explosion.

The most violent episode broke out on the night of October 9, 1951. October 10 was the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ROC (i.e., the Double Ten Day). The afternoon before, Rev. Woodberry gave a ROC flag to the PG squad leader Zhou Yanda and instructed the anti-communist prisoners to conduct a flag-raising ceremony the next morning to express their dedication to go to Taiwan. Rev. Woodberry also promised to bring in American journalists to take photos for the occasion. After Zhou held a meeting with the PG members and passed down Woodberry's instructions, this news was leaked to *Paoge*. A PG member named Li Zhihong was a *Paoge* brother in secret. He informed the *Paoge* leaders about Woodberry's arrangement.<sup>41</sup> Fearing that the UNC camp authorities might forcibly send them to Taiwan, the *Paoge* brothers sought cooperation with the communist cadres.

In the late afternoon of October 9, *Paoge* brothers and the communist cadres decided to sabotage the Double Ten celebration. Despite the fact that the *Paoge* brothers and the communist cadres had different beliefs, they nevertheless shared the common goal of returning to mainland China. The PG member Li Zhihong received the mission to destroy the ROC flag before the riot started. He successfully stole the flag and burnt it at the camp kitchen. As soon as the anti-communist prisoners found the ROC flag was missing, a bloody confrontation broke out in compound 86. Before the UNC camp guards controlled the situation and arrested eighty-one prisoners which included both communist

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<sup>41</sup> Zhang, *Wode Chaoxian Zhanzheng*, 70.

cadres and *Paoge* brothers, a communist cadre named Wang Shaoqi, was beaten to death by the PG squad.<sup>42</sup>

As the anti-communist prisoners enjoyed the UNC camp authorities' support, the clash on October 9 failed to disrupt the scheduled celebration of the Double Ten. After the ROC flag was burnt, Rev. Woodberry quickly delivered another ROC flag to the anti-communist prisoners. The UNC camp authorities facilitated the celebration of the Double Ten by cancelling the CIE classes and encouraging all Chinese POWs to participate in the celebration. Captain Booth reported that "formal instruction was not held Wed, Oct 10. Compound held festival in celebration of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Chinese Republic."<sup>43</sup> As the leaders of communist cadres and *Paoge* were arrested the night before, the celebration of the Double Ten turned out to be a propaganda success for the anti-communist POWs.

The UNC camp authorities further strengthened the anti-communist prisoners' control of the POW camps by deploying more DAC officers on Kojedo. On October 19, ten days after the clash, the UNC introduced the first group of four DACs as CIE lecturers on Kojedo. A State Department official named Henry G. White observed the DAC instructors' performance in CIE classrooms. According to his report on November 9, most Chinese POWs believed that "because the Chinese DACs came from Taiwan they therefore represent the Nationalist government."<sup>44</sup> The DAC officers purposefully reinforced the impression of ROC's presence in POW camps. Under the DACs' suggestions, the front gate of compound 72 was decorated by two national flags: one US flag and one ROC flag.

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<sup>42</sup> Zhang, 77.

<sup>43</sup> CIE Field Report for the week ending October 12, 1951. "CIE General Records," Box 3.

<sup>44</sup> Educational Specialist Henry G. White to Chief, CIE, "Report of TDY to Korea," November 9, 1951. "CIE General Correspondence," Box 1.

A mini-size statue of liberty was also erected at the center of the camp. By contrast, the national symbols of the PRC and the red color were banned on Koje-do. Thus, the decoration and the physical layout of the POW camps pressured the Chinese POWs to adopt a favorable attitude toward the free China.



Figure 4.1 CIE School front gate decorated by the national flags of the US and the ROC. (Presbyterian Historical Society)

In November, the UNC camp authorities decided to relocate the communist prisoners to a designated communist compound 71. On November 2, the CIE Director Osborne concluded that the clash on October 9 was the “communist prisoners’ desperate measures to retain control.”<sup>45</sup> Through this biased interpretation, the UNC camp authorities labeled *Paoge* as a “communist” organization. Osborne issued the following order to deal with the communist POWs:

As rapidly as Communist die-hards, political and cultural officers [literacy instructor] are spotted, they be moved, surreptitiously, into a special group. This would serve two purposes: (1) it would tend to remove the probability

<sup>45</sup> Director, CIE/UNC Affairs to Chief, CIE Section, “Report of Activities and Progress of CIE,” November 2, 1951. “CIE General Correspondence,” Box 1.

of attempts to sabotage our work in the other compounds; and (2) it would provide an opportunity for intensive and higher level work with this small group.<sup>46</sup>

Before the CIE Director issued this order, POWs from all political spectrums shared the same living quarters without special arrangements. Confirmed communist cadres and *Paoge* brothers were allowed to live with ex-KMT POWs. One month after the clash on October 9, the UNC decided to deport the communist cadres and *Paoge* brother to a separate compound as “communists.” The first group of eighty-one communist prisoners arrived at compound 71 in early November. Among them were the prisoner-interpreter Zhang Zeshi, the “self-liberation” movement leader Sun Zhenguan, and a *Paoge* leader Zhong Junhua.<sup>47</sup>

On November 8, the UNC camp authorities delivered another group of communist prisoners to compound 71. On that morning, a group of Chinese prisoners staged a boycott to the CIE lectures and protested the violence unleashed by the anti-communist POWs. Captain Booth reported to the CIE Headquarters that these prisoners “were holding public meetings which interfered with normal compound operations.”<sup>48</sup> The UNC camp guards quickly arrested the protesters. After a brief interrogation, the FOD identified one hundred and forty-eight “diehard communist officers” and sent them to compound 71.<sup>49</sup> In November 1951, the UNC camp authorities treated the communist cadres and the *Paoge* brothers as a contagious disease that needed physical quarantine. The UNC camp

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<sup>46</sup> TDY report by Monta Osborne, Director, CIE. “CIE General Correspondence,” Box 1.

<sup>47</sup> Zhang, *Wode Chaoxian Zhanzheng*, 88.

<sup>48</sup> FOD to Chief, CIE and GHQ, UNC, “Report for Week Ending 10 Nov 1951,” November 10, 1951. “CIE General Correspondence,” Box 1.

<sup>49</sup> FOD to Chief, CIE and GHQ, UNC, “Report for Week Ending 10 Nov 1951,” November 10, 1951. “CIE General Correspondence,” Box 1.

authorities no longer tolerated the presence of prisoners who demanded to return to the PRC. As long as an individual demanded to return to the mainland, he would receive the label as a communist.

After the removal of “communist” prisoners, the anti-communist POWs expanded their defection campaign through violence. In late 1951, the voluntary tattoo movement among the anti-communist POWs became a mandatory obligation for all Chinese POWs in compound 72 and 86. A prisoner remembered that “anyone who rejected the tattoo was viewed as a communist bandit who deserved no mercy but violent treatment. Under the constant threat of violence, many prisoners accepted the tattoo and even joined the anti-communists to inscribe the anti-communist slogans on the other prisoners’ bodies.”<sup>50</sup> Another prisoner recalled that he “simply gave up the thought of returning home” after receiving the anti-communist tattoo.<sup>51</sup>

In addition to the tattoo movement, the anti-communist prisoners forcibly collected blood signatures from the Chinese POWs. Before August 1951, the anti-communist prisoners obtained blood signatures from ex-KMT prisoners on voluntary basis. Their petitions only collected signatures from less than 10% of the prisoner population. On December 5 and 21, more than 80%, or 13,829, Chinese prisoners signed their names on two separate blood petitions and declared that they would commit suicide if forcibly sent back to PRC.<sup>52</sup> One of the petitions stated,

We hope that our countrymen in Free China do not forget us now that we are on an island in Korea. Under the kindness of the U.N. we are able to read many books and newspapers. Everyday we attend class to learn

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<sup>50</sup> Chou, *Fangong Yishi Fangtanlu*, 256.

<sup>51</sup> Chou, 142.

<sup>52</sup> 7,329 signatures were collected from Compound 72 and 6,500 from Compound 86. See Evaluation Branch to Chief CIE, “Declarations from Compound 72,” December 5, 1951; “Petition from PW’s Compound 86,” December 21, 1951. In “CIE General Correspondence,” Box 2.

something: to learn about international affairs; to understand the cunning communists and enlighten our minds. We clearly know that the U.N. develops the peace of the world and that she is a real friend of China. The Nationalists Government is the only government to lead our country to a happy future. Any organization of the communists is our public enemy who destroyed the peace. Any promise of the communists is a lie.<sup>53</sup>

Commenting on the blood petitions, Ma Jungeng remarked that “the tattoo and signature did not necessarily represent one’s true intention. Given the situation inside the camps, signing the petition was a necessary means to avoid trouble.”<sup>54</sup> Under the threat of physical violence, the majority of Chinese POWs signed the blood petition.

On January 3, 1952, the DAC officers reported to Taipei that compound 72 and 86 were under the “firm control” of anti-communist prisoners.<sup>55</sup> The State Department official Philip Manhard also reported to Washington that the anti-communist prisoners used “brutal force” to control the POW camps.<sup>56</sup> Manhard reported the general situation in compound 72 and 86 as the following,

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.<sup>57</sup>

Manhard also condemned the DACs as the accomplice: “With encouragement from Formosan Chinese [DACs] assigned to PW work by GHQ Tokyo, the trustees have for

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<sup>53</sup> Evaluation Branch to Chief CIE, “Declarations from Compound 72,” December 5, 1951. “CIE General Correspondence,” Box 2.

<sup>54</sup> Chou, *Fangong Yishi Fangtanlu*, 257.

<sup>55</sup> “Telegram from the Embassy in Korea to the ROC Foreign Ministry No. 1,” January 3, 1952. *Document Collection of Postwar Taiwan*, vol. 1: 179-180.

<sup>56</sup> “Memorandum by P.W. Manhard of the Political Section of the Embassy to the Ambassador in Korea (Muccio), Pusan,” March 14, 1952. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954 (FRUS 1952-1954)* (Washington, D.C: United States Government Printing Office, 1984), 15, Part 1: 98-99.

<sup>57</sup> “Memorandum by P.W. Manhard of the Political Section of the Embassy to the Ambassador in Korea (Muccio), Pusan,” March 14, 1952. *FRUS 1952-1954*, 15, Part 1: 98-99.



several months conducted a drive to collect petitions for transfer to Formosa.”<sup>58</sup> Although the CIE program failed to convert the Chinese POWs into “democratic citizens,” the anti-communist POWs ascended to power in compound 72 and 86. Under their leadership, a new camp order maintained by physical violence emerged.

During the second half of 1951, the Chinese POWs on Kojedo experienced the bloodiest and the most violent phase of their internment. During this period, the duel was between the anti-communist prisoners’ ability to inflict pain and the communist prisoners’ endurance. The central question then became: can the victims endure pain beyond the tormentors’ ability to inflict it? From the perspective of the anti-communist POWs, the answer was usually a yes. Although the UNC had yet decided to adopt the voluntary repatriation principle, it relied on the anti-communist POWs to control the POW camps. The UNC camp authorities thus acquiesced the anti-communist POWs’ violence and their defecation campaign to Taiwan. Such an attitude quickly backfired as the anti-communists pushed the Truman administration to uphold the voluntary repatriation principle in mid-1952.

#### From the Negotiation Table to Operation Scatter

By early 1952, the POW issue became the only obstacle for a peace agreement in Korea. While Beijing insisted upon an all-for-all exchange sanctioned by the Geneva Convention, the Truman administration denounced it as “forcible repatriation” and proposed the so-called “voluntary repatriation.” From January to April, a series of acrimonious debates took place at Panmunjom with neither side willing to concede. A

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<sup>58</sup> “Memorandum by P.W. Manhard of the Political Section of the Embassy to the Ambassador in Korea (Muccio), Pusan,” March 14, 1952. *FRUS 1952-1954*, 15, Part 1: 98-99.

miscommunication in early April ironically broke the deadlock. The Chinese negotiators wrongly assumed that more than 80% of the Chinese POWs would return to the PRC under the voluntary repatriation principle when in fact the less than half would do so. Under this false assumption, Beijing agreed with Operation Scatter, a screening to determine where exactly each Chinese prisoner would like to go after the war. In April 1952, despite the US' effort to settle the POW issue by trying to meet Beijing's demand, the anti-communist POWs manipulated the screening result and forcibly pushed the Truman administration to uphold the voluntary repatriation.

On January 2, 1952, the UNC chief negotiator Admiral C. Turner Joy proposed the voluntary repatriation principle to the Chinese delegates at the Panmunjom negotiation.<sup>59</sup> According to the UNC's proposal, the voluntary repatriation was a condition for peace in Korea and must be written into the armistice. As Joy explained, "the major objective of the Washington decision to insist on voluntary repatriation was to inflict up on the Communists a propaganda defeat."<sup>60</sup> In accepting the UNC proposal, the PRC would not only lose a number of its soldiers to the ROC but also acknowledge this humiliating defeat in public. From January to February, the Chinese negotiators bitterly resisted the voluntary repatriation and refused to give any concession. On February 27, 1952, the US President Truman lost his patience and announced his decision that "the final US position should be that the US would not agree to forcible repatriation of POWs."<sup>61</sup> Despite Truman's "final

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<sup>59</sup> "Memorandum of Conversation, by John R. Heidemann of the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs, Washington," August 27, 1951. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1951 (FRUS 1951)* (Washington, D.C: United States Government Printing Office, 1983), 7, Part 1: 855-857.

<sup>60</sup> Turner Joy, *How Communists Negotiate* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1955), 152-153.

<sup>61</sup> "Memorandum of Conversation, by the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Johnson)," February 27, 1952. *FRUS 1952-1954*, 15, Part 1: 68-69.

position” and the Chinese negotiators’ protest, the Panmunjom negotiation nevertheless continued for another three months.

Amid this fluid situation, the US Ambassador Muccio telegraphed Washington, suggesting American officials to be aware of Taipei’s influence over the POW issue. In February, Muccio reported that “I personally have a hunch that the Chinese [from Taiwan] have influenced the course of events at Koje-do and at Panmunjom.”<sup>62</sup> He pointed out that “interwoven with all this problem is the part being played today in Korea by the Chinese... we have groups of interpreters, translators and CI&E personnel brought here by our military. We also have a recently greatly augmented Chinese Embassy, military attaché and air attaché organization.” He lamented his inability to learn about the KMT’s “overt groups” in POW camps and their “covert activities.”<sup>63</sup> At the end of his telegram, Muccio warned that “as regards the Chinese, I am not satisfied as to who is using whom vis-à-vis the US.”<sup>64</sup> However, American policy makers never imagined the possibility of being used by the anti-communist POWs and ignored Muccio’s warning.

The situation reached a turning point on April 1. On that day, the negotiation started with the Chinese negotiators attacking the UNC: “Your side is even unwilling to express your opinion about a round figure (number of POWs to be repatriated).”<sup>65</sup> In an irritated tone, the UNC negotiator, Colonel George Hickman replied the Chinese negotiator, Colonel Chai Chengwen, that under the voluntary repatriation principle, 116,000 out of the

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<sup>62</sup> “The Ambassador in Korea (Muccio) to the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Johnson),” February 27, 1952. *FRUS 1952-1954*, 15, Part 1: 64-66.

<sup>63</sup> “The Ambassador in Korea (Muccio) to the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Johnson),” February 27, 1952. *FRUS 1952-1954*, 15, Part 1: 64-66.

<sup>64</sup> “The Ambassador in Korea (Muccio) to the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Johnson),” February 27, 1952. *FRUS 1952-1954*, 15, Part 1: 64-66.

<sup>65</sup> C. Turner Joy, *Negotiating While Fighting: The Diary of Admiral C. Turner Joy at the Korean Armistice Conference*, First Edition (Stanford, Calif: Hoover Institution Press, 1978), 343.

132,000 POWs would accept repatriation back to the communist bloc.<sup>66</sup> The Chinese were apparently intrigued by Colonel Hickman's round figure of 116,000, which constituted approximately 88% of the prisoner population. Based on Colonel Hickman's speech, the Chinese negotiators thought that 88% of the Chinese POWs would choose the PRC under the voluntary repatriation. The round figure of 116,000 became the turning point for the Chinese to move the negotiation forward.

During their next meeting on April 2, the Chinese negotiators no longer insisted on an all-for-all exchange. Instead, they suggested to put aside the "difference in principles" and proceed to an exchange of POWs' name list. Colonel Chai made the following statement at the negotiation table:

In the interest of progress in these conferences, we would rather recommend that instead of spending time on argument over the principles, we may as well be realistic and enter immediately into the work of checking the lists, and that discussions of principle be resumed after the lists have been checked.<sup>67</sup>

Colonel Chai's speech revealed that the PRC could afford the voluntary repatriation, given that an overwhelming majority of the POWs would be repatriated. After the Chinese negotiators made this statement, a resolution to the POW issue seemed in sight. In response to Colonel Chai, the UNC proposed Operation Scatter, a screening to determine where each prisoner would like to go after the war. The Chinese immediately approved it. In his telegram to the Pentagon, General Ridgway optimistically predicted that Operation Scatter

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<sup>66</sup> Walter Hermes, *Truce Tent and Fighting Front* (Washington, D.C: Center of Military History, United States Army, 1992), 169.

<sup>67</sup> Joy, *Negotiating While Fighting*, 346; *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954*, vol. 15, Part 1 (Washington, D.C: United States Government Printing Office, 1984), 136.

would induce a “final resolution” to the POW issue as long as the UNC could provide a name list that included 116,000 POWs.<sup>68</sup>

Nevertheless, the UNC negotiators made a dire mistake of colossal impact. When Colonel Hickman proposed the figure of 116,000, he never clarified the constitution of the POWs. Hickman’s statement misled the Chinese negotiators into thinking that both the PRC and the DPRK would receive 88% of their POWs back, which was never the case.<sup>69</sup> In mid-February, the UNC chief of staff General Hickey reported that more than half of the 21,000 Chinese POWs would resist repatriation back to the PRC, “since they were well organized, disciplined, and controlled by strong leaders with Nationalist sympathies.”<sup>70</sup> According to Hickey’s estimation, the 116,000 POWs would only include less than 10,000 Chinese POWs and the remaining were made up by North Korean POWs. The 50% of Chinese POW returnees apparently fell short of the PRC’s expectation of 88%. But the consequence of Colonel Hickman’s ambiguity was clear. In April 1952, the PRC conceded to the voluntary repatriation with the expectation to receive 88% of the Chinese POWs back as a face-saving mechanism.

The anti-communist POWs’ firm control of the POW camps quickly frustrated Washington’s and Beijing’s intention to settle the POW issue on the negotiation table. On April 7, two days before Operation Scatter started, the anti-communist prisoners held a series of mock screening sessions at the CIE lecture hall. A communist cadre named Zhao Zuorui attended the first mock screening session. He recalled that in the afternoon of April

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<sup>68</sup> “The Commander I Chief, United Nations Command (Ridgway) to the Department of the Army,” April 19, 1952. *FRUS 1952-1954*, 15, Part 1: 160-164.

<sup>69</sup> Historians who approached this topic generally agreed that the UNC negotiators made an unintentional mistake on April 1. Hermes called Col. Hickman’s statement “a tactical error on the part of the UN Command.” Chang Cheng argued that Hickman had made “an offhand mistake.” See Hermes, *Truce Tent and Fighting Front*, 169; Chang, *The Hijacked War*, 242.

<sup>70</sup> Hermes, *Truce Tent and Fighting Front*, 169.

7, Li Da'an and his PG squad toured around the compound and announced: "The UNC will start the screening now. Those who wish to return home should follow us to register your name on the exchange list."<sup>71</sup> As the PG squad served as the auxiliary camp guards, the Chinese POWs never questioned Li's words. After making the same announcement in several POW companies, a group of nearly 200 pro-repatriate POWs were gathered at the CIE lecture hall in compound 72. When the POWs entered the lecture hall, they found no UNC personnel but the PG squad. The PG leader Li Da'an asked again if the pro-repatriate POWs were sincere to return to the PRC.<sup>72</sup> Two DAC officers reported that prisoners who gave affirmative answers "were either beaten black & blue or killed."<sup>73</sup> A PG member named Xiao Lixing lamented: "At the time we PG members orchestrated these activities... You know, under that situation, we had no other choice."<sup>74</sup> The mock interview sessions turned out to be a trap to lure out the pro-repatriate prisoners.

A nineteen-year-old prisoner named Lin Xuebu was brutally murdered that night. Lin insisted on returning home to the PRC after multiple rounds of beatings. The PG leader Li Da'an made several death threats and still could not change his mind. "Humiliated and angry," Zhao Zuorui recalled, "Li followed by stabbing Lin with his dagger. After Lin finally collapsed, Li opened Lin's chest and pulled out his heart."<sup>75</sup> This scene terrified everyone, including the PG members. Years later, a PG member recounted: "His name was Lin Xuebu, a nice fellow from Sichuan. He used to teach me English in POW camps and we were very close friends... He was an innocent young man who received a decent

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<sup>71</sup> Zhang, *Wode Chaoxian Zhanzheng*, 122.

<sup>72</sup> Richard Peters and Xiaobing Li, *Voices from the Korean War, Personal Stories of American, Korean, and Chinese Soldiers* (The University Press of Kentucky, 2005), 245.

<sup>73</sup> On April 7, two DACs officers reported the mock screening sessions to Joy. See Joy's diary entry on April 7, 1952 in Joy, *Negotiating While Fighting*, 355.

<sup>74</sup> Chou, *Fangong Yishi Fangtanlu*, 409.

<sup>75</sup> Peters and Li, *Voices from the Korean War*, 245.

education. How I wish I could convince him to change his heart that night...”<sup>76</sup> After Lin’s death, all the other Chinese POWs in the lecture hall expressed a willingness to go to Taiwan.

The UNC camp authorities were well aware of the anti-communist POWs’ activities between April 7 and 9, but lacked the manpower to intervene. According to the CIE officer John S. Benben, “throughout the processing, fights took place during the night, screams charged with torture broke above the night’s din, and injured crawled to the gate on all fours, many to drop exhausted before reaching it.”<sup>77</sup> Ambassador Muccio also reported to Washington: “Physical terror including organized murders, beatings, threats” were administered by anti-communist prisoners during the mock screening sessions.<sup>78</sup> While Washington policy makers merely wished to exploit the POW issue and were never sincere to send the Chinese POWs to Taiwan for the sake of human rights protection, the anti-communists’ actions endangered such a policy. Nevertheless, the UNC camp authorities simply lacked the manpower to put a bridle on the anti-communists. By April 1952, the UNC camp authorities relied heavily on the PG squad to control the POW camps. The UNC never imagined that the PG would go out of its control.

