

CANTON, NANKING, AND PEKING.

LI CHAI-SUM's Kwangsi troops have entered Canton without opposition, but Li's return is hardly a matter of first-rate importance in the general politics of China. His rashness in leaving the seat of his authority six or seven weeks ago to attend a Kuomintang conference in distant Shanghai was punished with amusing promptitude. He had hardly embarked when CHANG FAT-KWAI, his second in command, seized Canton for himself. Four weeks later the "Reds" rose in insurrection, but after a week-end orgy of crime and destruction they were suppressed by CHANG FAT-KWAI, LI FU-LIN, and other generals. LI CHAI-SUM was not wanted back, but he has seen no reason for abandoning an honourable and lucrative post without an effort. So he has come back with his Kwangsi troops, whom he is able to trust more or less as himself a Kwangsi man. The faithless CHANG FAT-KWAI, who prudently fled three days ago, is understood to be on his way to join CHIANG KAI-SHEK's faction, and LI FU-LIN, the accomplice in CHANG FAT-KWAI's treachery, has hastened to Hong-kong in order to welcome LI, whom they had together betrayed, and whom LI, the other day, was threatening to resist. Meanwhile a Red "terror" is said to be spreading in some of the neighbouring districts, perhaps caused, or intensified, by the dispersal of the Reds in Canton. Their victims are taken indiscriminately from capitalists, Christians, opium smokers, gamblers, and bad characters generally, and are reported to average 150 a day. A party of Italian and Chinese Roman Catholic missionaries, whom the British destroyer Seraph took off from Swabue, were eye-witnesses of the barbarities practised on their prisoners by the Reds. Among them was the old Chinese method of execution by the slicing process (the "thousand cuts"). From Canton executions of supposed Reds (mostly women) and a big fire attributed to incendiaries were reported on Tuesday, and doubtless more executions may be expected to follow LI CHAI-SUM's happy restoration. WANG CHANG-WEI, a civilian politician who is believed to have used CHANG FAT-KWAI as his tool, has put himself out of harm's way by retiring, it is said, to Germany. His exile will be a relief to CHIANG KAI-SHEK and to the Nanking Government.

The real interest in China lies in the future of that Government. It has many cares. It has committed itself beyond recall to the expulsion of the Soviet consuls and agents from all China under its control, and to the violent repression of Chinese Communism, though the Centro-Soyus and other Bolshevist trade establishments have been granted a precarious respite. DR. WU, the Nanking Foreign Minister, protests, indeed, that the action of his Government "must not be construed as constituting the severance of political or commercial relations," but it will be difficult to get the Soviet Government, or, indeed, anybody else, to accept this view. Then the Kuomintang Party, for which the Nanking Government professes to speak, is divided into the supporters and the opponents of CHIANG KAI-SHEK, into civilians and "militarists," and into the adherents and the enemies of the more prominent leaders in each group. The plenary session of the Kuomintang Executive to take place next Thursday may throw valuable light on the relative strength of the main factors within the party, on the authority of the several leaders, and on their policy, or policies, for the future. It should prove to be unusually instructive, and our Peking Correspondent's forecast that it is likely to be stormy seems highly probable in view of the deep personal interests at stake. CHIANG KAI-SHEK's resumption of the military leadership—which means of the real leadership—is opposed, it seems, by some of the members of the party whose intrigues led to his temporary retirement to Japan in the summer. They may or may not have been among those patriots who besought the voluntary exiles to come back at any personal sacrifice in order to support the sacred cause of the Revolution, but some diffidence on their part of his forgetfulness of the past and some apprehension of his resentment are easy to understand. Others, again, with reason may not relish his alleged relations with "the Christian general" and "the model Tsuchun," whose representations are said to have been more efficacious in inducing him to return than the pathetic eloquence of his old Kuomintang colleagues. FENG YU-HSIANG and YEN HSI-SHAN, it need hardly be mentioned, have, or are supposed to have, their own strong reasons for desiring to see him once more in control at Nanking. Although the severe winter of the northern provinces has made extensive military operations practically impossible, they fear the resumption of CHANG TSO-LIN's forward movement in the spring. If CHIANG could be maintained in command on the Yangtze, and could be persuaded to renew in earnest his campaign against the North, clearly the relief to FENG and YEN would be considerable. The present campaign against CHANG's forces appears to be half-hearted and almost insignificant. A certain number of Kuomintang soldiers have made their way as far as Hsuchowfu, but our Peking Correspondent states that they are merely the

fringe of the main armies. The principal commanders of these armies, he explains, have no wish to pick the chestnuts out of the fire for FENG and YEN. They prefer to look after their own interests by remaining on the Yangtze, where these interests may be better served. When FENG reaches the river again, as he will be able to do as soon as the Lunghai railway to Hsuehowfu, now in his occupation, has been repaired, he may, of course, find means of inducing them to change their views.

But the situation seems to present other possibilities. The "Kwangsi clique" in the Kuomintang, which is opposed to CHIANG KAI-SHEK, is said to be establishing a new base at Hankow. The notorious CHEN CHIEN, who was in command at Nanking when the Europeans were murdered there in March, is stated to have engaged in this undertaking with the object of controlling Hupeh, Hunan, Kwantung, and Kwangsi. LI CHAI-SUM is supposed to be in alliance with the "clique," but what his attitude may be towards this move is doubtful. Far more interesting is the revival of the old talk about a possible truce between the North and the South. Both have declared their undying enmity to Communism, and both have publicly insulted the Soviet Government. It is suggested that, as the main difference of principle between them has been removed by the purification of the Kuomintang from the taint of association with the Bolshevists, an accommodation upon other questions might be practicable, to their mutual advantage. The gain to China of such an arrangement would, of course, be immense. Unfortunately questions of principle have not much to do with Chinese practical politics. These are usually determined by the personal interests, not merely of the principal leaders, but of their insatiable dependents. If CHANG TSO-LIN and CHIANG KAI-SHEK were ready to come together to-morrow, under the conviction that they have more to lose than to gain by the prosecution of their quarrel in the presence of foreign Powers with claims against them both, they would probably find it impossible to reconcile their generals and their Tuchuns to a reasonable settlement. Uneasiness, and even alarm, at the present position may do much, but the strong probability is that the old struggle will go on, complicated, it may be, by further developments of the controversies and rivalries inside the Kuomintang. Our Peking Correspondent states plainly that, until Canton and Hankow are in fuller accord with Nanking, the much-divided Nationalists will not find it easy to pursue a campaign against the North. The conference of next week ought to show whether CHIANG KAI-SHEK or any other leader can establish this accord.