

*The victorious army wins first, then seeks battle;  
the army destined to defeat enters battle in search of victory.*

—Sunzi, *The Art of War*

*If one knows where and when a battle will be fought, one can march a thousand miles to join the battle. But if one does not know either the place or the day of battle, one's left flank will be unable to aid one's right, or one's right, the left; one's front will be unable to aid one's rear; or one's rear, the front. This is true even if the separation between the forces is only several tens of *li* or even only a few *li*.*

—Sunzi, *The Art of War*

*By being able to use many to attack a few, we place those we fight against in grave difficulty.*

—Sunzi, *The Art of War*

## Chapter Seven

### Contesting the Central Position

When the Central Military Commission (CMC) withdrew its support from Su Yu's plan to achieve the expanded objectives of the "big" Huai Hai Campaign through continuous East China Field Army (ECFA) operations east of Xuzhou, the campaign's focus was set squarely on the central position around Suxian. As discussed earlier, this area had been an important element in Huai Hai Campaign planning before the campaign started and had become even more so after the campaign was enlarged. Control over this area was key to isolating the Nationalist armies in Xuzhou and destroying them. For this reason the CMC had ordered the Central Plains Field Army (CPFA) to seize Suxian and as long a segment of the Xu-Beng railroad as possible. Also because of this, before adopting Su Yu's plan to envelop and encircle much of the Second and Thirteenth Armies east of Xuzhou, the CMC had envisioned that after the Seventh Army was destroyed several ECFA columns would shift rapidly to locations around Suxian. The CMC's acceptance of Su Yu's vision did not in any way signify a reduced value on the central position. It indicated CMC agreement with Su Yu's assumption that the CPFA could successfully block the advance of all the Nationalist armies on the southern front. When that assumption proved to be incorrect, the CMC quickly changed course, abandoning Su Yu's vision and adopting a course of action designed to ensure that it maintained control over the central position.

The CMC's intent to hold the central position was stated strongly in the conclusion of its message of 2400, 18 November that, as was noted earlier, also contained a statement supporting Su Yu's operations east of Xuzhou. This was a clear expression of commander's intent that, by referring to a "gradual" elimination of the three armies in Xuzhou, raised the possibility that a slower-paced campaign was possible:

All that we need do is to destroy about half of each of the southern front armies and make it impossible for them to advance. Then the northern armies will become like turtles in a bottle and we can gradually wipe them out.

You should exert all of your strength to keep control over part of the Xu-Beng railroad in our hands. You must be sure to keep the southern enemy forces separated from the northern enemy forces and make it impossible for them to link up.<sup>1</sup>

Five days later, with the Seventh Army eliminated and ECFA columns moving from east of Xuzhou into the central position, the CMC continued to emphasize the area's critical importance. It also continued to present its view that holding that area would allow the Communists to stretch out the campaign if they so desired. On 23 November the CMC sent two messages to ECFA and CPFA field commanders

and the regional Chinese Communist Party (CCP) bureaus giving its appraisal of the strategic and operational situations after achieving one major operational goal. Both messages manifested a shift away from Su Yu's emphasis on continuous and simultaneous operations. The first message mentions having a rest period, waiting for opportunities, and conducting a long-term defense of the central position. The second speaks of a 3- to 5-month campaign with several operational phases in which enemy forces would be destroyed in sequence. In both cases, the implication was that the operational tempo would slow. Such a change was acceptable because the CMC felt that Communist forces held the initiative and had time on their side.

#### Message 1

(2) We stand in accord with Liu, Chen, and Deng in agreeing with Su Yu's deployment as presented in his message of 1800 21 November. No matter whether Huang Wei, Liu Ruming, or Li Yannian advance or stop, these dispositions are all good. If the enemy advances, then we can destroy most of Li and Liu's forces and part of Huang Wei's forces. If the enemy stops, then we can gain a short rest period.

(3) At present we do not want to consider seeking other operational opportunities. Now we must grab hold of the Xuzhou enemy's two weak points, his isolation and his difficult food situation, keep the enemy forces in Xuzhou and Bengbu separated, and wait for opportunities to destroy enemy forces.

(5) If, after ten days, there are still no opportunities for fighting in either the Xuzhou or Bengbu areas, as long as it does not obstruct our general plan of cutting Xuzhou off from Bengbu and destroying Liu Zhi's main force, then the idea of dispatching a force to capture Huaian and Huaiyin can be considered.

(7) In order to carry out the long-term separation of Xuzhou from Bengbu and keep the enemy in Xuzhou pinned down, the ECFA should construct strong defensive works between Xuzhou and Bengbu with Suxian serving as the center point.

(8) We look forward to your comments on implementing these things.<sup>2</sup>

#### Message 2

(1) Congratulations on your great victory of wiping out the ten divisions of Huang Baitao's army.

(2) During the 16 days from 7 November through 22 November you eliminated 18 divisions from Liu Zhi's command (including the 3 divisions that were part of He and Zhang's revolt). . . . Before the start of the campaign we already calculated that it would be possible to annihilate 18 enemy divisions, but at that time we still did not dare estimate that we could cut Xuzhou off from Bengbu and completely isolate the enemy force in Xuzhou.

(3) . . . Besides those divisions that have been destroyed, the enemy still has approximately 50 remaining. This enemy force can be destroyed, but we must prepare for a campaign 3-5 months in length. We must prepare to go through several operational phases (You have already completed the first operational phase.) in order to achieve complete victory in the campaign. We must prepare an army and labor force of around 1,300,000; 3-5 months of food, fodder, and ammunition; and medical treatment for 100,000-120,000 wounded. We must ensure that during whatever time is required to finish the entire campaign, for every unit in the army more than half of that time will be spent resting, reorganizing, and replenishing. We must keep soldier morale and spirits

high. As for troop strength, we must implement the policy of ‘as we fight, fill in the ranks; as we fill in the ranks, fight.’

(4) There is only one situation that could possibly cause you to leave your present situation and seek other operational opportunities. That situation would be one in which the southern front armies of Huang Wei, Liu Ruming, and Li Yannian temporarily stop instead of advancing, so they haven’t yet suffered serious losses from attacks by you, and in order to save Qiu, Li, and Sun’s armies, Jiang Jieshi completely changes his Yangzi River defenses . . . and shifts all possible forces to Bengbu for a push north to open the Xu-Beng railroad and connect with the enemy in Xuzhou. If Jiang Jieshi does this he will be abandoning the Ping-Han railroad and laying Wuhan and the middle reaches of the Yangzi bare before our army. This would be very dangerous for the Guomindang.

Whether or not the enemy will shift his forces in this way, and whether or not there is enough time to do it will become apparent. As far as we are concerned, the most advantageous approach is to use the present situation and destroy the enemy forces that lie before us one by one. We should energetically strive to achieve this. If we are able to destroy large parts of the armies the enemy has on the southern front during the second phase of the campaign, then even if the enemy does shift [all those other forces to Bengbu], we will be able to fulfill our original plan.<sup>3</sup>

### **Nationalist Strategy to Retake the Central Position**

Time was on the Communists side because of the entropy inherent in the isolated Nationalist armies in Xuzhou. Sunzi states, “An army without its baggage-train is lost; without provisions it is lost; without bases of supply it is lost.”<sup>4</sup> Nationalist commanders understood this reality very well, and soon after the CPFA took Suxian the Nationalists developed a plan to retake the central position. The Twelfth Army, which was at that time near Fuyang in southern Henan, was to continue moving toward Mengcheng and Suxian while the two newly organized armies based in Bengbu moved north. The Sixth Army was to move toward Suxian from the southeast along the Xu-Beng railroad to complement the Twelfth Army’s advance from the southwest. The Eighth Army was to support the Sixth Army by providing rear area security. Upon reaching Suxian, the Twelfth and Sixth Armies were to continue moving toward Xuzhou while the Eighth Army protected the reopened Xu-Beng railroad.<sup>5</sup>

Had this plan been executed quickly, it might have worked. However, CPFA delaying tactics, poor roads, bad weather, and other sources of friction combined to slow all three armies’ movement. On the day the Seventh Army was destroyed, the Sixth Army had only advanced a short distance north of Renqiao on the Su-Beng railroad.<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile the Twelfth Army was just crossing the Beifei River northeast of Mengcheng.<sup>7</sup> At this point the Twelfth Army was approximately 60 km from the Sixth Army. Suxian, their common objective, lay 50 km ahead of the Twelfth Army and 30 km ahead of the Sixth Army.

