

and from the peasants' committees and the tendency to counterpose them to the poor peasants and farm labourers in the land reform struggle must be corrected. Peasants with an income from exploitation should be classified as middle peasants if such income is less than 25 per cent of their total income, and classified as rich peasants if it is more. The land of well-to-do middle peasants must not be distributed without the owner's consent.

Source: 'Some Concrete Problems of Policy in the Land Reform and Mass Movements', 18 January 1948. In *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, Vol. 3, (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1965), pp. 182-3

6.8 Inflation and student protest in 1947

William Sewell

William Sewell, a British Quaker, taught Biology in Chengdu at the West China Union University. Inadvertently caught up by the Japanese invasion of Hong Kong, he was interned until 1945. He returned to the university at Chengdu (which he called Duliang to protect individuals) in 1947 and decided to stay on after some other Westerners had left.

The economic situation was beginning to dominate everything. Duliang is situated in fertile rice country, and the well-being of the people was indicated by the price and availability of rice. A teacher eats about a bushel of rice every month, though a manual worker needs more. In 1939 it cost two Chinese dollars a bushel, but, as a result of the Japanese occupation of part of China, it had risen to \$45 before I left on my ill-fated trip to the coast in 1941. [Sewell was caught up in the occupation of Hong Kong and interned throughout the war.] When I returned to Duliang in 1947 it had risen to \$50,000 a bushel, but already by the spring of the following year it was \$110,000. Paper money was almost worthless; we were most of us millionaires, but quite unable to cope. We began to know the terror that comes from a galloping inflation, the lack of security when money received on Friday has lost half its value by Saturday, and is useless on Monday. We knew, moreover, that there was no end in sight.

Dr David Fan, the President of the University, was worried about his Chinese staff, as indeed we all were. In his long years of wise guidance he had never faced a problem like this. Only the previous month, salaries had been doubled. Although they were linked to the cost of living index, prices rose too quickly for the University to be able to keep up. When I asked my Chinese colleagues in the Department of Chemistry how they were managing, they looked blankly at one another. It was the youngest, Fu May-lan, who spoke up for all. 'When I must have a new pair of shoes, my salary is sufficient to buy one shoe and then I must trust to being able to buy the other shoe the following month' – and the bitter laugh from all who were gathered round the bench showed that they felt she had spoken well ...

In the days when students had paid their fees in silver, it was easy work for all; but with inflation came hardship. Parents of a student, living two days travel away, would sell a small piece of land or some produce to pay fees for a year; but by the time the student arrived two days later there was sufficient only for one term, or perhaps just for a month. Fees which had been \$20 a term had increased to five million and were still rising. So it was agreed that fees should be paid in kind; and special stores were built for the rice that was brought, often from

long distances away. But quality varied, and rice was soon infested with insects if not properly cared for ...

Rice was frequently hard to get. The military men, who were becoming richer while the others got poorer, were buying it up, storing it, and then selling again only when the price was much higher. The government agreed to provide rice at a nominal price for the students to eat; but even then there was trickery. The students were given orders to collect rice at distances so great that there was no means of bringing it to Duliang even if the distant officials had been willing to give it.

At last the students, hungry and anxious, could stand it no longer. A demonstration was planned to ask the Governor to give the rice that he had promised on easier terms, and to provide transport if it had to come from a distance. A thousand strong, they marched to the headquarters of the Military Governor, placards lifted high, flags flying, and slogans shouted by voices that quickly grew hoarse.

The students arrived in the square, where all was hushed. Then, at a given signal, hundreds of soldiers and police, who had been hidden round about, ran out brandishing sticks and carrying ropes. Those students whom they caught they bound and drove indoors, some were trampled on and injured, but many escaped. The captured students were whipped and mostly set free; but some were confined overnight and kept without food until they were released. When they straggled back to the campus, President Fan was there to meet them, tears streaming down his face with emotion that students should have been treated in such a manner.

Thus the tide was turned. The situation was never the same again. 'Others have shed their blood. What about you?' was the question in blazing red characters that screamed from the walls of every building at Jen Dah. The Military Governor had kindled a torch.

