

Nanchang Within Reach

By AHUNA TONG (唐羅歎)

THE wonders of modern China today lie in her transportation facilities. They link all parts of the country otherwise almost inaccessible to the Shanghai residents of a few years ago.

The new railways that crisscross the country make traveling into the interior so easy, and its cost is within the reach of all classes, even the masses. One of the newest railways is the Chekiang-Kiangsi Railway, which was completed in January, a project of a little over four years—another story of the progress and perseverance of the Chinese people, completed against the age-old odds of famine, flood and bandits.

With 633 kilometers or a little over 395 miles to its credit, from end to end, Hangchow to Nanchang, the capital of Kiangsi, the line opens up the districts through which it passes and the points which it connects. It allows a much needed outlet for goods, some of which never before passed through beyond their point of production, and it passes through a particularly rich mining district.

The new line means a saving of time and money for all who use it. To go from Shanghai, we first take the Shanghai-Hangchow R.R. and transfer to the new R.R. The through fare from here to Nanchang is ridiculously small, considering the mileage and old form of travel, only \$13.80 for third class. It takes four hours to Hangchow and 24 hours from there to Nanchang, which means less than 50 cents for each hour of travel by train. A few years ago, one would have disbelieved that such means of travels could be made available.

Formerly for residents of the capital of Kiangsi, which is the birthplace of the New Life Movement, to come to Shanghai, it required four days of travel, first by train from Nanchang to Kiukiang, then by boat to Shanghai. We can now go back and forth to Nanchang, allowing two days' visit with friends, in the same time needed for traveling one-way only under the old system.

To send rice from Kiangsi to Shaoshing, Chekiang province, in days of old, required a round-about trip. This meant to get the product by the best way possible to Wuhu in Anhwei, ship it by boat to Shanghai, by rail to Hangchow and by truck to Shaoshing. No wonder rice is so expensive in some parts of the country and people resort to eating rice gruel one or two meals a day.

The railway journey from here to Hangchow is familiar to most Shanghaianders. We leave it at Sanlangmiao, the terminal, one stop beyond Hangchow. The transfer is particularly interesting, not only for one whose home is in a foreign country, but also for those born and brought up in China.

Sedan chairs and a sprinkling of rickshas will convey the traveler, depending on his choice, from one train to the ferry, across the Chientang River, and to the other train at Kiangpien. We chose the former means, as it was new to all of our party. However, for the stretch of the piers on both sides of the river, I would have preferred walking. This was about mid-spring, and one can well imagine the beauty of Hangchow hillsides at the background, the invigorating air, beautiful sunshine streaming down on us,

busy life humming about, and last of all the cool and clear greenness of the river water. Shanghai, which had been left only four hours behind, was still in the throes of winter. I suppressed a desire to dive into the waters for a swim. It meant that I could have a swim in natural open waters for the first time in almost three years.

The scenery and atmosphere of that part of the country so reminded me of the Paradise of the Pacific that it made me for a moment homesick. Only the thought of traveling into new country (for me) overcame the nostalgia.

We did not have to move one mite after we stepped into the sedan chairs, for these chairs, carriers and all, go on board the ferries as they are. Crude and slow though the ferries may be, they somehow got us across to the other side of the river. When the Chientang River bridge at Zakhou is completed, a through rail line from Shanghai to Nanchang will be available.

We left Kiangpien at 4 p.m. on the day we left Shanghai, and proceeded at a moderate rate for 24 hours to Nanchang, stopping briefly at some stations and longer at others. Traveling companions on the train, mostly country folks, a few business and government travelers, were most congenial and very unlike the hostile city people of Shanghai.

With the advent of the railway era in China, traveling has been rendered safer to the people. In those parts of the country, which were once infested with bandits or occupied by communists, now only remain reminders of the grim and losing battle they had with the government troops. On every hill-side, erected upon strategic points were blockhouses.

Kiangsi had once been the home of the very rich, and it was most thrilling for me to hear stories told by a former resident of the province of how the rich people buried their gold and jewelry in the walls of their houses, which heretofore I had only experienced through reading Pearl Buck's books on China.

On house walls slogans written by communists were blotched out, though a few could still be distinguished. Most of the slogans were replaced by signs which read "Support the Kuomintang."

Signs of the New Life movement were evident everywhere. Phrases and slogans extolling its purposes were posted at every station to remind one to be polite, to help the young and the old, not to spit promiscuously, and so on. The scenery along this line is more rugged and unlike the fields and farms of the Chekiang countryside, until we neared Nanchang.

Nanchang is a fast modernizing city, and changes were noted by people who had not been there since 1929. The city walls have been torn down to give way to progress. Wide highways replace the walls, which once encircled the city. Modern Nanchang now includes as its residential section the former rubbish dumps, home of the beggars, and haunting ground of the dead for ages. The firm determination of the Nanchang people to reconstruct their homeland may be witnessed in the lands recovered from the

dead. What was miles and miles of cemetery land has now been turned into the model sections of the town, where huge residences are being put up and where the Officers' Moral Endeavor Association Building is located.