The Twelfth Army’s position was particularly precarious and its commander knew it. One major cause of concern for Huang Wei was logistics. As his army had moved across Henan, it had effectively dropped its line of communication to the rear. It was impractical to transport new supplies for the army all the way from Queshan, and in any case Communist guerrilla activity in central Henan made such an effort impossible. After reaching Mengcheng on 18 November the army had established contact with supply depots in Bengbu and some much-needed supplies were brought up the Bengbu-Mengcheng road.<sup>8</sup> However, this road was not a line of communication capable of supporting four corps in heavy

combat. Another cause for concern was intelligence reports indicating the presence of large enemy forces to his front and on his left flank. Especially troubling was the capture of soldiers from the 6th Column because this indicated the force the Twelfth Army had been fighting two weeks earlier in western Henan had beaten them to Mengcheng. Huang was also worried about the terrain obstacles he faced between Mengcheng and Suxian. Several rivers ran perpendicular to his route, and they were filled with water due to recent unusually heavy rains. Looking at the situation, Huang decided that continuing to push directly toward Suxian was too risky. As his army was reorganizing and replenishing after reaching Mengcheng, he proposed a different course of action to his superiors in Nanjing.

Huang Wei's concept was to move southeasterly using the Guo River to help screen his left flank until he reached Huaiyuan, a town 10 km west of Bengbu. There he would cross the Guo River, link up with the Sixth and Eighth armies along the railroad, and move against Suxian with them.<sup>9</sup> Huang thought such a maneuver would likely catch the enemy by surprise and be a more secure way to proceed. He estimated that the time required to do this would take no longer than it would to fight his way through to Suxian on the most direct route.

While waiting for the response from Nanjing, Huang Wei used the time to bring in supplies and arrange his army for whatever lay ahead. The pause also allowed the LXXXV Corps, which had departed Queshan several days after the rest of the army, to come closer to catching up. On 20 November Nationalist headquarters in Nanjing rejected Huang's proposal and ordered him to advance directly to Suxian with all possible speed. The next day the Twelfth Army set out from Mengcheng just as the LXXXV Corps was reaching the city.<sup>10</sup>

As the Twelfth Army had approached Mengcheng on 18 November, Huang Wei had ordered each of the three corps to establish bridgeheads on the north side of the Guo River. This they had done. In the center of the Mengcheng city area was the XVIII Corps, the Twelfth Army's most powerful corps. The X Corps was west of the city and the XIV Corps was to the east.<sup>11</sup> On 21 November these three corps advanced from these positions in a line abreast with the LXXXV corps, the designated army reserve, following behind. On 21 November the advance carried to the Beifei River. On 22 November the army pushed its way across this river and also crossed the Xie River. On the evening of 23 November it reached the Hui River, the last major terrain obstacle between the army and Suxian. The morning of 24 November the XVIII and X Corps put units across the river, expanded their bridgeheads, and prepared to push on to Suxian only 20 km away.<sup>12</sup>

The Seventh Army's final destruction did not alter the concept of operations for the Nationalist armies on the southern front. It did, however, change the orientation of the armies in Xuzhou. No longer committed to a relief effort to save Huang Baitao's force, they could now concentrate on ensuring their own survival. What form such actions would take was the main topic on the agenda of a meeting of the Nationalist High Command held at the presidential office building in Nanjing the morning of 23 November. Early that morning Liu Zhi and Du Yuming flew from Xuzhou to Nanjing to attend this important strategy session, which Jiang Jieshi also attended. All in attendance agreed that the immediate objective should be to retake Suxian and reestablish a ground link to Xuzhou along the Xu-Beng railroad. The Twelfth, Sixth, and Eighth Armies were already engaged in operations intended to reach Suxian, and it was decided that those operations should continue. They also decided that as soon as possible the Xuzhou force should launch its own attack toward Suxian to create, with the Sixth, Eighth and Twelfth Armies, a three-pronged attack on this single point. The intent was to have these armies crush the Communist forces that were located between them and thereby reestablish communications between Xuzhou and Bengbu.<sup>13</sup>

After the meeting, Du Yuming felt hopeful about this plan, especially if Jiang Jieshi made good on his promise to add two to three more corps to the force fighting north of Bengbu.<sup>14</sup> When he and Liu Zhi flew back to Xuzhou that afternoon, he had the pilot fly over the Twelfth Army so he could talk by radio with Huang Wei. Huang expressed concern about the heavy resistance his army had been facing and his casualties, but Du told him to be optimistic. Du told Huang about the meeting he had just attended and assured him that a comprehensive strategy had been approved. If he followed the orders he would soon receive, everything would work out.<sup>15</sup>

After reaching Xuzhou, Du and Liu decided that the Second and Sixteenth Armies would attack to the south and the Thirteenth would defend Xuzhou. On 24 November forces shifted positions as required and completed preparations for the operation. On 25 November the attack began, with the Second Army to the east of the Xu-Beng railroad and the Sixteenth Army to the west.<sup>16</sup>

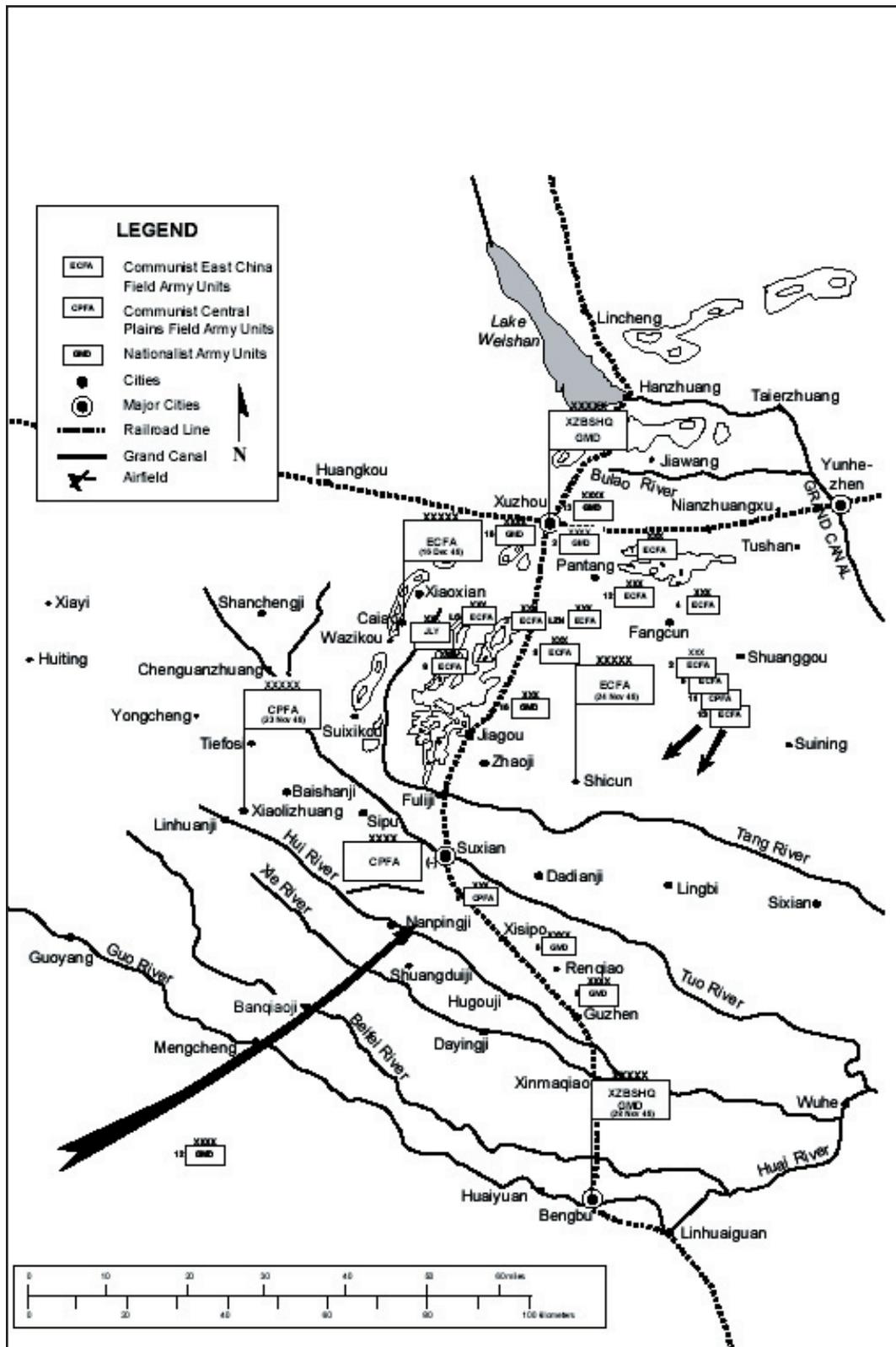
### **Communist Strategy to Hold the Central Position**

While Nationalist strategy for retaking the central position was to attack on external lines from three directions—north, southeast, and southwest—the Communists decided to use the flexibility provided by internal lines to mount their defense. Having successfully blocked the Nationalist attempt to relieve the Seventh Army, the Communists believed they could hold those armies to the north of the central position and conduct counteroffensives in the south. This was the essence of Su Yu's proposal for future operations contained in his message of 2100, 20 November. Applying the principle of economy of force, he suggested that eight columns, a force smaller than the Nationalist group army in Xuzhou, be deployed in an arc south of the city and that seven columns be sent to the southern front.