Liu Lo-lah had shed blood – at least just a trifle. She and Min-lah had both been in the procession. Next day she had knocked at my door. I saw her face pressing against the glass as I went to open. 'Shien-sen', she cried, 'look what they have done', and, turning, she lifted her gown to show the red weals behind both her knees. They were the sign of a change in her life. I saw them again and again until they had faded, leaving no discernable mark, though the scar on her soul increased until it consumed her.

'Now I have hate', she spoke the words deliberately and so low that I could hardly hear them. 'Only those with great hate can have great love'. She told of her longing to love with ever greater intensity the poor of the land, the ignorant peasants, and all to whom privilege is denied. 'And the Chinese women especially I would love', she told me. 'You have heard from my brother of our misery. We are not born just for ourselves, but for the multitude who suffer. You can never know what Chinese women have suffered, the agonies and the humiliations they have endured. They are suffering now, as my mother suffered, and her mother's mother. But now is the time; now is the change. If we fail now, if we are weak, the chance will be lost, and misery will continue to my daughter, and my daughter's daughter. I am uneasy and ashamed that my home is rich; but I must become one of the people. I must hate what they hate; love what they love' ...

In her present mood it seemed important simply to listen to her as she talked, yet her words about hatred troubled me. 'Only those who have greatly suffered are capable of deep love or indeed of bitter hate', I tried to persuade her, telling her that they were not of necessity dependent on each other. In the end I believe she has driven some of the bitterness from her. She agreed that if it lay in her heart it would cloud her mind, warp her judgement, and make it less easy to achieve her great purpose.

What this purpose was seemed clear to me. There was no need to ask her, for I knew the answer before she gave it. 'Apart from Communism', she said, 'there is now no hope for China or the masses of her people'. Though I argued against it, she would not agree. 'I must teach you to understand. You are too foreign yet to know. It is our only hope. Our present government must go', and she tightened her grasp on my hand with her short fingers as she sought for English words with which to express her meaning. 'They now serve only the rich and rob the poor, so that the few can live in ever greater luxury'.

Source: William Sewell, *I Stayed in China* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1966), pp. 21-2, 24-7

6.9 The Communist army enters Nanjing, April 1949

Seymour Topping, a reporter with Associated Press

During the upheaval of the civil war, most liberal students chose the Communists, attracted by their asceticism and dedication, and repelled by the corruption and police brutality of the Kuomintang. Thousands went into the 'liberated areas' to work for the Communist cause without any prior intellectual commitment to Marxism-Leninism. The students whom the Communist troops met on the morning of April 24 near the Northwest Gate had elected to remain in the Nationalist areas, to continue their schooling and agitate for peace and good government from within. This was not enough to elicit the trust of the Communists. Several weeks after the Communist entry, I saw a column of thousands of students escorted by soldiers being marched down to the river to strengthen the dykes against the spring floods. The students were being indoctrinated not only through political lectures by army commissars but also by participation in manual labor, from which the classical tradition exempted intellectuals and to which they were not accustomed. The Party would be ready to greet those who passed the ideological tests.

The orderly entry of the Communist army was marred by an incident at [US Ambassador] Stuart's residence. At 6.30 a.m., 12 peasant soldiers sightseeing round the big city chanced on the embassy, forced the night gatekeeper to open the iron gates, and several blundered into the ambassador's bedroom, awakening the 72 year old envoy. 'Who are you? What do you want?' the Ambassador shouted. The armed soldiers left muttering and returned with the others, one of them explaining that they were simply looking round and meant no harm ...

The incident was widely publicized after the embassy reported to Washington, making the Communists appear provocative and belligerent ...

I, too, became involved in an incident with the Communist soldiers at the Associated Press House. Upon my return from the Northwest Gate, three soldiers entered my office as I sat at a typewriter. They were accompanied by Liu, my number one servant. Pointedly addressing themselves to Liu, they asked what I did. 'Oh, he sends messages to the United States,' Liu said casually, not seeing he was arousing the ideological vigilance of our guests. 'What does he say in these messages?' the spokesman asked suspiciously of Liu. My spirits sank as Liu replied: 'He reports about everything.' That did it. With fixed bayonets, the delegation marched out, and within a few minutes the house was surrounded by sentries. I could not leave, nor could my cook go to the market for food. Ronning [at the Canadian Embassy], hearing of my plight, delivered food packages through the barbed wire fence. I telephoned