

# Second Northern Expedition - 1928

by Ah Xiang

*Excerpts from "Tragedy of Chinese Revolution" at <http://www.republicanchina.org/campaign.html> For updates and related articles, check <http://www.republicanchina.org/RepublicanChina-pdf.htm>*

Nationalist Army took over Shanghai on March 21st 1927. On the afternoon of Mar 22nd 1927, Hu Zongnan assembled regiment/battalion officers and armed soldiers, rode on captured vehicles for a tour of the city, intruded onto British/French extraterritories, and drove by the Racing Course (i.e., today's People's Square of Shanghai) and through the Nanking Road. British/French, daunted by National Army's valour and Shanghai citizens' fervour, dared not stop the parade. (During the battle for Shanghai, imperialist nations assembled an army of 23000 in Shanghai and dispatched over 90 warships towards Nanking. However, as Harriet Sergeant had pointed out, Shanghai, i.e., the 'Whore of the Orient', where you could expect to "buy a nine year girl at no cost" per Sterling Seagrave in addition to "688 whorehouses", had corrupted both the mercenaries and the Third Communist International agents. The venereal disease incapacitated Dr. McDonald's entire British regiment as a result of "everything [including sex] was so [dirty] cheap", with soldiers having to go through treatment in Weihaiwei before reunion with their wives.)

With Songjiang-Shanghai Campaign over, Nationalist Army pushed against Sun Chuanfang remnants as well as armies of Zhi-xi [Hebei Province] and Lu-jun [Shandong Province army] from all directions. Sun Chuanfang's generals already defected to the Nationalist Army camp in batches: 15th Division Chief Liu Baoti defected on Feb 20th, 6th Division Chief Chen Diaoyuan defected on Mar 4th, and Ye Kaixin and Wang Pu followed suit. Three Hunan Province armies participated in the campaign against Nanking, i.e., Tan Yankai's 2nd Corps, Cheng Qian's 6th Corps & Heh Yaozu's 2nd route army. Nationalist Army General Cheng Qian pushed against Wuhu and Yicheng on Feb 27th, took over Wuhu on Mar 6th and Dangtu on Mar 17th, and continued on against Nanking. On the other side of Yangtze River, Nationalist Army, in collaboration with Chen Diaoyuan, penetrated into the central Anhui Province and north of Huai-shui River.

Sun Chuanfang remnants and Zhi-xi [Hebei Province army] / Lu-jun [Shandong Province army] made a defense in Nanking, with Sun Chuanfang and Zhang Zongchang stationed in Qingjiangpu and Bengbu of Anhui Province, respectively. Cheng Qian was put in charge of Lu Diping & Heh Yaozu. On March 23rd 1927, Lu Diping's 2nd column under the command of 2nd Echelon of Nationalist Army's South-of-Yangtze Flank, in the south and southeast, took over Jiangningzhen Town and pushed towards Zhongshanmen and Guanghuamen city gates. From the northeast, Heh Yaozu's 3rd Echelon took over Jiangjunshan, Niushoushan and Mufushan mountains and pushed against Tongjimen and Wudingmen city gates. Cheng Qian's 1st Echelon,

in the south, defeated enemies at Daxiaoshan, Mashishan and Xishanqiao and pushed against Yuhuatai area of Nanking. Heh Yingqin led his 4th Echelon into Nanking on March 25th.

On March 24th 1927, 6th & 2nd Corps of the Nationalist Army took over Nanking. Sun Chuanfang's army fled, and pillaging occurred in Nanking. [Pearl Buck](#) [Sai-zhen-zhu] had recalls about her ransacked residence in Nanking. At this time, British and American warships fired cannon balls into Nanking city from warships near Xiaguan Wharf on the pretext of punishing mobsters. Cheng Qian fought back against the warships' bombardment. Bombing led to a Chinese casualty of over 2000 people, i.e., [Nanking Bloody Incident](#). Japanese, headed by Prime Minister Biyuan Xichonglang, refused to join the British, American, French & Italian in an ultimatum against Chiang Kai-shek. (On April 20th 1927, new Japanese Prime Minister, Tianzhong [Tanaka] Yiyi, in contrast with his predecessor, had adopted a belligerent policy against Chiang Kai-shek's National Government by dispatching relief to Jinan of Shandong Province on May 27th.)