Su's message presented two courses of action to aid the CPFA. One course was to have the ECFA 6th Column replace the CPFA 9th Column in the defensive line southeast of Suxian, freeing it for use against Huang Wei. The other was to have the ECFA 2d and 11th (C) Columns, under the command of Wei Guoqing and Ji Luo, prepare to go under CPFA operational control and move west to join the fight against Huang Wei if they were needed. But as Su's expression of how the ECFA's shaping operations might develop shows, he was hoping that such a shift of forces would not be necessary and that he could concentrate a large force for offensive action: "If we do not need to send forces to participate in the battle with Huang Wei, then, besides holding Qiu, Li, and Sun in the north, we can concentrate the 2d, 7th, 8th, 9th, 11th (C) and 13th columns to destroy Li Yannian's army."<sup>17</sup>

At the same time that Su Yu was drafting this proposal, he was already taking action to implement it. To prepare for the coming defensive battle south of Xuzhou, on 20 November the 3d Column, which had been engaged in the attempt of Su's *qi* force to break through the Nationalist lines at Pantang, was ordered to move west and start constructing a defense in depth astride the Xu-Beng railroad.<sup>18</sup> Also, to give the ECFA a presence on the southern front, "the 2d, 6th, 11th (C), and 13th columns started advancing to the south along different routes under the command of Wei [Guoqing] and Ji [Luo]."<sup>19</sup> Before the Nationalists had agreed on a concept of operations and developed a plan to achieve their next operational objectives, the ECFA was already preparing to thwart their moves.

The times on the messages sent during this period and the content of those messages provide a glimpse into the problems the Communists faced—coordinating large forces moving across a broad area—because of slow communications. Transmitting Chinese characters by radiotelegraph was painstaking and time consuming. The standard method was to use a codebook listing several thousand characters in a format that assigned four Arabic numbers to each character. Since messages were a series of numbers, any errors made in entering numbers would produce errors in the messages when they were



Map 1. Holding the central position.

received. The need to encode and decode messages complicated the process further. Time was also spent assessing information, evaluating alternative courses of action, developing plans, and formulating orders. Given the requirements for careful work and the small size of the staffs to handle the work, it was inevitable that on occasion messages with differing, or even contrary, thoughts and directives were moving through the command, control, and communications network from one headquarters to another at the same time. (For instance, at this time the CPFA operations section only had 10 staff officers assigned.<sup>20</sup>)

The CMC practice of giving field army commanders the freedom and flexibility to display initiative within agreed-upon strategic and operational objectives significantly reduced the potential for shortcomings within the communication system to cause harmful delays and create confusion in planning and executing operations. This “Moltkean” approach to command and control helped avoid the first of what Sunzi described as the “ways in which a ruler can bring misfortune upon his army: ‘When ignorant that the Army should not advance, to order an advance or ignorant that it should not retire, to order a retirement.’”<sup>21</sup> It also made the matter of having messages with different concepts and plans crossing paths of less consequence than it could have been. For example, in its 2000, 20 November message to Su Yu the CMC directed Su to quickly dispatch the 4th, 6th, 8th, and 9th Columns to the south and have Tan Zhenlin command them. At virtually the same time Su Yu was sending a message to the CMC containing the following sentence that was just quoted: “This evening the 2d, 6th, 11th (C), and 13th Columns started advancing to the south along different routes under the command of Wei [Guoqing] and Ji [Luo].”<sup>22</sup> This was not the same group of columns or the same commander the CMC had asked for, but it met the CMC’s intent—to have the ECFA send columns quickly to bolster the southern front. This arrangement also gained Liu, Chen, and Deng’s approval as was expressed in their message of 1500, 21 November:

We completely agree with the deployment laid out in your message of 2100 20 November. We have decided that during the night of 21 November we will withdraw to another line and draw the enemy forward. This is setting the stage for destroying Huang Wei’s army south of Nanpingji.

We hope that Wei Guoqing and Ji Luo will be able to lead 4-5 columns to reach the Suxian-Dadianji line by nightfall on 23 November and be ready to use 3 columns to clamp down on Liu Ruming and Li Yannian and commit more than 2 columns to the fight against Huang Wei.<sup>23</sup>

Since Su’s action met its intent and Liu, Chen, and Deng had approved what he had done, rather than request that Su Yu adhere to the details of its 2000, 20 November directive, the CMC allowed Su Yu’s deployment to stand and the campaign went on from there. Again, when Su assigned the 4th and 8th Columns to the defensive line south of Xuzhou and made Tan Zhenlin the overall commander of that blocking force, the CMC accepted his decisions.

At 1800, 21 November Su Yu sent a message laying out more specific ECFA deployments and command relationships for the upcoming shaping operations to Liu, Chen, and Deng; the CMC; the East China Military Region (ECMR); Tan Zhenlin; and other ECFA commanders. The 1st, 3d, 12th, Luzhongnan, and Lianguang Columns and the two Ji-Lu-Yu Military District divisions were assigned to the blocking force front line. The 4th, 8th, and 9th Columns, having suffered heavy casualties in the battle at Nianzhuangxu, were assigned to the second line of defense. All were placed under command of Tan Zhenlin and his Shandong army headquarters. On the southern front the 2d Column, not the 6th, was directed to replace the CPFA 9th Column. All other columns, including the 11th (C) Column, were

to be used to fight Li Yannian. Su suggested to Liu Bocheng that “for ease of coordination” it would be best if the CPFA “destroyed Huang Wei to the south of the Nanpingji-Sunding line.” Reflecting his offensive aggressiveness, Su stated his desire to maintain control of his ECFA columns to use against Li Yannian: “During the first phase of the [southern front] campaign I will concentrate forces to destroy Li Yannian’s army. Because of this, except for having the Second Column take over the [blocking] mission of the CPFA’s 9th Column, for the present I will be unable to send forces to directly coordinate with the CPFA operations.”<sup>24</sup>

In this message Su Yu also announced his intention to move his headquarters to a new location that was more centrally located and closer to the southern front. Since 7 November his headquarters had been in Matou, a village 35 km north-northwest of Xinanzhen.<sup>25</sup> Now he was going to move 140 km southwest to Shicun, a village 40 km east-northeast of Suxian. In his message he estimated that he would be on the road for two nights and would reach Shicun the evening of 23 November.<sup>26</sup> Actually, he did not reach there and set up his headquarters until the next day.<sup>27</sup> At the same time Su Yu was moving, Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi, and Deng Xiaoping were also shifting the locations of their headquarters. Since 4 November they had been in Boxian, which was almost 150 km west of Suxian. On 23 November they established their headquarters in Xiaolizhuang, a small village only 30 km due west of Suxian and about the same distance away from Nanpingji, the place where they planned to fight the decisive battle to destroy the Twelfth Army.<sup>28</sup>

### **Liu Bocheng’s Sunzian Plan for Attacking the Twelfth Army**

CMC approval of the deployment of forces and concept of operations contained in Su Yu’s message of 1800, 21 November was issued in a message sent to Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi, Deng Xiaoping, Su Yu, Tan Zhenlin, Wei Guoqing, the CCP’s East China Bureau, and others at 2100, 23 November. The message shows that at this time the CMC was not certain the Nationalist armies on the southern front would continue to move toward the north. Another CMC message sent on 23 November contains the same perspective. Liu Bocheng, however, was certain his army would soon be engaged in a major battle with Huang Wei’s force. During the day on 23 November he, along with Chen Yi and Deng Xiaoping, developed a Sunzian plan to shape that battle and destroy Huang Wei’s army. At 2200 that evening they transmitted this plan to Su Yu, Chen Shiju, Zhang Zhen, and the CMC.

On 22 November Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi, and Deng Xiaoping had expressed their approval of Su Yu’s plan to have the ECFA do nothing more to aid the CPFA than send the 2d Column to take the place of the CPFA 9th Column on the defensive line southeast of Suxian. In this plan, the 11th (C) Column would move into position east of the 2d Column and when ordered, “attack eastward to keep Li Yannian from linking up with Huang Wei’s army.”<sup>29</sup> In Liu Bocheng’s plan of 23 November, however, the 11th (C) Column would attack *west* against Huang Wei’s army, not east against Li Yannian’s army. In addition, Liu wanted the ECFA to send “at least four columns to join an operation to destroy Huang Wei.” In the estimation of Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi, and Deng Xiaoping, all or part of the Twelfth Army’s destruction would be of greater benefit than destroying the Sixth and Eighth Armies:

(1) Today (23 Nov), from 0900 to dusk, with the support of more than 20 tanks, the enemy’s XVIII Corps fiercely attacked our Nanpingji defenses. During the day, despite suffering fairly heavy casualties, we didn’t give up a single defensive position. However, early this afternoon more than a regiment of enemy troops pushed across the Hui River some five kilometers east of Nanpingji.