Confronted with the violent situation, the UNC strove to meet the number of 116,000 while acquiescing to the anti-communists’ violent actions. Admiral Joy explained that the PRC acceptance of an exchange “based solely” on the number of 116,000. He therefore “recommend use of min. [minimum] standard in screening process.”<sup>79</sup> Joy hoped

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<sup>76</sup> Chou, *Fangong Yishi Fangtanlu*, 409–10.

<sup>77</sup> John S. Benben, “Education of Prisoners of War on Kojé Island, Korea,” *The Educational Record* 2 (1955): 170–71.

<sup>78</sup> “The Ambassador in Korea (Muccio) to the Department of State,” June 28, 1952. *FRUS 1952-1954*, 15, Part 1: 360-361.

<sup>79</sup> Joy, *Negotiating While Fighting*, 347.

that the “minimum standard” in the screening would meet the total figure of 116,000 and settle the POW issue. Meanwhile, the UNC camp authorities continued exonerating the PG members. In addition to Lin Xuebu, the UNC camp authorities received two more murdering reports on April 7 and April 8.<sup>80</sup> The UNC investigated into the three murders and attributed these deaths to “beatings administered by other prisoners.”<sup>81</sup> In its final report, the UNC concluded that no UNC personnel or DAC officer was responsible for the deaths and that no policy changes would be recommended for administering the POW camps.<sup>82</sup> As the PG members were promoting the defection campaign, the UNC camp authorities were pre-occupied with meeting the figure of 116,000.

Other than the three reported cases of murder, many more murders were uncounted. In a 2008 interview, a PG squad member acknowledged, “in April 1952, the US Army launched the screening. To tell you the truth, in compound 72, we have killed many men.”<sup>83</sup> The PG squad member explained that they dismembered the dead bodies, hiding the body parts into latrine buckets, and dumped them into the ocean the next day.<sup>84</sup> The exact number of deaths remains unknown, but could be estimated. In a telegram to Taipei on June 6, 1952, a DAC officer reported that during the first half of 1952, the anti-communist prisoners had administered “more than one hundred executions of communist bandits.”<sup>85</sup> As the result of the anti-communist POWs’ activities and the UNC’s inaction, most pro-repatriate POWs

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<sup>80</sup> The names of the victims were Cao Lixing and Zhang Zhenlong. Investigation Report, June 21, 1952. “POW Incident Investigation File,” Box 1-6.

<sup>81</sup> Investigation Report, June 21, 1952. “POW Incident Investigation File,” Box 1-6.

<sup>82</sup> Investigation Report, June 21, 1952. “POW Incident Investigation File,” Box 1-6.

<sup>83</sup> Chou, *Fangong Yishi Fangtanlu*, 408.

<sup>84</sup> Chou, 410.

<sup>85</sup> “Telegram from the Embassy in Korea to the ROC Foreign Ministry No. 127,” June 6, 1952. *Document Collection of Postwar Taiwan*, vol. 1: 251.



changed their minds after attending the mock screenings. Clearly, the outcome of Operation Scatter was largely pre-determined by the anti-communist prisoners.

In the early morning of April 9, the UNC launched Operation Scatter and erected ten tents in the middle of the sports field in compound 72. The Chinese prisoners were screened individually by the UNC. According to Ridgway's report, this screening was to make "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."<sup>86</sup> Each Chinese prisoner were asked the following seven questions:

1. Will you voluntarily be repatriated to China?
2. Would you forcibly resist repatriation?
3. Have you carefully considered the impact of such action on your family?
4. Do you realize that you may remain here at Koje Do long after those electing repatriation have been returned home?
5. Do you realize that the UNC 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 were repatriated in spite of this decision?<sup>87</sup>

These questions were asked one at a time and reply was awaited before next question. If "at any time the POW mentioned suicide, fight to death, escape, braving death or similar information," the prisoner would be deemed as non-repatriate and returned to their original compound. If "at any time POW expressed a decision to accept repatriation the questions ceased" and the prisoner would be transported to the communist compound 71, waiting for their repatriation back to the PRC.

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<sup>86</sup> "The Commander I Chief. United Nations Command (Ridgway) to the Department of the Army," April 19, 1952. *FRUS 1952-1954*, 15, Part 1: 160-164.

<sup>87</sup> "The Commander I Chief. United Nations Command (Ridgway) to the Department of the Army," April 19, 1952. *FRUS 1952-1954*, 15, Part 1: 160-164.

Contrary to Ridgway's wishful thinking to recruit "the maximum number" of repatriate POWs, the overwhelming majority of the Chinese POWs were too terrified to express their true intention during the screening. As the Chinese POWs entered the tent one by one to be screened, one DAC officer observed, "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 & over again."<sup>88</sup> After the mock interview sessions, many Chinese POWs were not sure whether this screening was another trap and feared that they might be murdered if they chose the PRC. As this uncertainty loomed over the minds of the Chinese POWs, most of them chose Taiwan for their personal safety.

By mid-April, it became clear that Operation Scatter could hardly reach the round figure of 116,000. On April 13, the UNC completed the screening for the 17,593 Chinese POWs in compound 72 and 86. Among them, only 3,467 (or less than 20%) chose repatriation. This small number shocked Admiral Joy as his diary entry on April 14 wrote:

That evening I interviewed at my house Lieuts Wu & May (our Chinese interpreters) who Briggs had sent over to give me firsthand info on the screening of the Chinese POWs. Also present were Millburn & Libby. The picture Wu & May gave us was not pretty. It seemed that the compounds with pro nationalist (pro Chinese Nationalist) leaders were completely dominated by those leaders, to such an extent that the results of the screening were by no means indicative of the POWs real choice.<sup>89</sup>

In mid-April, more than 47,000 POWs (Chinese and North Koreans combined) remained unscreened. Most of these unscreened prisoners lived in the designated communist compound and they violently resisted the screening. To boost the number of repatriate POWs closer to 116,000, the UNC camp authorities made an arbitrary decision to put all

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<sup>88</sup> Joy, *Negotiating While Fighting*, 355.

<sup>89</sup> Joy, 355.

the unscreened POWs to the group of repatriate POWs. On April 29, the UNC camp authorities reported a total number of 74,599, or 57%, of POWs who demanded repatriation.<sup>90</sup> Even this number was far below the 116,000 promised by Colonel Hickman on April 1. A re-screening was suggested, but was denied by the UNC camp commander Brigadier General Francis Dodd. He estimated that a re-screening would not change the current result for more than 10%.<sup>91</sup> In April 1952, the anti-communist POWs successfully manipulated the result of Operation Scatter. Their actions bankrupted Washington's effort to settle the POW issue and delivered a public humiliation to Beijing.

In contrast with the violent situation on Kojedo, Operation Scatter was much more peaceful at Pusan POW camps where the anti-communist POWs were absent. In addition to the 16,768 Chinese POWs on Kojedo, there were 4,306 Chinese prisoners remaining at Pusan.<sup>92</sup> These included the sick and wounded prisoners who required intensive medical attention and a 1,500-man labor battalion. An administrative officer at the Pusan named Stanley Weintraub recorded the screening in his diary. On April 15, Weintraub and his colleagues travelled to different hospital compounds to inform the prisoners about the screening. As most POWs remained silent upon hearing the news, Weintraub worried: "Since news of bloody riots over screening in Kojedo has been our main topic of conversation, we are surprised at the placid reaction."<sup>93</sup> In the absence of the DACs and the anti-communist organizations, the screening went smoothly. Among the 1,832 Chinese prisoners who were interviewed between April 15 and April 19, "only about 25 per cent"

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<sup>90</sup> "The Commander in Chief, Far East (Ridgway) to the Joint Chiefs of Staff," April 29, 1952. *FRUS 1952-1954*, 15, Part 1: 183.

<sup>91</sup> Joy, *Negotiating While Fighting*, 356.

<sup>92</sup> For the detailed statistics, see Table 16 in Bradbury, *Mass Behavior in Battle and Captivity*, Appendix A.

<sup>93</sup> Stanley Weintraub, *War in the Wards* (San Rafael, California: Presidio Press, 1976), 34.

of POWs chose Taiwan as their final destination. The survey result percentage was “much smaller than the first ratios reported from Koje” and surprised Weintraub and his colleagues at Pusan.<sup>94</sup>

The CIE field reports from Pusan also confirmed Weintraub’s finding. On April 19, the FOD reported the screening result from the Pusan hospital compound 10. Among the 296 Chinese POWs, 288 demanded to return to the PRC.<sup>95</sup> On the same date, another report from Pusan indicated that more than 85% of the 1,500-man labor battalion preferred the PRC.<sup>96</sup> In a telegram to the Department of the Army, the UNC Commander Ridgway reported that out of the 1,832 Chinese POWs who had completed the screening at Pusan, 1,306 or 71% opted to return home to the PRC.<sup>97</sup> Without the PG squad or the DAC officers from Taiwan, the screening result from Pusan was closer to reality.

The only issue for Operation Scatter in Pusan was the prisoners’ medical conditions. Weintraub recalled that the “toughest issue” encountered by his colleagues was for Pusan hospital compound 2, the designated neuropsychiatric ward. Its population was about eighty and the UNC team simply could not proceed to the screening as these prisoners were deemed as “too seriously ill to be questioned about screening, or too incompetent mentally to make a rational decision.”<sup>98</sup> Aside from this issue, the screening result demonstrated that most Chinese POWs preferred to return home to the PRC.

The DACs were dissatisfied with the results from Pusan. On May 25, a DAC officer named Abraham Lin suggested to launch the CIE program at Pusan. In his letter to the CIE

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<sup>94</sup> Weintraub, 39.

<sup>95</sup> Joy, *Negotiating While Fighting*, 365.

<sup>96</sup> Joy, 355.

<sup>97</sup> “The Commander I Chief. United Nations Command (Ridgway) to the Department of the Army,” April 19, 1952. *FRUS 1952-1954*, 15, Part 1: 163.

<sup>98</sup> Weintraub, *War in the Wards*, 40.

Headquarters in Tokyo, Lin claimed that “most of the Chinese prisoners were former nationalist soldiers who were and still are loyal to the Nationalist government.” Due to the absence of the CIE program, the Chinese POWs at Pusan lacked “thinking of democratic ways” and therefore wrongly rejected the opportunity to embrace democracy in Taiwan.<sup>99</sup> By introducing the “Chinese DACs, especially these coming from Formosa [Taiwan],” Lin was confident that the CIE program could give “some definite help” for the Chinese prisoners to make a “better” decision. Having failed to obtain a name list of 116,000 POWs, the CIE Director rejected Lin’s proposal out of hand. More importantly, due to the small number of the Chinese POWs at Pusan, the screening result had nearly no impact for the overall result of Operation Scatter. By combining the statistics from Koje-do and Pusan, the non-repatriate prisoners constituted 78% (14,652 out of 18,899) of the Chinese POWs.

While the screening procedure of Operation Scatter seemed to provide a fair opportunity for each Chinese prisoner, the majority of the Chinese POWs interned at Koje-do were pressured to choose Taiwan before the screening even started. Commenting on Operation Scatter, the ROC Ambassador Shao Yulin bragged in his memoir: “Our ROC government had dispatched personnel to work inside the POW camps for a long time. As our people [DACs] received professional psychological warfare trainings from the US Army, they did a great job to affect the prisoners’ choice-making.”<sup>100</sup> Ambassador Shao’s words revealed the DAC officers’ ability to influence the Chinese POWs’ choice-making before and during the screening. Rather than fulfilling Washington’s design as a bargaining

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<sup>99</sup> Suggestions, from Abraham Lin, Chinese DAC to Chief, CIE, May 25, 1952. “Activity Report to Indigenous Rations/Intelligence to Utilization,” Box 2.

<sup>100</sup> Shao, *Shihan Huiyilu*, 249–50.

chip, the ROC government had successfully exercised its influence over the POW issue to serve its own interest.

A closer examination of the anti-communists' background further revealed the non-ideological nature of the POW issue. For example, the notorious PG leader Li Da'an initially hesitated to cooperate with the DACs in May 1951. He questioned the DAC officer Bai's suggestion to declare himself as a staunch anti-communist. After the ROC military attaché to the ROK, Zhang Zhen, promised Li with fame, job, and a better future in Taiwan, Li agreed to cooperate with the DACs.<sup>101</sup> Another anti-communist leader Li Erwa was a disgruntled CCP cadre. According to the Chinese document, Li Erwa came from a poor peasant family and he joined the CCP in January 1945. He became a platoon leader on the eve of the Korean War. In 1950, Li Erwa wished to divorce his wife and marry another woman. His application was rejected and he was relieved from leadership position. In his postwar interrogation, Li explained that he surrendered to the UNC because he was dissatisfied with the CCP's handling of his divorce case.<sup>102</sup> Instead of detesting the communist ideology in the mainland, some anti-communist leaders sought better jobs and happier marriages in Taiwan.

Having failed to reach the round figure of 116,000, Operation Scatter turned out to be an embarrassment for both Washington and Beijing. The screening result forced the Truman administration to uphold the voluntary repatriation and prepare to deliver the anti-communist POWs to Taiwan. On May 7, President Truman declared his decision to reject the all for all exchange principle in a news conference: "We will not buy an armistice by

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<sup>101</sup> Interrogation of Li Da'an. Cited in Yu, *E Yun*, 116–17.

<sup>102</sup> Interrogation of Li Erwa. Cited in Yu, 83–87.

turning over human beings for slaughter or slavery.”<sup>103</sup> Even if the UNC could come up with a name list of 116,000 POWs, Operation Scatter was by no means a solution to the POW issue. According to the UNC’s estimation, the PRC could only receive less than 50% of its POWs back. This number simply could not placate the PRC leadership. Just before the Panmunjom negotiation was suspended, the PRC government tried to settle the POW issue in June. During a conversation with the Indian Ambassador Panikkar on June 15, the PRC Foreign Minister Zhou Enlai clarified that the PRC government was willing to consider the voluntary repatriation principle. Excluding some KMT spies and agents, Zhou indicated that Beijing demanded at least 20,000 Chinese prisoners back to settle the POW issue.<sup>104</sup>

The US Embassy in India quickly reported this conversation to Washington. According to Zhou’s proposal, the PRC government was willing to accept the voluntary repatriation principle as long as the UNC could return 20,000, or 93% of Chinese POWs back. However, the statistical gap between Beijing’s demand for 93% repatriates and the Operation Scatter’s result of 22% repatriates was simply too large to cover and the proposal was rejected by Truman out of hand. During the following months, neither Truman nor Mao could afford to appear “weak” on the POW issue. The Panmunjom negotiation was suspended and both sides resumed the battlefield fighting with the hope that the POW issue would be resolved in its favor. The anti-communist POWs, which Truman intended to use as a bargaining chip, had successfully manipulated the US policy-makers in Washington.

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<sup>103</sup> Truman, *Memoirs by Harry S. Truman*, Two: Years of Trial and Hope:461.

<sup>104</sup> “Memorandum of Conversations, by the Deputy Director of the Office of Northeast Asian Affairs (McClurkin),” June 18, 1952. *FRUS 1952-1954*, 15, Part 1: 340-341.

### Dodd Incident and Operation Breakup

While the battlefield fighting resumed, the communist POWs organized their last collective resistance against the UNC camp authorities. In May 1952, a group of North Korean and Chinese prisoners kidnapped the UNC camp commander, Brigadier General Francis T. Dodd, as a protest for the screening and demanded the UNC to punish the PG members who had persecuted their fellow prisoners. During the celebration for the International Labor Day on May 1, a group of North Korean prisoners approached the Chinese communist cadres in compound 71 and asked their assistance.<sup>105</sup> Other than demanding Dodd's presence for a negotiation at the front gate of compound 76, the Chinese cadres never learned the North Koreans' actual plot for the kidnap. On May 3, Zhang Zeshi drafted a petition, demanding the UNC camp authorities to cancel all future screenings and to punish the PG members. After sending the petition letter, a group of North Korean and Chinese POWs launched a hunger strike to pressure Dodd for a face-to-face talk.<sup>106</sup>

On May 7, Brigadier General Dodd paid a personal visit to compound 76, which was deemed as a communist compound for KPA POWs. During Operation Scatter, several bloody confrontations broke out in compound 76 between prisoners and UNC guards. General Dodd wished to evaluate the aftermath of Operation Scatter and to investigate the situations in the communist compound. With a few camp guards and one Korean language interpreter, Dodd began an hour-long conversation with the prisoner leader at the compound front gate. Just as the conversation was ongoing, a brigade of prisoners (aka., the honey bucket brigade) wanted to pass through the front gate with an alleged purpose of

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<sup>105</sup> Compound 71 was a communist compound and its members resisted the screening during Operation Scatter. The UNC put their names on the POW exchange list, meaning that they would be repatriated back to North Korea after the war.

<sup>106</sup> Zhang, *Wode Chaoxian Zhanzheng*, 130–32.



servicing the latrines as a daily routine. As soon as the camp gate was opened, General Dodd was suddenly pushed by the members of the service brigade and dragged into compound 76. Before the UNC guards could react, the compound gate was shut tight. A red flag was raised and a premade banner was lifted that promised to treat General Dodd well unless a rescue was attempted.

A POW Representative Committee was elected among the KPA and the CPV POWs to negotiate with the UNC camp authorities. General Dodd's immediate replacement, Brigadier General Charles F. Colson started the negotiation with the POW Committee. The POWs proposed the following conditions to release Dodd:

1. Stop the physical violence, verbal insult, blood petition, forced tattoo and chemical weapon experiment over the POWs. Protect all prisoners' human rights according to the Geneva Convention.
2. Abandon the wrong practice of forcible screening and the so-called voluntary repatriation for the KPA and the CPV POWs.
3. Cancel all future screening for the POWs.
4. Acknowledge the legality of the POW Representative Committee.<sup>107</sup>

To secure General Dodd's release, Colson issued the following public statement: "I do admit that there have been instances of bloodshed where many prisoners of war have been killed and wounded by UN Forces... After Dodd's release, unharmed, there will be no more forcible screening or any rearming of prisoners of war in this camp."<sup>108</sup> This embarrassing statement acknowledged the UNC's long-term violence directed against the POWs who demanded repatriation. It also contradicted the many investigation reports that exonerated the anti-communist POWs during the blood petitions and the tattoo movement. Most importantly, Colson's promise to cancel all future screening went directly against

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<sup>107</sup> Chai Chengwen, *Banmendian Tanpan [Panmunjom Negotiations]* (Beijing: Jiefangjun Chubanshe, 1989), 227–28.

<sup>108</sup> Harold J. Vetter, *Mutiny on Koje Island*, 1st Edition (C.E. Tuttle Co., 1965), 130.

Washington's decision to uphold the voluntary repatriation principle. The POW Committee was satisfied with Colson's statement and decided to release Dodd on May 10. After Dodd's release on that day, both Colson and Dodd were immediately fired by the UNC and forced into retirement by the US Army.

General Ridgway was infuriated by the incident and appointed Major General Haydon Boatner as the new camp commander. During WWII, Boatner worked with the Chiang Kai-shek government in Tianjin and Chongqing. Having worked and lived in China for several years, he could speak fluent Chinese and his comprehension for the series of clashes in POW camps transcended the dichotomy of communism vs. capitalism. In private, Boatner sympathized with the Chinese POWs as he wrote an article published in 1962: "Prisoners suddenly and possibly accidentally became sacrificial figures on the diplomatic chessboard in the game being played at Panmunjom."<sup>109</sup> In mid-1952, however, Boatner had no other choice but to rule the POW camp with an iron-fist. Upon his arrival at Koje-do, he immediately retracted Colson's statement and arrested members on the POW Representative Committee.

In June 1952, General Boatner decided to establish direct control of the Chinese POWs with an increased number of camp guards and a new camp structure. He proposed Operation Breakup to ensure the camp authorities' total control by relocating all the Chinese POWs from Koje-do to Cheju-do and then reorganizing the prisoners into smaller compounds with more camp guards. To ensure a successful transfer, Ridgway transferred a tank battalion from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division and 12,000 American soldiers from the 187<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment from the battlefield to Koje-do.<sup>110</sup> Remarking the POWs as "arrogant and

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<sup>109</sup> Haydon Boatner, "Prisoners of War for Sale," *The American Legion*, August 1962, 39.

<sup>110</sup> Ridgway, *Soldier: The Memoirs of Matthew B. Ridgway*, 233.

insubordinate,” Ridgway declared that “I was determined that if the RED POWs made any resistance, or attempted any delay in carrying out our demands [Operation Breakup], we would shoot, and I wanted the killing machinery on hand to do a thorough job of it.”<sup>111</sup> On June 10, the UNC launched Operation Breakup to relocate the POWs from Kojedo to Cheju-do. When the operation ended, the US Army reported thirty-one prisoner deaths and one American guard casualty.<sup>112</sup> After the relocation was completed, the UNC guards would remain at the new camps on Cheju-do. The guard-prisoner ratio was drastically reduced from 1:188 in September 1951 to 1:11 in June 1952.<sup>113</sup>

At Cheju-do, the UNC built a physical panopticon to control the Chinese POWs. The prisoner reorganization entailed a social quarantine to a prisoner’s own squad. Upon the Chinese prisoners’ arrival at their new camps, the UNC reorganized compound 72 and 86 into three new compounds: compound 1, 2 and 3. Each compound had approximately 5,000 prisoners. Within each compound, there were ten battalions with 500 prisoners for each. Below the battalions, prisoners were divided into a company-platoon-squad system.<sup>114</sup> A squad is the basic unit of the new camp structure and it usually consisted of three to five prisoners.<sup>115</sup> The UNC designated an anti-communist prisoner at each squad with the primary responsibility to report any suspicious activities of its members. Travelling across squads required permission from the squad leader and were usually discouraged to prevent collective resistance.

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<sup>111</sup> Ridgway, 233.