Chiang Kai-shek, after the Nanking Incident, dispatched Li Zongren & Heh Yingqin to Nanking, and sent Liu Wendao to Heh Yaozu's camp for instigation. Heh Yaozu's 40th Corps forced Cheng Qian's 6th Corps out of Nanking. Cheng Qian fled to Wuhan of Hubei Prov. Heh Yaozu was conferred the post of garrison commander for Nanking as well as commander-in-chief of 3rd group army. On April 18th 1927, National Government made an announcement in making Nanking the capital of the Republic of China. (KMT leftists, however, set their headquarters in Wuhan of Hubei Prov.)

### Three Routes of Nationalist Army Pushing Against Northern Armies

Wu Peifu, who lost Hanyang (one of the triplet cities of Wuhan) on Sept 6th 1926, retreated to Xiaogan, Guangshui and Xinyang consecutively. Historians claimed that Sun Chuanfang did not go to the relief of Wu Peifu to avenge on Wu's waiting out the defeat of Wang Zhanyuan (i.e., former governor-general for Hubei Province and Sun Chuanfang's former supervisor). Jin Yun'e, a general under Wu Peifu, went to Jigongshan of Henan Province after retreating from Hankou. Though Wu Peifu still possessed some troops from Baoding to Zhengzhou to Wushengguan Pass (i.e., Xinyang of Henan), Jin Yun'e disarmed the firearms of all troops passing through his garrison point. When Wu Peifu



executed an officer who enforced Jin Yun'e order in disarming even Wu Peifu's bodyguards on Sept 16th, Jin Yun'e staged a coup. Wu Peifu fled to Zhengzhou where deposed president Cao Kun would pay him a visit. Wu Peifu did not see Cao Kun till two days later, and Cao Kun rebuked Wu Peifu for various blunders that led Zhi-xi faction to the frustrations and defeats. Cao Kun managed to have Jin Yun'e compromise with Wu Peifu.

To the north, Feng-xi's warlord, Zhang Zuolin, repeatedly requested with Wu Peifu for allowing the Manchurian army to go south to fight the Nationalist Army. At Baoding, Zhang Zuolin demanded that Qi Xieyuan vacate the garrison to Feng-xi army by claiming that Feng-xi army had been asked to go south to recover Wuhan by Sun Chuanfang. All parties, including Wang Zhanyuan and Jin Yun'e, treated Wu Peifu as an obstacle. Wu Peifu, though guaranteed assistance by Zhang Zongchang of Shandong Province, dared not allow Lu-jun (Shandong army) come south since Chu Yuepu, a Lu-jun general, intended to take over control of Baoding and Daming. On Oct 2nd, one division under Chu Yuepu marched into Baoding. The day before that, on Oct 1st, Du Xigui, a puppet cabinet supported by Wu Peifu, resigned his premier post in Peking. Feng-jun, i.e., Manchurian army, dispatched Yu Zhen, i.e., Zhang Zuolin's 10th Corps Chief, to Peking as garrison commander.



On Jan 15th 1927, Zhang Zuolin ordered that Zhang Xueliang [Chang Hsueh-liang] and Zhang Zongchang go to the relief of Wu Peifu. Zhang Zuolin's Feng-xi army entered Zhangde of Henan Prov. Some of Wu Peifu's cronies changed loyalty. On Feb 8th, Zhang Zuolin issued a public wire about his entrance into Henan Province, with attention to various provincial governor-generals and commanders including Zhili (Hebei), Shandong, Shanxi and Sui (Suiyuan). Zhang Zuolin accused Wu Peifu of doing nothing for half a year about Nationalist Northern Expeditions. Seeing Wu Peifu's inability to control the situation, Cao Kun left for Tianjin on Feb 11th. Zhang Zuolin's Feng-xi army, totaling 50,000, marched southward along Jing-Han and Long-Hai Railroads. On Feb 15th, Feng-xi army crossed the Yellow River without regard for Wu Peifu's objection. However, Jin Yun'e and Wei Yisan decided to counter Feng-xi army on their own accord. Wei Yisan's decision had to do with his early following Guo Songling's defection away from Manchurian army. On Feb 17th, Zhang Xueliang sent a wire to Jin Yun'e in the hope that Jin Yun'e would not hinder Feng-xi army, stating that Zhang Xueliang himself knew only "loyalty for the supervising officers and filiality to the parents".

