

Ping-Jin Campaign

by Ah Xiang

[Excerpts from "Civil Wars: 1945-1950"]

Fu Zuoyi's KMT troops, totaling 520,000, originally had plans of either evacuating from coastal Tanggu or retreating to hometown Suiyuan Province in Inner Mongolia via Ping-Sui Railway. To prevent Fu Zuoyi from slipping away, Mao Te-tung deliberately adopted an early policy of either encircling the enemy cities only or segregating parts of the cities, with a specific order that communist forces could not take out all three key points to the west, i.e., Zhangjiakou, Nankou & Xinbao'an.. Mao Tse-tung was especially worried that Fu Zuoyi would succumb to Chiang Kai-shek's request for a relocation to southern China via sea, for which The final onslaught against besieged Du Yuming army group was delayed by two weeks.

In Peiping [i.e., Peking], Nie Rongzhen's city work department of Jinn-Cha-Ji CCP Central Bureau had been working on "peaceful pacification" of Fu Zuoyi's KMT troops since The spring of 1948. CCP underground activist Liu Ren first retrieved Nankai University student Zeng Changning for sake of manoeuvring her father Zeng Yanyi who was a classmate of Fu Zuoyi at Baoding Cadet. After failing to persuade Fu Zuoyi into a defection, Zeng Yanyi managed to have their common teacher Liu Houtong lobby with Fu Zuoyi. Before Liu Houtong acted on it, another communist contact Du Renzhi, with facilitation of student Yan Youwen acting as deputy office director inside of Fu Zuoyi's headquarter, had lobbied with Fu Zuoyi in vain. Du Renzhi then contacted Liu Houtong at the suggestion of brother Du Jingzhi who worked for Fu Zuoyi as a councilor. In September, Liu Ren dispatched messenger to Liu Houtong for asking Fu Zuoyi to follow the example of Wu Hualong's defection at the siege of Jinan. After communist victory in Jinzhou on Oct 15th, Du Renzhi disputed Liu Houtong's suggestion of selling a 'coalition government' to Fu Zuoyi. On Nov 2nd, Du Renzhi promised to Liu Houtong as to communist credibility. In early Nov 1948, Shen Diqing of CCP student work committee in Peking was called over to Bozheng town by Liu Ren for the task of accompanying Fu Dongju, i.e., Fu Zuoyi's daughter, to Peking.

3000 underground communists and 5000 communist sympathizers of third party nature, including Heh Siyuan [former Peking mayor] and Kang Tongbi [daughter of Kang Youwei], organized numerous parades and demonstrations for exerting pressure on Fu Zuoyi. On Nov 7th, Fu Zuoyi suggested to Heh Siyuan that he was in no hurry to make a decision since Americans might get involved in China's civil wars and Li Zongren might save the regime. Fu Zuoyi wavered till after several military defeats, i.e., 105th Corps being surrounded by The communist troops at Zhangjiakou, two divisions of 35th Corps surrounded at Xinbao'an and two divisions of 104th Corps destroyed at Henglingguan, Du Renzhi and communist underground leader Cui Yueli then pressured Du Renzhi with the prospect of Fu Zuoyi becoming a prisoner. Fu Zuoyi, still hoping to get a better term, dispatched representatives and telegraph set to communist camps to see Liu Yalou at Sanhexian county, still hoping that a trilateral talk, with Democratic League acting as a neutral, could yield a 'coalition government' in Northern China.

Chiang Kai-shek, to rein in Fu Zuoyi, dispatched Xu Shichang to Peking, but Fu Zuoyi declined the suggestion of a southern retreat either via Tanggu or going to Qingdao on the pretext that his troops at Zhangjiakou and Xinbao'an could not be saved. Zheng Jiemin, the under-secretary of the Defense Department, was sent to Peking next. Jiang Huiguo, i.e., Chiang Kai-shek's stepson, carried a letter to Peking, with Chiang Kai-shek's call for "the homecoming of Fu Zuoyi alone beating thousand soldiers". American navy general also paid a visit to Fu Zuoyi as to US assistance in a coastal retreat. American ambassador Stuart and Dr Hu Shi paid a similar visit. Fu Zuoyi, over-saddened by the loss of 35th Corps at Xinbao'an on Dec 22nd, made a decision for conceding to communists on Dec 23rd. With communist final siege of Zhangjiakou going on on 23rd, Fu Zuoyi sent a letter to Mao Te-tung, with a call for a "public wire to terminate the civil war" but "advising against communist demand in disarming his troops during transition stage". Communists answered with eliminating Fu Zuoyi's troops at Zhangjiakou, instead.

CCP Northeast China Field Army [NCFA], under Lin Biao, cut short re-organization for northern China campaigns. 800,000 troops entered the Great Wall via multiple passes, ranging from Shanhaiguan Pass to Gubeikou & Xifengkou passes. Li Tianyou's 1st "zong dui" of NCFA, after crossing Xifengkou, arrived Baodi county to cut off Beiping-Tianjin Railway on Dec 20th 1948. Five communist corps, with 22 divisions, in addition to cannons, tanks, garrison, and engineering columns, converged upon the city of Tianjin. One additional corps was deployed against KMT troops in coastal Tanggu.