<sup>112</sup> Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation: My Years in the State Department*, Reissue edition (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 1987), 655.

<sup>113</sup> 12,000 UNC soldiers vs. 132,000 POWs on Kojedo.

<sup>114</sup> “Telegram from the Embassy in Korea to the ROC Foreign Ministry No. 127,” June 6, 1952. *Document Collection of Postwar Taiwan*, vol. 1: 252.

<sup>115</sup> Shen, *14,000 Witnesses: A Study on the “Anti-Communist Defectors” During the Korean War*, 178.

The architectural design of the new prison compound also revealed the UNC's intensive control. Each compound was surrounded by defensive walls topped with barbed wire and there was typically only one front gate. Additionally, the ten battalions for each compound were separated by barbed wire with one small entrance.<sup>116</sup> For each battalion, the UNC deployed fifteen surveillance towers with armed sentries.<sup>117</sup> The physical layout of the prison camps created the perception by the Chinese prisoners that they were always being watched, either by their anti-communist squad leaders or by the sentries from the surveillance towers. Although the UNC camp authorities never precluded the use of violence, the architectural design of the prison camps combined with the visibility of anti-communist squad leaders and the surveillance towers contributed to a proper order on Cheju-do. After June 1952, organized resistance against the UNC camp authorities essentially disappeared. The communist cadre Zhang Zeshi recalled that at Cheju-do, all he could do was to play chess with his roommate and wait for the end of the war.<sup>118</sup>

Between late 1951 and early 1953, the anti-communist POWs gradually earned the right for a voluntary repatriation by manipulating Truman's POW policies. In late 1951, the UNC sought cooperation with the DACs and the ex-KMT POWs to maintain an indirect control of the POW camps. Such a strategy engendered the anti-communist identity out of the ex-KMT POWs, fostered a defection campaign to the ROC, and put the Truman administration into a precarious position. While Truman merely wished to use the POW issue as a bargaining chip on the negotiation table in late 1951, the anti-communist POWs

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<sup>116</sup> Zhang, *Wode Chaoxian Zhanzheng*, 178.

<sup>117</sup> Shen, *14,000 Witnesses: A Study on the "Anti-Communist Defectors" During the Korean War*, 178.

<sup>118</sup> Zhang, *Wode Chaoxian Zhanzheng*, 183–86.

manipulated Operation Scatter in April 1952. The screening result forced Truman to uphold the voluntary repatriation principle thereafter.

In June 1952, the UNC camp authorities established direct control of the Chinese POWs by dispatching an additional number of camp guards and investing the resources to build a new camp on Cheju-do. However, such a control was established after the anti-communist POWs earned their right for a voluntary repatriation. After 1952, the anti-communist POWs declared themselves as victims of communism, faithful Christians and patriotic ROC citizens who sought freedom in Taiwan.<sup>119</sup> Before Truman's presidency ended in early 1953, the US government was forced to uphold the voluntary repatriation principle under the alleged promise of protecting freedom.

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<sup>119</sup> Telephone Conversations with Associate Press Correspondent, February 25, 1952. *Document Collection of Postwar Taiwan*, vol. 2: 10-15.

## Chapter Five

## Control Persisted, 1953-54

Both sides, to my mind, shared an additional reprehensible attitude. Neither side gave sufficient attention to the human aspects of the POWs problems. The Americans, unofficially, spoke of the non-repats as “gooks,” and sometimes openly despised them quite obviously, these Americans considered the non-repats important only for their propaganda value against the communists. The Northern side looked upon the genuine non-repats as gangsters or worse and to quote frankly, would not have minded seeing them shot.

General K.S. Thimayya, Chairman of the NNRC<sup>1</sup>

In the 2006 documentary *They Chose China*, the director Wang Shuibo recalls his first encounter with a westerner in his hometown Jinan, Shandong province during the heydays of the Cultural Revolution. “I saw a smiling westerner dressed like a Chinese worker, riding a green bicycle... This westerner was the first I’ve ever seen and was as alien to me as a creature from the outer space.”<sup>2</sup> The name of this westerner was James Veneris who had fought World War II with the US Army. During the Korean War, Veneris was captured by the Chinese People’s Volunteer (CPV) and decided to stay in the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in 1954. Together with him was a group of twenty-one Americans.<sup>3</sup> As Veneris exclaimed during a Chinese TV interview in the 1990s: “I was twenty years ahead of Nixon!” Indeed, before the US President Richard Nixon visited the PRC in 1972, there was no official diplomatic relationship between Beijing and Washington. Ordinary Chinese citizens like Wang Shuibo marvel the presence of these Americans and wonder how and why did they come to China.

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<sup>1</sup> K. S. Thimayya, *Experiment in Neutrality, Gen. K. S. Thimayya’s Korean Diary* (New Delhi: Vision Books Private Limited, 1981), 79.

<sup>2</sup> *They Chose China*, documentary, 2006.

<sup>3</sup> Under the arrangement of Chinese government in January 1954, nine of them enrolled at the Renmin University of China, two became factory workers at Jinan, Shandong province, and the remaining were sent to an auto repair shop in Hankou, Hubei province.

Across the Taiwan Strait, 14,342 Chinese POWs of the Korean War settled down in the Republic of China (ROC) in Taiwan as the “anti-communist righteous persons” in January 1954. In early 2000s, one former CPV soldier who came from Bishan County, Chongqing passed away in Taipei. Despite the fact that the Korean War ended five decades ago, this soldier was never able to return home and see his families again. His son Lü Jingke was confounded by his family history. In his Sina blog, Lü writes: “Yes, without a question, I always know that I am the son of a CPV soldier. However, I know nothing about when my father joined the CPV, how he was captured in Korea, and why he eventually ended up in Taiwan.”<sup>4</sup> When Lü was young, he once asked his father in a joking tone: “Were you voluntary?” His father scolded back: “You rascal kid stop asking such kind of question!” Then after a long pause, his father slowly murmured: “Did I really have a choice back then?” Like Lü Jingke, the family members of the “anti-communist righteous persons” in Taiwan struggle to find an answer as to how their fathers ended up in Taiwan more than half a century ago.

The answer to Wang Shuibo’s and Lü Jingke’s questions can be found in the Korean War armistice agreement signed on July 27, 1953. According to Article III of the Agreement on Prisoners of War,

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

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<sup>4</sup> Blog post of Lü Jingke, cited in Zhang and Gao, *Gu Dao*, Introduction.

relating to their return to their homelands, particularly of their full freedom to return home to lead a peaceful life, under the following provisions...<sup>5</sup>

In essence, the PRC government yielded to the US' demand for voluntary repatriation, a policy which Beijing had staunchly resisted for eighteen months. As a face-saving mechanism, the armistice agreement entailed a ninety-day "explanation" for non-repatriate prisoners under the supervision of the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission (NNRC).

As the historian Monica Kim delineates about the explanation procedure in *The Interrogation Room of the Korean War* published in 2019, after completing the explanation session, an individual prisoner must decide "through which door he or she would exit—the door for repatriation, or the door for non-repatriation."<sup>6</sup> During the Korean War armistice talks, the official terms of reference used to identify the non-repatriate POWs was "prisoners of war who have not exercised their right to be repatriated."<sup>7</sup> This reference was later abbreviated as the Voluntary Non-Repatriates (VNRs). Thus, the twenty-one American and the 14,342 Chinese VNRs made the decision to reject repatriation during the ninety-day explanation. Seven decades after the Korean War ended, scholars across the Pacific debated as to why these VNRs refused to go home and provided different, and sometimes contradictory answers.

For the American VNRs, the studies published in the US generally accused Beijing for detaining the innocent Americans through cheating and coercion. Within days of the American VNRs making their decision to go to the PRC in 1954, the American journalist Virginia Pasley started her journey to the hometowns of the twenty-one Americans. A year

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<sup>5</sup> "Agreement on Prisoners of War," *The American Journal of International Law*, Supplement: Official Documents (Oct., 1953), 47, no. 4 (June 8, 1958): III Explanation.

<sup>6</sup> Monica Kim, *The Interrogation Rooms of the Korean War: The Untold History*, First Edition (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), 273.

<sup>7</sup> "Agreement on Prisoners of War."



later in 1955, Pasley publishes the *21 Stayed: The Story of the American GI's Who Chose Communist China* and provides her explanation.<sup>8</sup> Her book portrays the twenty-one Americans as a group of mentally incapacitated social outcasts who lacked the capability to make a fair and responsible decision for themselves. According to Pasley, the PRC government simply took advantage of these handicapped Americans and cheated them to choose China with the false promise of a better life in the communist bloc. A few years later, another American journalist Eugene Kinkead publishes his popularly, yet highly critical book, *In Every War but One* in 1959 to discuss the VNR issue. Kinkead condemned the VNRs as the product of what he perceived as the “soft” American generation.<sup>9</sup> The book argues that the twenty-one Americans were a product of the long-term degeneration of American society and the Chinese coerced the VNRs into staying in the communist bloc with death threats.

The military historian Brian McKnight conducts a comprehensive study of the American VNRs and publishes his *We Fight for Peace* in 2014. With the benefit of sixty years of hindsight, McKnight had access to the VNRs’ Official Military Personnel Files (OMPF), US Army investigation records, personal recollections, media interviews, and some scholarly articles.<sup>10</sup> His book demonstrates that the American VNRs were not the handicapped weaklings who were cheated or coerced into staying in the PRC. McKnight blames the US government for not educating its soldiers with “democratic values” prior to their departure to Korea. He argues that “a nation, if it aspires to greatness, must educate

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<sup>8</sup> Virginia Pasley, *21 Stayed: The Story of the American GI's Who Chose Communist China: Who They Were and Why They Stayed*, 1st edition (Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1955).

<sup>9</sup> Eugene Kinkead, *In Every War but One* (Norton, 1959).

<sup>10</sup> Most of the 21 VNRs eventually returned to the US in the following decades. Only James Veneris remained in the PRC until he passed away in 2004. Many of them published their memoirs upon their repatriation back the US. Some were put on trial by the House of Un-American Activities Committee. See for example, Adams, *An American Dream*; Wills, *Turncoat*; *They Chose China*.

its citizenry or suffer the consequences of popular ignorance.”<sup>11</sup> According to McKnight’s investigation, the American VNRs were ignorant individuals who failed to appreciate the merit of democracy and made a poor decision to stay in the communist bloc. Whether these American VNRs were handicapped weaklings or ignorant individuals, the studies discussing the American VNRs do not transcend the Cold War narrative of “democracy vs. dictatorship.”

Likewise, the studies discussing the Chinese VNRs were also limited to the Cold War narrative. The VNR-related topics remain a taboo in the PRC and the few state-sanctioned studies unanimously condemn the American “imperialists” for abducting patriotic Chinese soldiers. In 1990, the Chinese scholars Bian Lijun and Feng Junhui co-authored a book to discuss the VNR issue.<sup>12</sup> In the book, Bian and Feng essentially condemn the US government for collaborating with the KMT leader Chiang Kai-shek to “abduct” the patriotic Chinese POWs with violence. After the VNRs settled down in Taiwan, the two authors claim that the ROC government trained these VNRs into spies for the purpose of “recapturing the mainland.” The authors also claim that the Americans used the Chinese VNRs for horrendous biological weapon experiment.<sup>13</sup> Despite the hyperbolic claims and the lack of appropriate evidence, this book represents the mainstream narrative in the PRC.

A decade later in 2000, the Chinese scholar Cheng Laiyi published another book to discuss the Chinese VNR issue.<sup>14</sup> Although Cheng drops many of the unfounded claims in

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<sup>11</sup> Brian D. McKnight, *We Fight for Peace: Twenty-Three American Soldiers, Prisoners of War, and Turncoats in the Korean War* (Kent, Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 2014), 12.

<sup>12</sup> Lijun Bian and Jinhui Feng, *Chaozhong Qianfan Neimu [The Inside Story of POW Repatriation]* (Shijiazhuang: Huayi Chubanshe, 1990).

<sup>13</sup> Bian and Feng, 124.

<sup>14</sup> Laiyi Cheng, *Zhengyi Yu XieE De Jiaoliang [A Duel Between Justice and Evil]* (Beijing: Zhongyangwenxian Chubanshe, 2000).

Bian's book, his main argument still attaches to the narrative of American "imperialist" abducting patriotic Chinese. The general assumption for the PRC-based scholars is that, the Chinese VNRs would never betray the PRC government and choose the "counterrevolutionary" regime led by Chiang Kai-shek in Taiwan. According to the state-sanctioned studies in the PRC, the American "imperialists" abducted the innocent Chinese VNRs to the ROC.

The studies published outside the PRC generally rejects the claims made by the PRC-based scholars and portrayed the Chinese VNRs as staunch anti-communists. In the article "A Study on the Transport of Anti-communist Fighters to Taiwan during the Korean War" published in 2011, the ROC historian Hsiu-Huan Chou continues the ideological argument. In her article, Chou argues that

Due to ideological difference these war prisoners could not get along with each other. Some supported the communists (the pro-communists) and some against them... these prisoners firmly refused to be sent back to the Communist China and chose to settle down in Taiwan. Their slogan was "to return to Taiwan whole-heartedly, and to destroy the communists with all their lives."<sup>15</sup>

According to the Chou, more than 14,000 of the Chinese POWs voluntarily chose the ROC due to their anti-communist convictions.

Despite the different explanations, the established scholarships on both sides generally examine the VNR issue through an ideological lens. However, as chapter three and four demonstrate, the POWs on both sides cared little about ideology and the camp authorities on both sides relied on non-ideological means to administer the POW camps. By examining the documents mentioned in the previous four chapters, chapter five

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<sup>15</sup> Hsiu-huan Chou, "A Study on the Transport of Anti-Communist Fighters to Taiwan during the Korean War," *Bulletin of Academia Historica*, no. 28 (June 2011): 115–54.

examines the VNR issue from March 1953 to January 1954. This chapter argues that the POW camp authorities' control over the POWs persisted to the very end of the Korean War and largely pre-determined the prisoners' choice-making before the exchange even started. In April 1953, the exchange of "sick and wounded" prisoners illustrates that the POW camp authorities on both sides manipulated the exchange list to serve their specific goals. The VNR prisoners who remained with their captors were not fundamentally different from the POWs who were repatriated back. From September to December 1953, the so-called voluntary repatriation principle and the ninety-day explanation never provided a fair or just procedure where each prisoner could make such a choice. Had that been the case, the number of VNRs would have been a lot different on both sides. The American VNRs would be much more than just twenty-one; whereas the Chinese VNRs would be a lot less than 14,342.

### Consensus to End the War

In early 1953, Washington and Beijing decided to settle the POW issue and to bring an end to the Korean War. When Dwight D. Eisenhower took over the deadlocked "police action" in Korea, he planned to reactivate the armistice talks. On February 18, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) instructed the United Nations Command (UNC) Commander General Mark Clark to contact the PRC-DPRK side for restarting the armistice talks.<sup>16</sup> Four days later on February 22, General Clark delivered a public speech toward the CPV General Peng Dehuai and the KPA Marshal Kim Il Sung through a UNC radio program. In his speech, Clark argued that an exchange of "seriously sick and wounded" prisoners would

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<sup>16</sup> "The Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Commander in Chief, Far East (Clark)," February 18, 1953. *FRUS 1952-1954*, 15, Part 1: 785-786.

serve as “a gesture of good will” to resolve the POW issue and a possible first step toward an armistice in Korea.<sup>17</sup> Could such a step be taken? Clark asked in the speech and answered that it could if the PRC-DPRK side really wished to end the Korean conflict. At the end of his speech, Clark openly invited the PRC-DPRK for a liaison officer meeting. The UNC commander’s call provided an opportunity to reactivate the Panmunjom armistice talks.

In March, the PRC leader Mao Zedong also prepared to end the Korean War. On March 18, Mao called the CPV General Peng Dehuai and the CPV commissar Du Ping back to Beijing for a meeting.<sup>18</sup> During this meeting, Mao pointed out that while the Eisenhower administration might be prone to escalate the Korean War, the newly elected American president might also want to end the war through negotiations to fulfill his campaign promise.<sup>19</sup> At the end of the meeting, Mao personally transferred Du Ping from the Pyöktong POW camps to Kaesong with the new task to “participate in the negotiation work with Americans.”<sup>20</sup> During this important meeting, Mao made it clear that he wished to end the war in the near future.<sup>21</sup>

As Du Ping stated in his memoir, at the time he was quite surprised by the direction of this meeting.<sup>22</sup> After the Panmunjom negotiation collapsed in mid-1952, he expected a

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<sup>17</sup> Mark Clark’s letter to Marshal Kim Il Sung and General Peng Dehuai proposing exchange of sick and wounded POWs, February 22, 1953. Published in *People’s Daily*, February 29, 1953.

<sup>18</sup> *Mao Nianpu, 1949-1976*, vol. 2: 61.

<sup>19</sup> *Mao Nianpu, 1949-1976*, vol. 2: 61.

<sup>20</sup> Du, *Memoir of Du Ping*, 445.

<sup>21</sup> Most scholars in the US and the PRC agreed that Mao Zedong decided to end the Korean War in early 1953. However, with the currently available Chinese language sources, scholars are unable to determine as to why Mao Zedong suddenly made such a decision. For example, the Chinese scholar Shen Zhihua speculated Stalin’s death was the determining factor. Likewise, the American historian Michael Hunt made similar argument. This dissertation will not make additional speculations over the PRC’s policy change. Rather, this dissertation discusses the development after the PRC decided to accept the “voluntary repatriation.” For Shen Zhihua’s argument, see Shen, *Mao, Stalin, Yu Chaoxian Zhanzheng*, 457–82; For Hunt’s argument, see Hunt and Levine, *Arc of Empire*, 169.

<sup>22</sup> Du, *Memoir of Du Ping*, 445.

meeting about the military operation in the coming spring, not a new appointment at the armistice talks. He recalled that Mao initially offered him the ambassadorship to North Korea after the war ended.<sup>23</sup> As a career soldier, Du turned down the offer: “I don’t like smoking or drinking. I am generally not a sociable person. I simply can’t handle the diplomatic occasions.”<sup>24</sup> At the end of the meeting, he reluctantly accepted the position as the Deputy Party Secretary of the Chinese negotiation team and departed for Kaesong.<sup>25</sup> As Du Ping’s immediate replacement, the General Political Department appointed Zhang Zizhen as the CPV commissar to handle the UNC POWs at Pyöktong.<sup>26</sup>

While Du Ping was on his way to Kaesong, the leaders in Beijing, Moscow, and Pyongyang reached the consensus to end the Korean War. On March 19, Zhou Enlai was dispatched to Moscow to discuss the Korean War armistice. The new Soviet leadership and Zhou quickly agreed to end the Korean War by accepting the voluntary repatriation principle.<sup>27</sup> On March 29, the North Korean leader Kim Il Sung also expressed his support for this decision. According to the Soviet Ambassador to the DPRK, Kim Il Sung complained that the KPA suffered a daily causality between 300 and 400, “it is hardly advisable to conduct further discussion with the Americans regarding repatriation of a

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<sup>23</sup> The PRC Ambassador to the DPRK Ni Zhiliang suffered chronic asthma and returned to Beijing for medical treatment at the time of this meeting.

<sup>24</sup> Du, *Memoir of Du Ping*, 443.

<sup>25</sup> Li Kenong served as the Party Secretary of the negotiation team. However, Li did not arrive at Panmunjom until May 7. Before that, Du was in charge of the negotiation work. See Du, 457.

<sup>26</sup> Commissar Zhang’s name appeared as commissar Chang in the UNC POWs’ interrogation reports due to the different spelling systems. For consistency, this dissertation will use the standard *pinyin* to address commissar Zhang. See for example, Interrogation of Claude Batchelor, January 26, 1954. “POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files,” n.d., Box 30, Claude Batchelor Dossier.

<sup>27</sup> Directives, the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union to the PRC, the DPRK, and the Soviet delegate to the UN, March 19, 1953. *Chaoxian Zhanzheng: E Guo Danganguan De Jiemi Wenjian [The Korean War: Declassified Documents from Archives in Russia] (E Guo Danganguan Wenjian)* (Taipei: Academia Sinica, 2003), vol. 3: 1295-1300.

disputed number of prisoners of war.”<sup>28</sup> By the end of March, Beijing, Moscow, and Pyongyang reached the consensus to accept the voluntary repatriation.

On March 30, the PRC Premier Zhou Enlai issued a public speech as a response to General Clark’s message. Zhou endorsed the suggestion to exchange the sick and wounded prisoners and claimed that such a move was a “reasonable first step toward a final solution to the POW issue and an armistice.”<sup>29</sup> Zhou clearly stated that the PRC-DPRK government had agreed to settle the POW issue with the principle of voluntary repatriation. One day after Zhou’s speech, the Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov delivered a speech on March 31: “I am authorized to state that the Soviet Government expresses its complete solidarity with this noble act of the governments of the PRC and the government of the DPRK... the Soviet Government has invariably supported all steps directed at the establishment of a just armistice and an end to the war in Korea.”<sup>30</sup> After making these public announcements, both sides quickly agreed to have a liaison officer meeting in early April. The end of the Korean War was just around the corner.

### Operation Little Switch and Signing of the Armistice

During the liaison officer meeting on April 6, both sides quickly agreed to an exchange of the sick and wounded prisoners in two weeks. The PRC-DPRK side proposed to return 600 UNC POWs (out of 12,000, or 5%) at the rate of 100 per day, whereas the

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<sup>28</sup> “Ciphered Telegram from Kuznetsov and Fedorenko” (Cold War International History Project, March 29, 1953), <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/117036>.

<sup>29</sup> Zhou Enlai’s statement on the Korean War peace negotiation, March 30, 1953. *Zhongguo Dui Chaoxian He Hanguo Zhengce Wenjian Huibian [Selected Documents of the PRC toward DPRK and ROK] (Dui Chaoxian He Hanguo Wenjian Huibian)* (Zhongguo Shehui Kexue Chubanshe, 1994), 442–45.

<sup>30</sup> Statement of Molotov, Minister of Foreign Affairs on the Korean Question, March 31, 1953. “Statement of Molotov, Minister of Foreign Affairs on the Korean Question” (North Korea International Documentation Project, March 31, 1953), <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/117426>.