(2) We have decided to abandon Nanpingji and withdraw more than five kilometers, arranging our positions in the shape of a bag. We plan to entice the XVIII Corps

to cross the Hui River and then spread out using the 4th and 9th columns to attract this enemy force. This will make use of the Hui River as a way to cut links between this force and the three enemy corps that will be south of the river. At the same time tomorrow (24 Nov) night, we will have the 1st, 2d, 3rd, 6th, and 11th (C) columns attack the enemy force located south of the Hui River in an effort to cut off and destroy 2-3 divisions.

(3) Because the 9th Column must cooperate with the 4th Column to grab hold of the enemy's main force, the XVIII Corps, we have decided to have the 11th (C) Column attack from east to west, which will aid in cutting the enemy apart. At the same time we are ordering the 2d (E) Column to construct defensive works north and south of Xisipo Station to block a possible westward move by Li Yannian and Liu Ruming to aid the Twelfth Army.

(4) This is a very opportune moment to destroy Huang Wei because Li Yannian and Liu Ruming haven't been advancing. Therefore, our idea is that, in addition to the 11th (C) Column, we ask Su, Chen, and Zhang to use 2-3 columns to defend against Li and Liu and send at least 4 columns to join in an operation to destroy Huang Wei. If we destroy all of Huang Wei's army or a large part of it, this will be more beneficial than destroying Li and Liu. If the CMC approves, this is what we will do. We also ask Su, Chen, and Zheng to quickly give us their thoughts.<sup>30</sup>

In this message Liu Bocheng presented a proposal that, like Su Yu's plan of 13 November for shaping the battles east of Xuzhou, was deeply imbued with ideas that appear in Sunzi's *The Art of War*. There was the element of deception, of having a *zheng* (fixing/holding) force that is directly engaged with the enemy voluntarily abandon its positions to lure an enemy force into a vulnerable position. According to Sunzi, "Warfare is the art (*tao*) of deceit. Therefore, when able, seem to be unable; when ready, seem unready; when nearby, seem far away."<sup>31</sup> Liu planned to have the 4th and 9th Columns feign an inability to hold in place to draw the XVIII Corps into his bag.

This act of deception was expected to work because it tapped into the *shi* (energy/momentum) inherent in the Twelfth Army's drive toward Suxian. It was also in accordance with Sunzi's advice on how to shape human behavior: "If the enemy seeks some advantage, entice him with it."<sup>32</sup> Then, after the XVIII Corps had reached the desired place, Liu intended to loose his *qi* (maneuver) force to slice into the enemy rear. The plan even followed Sunzi's advice about the tactics for opposing a river crossing: "When an invading force crosses a river in its onward march, . . . it will be best to let half the army get across, and then deliver your attack."<sup>33</sup> Like Sunzi and Su Yu, Liu Bocheng wanted to use information superiority and the initiative to shape the battlefield to his advantage and then act. In this he was pursuing the Sunzian ideal of the proficient commander who "moves the enemy, and is not moved by him."<sup>34</sup>

At this time Liu Bocheng was facing both threats and opportunities on a rapidly changing battlefield. Along the Su-Beng railroad the Sixth Army's XCIX Corps was nearing Xisipo, and its XXXIX Corps had reached Renqiaozhan. The Twelfth Army had outflanked the CPFA positions at Nanpingji the morning of 23 November, forcing Liu to withdraw several km toward Suxian. On 21 November Liu had planned to hold the Twelfth Army south of Nanpingji (see his 1500, 21 November message). Now he was worried that Huang Wei might not move directly toward Suxian but instead slide east and reach the Su-Beng railroad in the area the XCIX Corps controlled. Such a development would ruin all plans for isolating the Twelfth Army and lead to further problems on the southern front. It could not be permitted. Time was of the essence, so Liu, along with Chen Yi and Deng Xiaoping, decided that before

receiving CMC approval of Bocheng's plan to encircle the Twelfth Army they would take operational control of the ECFA columns that the plan called for and execute it.

This is another example of what was described earlier as a Moltkean approach to command and control within the PLA. As discussed previously, the CMC, in the pattern of the 19th-century commander, Prussian General Staff, Helmuth von Moltke the Elder, granted senior field commanders the responsibility and the authority to take the initiative and act on their own when circumstances required it. This principle of decentralized execution was expressed in several messages during the campaign. On 1 November a CMC message to Chen Yi, Deng Xiaoping, Su Yu, and others stated, "Our army's operation southwest of Xuzhou will be selected from among the three options presented by Chen [Yi] and Deng [Xiaoping] as the situation dictates."<sup>35</sup> A 3 November message from the CMC to Chen Yi and Deng Xiaoping, with information copies sent to Liu Bocheng and Su Yu, said, "Actual attack missions should be determined by you on the basis of the situation you face."<sup>36</sup> The CMC message to Su Yu and other ECFA commanders on 7 November, the eve of the planned start date of the campaign, contained this statement, "In executing this plan, use your judgment and act quickly. Don't be asking for instructions. However, report your views on the situation to us every day or every second or third day."<sup>37</sup> When the CMC established the General Front Committee for the campaign on 16 November it made this point once again, "Liu, Chen, and Deng will form a standing committee and they will handle everything as the situation requires."<sup>38</sup>

This was the authority that Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi, and Deng Xiaoping used when, at 1000, 24 November they transmitted the following message to Su Yu and the CMC. In the message they expressed their concerns and the need for quick action:

1. The enemy units attacking us yesterday, 23 November, at Nanpingji was the 118th Division [of the XVIII Corps]. According to an assistant company commander who was captured, that division has suffered heavy casualties and two regiments are already combat ineffective.
2. Last night, 23 November, and early this morning, 24 November, except for controlling an area two to two and one-half kilometers west of Nanpingji and ten kilometers south of Nanpingji and both sides of the Hui River, the main body is moving east toward Li Yannian and Liu Ruming. It is possible that they will cross the [Hui] River in the section east of Nanpingji and Qixianji and place their rear against the Jin-Pu railroad.
3. Our main body will attack tonight, 24 November, according to our original plan, but on the line running from Suxian to Qixianji and south of Qixianji, we only have the CPFA 9th and 11th columns. Our troop strength on the eastern side is comparatively weak. Because of this, we ask Su[Yu], Chen [Shiju], and Zhang [Zhen] to rush at least three columns to the Xisipo Station-Hugouji-Qixianji area tonight. Furthermore, a column should be sent south of Qixianji to keep Huang Wei from linking up with Li and Liu. Also preparations should be made to have a large, strong force attack westward south of the Hui River and destroy the enemy while moving to the west.
4. Please give us a reply saying how this will be carried out.<sup>39</sup>

The CMC message approving Liu Bocheng's plan was sent to Liu, Chen Yi, and Deng Xiaoping and also to Su Yu, Chen Shiju, and Zhang Zhen before this message of 1000, 24 November had been fully processed at PLA headquarters. Transmitted at 1500, 24 November, it acknowledged receipt of the 2200, 23 November message that contained Liu's plan and expressed total concurrence with Liu,

Chen, and Deng's decision to make an attack on the Twelfth Army the main effort on the southern front. Again, following the "Moltkean" practice, the message also granted authority to Liu, Chen Yi, and Deng Xiaoping to do what they thought best. The effect was to not only approve the plan presented in the 2200, 23 November message but also to preapprove the orders Liu, Chen, and Deng issued in their 1000, 24 November message:

Your message of 2200 23 November has been received.

- (1) We completely agree that Huang Wei should be attacked first.
- (2) We hope that Su, Chen, and Zhang will follow the deployment set forth by Liu, Chen, and Deng and dispatch the necessary forces to participate in the attack on Huang Wei.
- (3) In urgent situations everything will be handled by Liu, Chen, and Deng on the spot. Do not ask for guidance.<sup>40</sup>

Su Yu's deployment of forces to implement Liu Bocheng's plan was presented in a message sent to Liu, Chen, and Deng and also to the CMC, Wei Guoqing and Ji Luo, and Tan Zhenlin and Wang Jianan at 0900, 25 November. The message acknowledged the receipt of Liu, Chen, and Deng's 1000, 24 November message, so Su Yu knew that Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi, and Deng Xiaoping wanted three ECFA columns to reach the area southwest of Suxian on the night of 24 November. But, as Su Yu stated, that would be impossible. Until the night of 26 November the CPFA would have to try to encircle the Twelfth Army by itself:

The [Liu-Chen-Deng] message of 1000 24 November and the CMC message of 1500 24 November have been read. We endorse completely the operational policy of first concentrating our strength and destroying Huang Wei. We have disposed our forces as follows:

- (1) Today the 6th Column, except for one division which will relieve the 2d(C) Column's 6th division of its responsibility for controlling Suxian, will advance to the Hugouji-Guanyintang line and then push eastward with all possible energy. It will construct defensive positions to firmly block any possible effort by the Li and Liu armies to move westward south of the Guzhen [Hui] River to aid Huang Wei. To its west this column will establish and maintain contact with the 11th (C) Column.