The disinterment of the graves has been wholly responsible for the influx of old pottery and antiques into the treaty ports and settlements of late. Genuine Ming pottery, which formerly commanded the price of hundreds of dollars, may now be obtained for a few.

The Soldiers' Memorial, the Provincial Agriculture Institute which gave us fresh eggs and cream for breakfast, and the "Clear Cloud" temple provided the inspiration for trips into the country nearby.

Time today takes on an ever-increasing importance. Though travel from Nanchang to Shanghai has been facilitated considerably, railway officials promise us even wider and better travel in the new lines projected for the future.

A Tour of Szechuan

(Contributed)

VACATIONS are mainly for mental relaxation, but an ideal vacation is one that not only affords the holiday-seeker a restful cure from the wear and tear of city life but also adds a little to his fundamental knowledge of his own country. The typical Shanghailanders on a vacation tour includes in his itinerary Tsingtao, Kuling, Mokanshan, Pootoo, Huang Shan and other famous coastal resorts, and, having visited one or more of these places, has satisfied his desire for a change of atmosphere. However, what he actually does is to surround himself with the same friends and the same luxuries, putting them into a different setting.

For a holiday which offers new diversions to the pleasure-seeker, I can give no better suggestion than "go West." For sheer beauty of scenery no place in China can surpass Szechuan and Sikong. In former times a journey to Chungking, the gateway to Szechuan, required no less than three months, that is to say, barring accidents and bandits, if one could arrive there at all, for travelling on junks through the swirling rapids of the Yangtze River was hazardous. However, since the introduction of steamship navigation on the Yangtze-kiang, sailing on these waters has been made safe and accessible to the tourist of ordinary means. Much credit is due to the Chinese-owned and operated Ming Sung Industrial Company which operates a large fleet of steamers especially constructed for the comfort and convenience of the traveller. With two weeks' time at one's disposal a trip can be made through the Gorges and back at a cost no greater than a trip to Tsingtao would entail.

The awe-inspiring beauty of the Yangtze Gorges has been so often described and quoted that it is not necessary to dwell upon it here. Arriving at Chungking, the largest city in West China with a population of over 600,000, one finds a city built on a high bluff, which is ascended by stone steps or by sedan chair. In contrast to the upper half of the city, where new models of automobiles occasionally mingle with rickshas, the lower section is a maze of steps which twist and turn and apparently lead nowhere.

A feeling of happiness and security has pervaded the air since the arrival of the Nanking troops in Szechuan. One of the first things that General Chiang Kai-shek did was to abolish the special taxes that had been the curse of travellers in the interior for many years. It was not long ago that a traveller going from Shanghai

to Chungking, Kiating or Chengtu had to undergo a series of some twenty odd inspections and meet almost an equal number of Szechuan Special Inland Tax Bureaux, which were *likin* stations in disguise. These inspections would begin at Hankow with the Chinese Maritime Customs, continue at Ichang with the Bandit or Communist Suppression Bureau and all points west with the Opium Suppression Bureau, Salt Gabelle and Navigation Bureau. Then, just as one would close one's trunks with a sigh of relief and a "thank goodness, it's all over!" the Inland Tax Bureau inspectors would appear on the scene. Under the revised laws, a party of inspectors representing the various organizations and bureaux will board a boat at Ichang and inspect the baggages while the boat puffs through the rapids. The tax, though amounting in the end to the same, represents all the other taxes, and the erstwhile nightmare would end there.

The trip from Chungking to Chengtu, the capital of Szechuan, which in former times meant a ten days' arduous journey overland by sedan chair, may now be made in two days by bus or two hours by airplane. A city with a historical background and a culture which many have described as almost as old as that of the old Peking itself, Chengtu is one of the most fascinating spots to the traveller. A remarkable sight to be seen about the city is the irrigation system, which is one of the most efficient and scientific systems in the world although its origin dates back some 1,000 years. A great attraction to tourists is the annual flower show and fair which takes place in the spring.

Not many miles north of Chengtu is Kwanshien, where the wild and rugged mountain scenery enhanced by deep jungle valleys begins. A short stay here will enable one to see how the raw material essential to the manufacture of perfume is obtained. If so inclined, one may even take out a gun and go after the musk deer.

General Chiang, realizing the importance and the need of transportation and communication facilities in Central China, has pushed on the construction of roads with vigor. From Chungking one may now travel over the newly-completed road to Kweiyang. The highway from Chengtu to Kansu is almost ready for traffic, and while the surveying work on the Chengtu-Kangting (Tachienlu) highway has been completed, the actual construction is to begin in the near future. Eventually the network of roads