UNC promised to deliver 5,800 CPV and KPA POWs (out of 132,000, or 4.4%) at the rate of 500 per day.<sup>31</sup> Although the absolute numbers were asymmetrical, the percentages were comparable. When Operation Little Switch was completed on April 26, the PRC-DPRK side delivered 684 POWs, including 149 Americans. The UNC repatriated 6,670 POWs. These included 5,194 North Korean, 1,030 Chinese POWs, and 446 civilian internees.<sup>32</sup> At a first glance, Operation Little Switch seemed to demonstrate the good faith on both sides to settle the POW issue. However, the CPV prioritized the repatriation of “progressive” prisoners for propaganda purpose and the UNC returned the “die-hard” communist prisoners for controlling the remaining POWs under its custody. Thus, both sides utilized Operation Little Switch to achieve their respective goals.

In early April, the CPV Political Department began preparing the repatriation of “progressive” prisoners as the “sick and wounded” in Operation Little Switch. According to the CPV’s calculation, “progressive” prisoners could debunk the “untruthful American propaganda” and promote the Lenient Policy to Western media upon the POWs’ return.<sup>33</sup> As the exchange was scheduled on April 20, CPV still had two weeks to impress the UNC POWs. In addition to foods and drinks served in the farewell parties between April 6 and 20, the Chinese instructors also issued each prisoner a “comfort bag” that included a pack of *Zhonghua* cigarette, a *Xihu* bath towel, a bag of Chinese tea, some apples, and a set of new uniforms as farewell gifts.<sup>34</sup> Interpreter Guo Weijing remarked that these gifts were the “undeniable” evidence for the Chinese leniency toward the POWs.

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<sup>31</sup> “Memorandum by the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Johnson) to the Secretary of State,” April 20, 1953. *FRUS 1952-1954*, 15, Part 1: 919-921.

<sup>32</sup> For the detailed breakdown of the POW statistics, see Hermes, *Truce Tent and Fighting Front*, 419.

<sup>33</sup> “Qainfan Fulu Gongzuo Zongjie Baogao [Report on the POW Repatriation Progress],” April 16, 1953. *Dijun Gongzuo Jingyan Huibian*, 225–26.

<sup>34</sup> Guo, *Diyideng Zhanfuying*, 193.



The CPV's planning backfired as a number of the "progressive" prisoners expressed their wishes to remain in the communist bloc. In early April, the Pyöktong Director Wang Yanggong held a series of mobilization meetings with "progressive" prisoners. The purpose of these meetings was to encourage "progressive" prisoners to request repatriation via Operation Little Switch and conduct propaganda mission after their repatriation.<sup>35</sup> However, most "progressive" prisoners disliked this idea. They instead petitioned to remain in the communist bloc.<sup>36</sup> For example, the "progressive" prisoners Richard Tenneson, Lowell Skinner, William Coward, and Howard Adams requested to go to Indochina to fight the "French imperialists." Scott Rush and Samuel Hawkins petitioned to stay in the DPRK and help the postwar reconstruction. Albert Belhomme expressed a wish "to go to France immediately to help the Communists start a revolution." After three years of study in communist theories, these "progressive" prisoners wished to act.

More than the ideological motivations, a number of black POWs also demanded to stay in the communist bloc to pursue racial equality. In mid-April, the black prisoner Clarence Adams received multiple death threats. Some white prisoners "openly stated that we [black prisoners] would never get back to the States alive, or if we did, they'd look us up and take care of us then."<sup>37</sup> On one occasion, a white prisoner swore in front of Adams that "he was going to throw me overboard on the home-bound ship."<sup>38</sup> Adams discussed the issue with two other black prisoners, LaRance Sullivan and William White. The three black "progressive" prisoners quickly decided to stay in the communist bloc where racial

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<sup>35</sup> Report of findings, January 1954. "POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files," n.d., Box 30, Claude Batchelor Dossier.

<sup>36</sup> Interrogation of Claude Batchelor, January 18, 1954. "POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files," Box 30, Claude Batchelor Dossier.

<sup>37</sup> Adams, *An American Dream*, 59.

<sup>38</sup> Adams, 63.

discrimination was allegedly absent. Adams wished to go to the Soviet Union and see what the racial relations really was under the most advanced communist society.<sup>39</sup> Sullivan hoped to stay in North Korea to help rebuild the war-devasted country.<sup>40</sup> White was still hesitating of whether he should go to one of neutral countries such as India.<sup>41</sup> But the bottom line was clear, they did not wish to return to the US and face potential racist persecution.

The CPV Political Department rejected all such requests and insisted that all UNC POWs must return home. As the “progressive” prisoner William Banghart recalled, Director Wang discouraged them from requesting to stay in the communist bloc. Wang told them that “if they still wish to continue studying communism, all they had to do is to buy one of the progressive newspapers, such as the ‘Daily Worker’ or the ‘Political Affairs,’ which was referred to by Instructor Wong [Wang] as the ‘monthly report of the Communist Party of America’ and that the names and addresses of progressive organizations and persons would appear in such publications.”<sup>42</sup> Other than suggesting the POWs to contact the US-based “progressive” organizations, Director Wang turned down their request to stay in the communist bloc.

The CPV also turned down the black prisoners’ request to stay. When the black prisoner Preston Richie asked his instructor Chu what he should do after he returned home, Chu only advised him to “work with the workers, attend all union meetings, be friendly

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<sup>39</sup> Interrogation of Ellvert Mathews, July 23, 1955. Records of the Investigative Records Repository, U.S. Army Intelligence and Security Command, “Clarence Adams Dossier,” 1955, Box 692, Clarence Adams Dossier, RG 319/650/900/67/1 Box 692, NARA at College Park.

<sup>40</sup> Interrogation of Clarence C. Banks, July 28, 1955. “POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files,” n.d., Box 591, LaRance Sullivan Dossier.

<sup>41</sup> “POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files,” n.d., Box 778, William White Dossier.

<sup>42</sup> Phase II Interrogation of William Banghart, October 27, 1953. “POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files,” n.d., Box 25, William Banghart Dossier.

and helpful to the union members, and show an interest in their welfare.”<sup>43</sup> As for his ideological trainings, Chu told Richie that “he could not make him a Communist, nor could he prescribe a procedure whereby Richie could enter the Communist Party in the United States.” Likewise, the CPV rejected another black prisoner, Robert Hickox’s request to stay. Despite the “progressive” prisoners’ petitions to stay in the communist bloc during Operation Little Switch, the CPV attached to their original plan, which prioritized the repatriation of “progressive” POWs for propaganda purpose.

From April 20 to 26, the CPV successfully obtained a substantial amount of propaganda materials at the exchange scene. Du Ping recalled that “all American POWs are wearing brand-new uniforms issued by us. There are happy smiles on everyone’s face. After boarding the UNC trucks, some prisoners even extend their bodies out of the truck side and wave their hands toward their Chinese instructors. Many of them expressed their gratitude toward us and shouted ‘thank you’ and ‘goodbye.’”<sup>44</sup> The farewell scene was promptly captured by the Chinese journalists and became propaganda materials for the PRC government. By repatriating the “progressive” POWs back home who wished to stay in the communist bloc, the “first rate” POW camp fulfilled the CPV’s goal of obtaining propaganda materials.

When the first-round prisoner exchange ended, only a small number of “progressive” prisoners remained at Pyöktong. Instead of the PRC’s intention to accept them, these “progressive” prisoners remained because the CPV could not justify them as either sick or wounded. For example, the “progressive” prisoner James Veneris was examined by CPV physicians at the camp hospital four times from April 20 to 26. Yet the Chinese physician

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<sup>43</sup> “Investigative Records: Intelligence and Investigative Dossiers,” Box 2, “Final Report,” 101.

<sup>44</sup> Du, *Memoir of Du Ping*, 453.

could not find anything to justify him as sick or wounded. For this reason, the names of several other “progressive” prisoners such as Claude Batchelor and Clarence Adams were removed from the list of exchange.<sup>45</sup> In the eyes of the CPV Political Department, there was no fundamental difference between the “progressive” prisoners who had been repatriated and those who remained. What mattered in early 1953 was the prisoners’ propaganda value for the PRC government.

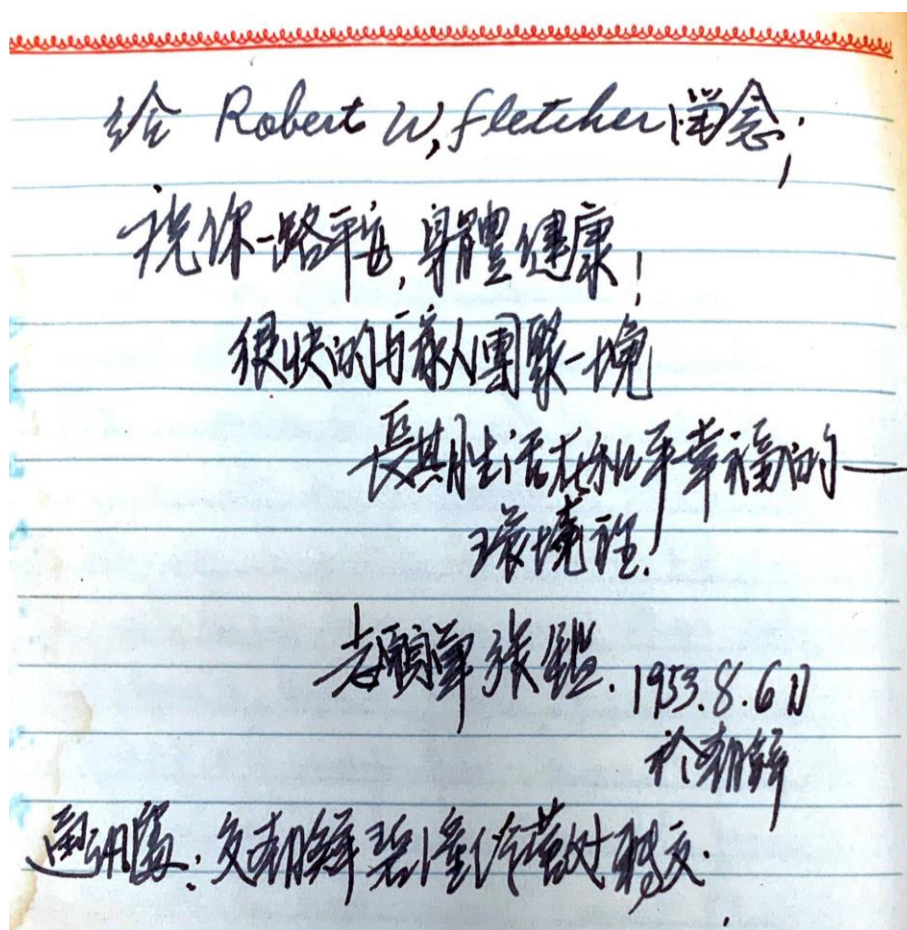


Figure 5.1 Farewell message by a CPV instructor to an American POW (Bentley Historical Library)

While the CPV reckoned with the propaganda value of the “progressive” prisoners, the UNC camp authorities were eager to get rid of the communist prisoners as they

<sup>45</sup> Interrogation of Claude Batchelor, January 15, 1954. “POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files,” n.d., Box 30, Claude Batchelor Dossier.

remained a threat to the 14,000 anti-communist prisoners who demanded to go to Taiwan.<sup>46</sup> In addition to the “sick and wounded,” the UNC camp authorities repatriated an additional batch of confirmed communist cadres during Operation Little Switch. In early April, when the UNC was preparing the list of sick and wounded, it also included 550 (475 KPA and 75 CPV prisoners) communist cadres who were neither sick nor wounded.<sup>47</sup> These prisoners included some prominent communist cadres such as Zhao Zuorui, Sun Zhenguan, Ma Xingwang, and Zhang Zeshi. The list also included the *Paoge* brother Zhong Junhua.<sup>48</sup> On April 20, a couple hours before the exchange proceeded, General Clark authorized the repatriation of these 550 communist cadres.

In mid-April, the UNC camp authorities issued new clothing and lavished farewell parties for the POWs, who were soon to be repatriated via Operation Little Switch.<sup>49</sup> To the communist POWs, their poor physical condition and tattoos served as the solid evidence for their maltreatment under the UNC. The farewell parties turned out to be another round of clashes. As Zhang Zeshi recalled, most of the communist prisoners insisted on wearing their old uniforms and refused the new clothing and new shoes.<sup>50</sup> They also refused to let the UNC personnel clean them with DDT powders. During their last days at the UNC camp, the communist prisoners staged several demonstrations, chanting and singing anti-American slogans and songs until the UNC camp authorities used tear gas to put down the unrest.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> “Agreement on Prisoners of War.”

<sup>47</sup> “Memorandum by the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs (Johnson) to the Secretary of State,” April 20, 1953. *FRUS 1952-1954*, 15, Part 1: 919-921.

<sup>48</sup> Zhang and Gao, *Gu Dao*, 107.

<sup>49</sup> Hermes, *Truce Tent and Fighting Front*, 415–16.

<sup>50</sup> Zhang, *Wode Chaoxian Zhanzheng*, 193–94.

<sup>51</sup> Hermes, *Truce Tent and Fighting Front*, 415–16.

The communist prisoners also attempted to embarrass the UNC on their way to the exchange site. Before April 20, the US Army transported the POWs with tank landing ships (LSTs) from Cheju-do to Pusan port. During their voyages at sea, the POWs threw away their tooth powder, soap, and cigarettes with hand written messages charging the United States with “starvation, oppression, and barbarous acts” against them in the past three years.<sup>52</sup> After their arrival at the neutral zone, many prisoners cut off buttons, severed the belts of their newly issued overcoats. Some prisoners threw away their shoes. A group of Chinese POWs went on a hunger strike to make their physical appearance worse. The communist prisoners thus used the exchange to generate bad publicities for the UNC.

Nevertheless, the UNC was willing to take this small defeat in Operation Little Switch for a bigger psywar victory later. In his memoir, General Clark acknowledged that the communist prisoners’ behavior had “weakened the UN Command in the eyes of friend and foe.”<sup>53</sup> But by repatriating the communist POWs back, the UNC secured its control over the remaining 14,000 anti-communist prisoners, who had demanded to go to the free China in Taiwan. General Clark explained, “when so many thousands of their people in our prison camps vowed they would rather die than return to communism,” it would become a “terrible psychological warfare beating” for the PRC government.<sup>54</sup> For this psywar victory, the UNC was willing to take a small defeat in April. Rather than demonstrating the UNC’s alleged “good faith,” Operation Little Switch served the controlling purpose for the UNC.

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<sup>52</sup> Hermes, 415–16.

<sup>53</sup> Clark, *From the Danube to the Yalu*, 205.

<sup>54</sup> Clark, 205.

Before the explanation session started in September, Beijing and Washington worked in the same direction to placate the Republic of Korea (ROK) President Syngman Rhee from obstructing the armistice. By mid-1953, the ROK president demanded nothing short of a national unification. In a desperate attempt, President Rhee ordered the release of anti-communist prisoners from POW camps on June 18. At that time, most POWs were interned at temporary facilities in ROK cities such as Pusan, Masan, Nonsan and Sang Mudai, waiting for the prisoner exchange. The ROK forces took over the guard duty from the UNC troops at these temporary facilities.<sup>55</sup> At mid-night on June 18, the ROK government opened the front gate of POW camps and pulled out all camp guards. Before the American personnel figured out Rhee's plan and shut the gate, 25,952 POWs had escaped. As most of these POWs were North Koreans, they quickly blended into the ROK civilian population and vanished. This shocking episode posed grave danger to the perceived armistice.

As a retaliation, Beijing decided to punish the ROK forces on battlefield. In the early morning of June 19, Peng Dehuai and Kim Il Sung issued a joint letter to the UNC General Clark, questioning "is the UNC able to control the ROK government and its army? If not, does the armistice treaty in Korea include the Syngman Rhee clique? If it is not included, what assurance is there for the implementation of the armistice on the part of ROK?"<sup>56</sup> Peng also telegraphed Mao on the same day, requesting to postpone the signing of the armistice with the UNC, which was scheduled on June 25, the third anniversary of the Korean War. Mao agreed with Peng's suggestion and instructed him to launch the last

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<sup>55</sup> "The President of the Republic of Korea (Rhee) to the Commander in Chief, United Nations Command (Clark)," June 18, 1953. *FRUS 1952-1954*, 15, Part 2: 1197-1198.

<sup>56</sup> Cited in Wei Yuan, ed., *Kangmei Yuanchao Zhanzheng Jishi [A Chronicle for the Anti-US Aid Korea War] (Kangmei Yuanchao Jishi)* (Beijing: Jiefangjun Chubanshe, 2000), 353-54.

major military campaign, “specifically targeting the ROK puppet forces and avoid major clashes with the other UNC forces.” Mao explained that “eliminating an additional 15,000 ROK puppet forces is very necessary to put down ROK’s rampant plan to destroy peace in Korea.”<sup>57</sup> With this military arrangement, Beijing clearly viewed Rhee as the only obstacle to peace in Korea.

The US was embarrassed by Rhee’s action and did not offer much resistance to the CPV’s military action in July. On June 25, General Clark issued a public statement denouncing Rhee’s unilateral action and denied the UNC’s involvement.<sup>58</sup> Such a statement was insufficient to placate the PRC. On July 13, six CPV divisions attacked the ROKA at the central demarcation line and pushed them back six miles and restored the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel.<sup>59</sup> The ROKA Commander General Paik Sun-yup recalled in his memoir that when the ROKA requested artillery and air support, the US Eight Army Commander Maxwell Taylor rejected, citing the bad weather.<sup>60</sup> General Taylor also refused to shake hands with all ROKA generals after the battle ended.<sup>61</sup> The CPV campaign lasted for four days and wiped out more than 78,000 ROKA forces.<sup>62</sup> In a private conversation at Panmunjom, the UNC chief negotiator Joy promised the Chinese negotiators that “if the ROKA carried out unilateral military actions in the near future, the UNC would keep the armistice and offer

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<sup>57</sup> Yuan, 358.

<sup>58</sup> “The Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Commander in Chief, Far East (Clark),” June 25, 1953. *FRUS 1952-1954*, 15, Part 2: 1271-1272.

<sup>59</sup> After this battle, the demarcation line was restored at the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. The prewar status quo was restored after three years of fighting. Yuan, *Kangmei Yuanchao Jishi*, 377–79.

<sup>60</sup> Sun-yup Paik, *Zuihanleng De Dongtian II [Coldest Winter II]*, trans. Yong Jin (Chongqing Chubanshe, 2013), 274.

<sup>61</sup> Paik, 278.

<sup>62</sup> Yuan, *Kangmei Yuanchao Jishi*, 375.



no support.”<sup>63</sup> On July 27, 1953, an armistice was signed. Although the battlefield fighting ended, the POW issue remain unresolved until January 1954.

In August and September, the two sides exchanged the remaining pro-repatriate prisoners through Operation Big Switch. The CPV returned 12,773 UNC POWs, including 3,579 Americans; and the UNC repatriated 70,183 North Korean and 5,640 Chinese prisoners.<sup>64</sup> What hung in the balance were the VNRs on both sides. They were to face another three months of ordeals before they could be delivered to their desired destination. The Korean War armistice agreement entailed the procedure of a ninety-day explanation session and the establishment of a Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission (NNRC) to supervise this process. The NNRC consisted of Czechoslovakia, India, Poland, Sweden, and Switzerland.<sup>65</sup> The Indian General Kodandera Subayya Thimayya (aka. K.S. Thimayya) served as the chairman of the NNRC. Should any dispute arise, General Thimayya would act as an “arbitrator.”<sup>66</sup>

In theory, the explanation procedure provided a fair and just way for each POW to determine his repatriation destination. Before the explanation started, NNRC took custody of the VNRs from both sides and the Custodial Force of Indian (CFI) assumed guard duty at the neutral zone. During the explanation, representatives from both sides had equal access to the VNRs to persuade them to return home under the supervision of the NNRC. When the explanation ended, a political conference that included government officials from both sides met for 30 days to solve any remaining issues. Afterwards, the NNRC

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<sup>63</sup> Yuan, 377.

<sup>64</sup> Appendix B in Hermes, *Truce Tent and Fighting Front*, 514.

<sup>65</sup> “Chaozhong Daibiaotuan Guanyu Zhanfu Qianfan Wenti De Xieyi Gongbao [Communique of Agreement Reached Regarding Question of POW Repatriation Issued by Korean and Chinese Delegation to Korean Armistice Negotiation],” June 8, 1953. *Dui Chaoxian He Hanguo Wenjian Huibian*, 453.

<sup>66</sup> Thimayya, *Experiment in Neutrality*, 143.

would dissolve itself and all the remaining POWs would be granted civilian status and transferred to India. The Red Cross Society of India would assist these individuals obtain the necessary travel documents to their desired destinations. In practice however, the explanation procedure never afforded such an opportunity where each prisoner could make such a decision. Although the CFI took custody of the VNRs from both sides, these prisoners were still subjected to the control of the CPV and the UNC.

#### Explanation Session and American VNRs

From September to December, the explanation took place under the NNRC's supervision. The explanation site was in Kaesong, a small Korean town 10 km away from Panmunjom. The CPV must ensure that the VNRs make the choices preferred by the CPV camp authorities. In late June, the CPV modified its POW policy from total repatriation to retention for propaganda purpose. In order to persuade the VNRs to stay, the CPV introduced the "brother's keeper" system to the VNRs. When the explanation ended in January 1954, twenty-two (twenty-one Americans and one British out of the twenty-four) VNRs rejected repatriation, demonstrating the CPV camp authorities' control over the POWs persisted to the very end of the Korean War.

In June 1953, the CPV changed its policy from repatriating all POWs back to encouraging them to stay in the communist bloc. At the time, the CPV realized that they would lose an overwhelming majority of the VNRs to the UNC. This realization triggered the radical policy change. In early June, the CPV Political Department assembled two work teams for the explanation and appointed two PLA officers, He Ming and Zhang Zhi, as team leaders. Both men fought on the Korean frontline and had no prior knowledge of the

POW issue until they arrived at Kaesong. General He was quite optimistic upon his arrival.