On March 11th 1927, Feng-xi army relocated armies of Jilin and Heilongjiang provinces southward for garrison while Yu Zhen's army circumvented to cross the Yellow River by boats. Bridges on Yellow River were destroyed already. On 12th, Feng-xi army took over Zhongping Train Station, and on 13th, took over Zhongping county, forcing Jin Yun'e army into a retreat to Baisha. Hearing of Yu Zhen success, two brigades of Manchurian army crossed the Yellow River with the support of cannons and took over Mangshan on 14th. To the west, Zhao Enzhen's

Manchurian army crossed the river from Wenxian county on 15th. Three prongs hence surrounded Zhengzhou city. On March 13th, Zhang Zuolin wired to Wu Peifu for a persuasion in giving up resistance. Meanwhile, Yan Xishan of Shanxi Province proposed to Wu Peifu that Wu Peifu could select 50,000 good quality soldiers for asylum in his province. On 15th, Wu Peifu vacated Zhengzhou for Gongxian in western Henan Prov.

On Apr 6th, in Peking, Zhang Zuolin sacked Russian embassy, arrested 60 communism activists including Li Dazhao and executed about 30 communists. Zhang Zuolin adopted concerted efforts for two purposes: clearing the threat of communist insurgency in northern China as well as sending a message of cooperation to Chiang Kai-shek.

After Chiang Kai-shek's [Purging Communists](#) on April 12th 1927, Wuhan Government immediately revoked Chiang Kai-shek's post as commander-in-chief of Northern Expedition and conferred it onto Feng Yuxiang. Wuhan military leaders, i.e., Tang Shengzhi, Zhang Fakui, Cheng Qian & Zhu Peide, began to organize "Eastern Campaign" against Nanking. (Later on June 23rd, Tang Shengzhi and Zhang Fakui assumed the commander posts for 1st and 2nd front armies against Nanking.) In Nanking, after the departure of Cheng Qian for Wuhan, 19th Division of 6th Corps was re-organized into "temp 6th Corps" by Nanking government, with tactician Yang Jie acting as corps chief. While KMT left-wing and right-wing were struggling against each other, Northern Armies, i.e., Xu Kun of Zhi-Lu-jun, crossed Huai-he River to lay a siege of Hefei of Anhui Province on April 12th 1927. Another prong of Zhi-Lu-jun army, along Jin-Pu Railway, took over Pukou on northern bank of Yangtze and bombarded Nanking. To the west, Zhang Xueliang's Manchurian army took over Madian to pose threat to Wuhan along Jing-Han Railway. Nanking government decided to continue northern expedition as well as dispatch relief to Ma Xiangbin's army in Hefei.

On May 1st 1927, Chiang Kai-shek ordered a three-prong plan for continuing northern campaigns, with himself, Li Zongren and Heh Yingqin in leadership, respectively. Heh Yingqin was put in charge of 1st Corps, 26th Corps [Zhou Fengqi], 14th Corps [Lai Shihuang] and 17th Corps [Lei Wanshun]; Bai Chongxi was put in charge of 40th Corps [Heh Yanzu ? Yaozu], 1st & 3rd divisions of 1st Corps, 6th Corps [Huang Jie] & 37th Corps [Chen Diaoyuan]; and Li Zongren in charge of 7th Corps [Xia Wei], 2nd Division of 15th Corps, 44th Corps [Ye Kaixin], 27th Corps [Wang Pu], 10th Corps [Wang Tianpei], 33rd Corps [Bai Wenwei] & detached 5th Division [Ma Xiangbin]. Hu Zongnan's 1st division, under Heh Yingqin's First Route, crossed the Yangtze River at Caizhiji Crossing and marched along the two banks of the Peking-Hangzhou Canal. On the same day, Feng Yuxiang, in Shenxi Province, declared his assumption of the post of commander-in-chief for 2nd Group Army of the Nationalist Army. On May 5th, Chiang Kai-shek issued the order of general attack.