On Jan 1st 1949, communists relayed a message to Fu Zuoyi for a delay in a public wire to call for termination of civil war on the pretext that Fu Zuoyi could maintain his legality, explained that communist side would still declare a list of war criminals including Fu Zuoyi, and suggested that Fu Zuoyi's immediate troops inside of Peking could be reorganized into one corps. On Jan 3rd, Fu Zuoyi dispatched officer Zhou Beifeng and Democratic League representative Zhang Dongsun to Jixian county for a new round of peace talks with communists. Nie Rongzhen, after discerning that Fu Zuoyi was willing to bargain on behalf of four cities of Peking, Tianjin, Tanggu & Suiyuan, proposed a talk the next day. On 4th, Luo Ronghuan stated that Fu Zuoyi's troops must be converted to People's Liberation Army, and all areas must be "liberated" whereas communists could release all officers captured in the siege of Zhangjiakou, Xinbao'an and Huailai. Two more talks were held on 7th & 8th, with signed stipulations good till midnight of Jan 14th 1949. Fu Zuoyi asked Zhou Beifeng relay a reply to communist side, stating that Jan 14th deadline was too close and suggested that he would dispatch to communist camp Deng Baoshan the deputy pacification commander for Northern China. Once Deng Baoshan flew into Peking, another sworn brother, i.e., Ma Zhanshan, fetched Deng Baoshan for exchanging opinions. The three made a decision, and then dispatched Deng Baoshan and Zhou Beifeng out of Deshengmen citygate by 1:00 pm. Nie Rongzhen, emphasizing that midnight was the deadline, cautioned Zhou Beifeng and Deng Baoshan that since the final attack at Tianjin city was already issued, peace talk would not cover Tianjin. To bargain for better terms, Fu Zuoyi ordered that chief of staff Li Shijie telegraph Chen Changjie with instructions that the longer Tianjin was retained the more likely some solution could be obtained.

Commander Liu Yalou devised a strategy of attacking the strip-shaped Tianjin from two directions of east and west, cutting the city in half at Jintangqiao, and then swallowing up southern segment before going after the northern part of the city. NCFA's 1st "zong dui" and 2nd "zong dui" were to attack Hepingmen citygate, while 7th "zong dui" and 8th "zong dui" were to attack Minquanmen citygate. At 10:00 am, on Jan 14th 1949, the general attack was launched with blanket shelling of the city for well over half an hour. Communist tank army rolled forward after taking out the long range cannon positions of the defenders. With citywall blast apart, Heh Dongsheng's division poured into the city via

Hepingmen citygate. Jiang Yonghui's division breached the city defense as well. On the eastern side of Tianjin, another two communist corps also broke through the citywall; and on the southern end, one communist corps was charging at KMT position as well. At the citywall, KMT troops and communist troops mounted ferocious counterattacks. Communist troops eliminated KMT tanks with anti-tank artillery, and deployed "chemical mortar shells" against the defenders.²

Lane-to-lane fightings ensued, with each building, each window, and each intersection wrestled after fierce struggles. Communist troops used dynamite satchel against walls and buildings for clearing the path. Division Chief Heh Dongsheng and deputy "zong dui" commander Cao Lihuai personally rode on a tank for blasting the KMT positions towards the city center of Jintangqiao. At this time, communist eastern route broke through Minquanmen citygate. KMT forces were cut into several segments and pockets. By 8:00 am of Jan 15th, communist troops sacked the citadel of Haiguangshi. Fierce fightings continued on inside of Tianjin Garrison Commander Chen Changjie's headquarter, with fightings in each corner, house, yard and floor of the building. Communist troops, after throwing grenades into the basement, intruded inside to have Chen Changjie caught alive. Tianjin, which was attacked by the communist troops 14 hours ahead of the midnight deadline, fell within 29 hours.

On Jan 16th, communists claimed to Fu Zuoyi's representatives that they would only cover the city of Peking for peace talks since Tianjin fell into communist hands, KMT troops at Tanggu already fled via sea, and Fu Zuoyi's troops in Suiyuan were far away. On Jan 17th, Deng Baoshan, together with communist tactics director Su Jing for Peking-Tientsin battlefield, entered Peking with signed preliminary agreement for peaceful liberation of Peking as well as an ultimatum from Lin Biao that was good from Jan 17th to Jan 21st. On the morning of 21st, before the communist noon deadline, Fu Zuoyi assembled all generals for a meeting, and declared that he had agreed to terminate war effective on Jan 22nd and relocate troops outside of the Peking city for reorganization in about one month timeframe³. Before delivering the city to communists, Fu Zuoyi made special arrangement for KMT agents from "military stats" and "central stats" bureaus to leave the city in exchange for releasing all communist captives and prisoners alive. On Jan 22nd, newspapers in Peking published the news. On Jan 31st, communist troops entered Peking.