On June 15, he wrote the following in his diary entry:

The overwhelming majority of the Chinese POWs are heroic and patriotic soldiers who were captured under the most uncontrollable situations. I do not believe they will ever betray the Party or our motherland. Not to mention that many of them struggled against the “diehard counterrevolutionaries” in POW camps during the past few years. This is our fundamental advantage and we are fully confident for our job.<sup>67</sup>

The work team leader’s optimism quickly vanished after reading some intelligence reports.

From April to June, the CPV headquarters carefully interviewed 463 (out of 1,030) Chinese POWs who had been repatriated during Operation Little Switch. Based on the returnee’s interrogations, the CPV gave the following estimations for the Chinese VNRs who were still under the UNC’s custody on June 20:

Diehard counterrevolutionaries:	6%
Accomplice of counterrevolutionaries:	24%
Middle of the roaders:	30%
POWs who gave in under violence:	30%
Resistors who demanded to return to the PRC:	6%
Total:	100% <sup>68</sup>

Contrary to work team leader’s initial expectation to convince the “overwhelming majority” of the Chinese VNRs to return, the intelligence report indicated that the PRC might only receive 6% of the VNRs back under the worst scenario. The postwar statistics implied that this intelligence report was seriously wrong as 7,110 out of 21,540, or 33%, Chinese VNRs chose repatriation back to the PRC. Nevertheless, under this false predication, the CPV drastically modified its policy toward the VNRs.

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<sup>67</sup> He Ming diary entry on June 17, 1953. Ming He, *Yibi Xuelinlin De Renquan Zhai [A Bloody Human Right Debt]* (Tianjin: Baihua Wenyi Chubanshe, 1991), 6.

<sup>68</sup> He Ming diary entry on June 18, 1953. He, 7–8.

According to the CPV commissar Zhang Zizhen, the CPV encouraged the American VNRs to stay as a face-saving mechanism. In late June, the CPV commissar summoned a number of “progressive” prisoners to his office and asked if they would like to go to the PRC after the War. Edward Dickinson recalled that “the Chinese put forth every effort to encourage as many Americans as they could to refuse repatriation.”<sup>69</sup> The “progressive” prisoners were confused by the direction of this meeting. Back in early June, the CPV had attempted to repatriate them all. Zhang explained to Dickinson that “it would be ‘bad publicity’ if the world knew that thousands of Chinese and Koreans were refusing repatriation to Communist China and North Korea, and none of the Americans or United Nations captives were refusing repatriation to their native lands.”<sup>70</sup> Although Dickinson disliked Zhang’s explanation, he and several others were delighted with the policy change and expressed their willingness to go to the PRC.

More than the face-saving argument, the CPV also wished to exploit the propaganda value of the American VNRs. In another meeting in June, commissar Zhang explained to Claude Batchelor and Lowell Skinner that if the CPV “could succeed in this move, it would be most valuable for political propaganda to show that these young Americans were willing to give up citizenship in a country like the United States for China.”<sup>71</sup> Zhang further stated that the CPV expected to receive some one hundred applications from the VNRs. Among them, the PRC government only intended to accept

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<sup>69</sup> Interrogation of Edward Dickinson, November 1, 1953. “POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files,” n.d., Box 144, Edward Dickinson Dossier.

<sup>70</sup> Interrogation of Edward Dickinson, November 1, 1953. “POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files,” Box 144, Edward Dickinson Dossier.

<sup>71</sup> Interrogation of Claude Batchelor, January 16, 1954. “POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files,” Box 144, Edward Dickinson Dossier.

fifty.<sup>72</sup> The meetings in late June demonstrated that the CPV had changed its policy objectives from a wholesale repatriation to retention.

The precarious inter-racial relationships prevented Batchelor from informing the black prisoners about the CPV's policy change. According to Batchelor's interrogation in January 1954, he suspected that "colored prisoners had little real sincerity for the Communist cause, and those who had attended study group meetings and played with the Chinese were mere opportunists than sincere 'progressives' or Communists."<sup>73</sup> In Batchelor's reckoning, the black prisoners were untrustworthy so he never told them about the Chinese policy change. He only discussed the issue with the white "progressive" prisoners.<sup>74</sup> On the following day, Batchelor handed over a name list that included twenty-four white "progressive" prisoners (twenty-three American and one British). Commissar Zhang frowned upon the name list which included no black prisoners. But he accepted it and promised Batchelor with "travel, fame, good living, and a leading place in the fight for peace throughout the world."<sup>75</sup>

Despite Batchelor's deliberate effort of ignorance, three black prisoners approached their Chinese instructor and demanded to go to the PRC. Clarence Adams recalled that shortly after he heard about the "voluntary repatriation" from the camp public announcement system, he decided to go to the PRC. In his memoir, he explained his motivations: "I had become a very different person, and an integral part of my worldview

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<sup>72</sup> Interrogation of Claude Batchelor, January 17, 1954. "POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files," Box 30, Claude Batchelor Dossier.

<sup>73</sup> Interrogation of Claude Batchelor, January 17, 1954. "POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files," Box 30, Claude Batchelor Dossier.

<sup>74</sup> Batchelor recalled that he and Skinner talked with Otho Bell, Rufus Douglass, and several others and "they all accepted it without question." Interrogation of Claude Batchelor, January 17, 1954. "POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files," Box 144, Edward Dickinson Dossier.

<sup>75</sup> Interrogation of Claude Batchelor, January 26, 1954. "POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files," Box 30, Claude Batchelor Dossier.

now included a growing understanding of class exploitation and a commitment to racial equality.”<sup>76</sup> Adams managed to convince his two close confidants William White and LaRance Sullivan to join him. The three black prisoners approached their Chinese instructor Ye Chengba. Under Ye’s assistance, they quickly received the permission to go to the PRC.

Both William White and LaRance Sullivan decided to go the PRC to pursue racial equality. In a letter to his mother, White explained that in POW camps, “I have seen complete equality for men of all races and colours who worked together and played together. When I see things like this [,] I am reminded of what happened to me in my own country where as children, I and other Negro boys, were whipped by policemen because we didn’t take off our hats to them.”<sup>77</sup> The racial segregation and police brutality toward the black people motivated White to pursue a different life in the PRC. Likewise, Sullivan wrote to his grandmother: “I came to realize since I became a prisoner of war exactly what I am fighting for. I have come to realize that the war is not being fought for the common people like you and I.”<sup>78</sup> Sullivan was clearly intrigued by the Chinese lectures that the Korean War was a race war. By defending Asia from white man’s encroachment, the PRC was able to fulfill the promise of racial equality. One of Sullivan’s close friends recalled that Sullivan once bemoaned, “if our living conditions had been better, this need not have happened.”<sup>79</sup> The systemic racism in the United States and the promise of racial equality in the PRC motivated the three black Americans to remain behind.

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<sup>76</sup> Adams, *An American Dream*, 66.

<sup>77</sup> Cited in Pasley, *21 Stayed*, 99.

<sup>78</sup> Pasley, 60.

<sup>79</sup> Pasley, 56.

Upon a close examination of the VNRs' motivations, it became clear that there was no fundamental difference between them and the "progressive" prisoners who had been repatriated during Operation Little Switch. The three black prisoners' pursuit for racial equality and the twenty-four white "progressive" prisoners' motivations to stay in the communist bloc remained the same. The only changing factor was the CPV's policy objective. Rather than repatriating the "progressive" prisoners to promote the Chinese Lenient Policy in April, the CPV needed them to stay in the PRC as the "proof" of the Chinese victory on the POW issue in June. Had the CPV policy change taken place before Operation Little Switch, the number of American VNRs would have been much more than just twenty-seven in June 1953.

Before the NNRC took custody of the twenty-seven VNRs on September 24, the "brother's keeper" system helped the CPV get rid of three "progressive" prisoners for their questionable loyalty. On August 19, the CPV repatriated Wesley Biers, Bobby DeGraw, and Wilburn C. Watson back to the UNC's control. As DeGraw was one of the CPV's recognized informants, his repatriation at the time was quite a surprise for other UNC prisoners. Shortly after the CPV changed its policy toward the VNRs in June, DeGraw and his two close friends Biers and Watson petitioned the CPV to stay in the PRC. Their applications were quickly approved as they were prominent "progressive" prisoners. In early August, however, Biers and Watson conspired to sabotage the explanation and tried to recruit other "progressive" prisoners. Under the "brother's keeper" system, the CPV quickly learned about their "counterrevolutionary" activity.

Although the CPV never found any solid evidence against DeGraw, his close association with Biers and Watson was enough for his repatriation. On August 19, the CPV

forcible sent them back to the UNC after an open criticism session.<sup>80</sup> Commenting on the CPV's action to repatriate the three "progressive" prisoners, Batchelor complained that "more Americans wanted to remain behind than the Chinese cared to have."<sup>81</sup> For the CPV, the VNRs' reliability was more important than their absolute numbers. On September 24, the CPV turned over the twenty-three American and one British VNRs to NNRC for the ninety-day explanation.

Once the VNRs left the Pyöktong POW camps, they also left behind the policing system constructed by the CPV Political Department. Although the VNRs continued acting as if an invisible Chinese guard was watching over them, there was no one to actually enforce the policing system. As a result, racism and mutual suspicion crept back to plague the relationships among the VNRs. Amid this uncertain situation inside the NNRC camps, the CPV lost the absolute control of the VNRs. But the "brother's keeper" system would suffice. Aside from the two American VNRs who opted for repatriation at the neutral zone, the CPV eventually received twenty-one Americans and one British in January 1954.

Before turning over the VNRs to the NNRC, the CPV replicated the Pyöktong system among the VNRs to make sure that they would choose the PRC during the explanation. Claude Batchelor was appointed as the leader of the VNRs and Richard Corden served as the Diplomatic Representative to deal with the CFI. In addition, the CPV and VNRs established a secret communication channel via the camp bathhouse. Batchelor and commissar Zhang would exchange their communications through a secret space hidden

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<sup>80</sup> Interrogation of Claude Batchelor, January 17, 1954. "POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files," n.d., Box 30, Claude Batchelor Dossier.

<sup>81</sup> Interrogation of Claude Batchelor, January 26, 1954. "POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files," Box 30, Claude Batchelor Dossier.



underneath a loose brick in the bathhouse. Under the Chinese instruction, the American VNRs developed the following strategies to obstruct the explanation session:

- 1) To show the explanation officers that they were as mean as any human could possibly be. They were to speak to the officers in harsh terms, trying to make them look silly.
- 2) Ask silly questions, such as, why did you come here? Go back and tell your boss that we are not returning to your nasty capitalistic system!
- 3) Ask the officers how they came to Korea. By plane? By boat? How were they going to return, by jet plane?
- 4) Show disrespect and no interest in the explanations, read a book, read a Communist newspaper, look at the hills.
- 5) Show hostility. Tell them to drop dead.
- 6) Puzzle the officers by not answering any questions at all – just sit and look at them.
- 7) Unmask the officers by asking them embarrassing questions.
- 8) Make them feel that they were of no importance – talk about Malenkov, Lenin, Stalin – then gracefully salute the Indians and ignore the Americans.<sup>82</sup>

Aside from these strategies, the “brother’s keeper” system was also secretly planted among the VNRs.<sup>83</sup> With these measures in place, the CPV expected to have all the VNRs chose the PRC during the explanation.

The twenty-four VNRs divided into three factions shortly after they entered the neutral zone. The repatriation of Bobby DeGraw deepened white POWs’ suspicion toward the three black prisoners who were deemed as unreliable. The three black prisoners felt the animosity and formed their own group at the neutral zone. According to Clarence Adams, they refused direct communication with the white prisoners to the point that “no one knew for sure what we [Adams, Sullivan, and White] were going to do.”<sup>84</sup> In the absence of CPV authorities, racism reverted back and plagued the relations among the VNRs.

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<sup>82</sup> Summary of interrogation report from January 7 to February 13, 1954. “POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files,” Box 30.

<sup>83</sup> Interrogation of Claude Batchelor, January 18, 1954. “POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files,” Box 30, Claude Batchelor Dossier.

<sup>84</sup> Adams, *An American Dream*, 68.

In addition to racism, the repatriation destination issue further divided the twenty-one white VNRs. Rather than unanimously agreeing to go to the PRC, a number of VNRs rallied around Richard Corden and secretly petitioned the DPRK government to accept them.<sup>85</sup> They hoped to stay and help rebuild the country that was devastated by the US. Batchelor immediately reported Corden's actions to commissar Zhang.<sup>86</sup> Upon learning the news, Zhang explained the impossibility for the VNRs to stay in the DPRK. According to the armistice treaty, the VNRs could only choose a neutral country. As a direct participant of the Korean War, the DPRK was never an option for the VNRs. Although the PRC sent the "people's volunteers" to Korea, Beijing never formally declared war. Thus, the PRC was the only viable option for the VNRs. Although Corden and his followers eventually gave up their plan, his faction remained and put Batchelor's leadership in serious question.

Amid this factional struggle, Edward Dickinson requested repatriation on October 20 after losing the confidence of both sides. In a failed attempt to win favor from the two factions, Dickinson ironically offended both. According to Batchelor,

He [Dickinson] expressed a desire to join the [Richard] Corden faction and remain in North Korea. Later he expressed a desire to join Batchelor and [Andrew] Condron who had the blessings of the Chinese. In this small group, he was caught in the middle, caused both factions to distrust him, and keep a close watch over him for the purpose of observing any act which he might commit against either group. After falling into disfavor with the 23 American non-repatriates, his only out was to escape to the United Nations Command.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Interrogation of Claude Batchelor, January 18, 1954. "POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files," n.d., Box 30, Claude Batchelor Dossier.

<sup>86</sup> Theoretically, the VNRs were under the authority of the NNRC and were forbidden to maintain contact with their captors. In reality, however, the VNRs kept a secret communication channel with the CPV via the camp bath house.

<sup>87</sup> Interrogation of Claude Batchelor, January 16, 1954. "POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files," n.d., Box 144, Edward Dickinson Dossier.

On the night of October 20, at approximately 10 pm, Dickinson left his bed. After he made sure everyone was asleep, he walked directly to the camp gate. He first told an Indian guard that he had a toothache and requested to go to the camp hospital for treatment. On his way, he told the Indian guard that he actually wanted repatriation back to the United States. After an Indian officer double confirmed his intention, he was allowed to sleep in the CFI barracks and was turned over to the UNC the next morning.<sup>88</sup>

Claude Batchelor followed Dickinson's step after losing the power rivalry with Richard Corden. Although the Corden faction gave up the plan to stay in the DPRK, his challenge to Batchelor's authority persisted. By late December, Batchelor realized that "he was among people who were once his friends and followers but now were either his enemies or reluctant supporters."<sup>89</sup> Meanwhile, he accidentally discovered that there was also secret communication between Corden and commissar Zhang through the camp hospital. This was the last straw that broke the camel's back. Batchelor demanded an explanation from Corden and requested to learn the content of the communication, but in vain.<sup>90</sup> While Batchelor thought he had the highest authority among the VNRs, the CPV never fully trusted him. Other than his appointment as the group leader, there was no difference between him and the other VNRs. Under the "brother's keeper" system, everyone was policing someone else, while being policed by someone else.

As Batchelor felt that he was losing control of the group, he requested repatriation on December 31. In January 1954, Batchelor confessed to the CIC that he changed his mind

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<sup>88</sup> Worn Statement of Edward Dickinson, November 6, 1953. "POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files," Box 144, Edward Dickinson Dossier.

<sup>89</sup> Summary of interrogation report from January 7 to February 13, 1954. "POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files," Box 30, Claude Batchelor Dossier.

<sup>90</sup> Report of Findings, January 18, 1954. "POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files," Box 30, Claude Batchelor Dossier.

at the neutral zone because the factional struggle became so intense that “he could not sleep at night for fear of having a knife stuck in his back.”<sup>91</sup> If the CPV authority could control the situation among the VNRs in late 1953, Dickinson and Batchelor might not have chosen repatriation. Nevertheless, when the explanation session ended in January 1954, twenty-two out of the original twenty-four VNRs decided to remain in the communist bloc and rejected repatriation back to the United States. The Twenty-two VNRs’ decision to stay in the PRC nevertheless demonstrated the CPV’s ability to influence the POWs during the explanation.

#### Explanation Session and Chinese VNRs

Blow the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, the UNC camp authorities prioritized delivering the Chinese VNRs to Taiwan. Similar with the CPV, what the UNC could not control was the prisoners’ individual choice during the explanation. That is to say, an individual Chinese prisoner must ask the NNRC explainers for delivering him to Taiwan, after he had been given the opportunity to return home by the Chinese explainers. After paying a personal visit at the Panmunjom in September 1953, the NNRC Chairman General K.S. Thimayya developed the impression that he “could not believe that they [Chinese VNRs] desired anything so much as to go home.”<sup>92</sup> The explanation procedure thus threatened the UNC’s goal.

In 1953, the US’ only goal was to recruit the maximum number of anti-communists to Taiwan.<sup>93</sup> To ensure the VNRs would choose Taiwan, the UNC camp authorities, the DAC officers, and the anti-communist prisoners collaborated to affect the Chinese POWs’

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<sup>91</sup> Summary of interrogation report from January 7 to February 13, 1954. “POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files,” Box 30, Claude Batchelor Dossier.

<sup>92</sup> Thimayya, *Experiment in Neutrality*, 91.

<sup>93</sup> James E. Webb, “Meeting with the President,” October 29, 1951. *FRUS, 1951*, 7, Part 1:1073.

choice-making. From June 1953 to January 1954, under the orchestration of the UNC and the DACs, the anti-communist prisoners first used violence to prevent 12,651 (out of 14,704 or 86%) Chinese prisoners from attending the explanation session. More than that, the anti-communist prisoners repeated the mock explanation for the 2,053 Chinese prisoners who attended the explanation, resulting in 1,957 (out of 2,053 or 95%) Chinese POWs to choose Taiwan in front of the NNRC explainers.

From October 1953 to January 1954, under the UNC's assists, the anti-communist POWs launched an organized effort to prevent the Chinese POWs from attending the explanation. According to the agreement between the UNC and the NNRC, the prisoners were only allowed "two outfits, two sets of underwear and socks, and a blanket" at the neutral zone.<sup>94</sup> However, the UNC only conducted a cursory body search and the anti-communist prisoners smuggled their self-made weapons such as razors, wood clubs, and nails into the neutral zone. One anti-communist leader explained that they used these weapons for controlling the other prisoners.<sup>95</sup> The UNC even smuggled a radio into the neutral zone and maintained daily communication with the anti-communist leaders.<sup>96</sup> Under the UNC's instructions, the anti-communist prisoners rebuilt the company-platoon-squad surveillance system and made the slogan "to return to Taiwan whole-heartedly, and to destroy the communists with all our lives."<sup>97</sup> The slogan suggested that the Chinese VNRs had made a collective decision to go to Taiwan, denouncing the explanation under the NNRC as unnecessary.

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<sup>94</sup> Fangong Yishi Fendoushi, 153.

<sup>95</sup> Fangong Yishi Fendoushi, 153.

<sup>96</sup> Thimayya, *Experiment in Neutrality*, 127.

<sup>97</sup> Fangong Yishi Fendoushi, 196.

More importantly, the anti-communist prisoners warned other Chinese POWs not to show up for the explanation.<sup>98</sup> When the first explanation session started in the early morning of October 15, not a single Chinese prisoner showed up. A group of the CFI soldiers attempted to take the VNRs to the explanation tent, but were attacked by the anti-communist prisoners. According to the Indian officer Major General Thorat, a group of Chinese prisoners “have assaulted the guards and indulged in unruly [behaviors]. A mass breakout from the camps has also been attempted.”<sup>99</sup> When the explanation resumed in the afternoon, 491 Chinese VNRs attended the explanation. Among them, only ten opted for repatriation. The NNRC Chairman Thimayya bemoaned that the Chinese POWs lived under the tight control of anti-communist prisoners, who were “powerful enough to command absolute obedience and to maintain an iron discipline. Each compound had its own guard tents, and trials for offences—even those that could be punished by death.”<sup>100</sup> On October 16, the NNRC declared a ten-day recess due to the anti-communist prisoners’ effort to derail the explanation and prevent the Chinese POWs from attending.

To settle the POW issue, the Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru mediated a new arrangement for the VNRs. During the ten-day recess, Nehru protested to Eisenhower and Dulles, stating that “coercion comes in in preventing POWs from appearing” to the explanation.<sup>101</sup> He stated that if the current situation continued, the NNRC could not complete the explanation before the deadline and the armistice might collapse.<sup>102</sup> Under

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<sup>98</sup> Fangong Yishi Fendoushi, 153.

<sup>99</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru (SWJN)*, vol. XXIV, Second Series (New Delhi: Teen Murti House, 1999), 483.

<sup>100</sup> Thimayya, *Experiment in Neutrality*, 114.

<sup>101</sup> Nehru, *SWJN*, XXIV:492.

<sup>102</sup> Nehru, XXIV:492.

Nehru's mediation, Beijing and Washington reached a new agreement which included the following:

- (1) No extension to the ninety-day explanation was granted and the NNRC shall dissolve itself on 23 January 1954. The CFI must terminate custody on 23 January 1954 and depart from Korea by 21 February 1954.
- (2) Prisoners who have attended the explanation sessions and choose repatriation shall be repatriated immediately.
- (3) Prisoners who have attended the explanation and refused repatriation and prisoners who have not attended the explanation shall be returned to their original detaining-sides by 23 January 1954.
- (4) After regaining the custody of the POWs, the detaining authority should continue the explanation and decided the final repatriation or disposition of these POWs.<sup>103</sup>

According to the third and fourth clause of this new arrangement, POWs who had not attended the explanation would be returned to their original detaining power. To the Chinese VNRs, this was tantamount to being delivered to Taiwan.<sup>104</sup> Upon hearing this new arrangement, the NNRC Chairman Thimayya lamented that the POWs became "pawns in a brutal game of politics."<sup>105</sup> Thanks to the anti-communist prisoners' effort to obstruct and derail the process, the explanations were conducted for only ten days. When the ninety-day explanation session ended in December 1953, merely 2,053 (out of 14,704 or 14%) Chinese VNRs completed the explanation.<sup>106</sup> The 12,651 unexplained Chinese prisoners were returned to the UNC's custody and shipped to Taiwan by the US Army directly in early 1954.