Wu Peifu, however, did not get a chance for rest. Feng Yuxiang departed Shenxi Province along Long-Hai Railroad for joining the Nationalist Army campaigns. At Luoyang of Henan Province, Liu Zhenhua's Zhengsong-jun army [army pressing against Mt Songshan (i.e., Henan Province)] echoed Feng Yuxiang's campaign, and in Tongguan Pass, Zheng Zhigong's army surrendered to Feng-xi faction. Zhang Xueliang hence requested that Wu Peifu vacate back to Zhengzhou so that Manchurian Feng-xi army could defend Luoyang against Feng Yuxiang. When Wu Peifu did nothing, Feng-xi army disarmed Wu's army at Sixian county, forcing Wu Peifu into fleeing to Nanyang from Gongxian. Jin Yun'e, being attacked on all sides, changed loyalty to Feng Yuxiang's camp.

By May 18th, 2nd Route of Nationalist Army conquered Tuzhou of Anhui Province, and Zhang Zongchang/Chu Yuepu fled to Xuzhou of Jiangsu Prov. By May 26th, Feng Yuxiang's northwestern army took over Luoyang, and by 30th, Zhengzhou of Henan Province was taken. On May 29th 1927, Japanese army made its first landing on Shandong Peninsula for propping up warlord Zhang Zongchang. On June 1st of 1927, Wuhan's Northern Expedition Army converged with Feng Yuxiang's Northwestern Army in Zhengzhou of Henan Prov. Feng Yuxiang was conferred the post of chair for Henan Prov. On June 2nd 1927, National Army took over Xuzhou, and Zhang Zongchang fled to Hanzhuang. On June 3rd, Nanking's Northern Expedition Army defeated Zhang Zongchang's army and took over Xuzhou of northern Jiangsu Prov. Both Zhengzhou and Xuzhou were seated on the Longhai Railroad horizontally. On 6th, Yan Xishan assumed the post of commander of northern nationalist army in Shanxi Province and declared obedience to "Three People's Principles". Whang Jingwei went to Zhengzhou to meet Feng Yuxiang on June 6th for sake of securing the support in the north. On 9th, National Army took over Haizhou, and Zhang Zongchang fled to Qingdao on coastal Shandong Prov. In Yunnan Province, southwest China, Long Yun was offered chief of 38th Corps and Hu Ruoyu chief of 39th Corps. On 18th, Zhang Zuolin declared himself a marshal inside of Huarentang Palace of the Forbidden City in Peking. 1st Divison pushed into Lu-jun territory.



Back in Wuhan, communists and KMT leftists co-hosted the so-called "KMT-CCP Joint Seat Meeting". Peasant and worker movement impacted families of higher-level, middle-level, and lower-level army officers. The father of KMT 35th Corps Chief Xu Kexiang was paraded on the streets. Xu Kexiang rebelled on May 21st. On May 31st, Comintern Rep M.M. Roy disclosed to Whang Jingwei a secret document from Stalin, calling for establishment of "worker and peasant revolutionary army" and "military court". Whang Jingwei promptly convened a secret meeting for dealing with communist insurgency. On June 5th, KMT Wuhan Central Politics Meeting dismissed Borodin and issued expulsion. On June 6th, Zhu Peide, in Jiangxi Province, expelled communists. On June 9th, Wang Jingwei, Tan Yankai, Sun Ke, Tang Shengzhi, Zhang Fakui,

Deng Yanda and Xu Qian arrived in Zhengzhou and talked with Feng Yuxiang for three days, with a decision to recall troops southward after a transfer of Henan territory to Feng Yuxiang.

On June 17th, Chiang Kai-shek arrived in Xuzhou with Feng Yuxiang's personal emissary. Two days later, at Haozhai train station, Chiang Kai-shek offered a grand ceremony for receiving Feng Yuxiang. The second day, Hu Hanmin etc came to Xuzhou to see Feng Yuxiang. On June 21st, a joint declaration was made for continuous northern campaign. However, Feng Yuxiang refused to support Chiang Kai-shek on a campaign against KMT leftists in Wuhan. Feng Yuxiang did call on Wuhan government in expelling Borodin back to USSR. Li Zongren memoirs stated that Li Zongren himself also objected to Chiang Kai-shek's proposal to solve the Wuhan issue before a continuous northern campaign. On June 23rd, Bai Chongxi led 2nd route against Linyi, while Li Zongren led 7th & 10th corps of third route against Lincheng and 33rd & 11th corps against Yutai & Jinxiang. Hanzhuang was sacked on this day. On June 25th, nationalist army took over Yixian, and on 27th, entered Lincheng and captured Ma Yueren's division of northern army.