The 2d Column will continue to control a line west and north of Caijiaqiao, Wangjiada-zhuangzi, Gujiadian, Xisipo, Zhangjiaqiao, and Gaokouji and also the railroad to block any advance by Li and Liu's armies to the northwest along the railroad. Moreover, it will make every effort to extend the defensive works toward the southeast so that the armies of Li and Liu are far from Huang Wei and Suxian. This column will establish contact with the 6th Column.

The 13th Column and the Jiang-Huai regional force, after taking Lingbi, will move as follows: The 13th Column will go to the area south of Sanpu and Dadian to join in the blocking of Li and Liu's armies. The two Jiang Huai divisions will advance to Tuoheji and conduct flanking attacks against the armies of Li and Liu.

All of the forces mentioned above will be under the command of Wei Guoqing and Ji Luo. They will determine the specific disposition of these units.

- (2) Besides the 11th (C) Column, which is already under CPFA command for the attack on Huang Wei, we will only additionally dispatch the 7th and 11th(E) columns to participate in the operation against Huang Wei. Not until tomorrow evening can

those two columns reach the area south and southwest of Suxian. The 10th Column will also be able to reach the area east of Suxian tomorrow to serve as a reserve. After a short period of rest and reorganization, it will prepare to join in the battle of annihilation against Huang Wei.

I look for your instructions on how these columns should be used.

(3) The 1st, 3rd, 4th, 8th, 19th, 12th, Luzhongnan, and Liangguang columns will stay on the northern front to perform the mission of blocking a possible move by the armies of Qiu, Li, and Sun to aid Huang Wei by going to the south or to the southwest along the Xuzhou-Xiaoxian road. This force is all under the command of Tan Zhenlin and Wang Jianan.<sup>41</sup>

### **Encircling the Twelfth Army**

While the Communist commanders were developing their plans and concentrating their forces to destroy the Twelfth Army, Huang Wei's army continued fighting toward Suxian. The morning of 24 November, with the XVIII Corps in the lead, the Twelfth Army began pushing north of the Hui River. However, progress was slow, and intelligence reports indicated that a dangerous situation was developing. XVIII Corps plainclothes intelligence personnel operating ahead of the corps had reported large numbers of Communist soldiers moving toward the Twelfth Army along the Mengcheng-Suxian road. Division reconnaissance teams were encountering overlapping "fish-scale" defensive positions built in depth along the corps' flanks. On the army's left flank, the X Corps reported a large enemy force moving from the west toward the corps' left flank and rear. Soldiers arriving from Mengcheng had brought news that the city had fallen into Communist hands.<sup>42</sup> Faced with stiff resistance, loss of any supply line to the rear, indications that he was moving into a sack-shaped area lined with defensive works, and other evidence of enemy intentions to surround him, at mid-day Huang Wei called his corps commanders together to discuss the situation.<sup>43</sup> A decision was reached to not abandon the attempt to reach Suxian but to go by way of Guzhen.<sup>44</sup> This would allow them to join with the Sixth and Eighth Armies and regain a supply line to support the advance to Suxian. That afternoon Huang issued orders for those units north of the Hui River to withdraw to the south bank and for the entire army to begin preparing to move toward Guzhen.<sup>45</sup>

The general outline of the Twelfth Army plan for shifting the army to Guzhen was, according to XVIII Corps commander Yang Botao as follows:

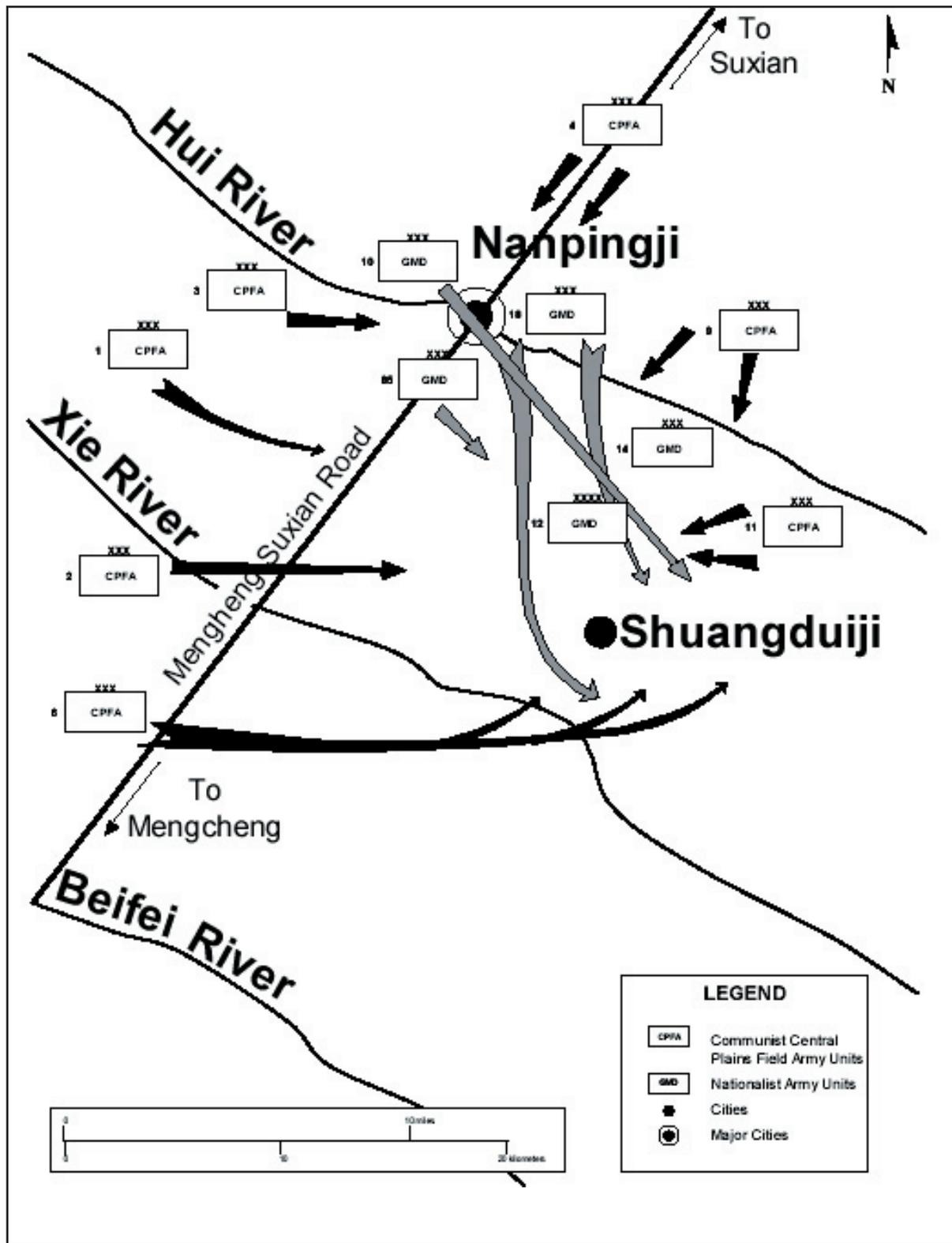
(1) The XIV Corps, which was located southeast of Nanpingji, was to quickly move to the area along the Hui River west of Dongpingji and occupy defensive positions facing north along the south bank of the Hui River. There it would be on guard to block any southward advance by the Communists, thus providing a protective screen for the movement of the army.

(2) The LXXXV Corps was to concentrate most of its forces in and around Nanpingji and defend the northwest approaches to the town so that the XVIII and X corps could shift positions [from north of the Hui River]. After these two corps had passed through Nanpingji, the corps was to move eastward toward Guzhen.

(3) The X Corps was to break contact with the enemy and use the protection provided by the LXXXV and XIV Corps to move to the area west of Guzhen.

(4) The XVIII corps was to immediately break contact with the enemy and move to an area west of Guzhen.

(5) The army headquarters were to follow the XVIII corps.<sup>46</sup>



Map 2. Encirclement of the Twelfth Army.