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<sup>103</sup> Cable to K.S. Thimayya, New Delhi, 25 December 1953, *SWJN*, 533-535.

<sup>104</sup> Scholars are still debating as to why the PRC accepted this condition. Established scholarships in the PRC and the US contemplated that Stalin's death cemented China's position on the POW issue. The argument implies that after Stalin's death in early 1953, the new Soviet leadership no longer supported China's war effort. For the scholarship, see for example, Hunt and Levine, *Arc of Empire*; Shen, *Mao, Stalin, Yu Chaoxian Zhanzheng*.

<sup>105</sup> Thimayya, *Experiment in Neutrality*, 90.

<sup>106</sup> B. Chakravorty, ed., *History of the Custodian Force (India) in Korea 1953-1954* (Historical Section, Ministry of Defence, Government of India, 1976), 59.

Table 1. Statistics of the Explanation Session Under the NNRC<sup>107</sup>

Date	Nationality of POWs	Numbers attended explanations	Numbers explained to	Numbers of Repatriation
Oct 15	Chinese	491	491	10
Oct 17	Chinese	491	491	9
Oct 31	N. Korean	459	459	21
Nov 3	N. Korean	483	483	19
Nov 4	Chinese	408	203	3
Nov 5	Chinese	492	136	2
Nov 16	N. Korean	472	227	6
Dec 21	Chinese	249	249	36
Dec 22	Chinese	233	233	23
Dec 23	Chinese	250	250	13
	Total	4,028	3,222	142

For the 2,053 Chinese prisoners who attended the explanation, the anti-communist prisoners staged mock explanation to affect their choice-making. In June 1953, the DACs and anti-communist leaders launched the so-called “180-Day Special Education Project” to train the Chinese POWs how to behave at the explanation tents.<sup>108</sup> The 180 days covered the sixty-day Operation Big Switch, the ninety-day explanation under NNRC, and the thirty-day special government meeting. In essence, the “Special Education Project” repeated the mock interview strategy during Operation Scatter. The anti-communist leader Gao Wenjun described the project this way in his memoir,

We used “mock” sessions to emulate the “real” explanation. Our anti-communist brothers assumed different roles, some of them pretended to be the Switzerland representative from the NNRC, some faked as the

<sup>107</sup> Chakravorty, 59.

<sup>108</sup> Gao, *Hanzhan Yiwang*, 209.



explainers from the UNC, and some took the role of communist bandit explainers. Under the guidance of our CIE instructors [DAC officers], our explanation tent looks exactly the same with the “real” explanation tent. Afterwards, we make the prisoners to attend the “explanation” ... as it turned out, the “mock” session was a great success.<sup>109</sup>

Like Operation Scatter in April 1952, the anti-communist leaders repeated the mock explanation session to affect the Chinese POWs’ choice-making in 1953, forcing them to choose Taiwan.

Under the suggestion of the DAC officers, the anti-communist leaders gave three additional instructions to the Chinese POWs.<sup>110</sup> The first instruction required the prisoners to act aggressively toward the NNRC members and the explainers who were deemed as “pro-communist.” The POWs who attended the mock explanation were instructed to attack the NNRC members from Indian, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and the Chinese explainers. The second instruction required the Chinese prisoner to write down his speech and read it during the explanation. While the mock explainers would encourage the prisoner to return home or to distract the topic, the prisoner must ignore the explainers and only read his speech draft. The last instruction was collective punishment. As all prisoners lived with three to five other prisoners in a squad, all squad members would be punished if any one of them chose the PRC during the mock explanation.<sup>111</sup> Aside from the three instructions, Jiang Hongqing recalled that his squad leader stood outside the mock explanation tent with a knife in his hand. The DACs instructed him to remove the anti-communist tattoo from anyone who walked out of the tent through the door to the PRC.

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<sup>109</sup> Gao, 210.

<sup>110</sup> *Fangong Yishi Fendoushi*, 153.

<sup>111</sup> *Fangong Yishi Fendoushi*, 153.

During the explanation from October 15 to December 23, only a small number of Chinese POWs chose repatriation back to the PRC. On the first day, the NNRC conducted 491 explanation sessions and only ten Chinese prisoners demanded repatriation.<sup>112</sup> As one of the ten prisoners, Xiao Dashan initially pretended to be deaf during his explanation. When the PRC explainers invited him to return home, Xiao pretended that he could not hear. After the Chinese explainers spoke in a loud voice for thirty minutes, Xiao eventually chose the PRC.<sup>113</sup> On the following day, the Chinese work team leader He Ming had the following conversation with Xiao,

He, “Why did you pretend to be deaf during the explanation?”

Xiao, “I needed to hear more from the Chinese representative. Judging from the American representatives’ reactions, I thought this explanation might be a genuine one. The KMT agents [DAC officers from Taiwan] had conducted many mock explanations in the past. By claiming deaf, I can have more time to think.”

He, “when you said you wanted to return home, why did you speak in such a low voice?”

Xiao, “I wanted to give it a try. If yesterday’s occasion turned out to be another mock explanation, when they beat me, I can say that they hear me wrong... Even on my way out of the tent, I could not tell whether this explanation was a trap or not. The man who claimed to be the Indian Chairman spoke the same language with the Americans. Besides him, I recognized two men in the tent. One is an American camp official and the other one is a KMT from Taiwan [DACs]... I was so terrified that I might be ambushed on my way out.”<sup>114</sup>

Requesting repatriation in the explanation tent thus required great courage from the Chinese POWs.

On October 17, a young Chinese soldier was too scared to make a choice after two hours. As explainers from both sides were burnt out, they agreed to let General Thimayya

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<sup>112</sup> Chakravorty, *History of CFI*, 59.

<sup>113</sup> He, *Yibi Renquan Zhai*, 113–14.

<sup>114</sup> He, 116–17.

“took him to his car and drove away with him.”<sup>115</sup> After living with the Indian guards for two days, the young Chinese requested repatriation. For the Chinese VNRs who wished to return home, they must declare their decision in front of the American camp authorities and the DAC officers from Taiwan, provided that they did not know whether this explanation was genuine or not. These were extremely high bars for an individual Chinese prisoner, who lived under the tight control of anti-communist leaders and experienced the mock sessions in the past three years.

While Xiao gambled his opportunity and won his right to return home, most other Chinese POWs chose Taiwan for their personal safety. As Li Hongfan recalled his explanation session, “there is a desk in the tent and a man sits behind it. I am not sure about this man’s true identity. He could be a UN [NNRC] staff as he claims to be. But he could also be a KMT agent.”<sup>116</sup> Li quickly chose Taiwan as he was unable to tell whether the explanation was genuine. After the completion of the “Special Education Project,” the majority of the Chinese POWs were unable to tell the difference between the mock session and the formal one. Many Chinese VNRs made an unconscious decision that warranted their delivery to Taiwan.

Ironically, more Chinese prisoners chose repatriation by attempting prison-break or approaching the Indian guards than those who changed their minds inside the explanation tent. The UNC transferred 14,704 Chinese POWs to the NNRC on September 23, 1953 and received 14,235 POWs back by February 19, 1954.<sup>117</sup> This number suggested that 440 Chinese prisoners changed their minds under the NNRC’s custody. Among the 440

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<sup>115</sup> Chakravorty, *History of CFI*, 56.

<sup>116</sup> Chou, *Fangong Yishi Fangtanlu*, 141.

<sup>117</sup> See Table 2 below.

Chinese prisoners who requested repatriation, 344 earned their right to return home outside the explanation tent. For example, on the night of October 15, 1953, the CFI captured nine Chinese POWs in a failed prison-break attempt.<sup>118</sup> After some brief interrogations by the Indian guards, the nine prisoners demanded repatriation back to the PRC. The CFI Major General Thorat reported that “they did this at great personal risk for any prisoner seen scaling the fence was liable to be killed by his co-prisoners or shot by Indian sentries who had no means of ascertaining his intentions.”<sup>119</sup> Despite the violent clash that happened during the daytime, Thorat ordered the Indian guards “not to open fire till they were sure that a prisoner scaling the fence was trying to escape and not coming out to ask for repatriation.”<sup>120</sup>

Aside from the desperate attempt of prison-break, some Chinese POWs requested repatriation by approaching the Indian guards at the neutral zone. On September 25, a Chinese prisoner named Wang Xu approached the Indian guard and requested repatriation. The Indian officer at the time was quite surprised as “he [Wang] had been the leader of this compound for a long time, and had given the impression that he was a firm anti-Communist.”<sup>121</sup> After the CFI delivered Wang to the Chinese side, Wang explained that a DAC officer with the last name Ma had issued the order to “kill all enemies (POWs who demanded repatriation back to the PRC) quickly and resolutely, let no one escape!”<sup>122</sup> As an anti-communist leader, he knew that the explanation was his last opportunity to return home. Although he would later stand in trial in the PRC for his anti-communist activities,

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<sup>118</sup> Chakravorty, *History of CFI*, 34–35.

<sup>119</sup> Chakravorty, 38.

<sup>120</sup> Chakravorty, 38.

<sup>121</sup> Wang Xu’ name appeared as Won Chu in the Indian document. His anti-communist identity and the defection timing match the Chinese records. For the Indian document, see Chakravorty, 39; He, *Yibi Renquan Zhai*, 79–83.

<sup>122</sup> He, *Yibi Renquan Zhai*, 79–83.

Wang still decided to return home. When the explanation ended in December 1953, only ninety-six Chinese prisoners (out of 2,053 or 5%) chose to return to the PRC. Despite the seemingly fair and just procedure afforded by the explanation, the prisoners' choice was largely pre-determined.

Table 2. Disposition of Chinese VNRs in 1953 and 1954<sup>123</sup>

Disposition	Chinese
Total POWs transferred from the UNC to the NNRC on Sep. 23, 1953	14,704
Repatriated to the PRC	440
Escaped and missing	2
Died in custody of Custodial Forces of India	15
Went to India with CFI	12
POWs returned to the UNC and went to Taiwan by Feb. 19, 1954	14,235

### Final Disposition

In the early morning of January 20, 1954, the ROC Air Force General Lai Ming-tang led the Chinese Government Liaison Team (CGLT) for the Reception of Chinese Non-Repatriate in Korea to the ROK.<sup>124</sup> After signing a few paper work with the Lieutenant General Maxwell Taylor from the US Eighth Army, the ROC government took official custody of the 14,220 “anti-communist righteous persons.” As soon as the CFI retreated from the camp at 8:52 am, the first group of Chinese VNRs marched out of the camp, holding large portraits of Chiang Kai-shek and Sun Yat-sen. General Lai and a dozen of

<sup>123</sup> Hermes, *Truce Tent and Fighting Front*, 515.

<sup>124</sup> “Jieyun Liuhan Zhongguo Fangong Yishi Guiguo Lianluo Xiaozu Gongzuo Baogaoshu [Report by the Chinese Government Liaison Team],” January 8, 1954. *Document Collection of Postwar Taiwan*, vol. 1: 324-391.

other CGLT members greeted them with a message from Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek. Under the escort of the US Army and the CGLT officials, the VNRs walked through a “freedom bridge” to leave the neutral zone and entered the “freedom gate” to the Inchon port, where the US Army provided LSTs to transport them to the “free” China in Taiwan. The same procedure repeated until the last Chinese prisoner left at 4:00 pm on January 23. Under the influence of the UNC camp authorities, the DAC officers, and the anti-communist prisoners, more than two-thirds of the Chinese POWs of the Korean War settled down in the Republic of China in January 1954.

On January 26, twenty-one Americans, one British, and 325 South Korean POWs held a joint press conference at Panmunjom and declared,

We are a group of South Koreans, Americans, and British who love our homelands, our peoples, and our countries. The pursuit of true democracy and racial equality brought us together... Here, at the POW camps, we have experienced true democracy, equality, and comradeship for the first time in our lives... Although the Chinese and North Korean governments repeatedly try to convince us to return to our home countries, we have decided to stay.<sup>125</sup>

Two days after the press conference, the PRC and DPRK government announced their decision to accept these VNRs who had “repeatedly rejected repatriation back home, and strongly demanded to stay in China and North Korea” and arranged the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to obtain the necessary travel documents for them.<sup>126</sup>

After becoming POWs for nearly three years, these individuals became the subjects of the

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<sup>125</sup> News conference speech, ex-POWs demanded the DPRK-PRC governments to accept them as civilians. January 26, 1954. *Chaoxian Wenti Wenjian Huibian: 1943-1953 [Selected Documents of the Korean Issue: 1943-1953] (Chaoxian Wenjian Huibian: 1943-1953)* (Beijing: Shijie Zhishi Chubanshe, 1954), vol. 2: 238-240.

<sup>126</sup> The telegram recognized the 347 VNRs as civilians. However, the real number of this group was 349. It is still unclear why the PRC-DPRK governments ignores the 2 Belgians. For the PRC-DPRK negotiation team’s response, see Telegram from the PRC-DPRK negotiation team to the NNRC Chairman, January 28, 1954. *Chaoxian Wenti Wenjian Huibian: 1943-1953*, vol. 2: 241.

“first-rate” POW camp and followed the Chinese instruction to choose their repatriation destination.

On morning of January 28, these 347 individuals finally got rid of the demeaning and inglorious label of POWs and were granted civilian status. As Clarence Adams recalled, “when I woke up the next morning, the camp was empty, the gates were wide open.”<sup>127</sup> However, this moment of ease would not last long. Once these VNRs stepped outside the empty NNRC camp, they would embrace a new journey to the communist bloc. Outside the VNRs’ living compounds were the CPV Political Department cadres waiting to pick them up and transfer them to the PRC-DPRK zone. After the VNRs obtained the travel documents on February 24, the 325 South Korean VNRs were formally accepted by the DPRK government, whereas the remaining twenty-two VNRs boarded a special train and headed toward their new destination, the People’s Republic of China.<sup>128</sup> In the absence of a peace treaty, the Korean War was over, for now.

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<sup>127</sup> Adams, *An American Dream*, 71–72.

<sup>128</sup> This group included 21 Americans and 1 British. The two Belgians VNRs went to the PRC later. The 325 South Korean VNRs stayed in North Korea.

## Chapter Six

### The Cold War at Home

For many repatriated POWs, the end of the Korean War marked the beginning of a new struggle in life. When the POW issue was finally resolved in early 1954, the policy makers in Washington and Beijing were paranoid with the idea of enemy infiltration. The Cold War hysterical and insecure mentality haunted the minds of the cold warriors on both sides and drastically affected the fate of the POWs in the wake of the Korean War. Whereas Washington thought that the Chinese had returned a number of “communist infiltrators,” Beijing feared that the US might have dispatched “imperialist agents.” Both sides simultaneously launched systemic investigations over the repatriated POWs. The presumption was not whether the returnees were able to disaffect or entice domestic revolutions in the United States and the Peoples Republic of China (PRC) respectively, but merely how they plan to achieve these goals. The reasons given by the returnees to explain their “treasonous” or “counterrevolutionary” activities in POW camps were unconvincing in the eyes of the American and Chinese investigators. The American returnees usually claimed: “I did this because everyone else did it”; the Chinese returnees usually explained: “If I didn’t do this, they would beat me.” The ex-POWs of the Korean War quickly fell victim to their own government’s prejudices.

#### The Loyalty Question

In the United States, an initial investigation by the US Army condemned the American POW returnees as communist “collaborators.” Before Operation Big Switch



started in August 1953, the US Army established the Japan Joint Intelligence Process Board (JJIPB) to conduct a preliminary investigation of the returned American POWs and provide policy recommendations for the future.<sup>1</sup> The JJIPB consisted of Counterintelligence Corps (CIC) agents, legal advisors, and a group of psychiatrists. After interviewing a group of 527 American returnees, the JJIPB submitted a report in October 1953. The report concluded that 34.73% (or 183) American POWs “have collaborated with the enemy in a treasonable manner.”<sup>2</sup> Based on this finding, the JJIPB suggested that “every repatriated United States [POW] must be considered a potential threat to the security of the Army Forces and the United States.”<sup>3</sup> The JJIPB investigators put the American POW returnee’s loyalty into serious question.

In explaining their “collaboration,” the JJIPB investigators claimed that the American POWs had been “brainwashed.” For example, on August 9, 1953, the Pulitzer winner and Associated Press war correspondent Frank Noel was repatriated. He had been a POW at Pyöktong for nearly three years. During his first interrogation at Tokyo, Noel claimed that the Chinese had attempted to “brainwash” him, but to no avail. According to Noel, the aim of brainwashing was “to destroy the will of prisoners and completely neutralize their past memories...and to train the prisoners to betray their native countries. They [Chinese] hoped that on their return to their homeland these prisoners would work assiduously for the overthrow of their respective governments.”<sup>4</sup> This claim supported the

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<sup>1</sup> Headquartered in Tokyo, the JJIPB only consisted of American military personnel. It has nothing to do with American allies. For more detailed information about the JJIPB, see “Investigative Records: Intelligence and Investigative Dossiers,” Box 2, “Final Report.”

<sup>2</sup> “Investigative Records: Intelligence and Investigative Dossiers,” Box 2, “Final Report,” 20.

<sup>3</sup> “Investigative Records: Intelligence and Investigative Dossiers,” Box 2, “Final Report,” 17.

<sup>4</sup> “Investigative Records: Intelligence and Investigative Dossiers,” Box 2, “Final Report,” 23-24.

JJIPB's conclusion that about one-third of American POWs were "brainwashed" into communist "collaborators."

To further substantiate such a claim, the POW returnee Preston Richie also used "brainwashing" to explain the VNRs' decision to stay in the PRC. Richie was a close associate with the VNR prisoner William White. According to Richie's interrogation,

The mind of this boy [William White] has been completely revamped in thinking, and that his memory of the past is either dim or lost. He recognizes none of the material comforts which his family provided for him, and he has lost all respect for the spiritual guidance his family gave him. He sees and recognizes only what the Chinese Communists have forced upon him, and have made him believe it is good and true. That the Chinese aimed at 'blacking out' certain past memories of a prisoner's mind is evidenced by the handbooks the Communists distributed to certain Chinese officials.<sup>5</sup>

Richie further stated that among the American returnees, approximately 500 were "sincere communists," 200 were dormant "communist agents" who could carry out espionage missions, and 75 were given "some kind of mission by the Chinese."<sup>6</sup> The "brainwashing" narrative clearly attempted to exonerate the American POWs for their questionable behaviors in POW camps. The fundamental assumption was that the American POWs in essence did not make a conscious decision to "collaborate" with the Chinese communist. Yet the "brainwashing" argument add much complications upon their repatriation back to the United States. Although the JJIPB identified a number of "collaborators," there was always the fear of hidden "brainwashed infiltrators" who had not been identified by the JJIPB.

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<sup>5</sup> Interrogation of Preston Richie, September 30, 1953. "Investigative Records: Intelligence and Investigative Dossiers," Box 2, "Final Report," 111.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, the interrogation of Frank Noel, Preston Richie, and Bajo Emiliano in "Investigative Records: Intelligence and Investigative Dossiers," Box 2, 22.

In 1953, the FBI started a surveillance program for the American POW returnees as a preemptive measure.<sup>7</sup> For example, in 1953, the FBI interviewed the “progressive” prisoner William Banghart’s ex-wife, uncle, neighbors, and co-workers to find traces of his communist leaning.<sup>8</sup> After a three-year extensive investigation, FBI found no evidence to prove Banghart as a “brainwashed” communist agent. Even some “reactionary” prisoners could not escape the FBI surveillance. From 1953 to 1955, FBI agents interviewed 120 people who were related to the “reactionary” prisoner James Thompson. The 120 people included Thompson’s local sheriff, employer, co-workers, neighbors, and high school teachers and they unanimously agreed that “JT [James Thompson] did not express anything related to communism.”<sup>9</sup> However, in a report delivered to the Department of the Army on May 17, 1955, the FBI Director John Edgar Hoover personally labelled Thompson as “a pro-Communist” and ordered the continuation of the surveillance program.<sup>10</sup>

While the majority of American POWs were portrayed as “brainwashed collaborators,” the US Army identified some “reactionary” prisoners as the “good citizens—loyal Americans.” In 1953, the JJIPB identified the KKK members, as a group, as “brave individuals” who exercised “open defiance” against the communist. In its final report, the JJIPB commended,

Ku Klux Klan (KKK): this organization was formed in most of the camps and the membership included a few well-meaning individuals who sent anonymous notes bearing the signature “KKK” to some of the better known “progressives” warning them to desist from collaborating with the enemy.

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<sup>7</sup> See for example, the FBI reports in “POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files,” n.d., William Banghart Dossier, Box 24; William Cowart Dossier, Box 111; Harry Fleming Dossier, Box 185; “POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files,” n.d., William White Dossier, Box 778.

<sup>8</sup> “POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files,” n.d., William Banghart Dossier, Box 24.

<sup>9</sup> “POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files,” James Thompson Dossier, Box 609.

<sup>10</sup> “POW, MIA, and Intelligence Files,” James Thompson Dossier, Box 609.

Beatings were also administered to “progressives” and informers...the existence of this organization did cause the Communists some concern, and for this reason the organization did contribute in some measure to the overall resistance movement.<sup>11</sup>

While the US Army questioned the loyalty of the majority of the American POW returnees, the KKK members were ironically commended as patriotic Americans. Although the JJJIPB did not release its investigation findings to the public in the 1950s, the “brainwashing” theme reached American audiences through other channels.

When twenty-one Americans announced their decision to stay in the PRC, the scepter of communist “brainwashing” went beyond the US Army and reached ordinary Americans. In April 1953, an American journalist for the *Christian Science Monitor* named Neal Stanford covered the explanation session under the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission (NNRC). According to his report on April 7, while losing a number of American VNRs to the PRC, the US could not afford accepting “brainwashed” communist infiltrators back into its borders. Neal urged the US Army to come up with what he called an “unwashing” process to recalibrate the POW returnees’ minds.<sup>12</sup> In 1957, another journalist named Eugene Kinkead interviewed the Assistant Secretary of the Army Hugh M. Milton II. Afterwards, Kinkead publicized the JJIPB’s findings by reporting that “almost one out of every three American prisoners in Korea was guilty of some sort of collaboration with the enemy.”<sup>13</sup> As the term “brainwashing” hit the front pages of American newspapers, American public viewed the POW returnees from Korea as potential communist infiltrators.

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<sup>11</sup> “Investigative Records: Intelligence and Investigative Dossiers,” Box 2, “Final Report,” 3.

<sup>12</sup> Neal Stanford, “Red ‘Teaching’ of Prisoners Stirs U.S.,” *Christian Science Monitor*, April 7, 1953.

<sup>13</sup> Eugene Kinkead, “The Study of Something New in History,” *The New Yorker*, October 26, 1957.

In the following decades, American novelists and Hollywood further strengthened the “brainwashing” theme. In 1959, the American novelist Richard Condon published the political thriller novel *The Manchurian Candidate*.<sup>14</sup> In Condon’s novel, an American Sergeant named Raymond Shaw was captured in Korea and was “brainwashed” into being an unwitting assassin for the communists. After his repatriation back to the US, however, Shaw began suffering a recurring nightmare in which he was surrounded by a group of communist “brainwashers.” Through these “brainwashers,” Shaw was instructed to carry out various espionage missions in the US. He became a sleeper agent who, activated by a post-hypnotic trigger (by playing solitaire), immediately forgot his assignments and lived like an average American. This political thriller became so popular that Hollywood released two movies on the basis of this novel in 1962 and 2004. The US pop-culture presented these American POW returnees as “brainwashed” to the American public.

With the benefit of seven decades in hindsight, it becomes clear that the JJIPB conjured up the story of American POWs’ “collaboration.” A closer look at the JJIPB’s investigation report in October 1953 reveals its biased nature. Among the 527 American POWs interrogated by the JJIPB was the 149 “progressive” American POWs who had been repatriated during Operation Little Switch. The Chinese People’s Volunteer (CPV) instructed the 149 Americans to conduct propaganda missions after repatriation. Thus, the “progressive” POWs constituted the majority of the 183 American “collaborators” identified by the JJIPB. In 1955, when the screening for the 4,428 American POWs was completed, the Department of Defense (DOD) reported a much smaller number of suspicious “collaborators” as shown in the following table:

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<sup>14</sup> Richard Condon, *The Manchurian Candidate* (McGraw-Hill, 1959).

Table 3. Number and percent of repatriated POWs suspected of misconduct.<sup>15</sup>

Service	Total repatriated	Number “required further investigation”	Percent “required further investigation”
Army	3973	426	11%
Air Force	224	87	39%
Marine Corps	200	52	26%
Navy	31	0	0
All services	4428	565	13%

In accepting Kinkead’s interview in 1956, the Assistant Secretary of the Army Milton II only mentioned the JJIPB’s report in 1953, but ignored the 1955 DOD investigation. Based on the interrogation of 527 American POWs in October 1953, Milton II drew the skewed conclusion that one-third of the 4,428 American POWs “collaborated” with the Chinese communists.

As the principal author of American POWs’ “collaboration,” the JJIPB interrogators established their own standard, which was by no means a conviction for treason. As the DOD reported that only 13% of the American POWs “required further investigation,” this finding was far below the 33% alleged by the JJIPB’s finding. In a 1956 interview with Albert Biderman, a scholar from the University of Chicago, the Assistant Secretary of the Army Milton II clarified the JJIPB’s standard for collaboration: “If we use as a standard some perhaps understandable act of ‘technical’ collaboration, such as broadcasting Christmas greetings to relatives at home, the percentage might run as high as 30 percent.”<sup>16</sup> Thus, the “technical” collaboration was up to the JJIPB interrogators’

<sup>15</sup> Secretary of Defense’s Advisory Committee on Prisoners of War, “The POW Report,” 82.

<sup>16</sup> Biderman, *March to Calumny: The Story of American POWs in the Korean War*, 35–36.

discretion. Under such a sketchy standard, the percentage of “collaborators” was clearly inflated in the JJIPB’s report in 1953.

Further official investigations suggested an even smaller number of “collaborators.” In 1956, the US Army created the Foreign Claims Settlement Commission. The primary responsibility of this commission was to determine the monetary compensation for each American POW during his captivity in Korea.<sup>17</sup> Each prisoner would receive \$1 per day during his captivity and \$1.5 per day if his treatment was in violation of the Geneva Convention. However, the commission sanctioned that no benefits should be paid to those POW returnees “who, at any time, voluntarily, knowingly, and without duress, gave aid to or collaborated with or in any manner served such hostile force.”<sup>18</sup> By continuing the DOD’s investigation in 1955, the commission only denied fifty-seven (out of 4,428) expatriated POWs such payment. Among the fifty-seven, fourteen had been court-martialed and eleven were convicted for “collaboration” and none for “brainwashing.” The final disposition of the POW returnees suggested the hyperbolic nature of the JJIPB’s initial findings on “collaboration” and the unfounded claims for “brainwashing.”

Some US Army officials did try to salvage the American POW returnees’ reputation, but in vain. During the congressional hearing on June 13, 1956, the chairman of the Foreign Claims Settlement Commission, Whitney Gilliland, protested the popular notion of American POWs’ “collaboration” and “brainwashing” to the congress:

Beginning in the spring of 1953 shortly after “Little Switch” and continuing until now, stories have appeared in the press and elsewhere to the effect that American GI’s held prisoners of war in North Korea did not demonstrate the sturdiness that might have been hope for in resisting Communist

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<sup>17</sup> Public Law 615, 83<sup>rd</sup> Congress, 1954. <https://www.congress.gov/83/statute/STATUTE-68/STATUTE-68-Pg759.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> Public Law 615, 83<sup>rd</sup> Congress, 1954. <https://www.congress.gov/83/statute/STATUTE-68/STATUTE-68-Pg759.pdf>

indoctrination...A number of the authors infer that Americans have lost purposefulness and direction and the capacity for success, and that the only persons in this day and age who know where they are going and what they are doing and why they are doing it, and succeed in getting it done, are the Communists. They make it appear that we are a decadent generation and no longer any match for the cleaver and progressive Communists.

...

The evidence clearly shows that the Communist effort to indoctrinate was a failure and that on the whole our boys were resolute and maintained their principles. Far from being a source of shame the record is one of which Americans can be proud.<sup>19</sup>

Nevertheless, Gilliland's protest was unable to expunge the fear of communist infiltration under the context of the Cold War. Despite the Army's formal conclusion, the American government, the FBI, and a number of American authors continued reinforcing the notion that the American POWs of the Korean as "brainwashed."

While the US government viewed its returnees as "communist infiltrators," the Chinese government gradually treated its returnees as suspicious "imperialist agents." In November 1953, the Pyöktong POW camp personnel received the new task of investigating the Chinese POW returnees through a screening process. Under the General Political Department's (GPD) instruction, the personnel of the Pyöktong POW camp were reorganized and relocated to the Center for the Chinese POW Returnees (CCPR) at Changtu, Liaoning province.<sup>20</sup> During their initial days at the CCPR, many Chinese POWs were quite optimistic about their future as the initial investigation only identified a small number of "imperialist agents." But, soon the power struggle within the CCP top leadership would change these ex-soldiers' fate by manifesting a suspicion that most Chinese POW returnees were "imperialist agents."

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<sup>19</sup> US Congress, House, June 13, 1956, 219-220.

<sup>20</sup> He, *Zhongcheng*, 121-22.



In September 1953, the GPD issued two official documents to handle the returned Chinese POWs.<sup>21</sup> According to these documents, pending the CCPR investigation, all the Chinese returnees would be expelled from the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and the party cadres stripped of their party memberships for now. If proved innocent by the CCPR investigation, an individual returnee's PLA profile and CCP membership could be restored. The GPD also established three categories for the POWs.<sup>22</sup> Category one included those who "firmly uphold the revolutionary belief, organize underground party organizations, and struggle against the enemies." Category two were POWs who had "committed minor mistakes," but eventually struggled against the anti-communist POWs and returned to the PRC. Category three were the "deserters, party traitors and imperialist agents."

The treatment for the three categories was also different.<sup>23</sup> Category one POWs would have their PLA profile and CCP membership restored immediately. In addition, they would also be commended for their bravery and were eligible for promotions. Category two POWs would restore their PLA profile. However, depending on their actions in POW camps, they could either be expelled from the CCP or have their party memberships restored with disciplinary punishment. Lastly, category three POWs would be expelled from the PLA and the CCP. This category of returnees would be transferred to the Northeastern Military Region for further investigation. While nerve-racking for the repatriated POWs, these policy directives to the CCPR nevertheless did not indicate that at the time the GPD viewed the majority of the POW returnees as a source of trouble.

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<sup>21</sup> "Zong Zhengzhibu Guanyu Zhiyuanjun Beifu Guilai Renyuan De Chuli Banfa [General Political Department's Policy for the POW Returnees]," September, 1953. *ZGLZX*, vol. 12: 483-486.

<sup>22</sup> "Zong Zhengzhibu Guanyu Zhiyuanjun Beifu Guilai Renyuan De Chuli Banfa [General Political Department's Policy for the POW Returnees]," September, 1953. *ZGLZX*, vol. 12: 483-486.

<sup>23</sup> "Zong Zhengzhibu Guanyu Zhiyuanjun Beifu Guilai Renyuan De Chuli Banfa [General Political Department's Policy for the POW Returnees]," September, 1953. *ZGLZX*, vol. 12: 483-486.

Between November 1953 and February 1954, the CCPR's initial treatment of the Chinese POWs was not harsh with the notable exception for *Paoge* brothers. After the CCPR cadres explained the GPD's policies, many Chinese returnees felt anxious as they did not know the standard for the three categorizations. In a speech given to the POW returnees on November 18, 1953, a CCPR official stated: "The overwhelming majority of you have conducted dedicated struggles in POW camps and returned to the motherland as revolutionary heroes. The Party won't let you down!"<sup>24</sup> As the investigation progressed, the returnees gradually felt relieved. The Chinese returnee Chen Jiqing remembered the screening process:

At the very beginning, we were organized into squads. During squad meetings, we all made self-criticism speeches in turns. The content of our speeches became the first draft of our *ziwo jianding* ["self-screening"]. Then we would exchange drafts, give suggestions to each other, and make necessary revisions. This step may take several rounds until everyone was satisfied. Then we turned in our "self-screenings" to the CCPR for approval. This was called *qunzhong pingyi; zhibu jianding* ["comments by the mass; conclusion by the Party"]. After the CCPR approved our drafts, they submitted the drafts to the Northeastern Military Region for approval. The decision from the Military Region became our formal "decision of the Party."<sup>25</sup>

Thus, at this point the "decision of the Party" largely based on the returnees' "self-screening." Yet the investigation proved to be a disaster for *Paoge* brothers. At Changtu, the CCPR cadres quickly classified the *Paoge* brothers as the category four POWs who received a similar treatment with category three POWs.<sup>26</sup> The *Paoge* leader Dai Yushu was convicted for "organizing and leading counterrevolutionary organizations" and was expelled from the PLA. Nevertheless, by February 1954, the investigation was nearly over

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<sup>24</sup> Zhao Guoxi diary, cited in He, *Zhongcheng*, 125.

<sup>25</sup> He, 132.

<sup>26</sup> Yu, *E Yun*, 457.

and the CCPR cadres were about to announce the investigation conclusion.<sup>27</sup> According to the CCPR's initial investigation, category one and two returnees constituted more than 80% of the Chinese POWs.<sup>28</sup>

Just before the CCPR was about to release its finding, the Gao Gang-Rao Shushi Incident took place in Beijing. Gao Gang was a top CCP leader who was in charge of Manchuria in the Korean War. During a CCP Politburo meeting in February 1954, Gao Gang and his colleague Rao Shushi were charged with attempting to displace Liu Shaoqi and Zhou Enlai. Both Gao and Rao were quickly convicted with “plotting against the Party and committing factionalism.” The politburo unanimously passed the resolution, “On the Strengthening of Party Unity.”<sup>29</sup> Shortly after, Gao Gang committed suicide and his associates were either demoted or purged from the CCP. As the POW returnees were still in Manchuria, a place which was labelled as Gao Gang's “independent kingdom,” the power struggles in Beijing generated immediate impacts over the POW returnees.

According to General He Ming who worked at the CCPR at the time, he was surprised by a sudden change of policy. In his memoir, He recalled that in early March of 1954, the Northeastern Military Region dispatched a group of military officers to the CCPR and issued the order to “scrutinize the returnees more carefully.”<sup>30</sup> At the same time, the Northeastern Military Region organized the CCPR cadres to study the politburo's resolution on strengthening unity. The newly arrived officials from the Northeastern Military Region explained: “The Gao-Rao Incident demonstrated that class enemies have

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<sup>27</sup> He, *Zhongcheng*, 133.

<sup>28</sup> He, 133.

<sup>29</sup> “Dangde Qijie Sizhong Quanhui He Zengqiang Dangde Tuanjie De Jueyi [The CCP 7th Congress and the Decision to Strengthen the Party Unity],” January 26, 2017, <https://www.dswxyjy.org.cn/n1/2017/0126/c244520-29051279.html>.

<sup>30</sup> He, *Zhongcheng*, 133.

already infiltrated the CCP top leadership.” As the POW returnees had been captured by the “American imperialists” and had contact with the KMT in POW camps, there must be hidden class enemies among them. Therefore, all CCPR cadres must work harder than before to “weed out” the hidden class enemies.<sup>31</sup>

Although He Ming and his colleagues at CCPR thought the Northeastern Military Region’s order “absurd,” they had to re-investigate the POW returnees with severer standards as directed by the Northeastern Military Region.<sup>32</sup> As He remembered, during the re-investigation from March to May, most CCPR cadres were instructed to take the assumption that “a loyal CPV soldier should never be captured.”<sup>33</sup> In April, He recorded the following conversation between a Chinese investigator and a returnee named Duan Shengxin in his diary entry,

Investigator: “are you a CCP cadre?”

Duan: “Yes, I am!”

Investigator: “If you are a true CCP cadre, you should have died bravely on the battlefield. How dare you come back alive?”<sup>34</sup>

Under the re-investigation process, the GPD’s instruction on the three categorizations of POW returnees became obsolete. The new policy directive from the Northeastern Military Region viewed a soldier’s being captured as tantamount to defection and surrender to the enemy.

In order to find more “imperialist agents,” the CCPR personnel replicated the Pyöktong camp systems among the returnees. Starting in March, the returnees were isolated in their living places and were forbade to talk to one another. The CCPR

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<sup>31</sup> He, 133.

<sup>32</sup> He, 133.

<sup>33</sup> He, 129.

<sup>34</sup> He, 135.

investigators required each returnee to re-submit a “self-screening” to explain their thoughts and actions in the UNC POW camps. As Zhang Zeshi recalled the process,

We were required to inform on each other... Particularly, we must name names for any suspicious imperialist agents. The investigators forbade us from travelling to each other’s living places or talking with one other. The relationships among the returnees quickly intensified.<sup>35</sup>

The investigation ended in late May and the GPD sanctioned the final disposition for the returnees in September. Among the 6,064 Chinese returnees, more than 5,300 (or 87%) were expelled from the PLA. As for the 2,900 CCP cadres, more than 2,700 (or 91.8%) were expelled from the CCP and only 120 retained their party membership.<sup>36</sup>

For the majority of the Chinese returnees, the stigma of being captured in the Korean War followed them in the next three decades. Many suffered ordeals during the various political upheavals from the 1950s to the 1970s. On September 27, 1980, the PLA Central Military Committee decided to rehabilitate the Korean War POWs. After a brief re-investigation, most Chinese returnee’ PLA profile and CCP membership were restored. Looking back, the Gao Gang-Rao Shushi Incident clearly changed Beijing’s policy toward the POW returnees. In early 1954, the power struggle among the CCP top leadership magnified the fear of “enemy from the inside.” Driven by this insecure mentality, the policy makers in Beijing overturned the CCPR’s initial investigation and labelled almost all returnees as “imperialist agents.” Resultantly, the POW returnees became the sacrificial figure under Beijing’s demand to “weed out” the hidden class enemies.

### Problems of “Conversion”

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<sup>35</sup> Zhang, *Wode Chaoxian Zhanzheng*, 213.

<sup>36</sup> He, *Zhongcheng*, 138.

Since not all POWs of the Korean War returned home, the two sides of the Cold War's first hot war were able to claim some success of their indoctrination programs. Although the PRC accepted twenty-one American VNRs as China's international "proletariat brothers," the CCP authorities never treated them as genuine converters to communism. In early 1954, a VNR named Rufus Douglas was admitted to a Chinese hospital due to "a heart defect caused by a disease he contracted in Japan."<sup>37</sup> Douglas' situation degenerated quickly and he passed away on June 8, 1954 at the age of twenty-seven. The Chinese authorities insisted in giving Douglas a Christian funeral, dispatching a Chinese priest to the funeral who read passages from the Bible in Chinese.<sup>38</sup> Another VNR named Morris Wills recalled: "That was ironical because we all considered ourselves rather Marxist."<sup>39</sup> A seemingly considerate gesture on the part of the Chinese authorities, Douglas' funeral underscored for the other VNRs their old identity in the Chinese eyes. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the political upheavals in China changed the conditions for the American VNRs dramatically. The Great Leap Forward, the Sino-Soviet split, and the Cultural Revolution gradually deteriorated their living conditions, which tended to be better than their Chinese peers'. By the 1960s, almost all the American VNRs returned to the US due to the increasingly hostile political environment in the PRC.<sup>40</sup>

Nevertheless, two American VNRs who lived far away from China's political center were well adapted to the Chinese society. James Veneris settled down in the PRC permanently and lived a peaceful life until he passed away in 2001. Upon Veneris' arrival in China in 1954, he became an engineer at a paper factory in Jinan, Shandong province.

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<sup>37</sup> Wills, *Turncoat*, 80.

<sup>38</sup> Wills, 80.

<sup>39</sup> Wills, 80.

<sup>40</sup> For detailed discussion for the VNRs' motivations to return to the US, see McKnight, *We Fight for Peace*.

He learned the Chinese language from his co-workers and married a Chinese woman. His co-workers nicknamed him *Lao Wen*. The locals enjoyed the presence of *Lao Wen* who could speak fluent Shandong dialect and always had a cheerful spirit.<sup>41</sup> During the 1980s, he paid several visits back to the United States, but eventually returned to the PRC where he had developed a big family with nineteen members. On December 18, 2001, Veneris passed away in Jinan at the age of eighty. In his last will and testament, he stated:

On November 28, 1950, I was captured by the Chinese in Korea. Personally speaking, it was the date of my “liberation” ... In the process of building up the new China, I have forged deep friendship with the Chinese people. As I lived, studied and worked in Jinan for several decades, please spread my ashes to the Yellow River as my final resting place.<sup>42</sup>

Whether or not becoming a genuine believer of communism, Veneris lived harmoniously with the Chinese people around him. As a second-tier Chinese city, Jinan’s remoteness from Beijing ironically provided protection to Veneris from the political turmoil during the 1950s and 1960s. Unlike most other VNRs who chose to settle down in Beijing, Veneris only spent a few years there. In 1963, Veneris enrolled in the Renmin University to study international politics. When the Cultural Revolution broke out, he quickly returned to Jinan to avoid troubles with the Red Guards. Under the protection of the factory manager and his co-workers, Veneris did not experience much hardship during the Cultural Revolution. While the political situation forced several of the VNRs out of China, Veneris was able to maintain a decent living in Jinan.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Cheng and Huang, *Meijun Zhanfu*, 180.

<sup>42</sup> Cheng and Huang, 184.

<sup>43</sup> For example, Richard Corden and Morris Wills settled down in Beijing and were disillusioned by the Great Leap Forward.

From 1954 to 1966, the black VNR Clarence Adams also enjoyed a peaceful life in Wuhan, Hubei province. In 1956, after spending two years at the Renmin University in Beijing, Adams decided to continue his study in the Wuhan University in the central part of China. This decision allowed him to evade potential troubles in Beijing during the late 1950s and 1960s. At Wuhan University, he became interested in the writings of Mao Zedong. By reading Mao, Adams admitted that he “became very idealistic and wanted to become a true leader for the people.”<sup>44</sup> During his leisure time, he became especially good friends with the cooks in the university cafeteria. After class, he usually hung out with the cooks, enjoying some “earthy food such as chicken feet or pig intestines and drink[ing] a powerful Chinese rice liquor called *bai jiu [jiu]*.”<sup>45</sup> On weekends, Adams enjoyed hanging out with ordinary working-class people to the extent that “I became part of their families, and I could completely relax.”<sup>46</sup>

In 1966, after spending twelve years in China, Adams returned to the United States to join the civil rights movement. Before that, Adams read, with “great excitement,” about the development of the civil rights movement reported in western publications such as *Time*, *Life*, and *Newsweek*.<sup>47</sup> While Adams contemplated returning to the US and fought for racial equality, the Vietnam War cemented his decision to return. After hearing the US President Johnson’s speech to escalate the Vietnam War in 1965, Adams thought “what was happening in Vietnam was all too familiar to me... I knew that once again many poor blacks would be sent to a remote foreign land to be slaughtered, just as I was. I wanted

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<sup>44</sup> Adams, *An American Dream*, 77.

<sup>45</sup> Adams, 78.

<sup>46</sup> Adams, 77–78.

<sup>47</sup> Adams, 102.



them to know what other young black Americans and I had gone through in Korea.”<sup>48</sup> On August 15, 1965, he made the following speech via Radio Hanoi and broadcasted to the American soldiers in Vietnam:

I am not broadcasting to the entire US Army, only to its black soldiers... you are supposedly fighting for the freedom of the Vietnamese, but what kind of freedom do you have at home, sitting in the back of the bus, being barred from restaurants, stores, and certain neighborhoods, and being denied the right to vote? ... Go home and fight for equality in America.<sup>49</sup>

Having lived and studied in China for over a decade, Adams saw the injustice of the Vietnam War for black people.

Shortly after making the broadcast, Adams, with the help of the Red Cross Society of China, purchased tickets back to the US via Hong Kong. Unlike *Lao Wen* who devoted the rest of his life to an adopted homeland, Adams remained true to his people back in the United States. Still, reflecting on his twelve-year experience in China, Adams wrote in his memoir: “I sincerely believed that for the most part, China had treated me well.”<sup>50</sup> As both Veneris and Adams lived far away from Beijing, they were able to evade the much worse environments of China created by Mao’s political campaigns. Under the protection of the locals, they managed to navigate relatively peacefully the political turmoil of China in the 1950s and 1960s.