Huang Wei hoped to execute a rolling advance in which his four corps would alternate between attacking to the front and providing protective screens along the flanks and rear of the large army formation.<sup>47</sup> For a while this seemed achievable. Despite the fact that during the night of 24 November the CPFA launched its planned attack, the X and XVIII Corps units were able to withdraw south of the Hui River, and on 25 November they reached the area around Shuangduiji. The XIV Corps also successfully withdrew from the Hui River line to an area east of Shuangduiji. However, during the day the LXXXV Corps, which was defending the army's rear came under heavy attack from pursuing Communist columns. Communist units infiltrated between Nationalist positions and created chaos and confusion as they destroyed trucks, equipment, and supplies. Finally, Huang Wei was forced to send XVIII Corps elements back to restore the situation.<sup>48</sup> They accomplished this mission, but the resulting loss of forward momentum allowed the CPFA 6th Column to reach the army's front and begin to build blocking positions. At 0500, 26 November Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi, and Deng Xiaoping reported triumphantly to the CMC that the Twelfth Army was encircled:

As of this morning, Huang Wei's army has been completely surrounded by us in the area between Nanpingji, Qixianji, Shaoweizi, Shuangduiji and Lugouji. We have blocked the attempt by the enemy to break out in the space between Shaoweizi and Shuangduiji. We have already ordered all columns to gradually squeeze the pocket until this enemy force is completely destroyed. We ask the CMC to direct New China Radio to intensify its political propaganda work aimed at the enemy.<sup>49</sup>

At the time this message was being transmitted, the Twelfth Army was preparing to resume its push toward Guzhen. Working through the night, Huang Wei had organized his army as follows: the LXXXV Corps was positioned on the right flank, west of Shuangduiji; the X Corps was in the center, east of Shuangduiji; the XIV Corps was on the left flank, northeast of Shuangduiji; and the XVIII Corps was providing rear security north of Shuangduiji. The plan was that after the three corps in front had reached and secured their intermediate objectives, the XVIII Corps would pass through the center and extend the advance to the southeast.<sup>50</sup> At dawn's first light the three columns in the lead element set out, but after advancing only a short distance to a line a few km southeast of Shuangduiji stiff CPFA resistance brought them to a stop. Given the continuing attacks against his army's flanks and rear, it was clear to Huang that he was encircled. This was confirmed in the afternoon when observers in reconnaissance aircraft flying out of Nanjing reported seeing Communist troops digging trenches all around his force.<sup>51</sup>

Huang Wei's first inclination after realizing that his army was encircled was to launch a major attack the next day to push through the Communist defensive positions before they were strengthened further.<sup>52</sup> Late in the afternoon he received orders from Nanjing directing that he do that very thing. The orders further informed Huang that Li Yannian had already been directed to launch an attack west toward Hugouji to support his attack. What Huang was supposed to do was "attack to the east with all the strength of his army, defeat the enemy in front of him, and link up with Li Yannian's army."<sup>53</sup>

Early the evening of 26 November Huang Wei called a meeting of his corps and division commanders to plan for the next morning's attack. To make the attack as strong as possible, Huang decided to use four divisions—the 18th Division, X Corps; the 10th and 118th Divisions, XVIII Corps; and the 110th Division, LXXXV Corps.<sup>54</sup>

Selecting the 110th Division to participate in the attack proved to be a bad choice for Huang Wei. Division commander Liao Yunzhou had joined the CCP in March 1927 during the Northern Expedition and had served as an underground party member within the Nationalist army ever since. Through the

years the party occasionally was able to send agents secretly to the division to help Liao's organizational work.<sup>55</sup> In summer 1947 the CCP gave him permission to establish an underground party committee within the division. Soon after, Liao began asking when he should lead the division to revolt, but Deng Xiaoping told him to "wait patiently in order to have the greatest effect at the most opportune time."<sup>56</sup>

In July 1948 Liu Bocheng and Deng Xiaoping advised Liao that the time to defect might be near and that he should prepare for such action. Now, on his own initiative, Liao decided that Deng's "opportune time" had arrived. During the meeting with Huang Wei, he volunteered the 110th Division to be one of the four divisions to participate in the attack. In addition, to facilitate the division's defection, he convinced Huang to change his concept of having four divisions attack abreast to one in which the divisions would attack in column with the 110th Division in the lead.<sup>57</sup> Once free to do so, he quickly went to his division's position on the perimeter of the Twelfth Army's pocket and drafted a message to send across the lines to the commander, 6th Column telling him the Twelfth Army was preparing to launch a large attack against his positions the next morning and the 110th Division wanted to defect.<sup>58</sup>

Around 0300, 27 November the messenger returned and took Liao across the lines to meet with 6th Column commander Wang Jinshan and his staff. Wang expressed great gratitude for the Twelfth Army plans that Liao had given them and told Liao they had been sent on to Liu Bocheng. Wang also set the conditions under which the 110th Division defection would take place. Gaoliang stalks would be set out to mark the routes to follow. Officers and soldiers would have a piece of white cloth or a towel on their left arms. When the two forces met, three rounds of artillery would be fired as a sign they were in contact. The goal was to have the entire division across the lines before daybreak.<sup>59</sup>

Returning to his division, Liao first informed his fellow Communist conspirators and then other officers who were known to be sympathetic to the Communist cause about what was going to happen. Security measures were put in place to ensure that word of their plans did not leak out as the division assembled for its scheduled attack. Then the Communist officers, and the other officers they trusted to join them, announced to their units what they said was good news. In the midst of a hopeless situation the division commander had arranged a way to save their lives. He would surrender the whole division immediately. Everyone was to put on the white cloth as directed and start moving out. An invitation was issued to those who did not want to go to say so.<sup>60</sup> Not surprisingly, as Liao later noted, no one spoke up, and off the division went.<sup>61</sup>

As the 110th Division was defecting, it was not clear to Huang Wei what was happening. The division had walked away in darkness, and at daybreak Liao had begun reporting to Huang by walkie-talkie that he was advancing easily against little resistance.<sup>62</sup> After 0900, with the division completely through the Communist lines, Liao still had the proper ground panels laid out to indicate to observers flying overhead that everything was proceeding well.<sup>63</sup> Reports from the follow-on divisions behind the 110th, however, indicated that things were not going well. They were encountering fierce resistance and going nowhere. With confusion compounding the effect of Communist defensive fire, the breakout attempt failed with hardly any forward progress being made. Meanwhile, on the Twelfth Army's flanks and rear, Communist attacks were compressing the pocket.

Liu Bocheng saw the situation at Shuangduiji at this time as extremely favorable and getting better. The 110th Division's defection and the number of prisoners being taken indicated to him that the Twelfth Army was about to disintegrate. As the following message sent to the CMC at 1700 27 November indicates, he was assuming the battle would be over the next day. Already he was directing that ECFA columns return to ECFA control for use in operations against Li Yannian:

(1) As of the present moment we have already compressed Huang Wei's army into

a little over ten villages around Shuangduiji. As the attacks have moved along, we have been taking prisoners. This morning Liao Yunzhou (commander of the 110th division of the LXXXV Corps) led his force to revolt on the battlefield. (Don't publicize this for 3 days.) The XVIII Corps and other units now densely packed into Shuangduiji like the spines of a hedgehog have already had men surrendering to us in certain areas. At the latest, the battle with the entire force will be completed tomorrow.

(2) We have already told Su, Chen, and Zhang to immediately begin deploying to destroy Li Yannian and Liu Ruming. We have also already directly ordered that the 11th (E) and 7th (E) columns be returned to Wei and Ji's command. Moreover, we have already directly ordered the 7th Column to move rapidly tonight (27 November) to the area between Guzhen and Bengbu to cut the route of withdrawal for all enemy forces north of Guzhen. We have also told Wang and Ji to order the 6th Column to attack from Hugou toward Guzhen. Afterward, the 7th Column and the 11th (E) Column (but not the 11th (C) Column) will return to the control of Su, Chen, and Zhang. Concerning the arrangements for surrounding and destroying Li and Liu, they will be the responsibility of Su and Chen.

(3) Each column of the CPFA (including the 11th (C) Column), after they have completed the task of finishing off Huang Wei tomorrow, must have a certain number of days to handle post-battle matters. We ask the CMC to tell us what our future strategic orientation will be.<sup>64</sup>

### **Intimidating the Sixth and Eighth Armies**

Three hours before Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi, and Deng Xiaoping sent out the preceding message, at 1400, 27 November Su Yu had already transmitted his plan for surrounding the Sixth Army's XCIX Corps and XXXIX Corps in the Renqiaoji area and cutting the Su-Beng railroad south of Guzhen.<sup>65</sup> This deep thrust toward Bengbu was intended to net as many Nationalist forces as possible before they could retreat to safety. It was also designed to hold the LIV Corps, which Su expected would try to relieve the XCIX and XXXIX Corps after they were surrounded, as far from them as possible. In his message, Su stated he had already received intelligence reports indicating that the XCIX and XXXIX Corps were withdrawing toward Guzhen, but he was still confident that his forces, which were to begin moving that night, would be able to surround and destroy them.<sup>66</sup>

Su Yu did not achieve this objective. After Lingbi had fallen to the 13th Column-Jiang Huai Military District force on 25 November, Li Yannian had become very concerned about the growing threat on his right flank posed by the ECFA columns moving south from the Xuzhou area. His XCIX and XXXIX Corps were at the tip of a very long thin salient along the Su-Beng railroad. Behind him was the Eighth Army, a force in which he had little confidence. As a result, the evening of 26 November he sent these two corps back south, a movement that, as Su Yu's reference to it in his message of 1400, 27 November indicates, the Communists quickly realized.<sup>67</sup> Despite what the Nationalist High Command told Huang Baitao about the Sixth Army supporting his breakout attempt on 27 November by attacking west from Renqiaoji, the attack did not take place. Instead, the Sixth Army continued to move south on 27 November.

Li Yannian's actions saved his army. On 28 November ECFA units could only catch up with the tail end of the Nationalist forces moving south. Some Nationalist soldiers were killed and captured. A number of trucks and the supplies they were transporting were captured or destroyed. Basically, however, the Sixth and Eighth Armies reached Bengbu intact. There they were deployed in a defensive line along

the Huai River, leaving the Twelfth Army deeply isolated 60 km to their northwest.

### **Holding the Line on the Northern Front**

By encircling the Twelfth Army and forcing the Sixth and Eighth Armies to withdraw to Bengbu from 25 to 28 November the CPFA and ECFA eliminated the two southern prongs in the Nationalist plan to seize the central position. Meanwhile, the eight ECFA columns deployed south of Xuzhou to hold the northern side of the central position were fighting to block the third prong. This was the key shaping operation of this phase of the campaign. PLA commanders were concerned that if the three armies in Xuzhou, the strongest Nationalist force on the campaign battlefield, were able to move south to Suxian and beyond, they would directly threaten the CPFA's rear and could possibly break the Twelfth Army's encirclement.<sup>68</sup>

To keep any of Liu Zhiming's Group Army from making such a breakthrough, Tan Zhenlin adopted a linear area defense. Five columns and the two independent Ju-Lu-Yu Military Region divisions were deployed along a 50-km arc that ran from the Xiaoxian area southwest of Suzhou to Shuanggouji in the southeast. The units' positions, left to right, were the Ji-Lu-Yu divisions near Xiaoxian, the Liangguang Column, the 3d Column in the center, the Luzhongnan Column, the 12th Column, and finally the 1st Column on the extreme east end of the line. These columns were directed to construct three lines of defensive works in their sectors and set up interlocking fields of fire.<sup>69</sup>

Behind these columns, as reserves, were the three columns that had suffered the most casualties in fighting east of Xuzhou, the 9th on the left, the 8th in the center, and the 4th on the right. Tan organized the columns into three army-sized groupings to promote unity of effort. The "western route blocking army" consisted of the Ji-Lu-Yu divisions, the Liangguang Column, and the 9th Column under the 9th Column commander's overall command. In the center the "frontal blocking army" contained the 3d Column, the Luzhongnan Column, and the 8th Column under the direct control of Tan and his Shandong army headquarters. On the right the "eastern route blocking army," consisting of the 12th Column, 1st Column, and 4th Column, was under the 4th Column commander's command.<sup>70</sup> Tan's objective was to firmly hold this line for 20 days to one month to give the CPFA time to destroy the Twelfth Army.<sup>71</sup>

Liu Zhi and Du Yuming faced an unenviable task in trying to overcome the defenses Tan Zhenlin established and reach Suxian. The frontal attacks the Thirteenth and Second Armies conducted in their attempt to reach Nianzhuangxu and relieve the Seventh Army had failed. In that difficult battle the two armies had expended large quantities of ammunition and suffered approximately 15,000 killed and many thousand wounded.<sup>72</sup> According to the commander, Thirteenth Army, VIII Corps, units committed to that effort had suffered about 30-percent casualties.<sup>73</sup> Now Du replaced the Thirteenth Army with the Sixteenth Army as an attacking force but again called on the Second Army. He knew he lacked the element of surprise, but he hoped an advantage in firepower would enable him to destroy the prepared defenses and advance south.

On 25 November the Sixteenth and Second Armies launched their offensive, employing four corps abreast supported by aerial strafing, tanks, and artillery. During the day, the Nationalists occupied the ECFA's first defensive line in several places and captured a number of hills. However, the average advance for the Second Army was only a disappointing 3 km.<sup>74</sup> Gains on 26 and 27 November were no better, which lead Qiu Qingquan and Sun Yuanliang to appeal to Du Yuming to either give them more firepower or stop attacking.<sup>75</sup> With infantry losses running high, they felt that continuing to carry out frontal assaults that gained little ground would soon put them in a position whereby they would be unable to conduct any offensive operations at all. Du agreed with them in principle but said that shortages

in bombs and artillery ammunition made it impossible to give them all the fire support they wanted. All he could do was direct that they continue their efforts to break through.<sup>76</sup>

Whether the Nationalists could have broken through the ECFA defenses south of Xuzhou is unclear. On 28 November their armies were into their third week of almost continuous combat. Casualties had been heavy, and ammunition, fuel, and food consumption had been high. Qiu Qingquan and Sun Yuanliang's concerns about their ability to continue their attacks were undoubtedly valid, but the ECFA was also feeling the strain of continuous operations. On 20 November Su Yu had reported to the CMC that ECFA casualties in the fighting east of Xuzhou had reached nearly 40,000, with the 8th and 9th Columns having more than 5,000 casualties each and the 4th Column having more than 4,000.<sup>77</sup> Most of the columns that were now on the front line had also suffered significant losses in earlier fighting. The 1st Column had more than 3,000 casualties, and the 3d and Luzhongnan Columns had more than 2,000 casualties each.<sup>78</sup> Added to these losses were those incurred during the Nationalist attacks of 25-28 November.

By 26 November the Liangguang Column had suffered so many casualties and was in such a battle-weary state that the commander, 9th Column, pulled it from the front. He replaced it with one of his three divisions and backed it up with his other two divisions.<sup>79</sup> On 28 November Tan Zhenlin decided the Luzhongnan Column needed to be taken out of the line and sent to the area east of Fuliji for rest and reorganization.<sup>80</sup> 8th Column elements went into its place. This costly battle of attrition was taking a heavy toll on both sides. The question was, could the Nationalists, given their slow rate of forward progress, continue attacking long enough to wear down the Communists and reach their objective?

This would have been hard to do because the Nationalists, being an isolated force, could not replace their losses as the Communists could. On 21 November Su Yu had ordered the Bohai Column, which had been performing garrison duty in Jinan, to go south to the Xuzhou area as rapidly as possible.<sup>81</sup> Traveling the first 140 km of their journey by train to Yanzhou and then marching 150 km, the column reached the northeast side of Xuzhou on 26 November and was immediately put on the line next to the 1st Column to increase pressure on that sector of the Xuzhou defenses.<sup>82</sup> The Communists also continued, during the battle, to use Nationalist soldiers who had surrendered or been captured as replacements.

Using enemy soldiers as one's own was not new in Chinese history. Sunzi had advocated the practice in *The Art of War* in keeping with his preference for preservation over destruction. Sunzi wanted to capture, not kill the enemy: "It is better to capture an army entire than to destroy it, to capture a regiment, a detachment or a company entire than to destroy them."<sup>83</sup> Once they were captured, Sunzi saw no better place for these soldiers and their equipment than in one's own force:

Therefore in chariot fighting, when ten or more chariots have been taken, those should be rewarded who took the first. Our own flags should be substituted for those of the enemy, and the chariots mingled and used in conjunction with ours. The captured soldiers should be kindly treated and kept. This is called using the conquered foe to augment one's own strength.<sup>84</sup>

The Communists had long relied on turning warlord or Nationalist soldiers into Communist soldiers as a way to increase their army's size. This was easier than taking a peasant out of the field and turning him into a soldier. The practice was embedded in PLA operational principles as part of principle nine where it states specifically: "replenish our strength with all of the arms and most of the personnel captured from the enemy." During the Huai Hai Campaign, using Nationalist soldiers as replacements received command emphasis right from the start. As the following excerpt from a message the CMC

sent to the ECFA and CPFA commanders on 7 November indicates, this was to be a major way to keep forces up to strength:

In order to fight consecutive operations and destroy a large number of the enemy, you should follow the method used in the Jinan Campaign, keeping troop strength robust and morale high by having every combat unit replace losses as they fight and fight as they replace losses. This is very important.