While the American VNRs had the choice between staying in the PRC and leaving, the Republic of China (ROC) government never provided such a choice to the 14,342 Chinese VNRs who settled down in Taiwan. In 1954, the ROC government exploited the propaganda value of the VNRs by organizing “witness groups” to testify to the atrocities

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<sup>48</sup> Adams, 103.

<sup>49</sup> “Korean War Defector, as ‘Voice’ Of Hanoi, Bids G.I.’s Get Out,” *The New York Times*, August 15, 1965; Adams, *An American Dream*, 104.

<sup>50</sup> Adams, *An American Dream*, 110.

committed by the CCP in the mainland. On February 21, 1954, the ROC government organized a group of Chinese VNRs to visit Changhua, Miaoli, Taitung, and Kinmen. During this two-week propaganda tour, the “anti-communist righteous person” visiting group reported the “hideous crimes and atrocities in the communist bandit-controlled mainland.”<sup>51</sup> They also described how they combatted communist agents in POW camps and earned their right to freedom in Taiwan. In April and August 1954, the ROC government arranged two separate tours for the Chinese VNRs to visit the Philippines, Japan, South Vietnam, the US, Canada, Brazil, Spain, France, and Italy to express the KMT’s anti-communist dedications.<sup>52</sup>

Fiction and documentary films and books about the “anti-communist righteous person” were released to promote the KMT authorities’ cause for recapturing the mainland. On March 13, 1954, the ROC government released the documentary *The Road to Freedom*.<sup>53</sup> According to the ROC Foreign Ministry, this documentary underscored the following message,

The [film] shows how happily these repatriates are living in the Freedom Village in Taiwan. They are assured of their security and general welfare, of finding jobs in the future and a satisfactory life in the free world. Here in the Freedom Village stand 14,000-odd former Chinese Communist soldiers – now citizens of Free China and the free world, living testimony to the world that no man, if give his choice, will accept slavery, and that freedom will ultimately triumph.<sup>54</sup>

In the following years, several books about the Chinese VNRs’ experience were also published to reinforce the necessity to recapture the mainland and urged the US

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<sup>51</sup> “Fangong Yishi Fangwentuan [Anti-Communist Righteous Persons’ Visiting Group],” *The United Daily News (UDN)*, February 21, 1954.

<sup>52</sup> See for example, *UDN*, April 27, 1954; *UDN*, August 11, 1954.

<sup>53</sup> *Document Collection of Postwar Taiwan*, vol. 2: 372.

<sup>54</sup> *Document Collection of Postwar Taiwan*, vol. 2: 376.

government to provide more aid to the ROC government in Taiwan.<sup>55</sup> After the VNRs' propaganda value was exhausted in the late 1950s, the ROC government gradually forgot them.

Ironically, living in poverty in Taiwan, most Chinese VNRs did not benefit but suffered from their identity as "anti-communist righteous persons." When the KMT retreated to Taiwan in 1949, more than 600,000 KMT soldiers followed the Chiang Kai-shek government. During the 1950s and 1960s, most of the KMT soldiers were demobilized and became the so-called *rongmin*, or glorious citizens. While the ROC government built designated hospitals and provided vocational trainings for the demobilized KMT veterans, the VNRs from the Korean War were ineligible for such benefits as they were not the recognized *rongmin*. A former Chinese POW Zhang Zeshi did an investigation in 2004, concluding that,

Due to their special identities as CPV POWs, the ROC government built the designated "home for the anti-communist righteous persons" to take care of the Chinese VNRs... It was not until a much later time, that the ROC government recognized the "anti-communist righteous persons" as *rongmin*.<sup>56</sup>

Upon the Chinese VNRs' arrival in Taiwan, they found neither democracy nor freedom. While exploiting their propaganda values, the ROC government viewed the "anti-communist righteous persons" with suspicion. After the Cold War ended the cross-strait relations improved, the Chinese VNRs in Taiwan were able to have normal lives as ordinary people.

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<sup>55</sup> For example, see *Fangong Yishi Fendoushi*.

<sup>56</sup> Zhang and Gao, *Gu Dao*, 212.

In June 1994, a group of seven former Chinese POWs of the Korean War had a reunion at the Taipei KMT Hero House. These seven men used to serve the 180 Division, 60<sup>th</sup> Army of the Chinese People's Volunteer (CPV). They were captured by the US Army in mid-1951 and were separated after the explanation session in 1953. Four decades after their ordeals in the Korean War POW camps ended, they became high school teachers, bus drivers, deliverymen, and writers in the PRC and the ROC. At dinner table, the former brother-in-arms recounted their experiences after the POW exchange was completed. As the representative of the POWs who returned to the mainland, Zhang Zeshi shared his harsh memories during the Anti-Rightist Campaign and the Cultural Revolution. A “anti-communist righteous person” shared bitter stories when he settled down in Taiwan,

After our arrival, the people in Taiwan called us job stealers and they never hid their xenophobic feeling toward us. The KMT soldiers who followed Chiang Kai-shek to Taiwan viewed us as unreliable and despised us. What's worse, we even looked down upon ourselves! Taipei's weather gets really hot in the summer, but for years I never wear a short sleeve T-shirt. I do not wish to let any other people see the tattoos on my arms! I, I was a CCP member and I still feel ashamed to this day!<sup>57</sup>

As the “speaking bitterness” session progressed, the seven men quickly reached the consensus: “In China [PRC and ROC], once you become a POW, the rest of your life is ruined!”<sup>58</sup> Although the former Korean War POWs returned to a rather peaceful civilian life by the 1990s, their common sufferings in the immediate aftermath of the Korean War revealed their respective government's insecure mentality under the Cold War.

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<sup>57</sup> Zhang, *Wode Chaoxian Zhanzheng*, 340.

<sup>58</sup> Zhang, 343.

## Conclusion

From the first truce talk at Kaesong in July 1951 to the signing of the armistice in July 1953, the prisoner of war (POW) issue deadlocked the Korean War peace negotiation for two years. Under the alleged purpose of protecting democracy, Washington insisted on the so-called voluntary repatriation principle for the “anti-communist righteous persons.” As a retaliation, Beijing retained a number of “international proletariat brothers” to defend the communist ideology. During these two years, 12,300 American troops were killed and 45 percent of the total American casualties of the Korean War were incurred.<sup>1</sup> On the other side, 76,964 Chinese lost their lives and 67 percent of the total Chinese casualties were suffered.<sup>2</sup> When the POW issue was finally resolved in January 1954, the UNC transferred 14,342 “anti-communist righteous persons” to the Republic of China (ROC) in Taiwan and the People’s Republic of China (PRC) retained twenty-one American “international proletariat brothers.” In a sense, for each of these Voluntary Non-Repatriate (VNR) prisoners who allegedly made a choice between democracy and communism, roughly one American and five Chinese soldiers were killed on the Korean battlefield.

As this author has argued and demonstrated in this study, in late 1950, the POW issue started with Beijing’s and Washington’s ambitions for ideological conversion. The Chinese People’s Volunteer (CPV) planned to recruit “liberated soldiers” from the American “proletariat” and the United Nations Command (UNC) wished to make “democratic citizens” out of the Chinese “communists.” At the POW camps however, the anticipated ideological contest never took place. In 1951, under ordinary soldiers’ “third

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<sup>1</sup> Dean Acheson, *The Korean War* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1971), 129.

<sup>2</sup> *Jingyan Zongjie, Weisheng Gongzuo*, vol. Weisheng Qinwu: 317.

ideology,” the Chinese commissars at Pyöktong encountered Ku Klux Klan (KKK) members while the US Army was baffled by *Paoge* brothers on Kojedo. The contests between communism and KKK, and democracy and *Paoge* essentially bankrupted the camp authorities’ presumptions and called for new policies to administer the POW camps.

From 1951 to 1953, the POW camp authorities on both sides, situated at the forefront of the Korean War amid the Cold War, devised non-ideological techniques to administer the POW camps. The CPV Political Department manipulated the UNC POWs’ minds with the strategy of alienation, self-punishment and self-policing. The cooperation between the CPV cadres and a few numbers of “progressive” prisoners preempted mass-scale violence among the prisoner factions and against the Chinese camp authorities. By 1953, the UNC prisoners became their own guards and acted as if they were always watched over by the Chinese. By comparison, the US Army controlled the Chinese POWs’ bodies with visible violence. The collaboration among the UNC camp authorities, the anti-communist prisoners, and the DAC officers eliminated the Chinese POWs’ collective resistance. After 1952, the Chinese prisoners knew for sure that they had always been watched over. Thus, the paranoid minds and the tortured bodies, rather than ideology, constituted the key strategies for controlling the POWs.

Between 1953 and 1954, the POW camp authorities on both sides successfully manipulated the VNR prisoners’ choice-making during the explanation under the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission (NNRC). Rather than the POWs’ making a conscious choice between communism and democracy, the explanation never afforded such an opportunity. In April 1953, the American VNRs’ repatriation served as evidence of the Chinese leniency. After June 1953, the retention of American VNRs served as a face-

saving mechanism as Beijing lost two-thirds of its POWs to Taiwan. For the US, after the anti-communist POWs pushed Truman to uphold the voluntary repatriation in 1952, the number of Chinese VNRs served as evidence to demonstrate the ideological supremacy of democratic capitalism. The collaboration among the UNC camp authorities, the anti-communist POWs, and the DAC officers successfully manipulated the majority of the Chinese POWs' choice-making. Resultantly, 14,324 out of 21,540 Chinese POWs were sent to Taiwan as "anti-communist righteous persons." Other than fulfilling their captors' designs, the POWs hardly had the opportunity to make a fair and just decision for themselves.

After 1954, the experience of the POWs of the Korean War on both sides revealed another ironic aspect of the Cold War. After systematically imposing the ideological indoctrination programs on the captured soldiers in Korea, policy makers on both sides were paranoid with the idea of enemy infiltration. Despite their own failures, both Beijing and Washington developed a conviction that their enemy was capable of recalibrating their own soldiers' minds. Such a superstitious belief in turn led to the unfair treatment for the POW returnees on both sides. Furthermore, the handling of the VNRs also revealed the governments' lack of confidence to make sincere converts from the other side. While publicly announcing the VNRs as their trophy ideological converts, neither Beijing nor Taipei truly accepted them as sincere communists or democratic citizens. Not to mention Washington's policy of utilizing the Chinese POWs as a bargaining chip on the negotiation table. When the Cold War's first hot conflict ended, the POWs from both sides had experienced the deadly battle at the frontline, mental and physical abuses in POW camps, and calumny and slander back home.

### Significance of Research

For a long time, most established Cold War studies provide a Eurocentric interpretation in terms of why the cold conflict turned hot in Asia. For a long time, historians interpret the Cold War as a European phenomenon and it remained “cold” until the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991.<sup>3</sup> As John Lewis Gaddis argued, the Soviet leader Joseph Stalin’s belief on capitalism’s “inherent greediness—the irresistible urge to place profits above politics—would sooner or later prevail, leaving communists with the need only for patience as they awaited their adversaries’ self-destruction.”<sup>4</sup> Building on Gaddis’ analysis, Odd Arne Westad argued that the Korea War is an anomaly byproduct of the Cold War which was “entirely avoidable.”<sup>5</sup> According to these scholars, the ideological contestation in Europe determined the discourse of the Cold War and the hot conflicts in Asia were mere “accidents.” Nevertheless, this Eurocentric view of the Cold War cannot provide a satisfactory explanation to the POW issue of the Korean War.

In recent years, many non-western historians have introduced new perspectives to the hot wars in Asia to challenge this Eurocentric interpretation. The Chinese scholar Shen Zihua explored how the North Korean leader Kim Il Sung as a dedicated communist leader subjugated to Moscow and Beijing was never the case, but skillfully exploited enough support to launch a civil war for national unification.<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile, the Vietnamese

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<sup>3</sup> See for example, John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History*, Reprint edition (London: Penguin Books, 2006); Odd Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times*, New Ed edition (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

<sup>4</sup> Gaddis, *The Cold War*.

<sup>5</sup> Westad argues that the Korean War “symbolized the Cold War conflict at it most frightening” and it “was an entirely avoidable war.” see Odd Arne Westad, *The Cold War: A World History*, 1 edition (New York: Basic Books, 2017), 159.

<sup>6</sup> Zihua Shen, *Zaitan Chaoxian Zhanzheng [Reinvestigate the Korean War]* (Hong Kong: Sanlian Shudian Youxian Gongsi, 2013), 160–231.



scholar Lien-Hang Nguyen focused on North Vietnamese leaders such as Le Duan and Le Duc Tho to demonstrate how their nationalist impulses for unification dictated the discourse of the Vietnam War, a hot conflict in which most scholars believed Moscow, Beijing, and Washington had total control.<sup>7</sup> These scholars have demonstrated that nationalist impulses fueled the hot conflicts in Asia. According to them, it was not the Cold War that “accidentally” turned hot; but rather the superpower intervention inevitably turned the hot wars “cold” by dragging the regional wars for national unification into global ideological confrontation. By bringing in new perspectives from the non-European archives, these scholarships shake the long-term belief of the inevitability of the hot wars in Asia and open new avenues for scholar inquiries.

What differentiates this study from the Eurocentric scholarship is the crucial importance this author assigns to the interactions between the camp authorities and the POWs on both sides. Similar with Shen Zhihua’s and Lien-Hang Nguyen’s approach, this study breaks new ground for the study on the Cold War in Asia in multiple senses. First, the established literature demonstrated the enmeshment of the hot and cold elements of the Korean War without identifying when or how the ideological contest, the essence of the Cold War, replaced the nationalist civil war. This study underscores that the Cold War in Asia started in the Korean War POW camps because of how in the first place these ordinary Americans and Chinese participated in the hot war as soldiers, and later were displayed as

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<sup>7</sup> The argument is that while traditional scholarship on “American involvement and defeat in Vietnam highlight contingency and human choices, depictions of the Vietnamese revolution and victory emphasize structural forces and inevitability. This book reveals that in fact the war and its outcome were shaped as much by individuals in Hanoi as by historical structures.” That “Washington was not alone in prolonging the war; often, American leaders were at the mercy of actors in Hanoi and Saigon who had their own geostrategic reasons to extend the fighting and to frustrate the peace negotiations.” See Lien-Hang T. Nguyen, *Hanoi’s War: An International History of the War for Peace in Vietnam*, Reprint edition (The University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 22.

trophy ideological converts by their captors. Although the official propaganda on both sides toward each other and their domestic audience started prior to the Korean War, ordinary citizens on both sides could hardly meet their ideological opponent face-to-face. The POW camp was the only place for people from one side to meet the ideological other. These Chinese and American POWs were at the forefront of the Cold War contest in Asia.

Second, this dissertation illuminates what this author calls the normal soldiers' "third ideology" in addition to their supposed official beliefs. When the Chinese commissars launched the ideological indoctrination program, they quickly discovered that these American soldiers were not their "international proletariat brothers" who had been cheated by the Wall Street financial capitalists. Rather, many Americans rallied under the KKK organization to reject the gospel of communism. The US Army encountered similar issues when they activated the CIE program for the allegedly Chinese "communists." Instead of embracing democracy wholeheartedly, the staunchest opposition came from a traditional Chinese secret society—*Paoge*. The POWs of the Korean War forced the policy makers on both sides cope with their actions and demands. By incorporating these ordinary soldiers' "third ideology" other than the official "communism vs. capitalism" and "democracy vs. dictatorship" narratives, this study brings in normal soldiers' perspectives to the Cold War literature.

Lastly, the ambiguity surrounding the POW indoctrination programs has continuously been plaguing the US-China relations to the present. The mythology of communist "brainwashing" remains popular in the US. The making and remaking of "The Manchurian Candidate" film in 1962 and 2004 reflect the popular fear of a communist

mind-control conspiracy.<sup>8</sup> In 2002, the US military and intelligence officers re-examined the Korean War POWs' testimonies to improve their interrogation procedures in the Global War on Terrorism. The American officers learned what they perceived to be the Chinese "brainwashing" tactics and made a new handbook for interrogators at Guantanamo.<sup>9</sup>

On the other side of the Pacific, the PRC has been fighting the specter of "peaceful evolution" after the Korean War. Mao Zedong concluded that the US had changed its Cold War strategy from direct military intervention to peaceful evolution.<sup>10</sup> Even after the normalization of US-China relations, Deng Xiaoping warned his colleagues in 1985 that the concepts of "human rights, democracy, and freedom" were the instruments employed by the United States for a "peaceful evolution" in China.<sup>11</sup> Thus, the terms "brainwashing" and "peaceful evolution" share the aura of dark magic that obscures the precise discourse in determining the thoughts and behaviors of both Americans and Chinese. This obscurity in turn fertilizes various conspiracy theories and reinforces misinformation across the Pacific in the past seven decades. By examining the indoctrination programs on both sides, this dissertation demystifies the misinformation across the Pacific and facilitates mutual understandings between the United States and the People's Republic of China.

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<sup>8</sup> *The Manchurian Candidate*, 1962, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0056218/>; *The Manchurian Candidate*, 2004, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0368008/>.

<sup>9</sup> Tim Weiner, "Remembering Brainwashing - Cold War Thinking, Today," *The New York Times*, July 6, 2008, sec. Week in Review, <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/06/weekinreview/06weiner.html>.

<sup>10</sup> In 1959, Mao Zedong delivered a speech arguing that "communist leaders like Khrushchev... had already been duped by the imperialist's peaceful evolution scheme." Mao put forward his peaceful evolution argument on the basis of Dean Acheson's Press Club Speech in 1950. Citing Acheson's statement that "[when the Chinese people] completely withdrew their support from this government, when that support was withdrawn, the whole military establishment disintegrated. Added to the grossest incompetence every experienced by any military command was this total lack of support both in the armies and in the country, and so the whole matter just simply disintegrated." For Mao's analysis see Xianzhi Feng and Chongji Jin, *Mao Zedong Zhuan (Quan 6 Juan) [A Biography For Mao Zedong]*, 6 vols. (Zhongyang Wenxian Chubanshe, 2011); For Acheson's speech, see Dean Acheson, Speech on the Far East, January 12, 1950, <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/1950-01-12.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> Xiaoping Deng, *Deng Xiaoping Wenxuan [Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping]* (Renmin Chubanshe, 1983), vol. 3: 123-125.

### Suggestions for Future Research

In addition to the research questions discussed in previous chapters, there are some remaining issues surrounding the Korean War POWs. The first issue is related to communist “brainwashing.” One common but specious explanation for the American POWs’ “collaboration” was “brainwashing.” However, any such claims that the American POWs were victims of communist “brainwashing” is problematic. The CIA operative Edward Hunter coined this term and published his first book *Brain-Washing in Red China: The Calculated Destruction of Men’s Minds* in 1951. The American POWs who claimed to have been “brainwashed” by the Chinese were captured in late 1950. Specifically, Frank Noel was captured on November 29, 1950 and Preston Richie was captured on November 30, 1950.<sup>12</sup> These American POWs had been interned at Pyöktong for over three years, isolated from the outside world, and were interrogated by the JJIPB on the first day of their release, how could they fell victim to communist “brainwashing” before this term was even invented by the CIA? The question then becomes, who induced the “brainwashing” confessions from the American POW returnees and for what purpose.

The second issue that deserves some scholarly attention is related to the *Paoge* brothers. According to Beijing’s initial policy instructions in 1953, the *Paoge* brothers did not belong to any of the three POW categories.<sup>13</sup> The process under which the Center for the Chinese POW Returnees (CCPR) classified the *Paoge* brothers as category four POWs was not clear. Even before the Gao-Rao Incident in early 1954, the *Paoge* brothers were

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<sup>12</sup> “Investigative Records: Intelligence and Investigative Dossiers,” Box 2, “Final Report,” 23, 28.

<sup>13</sup> “Zong Zhengzhibu Guanyu Zhiyuanjun Beifu Guilai Renyuan De Chuli Banfa [General Political Department’s Policy for the POW Returnees],” September, 1953. *ZGLZX*, vol. 12: 483-486.

treated like category three POWs. Why did the CCP condemn the *Paoge* brothers, after they had fought so hard to return home? For the majority of the Chinese POW returnees, their stigma of being captured in Korea ended in 1980. While most Chinese POW returnees' PLA profile and CCP membership were restored after September 1980, the *Paoge* brothers were never rehabilitated. The *Paoge* leader Dai Yushu became a shoemaker and died in poverty in 1989.<sup>14</sup> After the majority of Chinese returnees had been rehabilitated in the 1980s, why did the CCP treat *Paoge* brothers with such harshness?

Another possible research topic is about the VNR POWs. When the explanation under the NNRC ended in 1954, a group of eighty-eight POWs (twelve Chinese and seventy-six Koreans) refused to go to the PRC, the ROC, North Korea, or South Korea. Under the arrangement of the International Committee of the Red Cross in India, this group of eighty-eight POWs eventually ended up in India, Mexico, and Argentina. Commenting on these prisoners, the Indian General Thimayya stated,

In studying these prisoners as people, I felt that I could learn the most from those who did not want to go back either to China or to North or South Korea, but who had opted to be sent to some neutral country. Such men, I thought, would have intellectually arrived at reasons for their choice, and I wanted to know their reasoning.<sup>15</sup>

Seven decades after the conclusion of the Korean War, these POWs' reasoning for choosing one of the neutral countries remains ambiguous. Aside from the eighty-eight POWs who went to the neutral countries, an American VNR named John Roedel Dunn was surrounded by mystery. While most American VNRs gradually left China and returned to the United States during the 1950s and 1960s, Dunn left China for Czechoslovakia in 1959. In Beijing, Dunn married a Czech student named Emilia Porubcova. During the heyday of

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<sup>14</sup> Yu, *E Yun*, 457.

<sup>15</sup> Thimayya, *Experiment in Neutrality*, 107.

the Cultural Revolution, Dunn took a job from the Czech secret police to spy on the Chinese Embassy in Prague. Until he passed away in 1996, Dunn never set his foot again on US soil. The stories of these extraordinary individuals will surely shed a new light on the Cold War studies from ordinary people's perspective.

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