To accomplish this, the trained replacement units in the rear should be shifted to positions near the battlefield, so that the new soldiers and captured soldiers who have already been properly trained can rapidly replenish the forces. At the same time, take all of those captured during this campaign, quickly give them training, and replenish the forces.<sup>85</sup>

Other messages sent during the campaign reveal a continuing command focus on this practice. Su Yu's message of 1000, 9 November sent to all ECFA army, column, division, and regimental commanders stated: "At the front, as you take prisoners, use them as replacements, and as you use them as replacements, continue to fight, thus maintaining the numbers required for combat, replenishing our strength for battle, and carrying forward the spirit of continuous, protracted combat."<sup>86</sup> In his message of 2100, 18 November to his field commanders Su Yu said, "You should immediately use your prisoners as replacements to maintain sufficient strength for continuous operations."<sup>87</sup> Tan Zhenlin's message to his column commanders upon assuming command of the blocking force south of Xuzhou included a similar request to "Firmly grasp the work of integrating liberated soldiers into your units."<sup>88</sup>

The pace of integrating captured Nationalist soldiers into ECFA units quickened as the Huai Hai Campaign progressed. Large ECFA losses created the need. The changing characteristics of the Nationalist soldiers being taken prisoner created the conditions that made it possible. The political commissar, 4th Column, later recounted how, at the time, the political cadres responsible for reeducating the Nationalist soldiers began to realize that many of the soldiers were poor peasants who had only recently been dragooned into the army. The Communist political message easily convinced them, and they would readily agree to enter the PLA. As a result, the 4th Column asked for and received permission from ECFA headquarters to process its prisoners quickly and put as many of them into the columns as each column commander saw fit. But this was not done haphazardly. Not all Nationalist soldiers could be transformed into PLA fighters because of political considerations or other reasons. The 4th Column developed a systematic program involving several steps to carry out this transformational process. The steps were "capture, divide (clearly distinguish between ordinary soldiers and officers and the small number of hooligans and army riffraff); educate; place in the ranks; commit to combat; and evaluate (the granting of awards and promotions.)"<sup>89</sup>

Ceremonies were held when captured soldiers entered the PLA and received their weapons. When time permitted, sessions telling about the misery of life under the Nationalists were convened. Old PLA fighters were assigned to help the new arrivals. As a result of this program, 13,000 captured Nationalist soldiers were brought into the 4th Column between 6 November and 15 December.<sup>90</sup> How many thousands of these were in the column when it was fighting south of Xuzhou is unknown, but there must have been many because in the latter stages of the battle to destroy the Seventh Army the column commander had begun to plan attacks specifically with capturing soldiers to replace his losses in mind.<sup>91</sup> With eight ECFA columns using former Nationalist soldiers as replacements it is easy to see how their total number could have been quite large. Ironically, they may have been numerous enough to have tipped the balance in the Communists' favor in the attrition battle south of Xuzhou.

## Communist Visions and Operational Concepts, 27 November-1 December

After receiving the optimistic report on the fight to destroy Huang Wei's army that Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi, and Deng Xiaoping had sent at 1700, 27 November and Su Yu's message of 1400, 27 November expressing his confidence that he would soon destroy two of Li Yannian's corps, the CMC responded at 0400, 28 November with a grand vision of developing opportunities and future operations. Worth noting is that at this point, with the CPFA having only fought the Twelfth Army for a few days and an easy, quick victory anticipated, the CMC was still thinking this army should spend two weeks resting, reorganizing, and replenishing before resuming operations. The message also shows the CMC's desire to maintain maximum pressure on the Nationalists. Although destroying the three Nationalist armies in Xuzhou was to be the next main effort, the CMC also wanted Communist forces on the Yangzi's north bank opposite Nanjing (at Pukou) as soon as possible:

(1) Both the Liu-Chen-Deng message sent 1700 27 November and the Su-Chen-Zhang message sent 1400 27 November have been read.

(2) If today (28 November), Liu, Chen, and Deng are able to completely take care of Huang Wei's army, and Su, Chen, and Zhang are able to surround the various units from Li Yannian and Liu Ruming's armies that are located north of Bengbu and destroy them during the next several days, then the entire Huai Hai Campaign will have undergone a decisive change. The second phase of the campaign would be over.

(3) The third phase of the campaign will be to finish off the enemy forces in Xuzhou and Bengbu and capture both cities.

(4) After completely destroying Huang Wei and all the units Li Yannian and Liu Ruming have north of Bengbu, the entire army should rest and reorganize for a short period. The length of time will be determined by conditions. Most likely, approximately two weeks will be required. Afterwards, the main force will be used to take Xuzhou while a fairly large force will be used to take Bengbu, Pukou, Hefei, and other cities located in the area bounded by the Huai River on the north, the Yangzi River on the south, the Grand Canal on the east, and Chao Lake on the west. This force will press right up against the Yangzi.

(5) Presently, the ECFA altogether has 16 columns of different sizes, the 1st, 2d, 3rd, 4th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th, Bohai, Luzhongnan, Liangguang, and Special Type [ST]. The CPFA has 7 columns, the 1st, 2d, 3rd, 4th, 6th, 9th, and the Wang [Bingzhang]-Zhang[Linzhi] 11th. (The Wang-Zhang column should return to CPFA control.) After the second phase of the campaign has concluded, and before the short period of rest and reorganization has begun, please immediately consider the question of troop deployment for the next phase of operations and give us your ideas on how many troops will be needed to attack Xuzhou and how many will be needed to take Bengbu and Pukou.

(6) If Li and Liu's main body can be destroyed north of Bengbu, then there will be very few enemy troops in Bengbu or along the Beng-Pu [Bengbu-Pukou] railroad. It seems that there is the possibility here to build on a victory and seize both Bengbu and part, or all, of the Beng-Pu railroad. If this possibility arises, then we should have at least two or three columns go south of the Huai River at an early date to carry out this mission. Even if Bengbu cannot be taken immediately, we still should, at an early date, cut the communication link between Bengbu and Pukou so that the reinforcements that the enemy could shift from other places will have no way to reach Bengbu. Once the

columns that would execute this mission have cut communications between Bengbu and Pukou, they can rest and reorganize along the Beng-Pu railroad. Then, they can attack Bengbu.<sup>92</sup>

At 2200, 28 November the CMC sent Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi, Deng Xiaoping, Su Yu, and Tan Zhenlin a message that followed up on this vision of quickly advancing into the area south of the Huai River and capturing Bengbu. Reflecting the CMC's desire that this movement across the Huai River take place soon, the CMC identified the ECFA columns that were in the Guzhen area not far from Bengbu as the units that could execute such an operation. While these columns would be moving south, the CPFA would move north to fight the Nationalist armies in Xuzhou supported by the ECFA columns under Tan Zhenlin:

(1) We ask Su, Chen, and Zhang, after they have destroyed the enemy in the Guzhen-Caolaoji area, to consider exploiting this victory by sending five columns, the 2d, 6th, 7th, 11th, and 13th south of the Huai River to cut the Beng-Pu railroad and surround Bengbu, all the while looking for an opportunity to seize Bengbu. The 10th Column would stay at Suxian to rest and reorganize. Afterwards, the columns led by Tan [Zhenlin], Wang [Jinan], and Li [Yingxi] and the 10th Column would be used in coordination with the CPFA to take care of the enemy in Xuzhou. We look forward to your telling us whether or not this could be done and what difficulties there would be in a river crossing operation across the Huai so we can make a final decision.

(2) After Huang Wei is finished off, we must consider the possibility of the enemy in Xuzhou taking flight toward the two Huai cities [Huaian and Huaiyin] or toward Wuhan. Because of this, even though, on the one hand, the CPFA and the ECFA columns under Tan, Wang, and Li should try to take two weeks for rest and reorganization, on the other hand, they should quickly handle the post-battle work so they can counter the unexpected from an advantageous position. We ask that you take heed of this matter and get a good handle on it.<sup>93</sup>

During the hours when the CMC was preparing and transmitting these messages laying out its vision of future possibilities, events on the Shuangduiji battlefield were undercutting the foundation on which that vision was built. Far from disintegrating the night of 27 November, the Twelfth Army managed to mount a strong defense that grew stronger on 28 November. At 1700, 28 November Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi, and Deng Xiaoping had to inform the CMC that the battle to destroy the Twelfth Army not only would not be over that day as they had expected, it also would take 10 more days:

(1) After last night's (27 November) fighting, we have already compressed the enemy into a long, narrow small area 7.5 kilometers long and 2.5 kilometers wide. The enemy has fiercely attacked our 6th Column's positions several times using large numbers of aircraft and tanks in an attempt to open a route for escaping toward the southeast. All attacks have been repulsed and more than 300 soldiers have been taken prisoner. We have been pressing on the pocket from the west, east, and north, in a southerly direction. Our troops are fiercely courageous, but [last evening] because of the murky weather and nightfall the units became disorganized. Also, the enemy, after the failure of the break out attempt, relied on the positions they already had to mount a firm defense. As a result, before dawn this morning I stopped attacking.

(3) At present, in light of the enemy's tenacious defense, we are waiting for ammunition to arrive. Then, on the night of 29 November we will start attacking to

annihilate the enemy. Our method of fighting will be to concentrate firepower against points in sequence, taking them out one by one.

(4) From the time that we began the blocking battle at Guoyang on 19 November, up to this morning (28 November), total casualties for our six columns have not exceeded 6,000. Morale is very high. With the addition of the ECFA 7th Column and artillery we can surely destroy this enemy. However, finishing the task will require ten days or so. Originally, on the basis of conditions existing at the time of the enemy's full-scale break out attempt and the revolt of Liao, we calculated that combat would soon be over. Those conditions have already changed.

(5) Because the enemy is mounting a strong defense, we will keep the ECFA 7th Column as a general reserve.<sup>94</sup>

This message caused a dramatic shift in CMC thought. The vision of establishing a reserve force and concentrating on attacking Huang Wei replaced the vision of quickly sending several ECFA columns south of the Huai River. Destroying the Twelfth Army was the key to maintaining the initiative in the campaign. Once that happened, more than 100,000 Communist soldiers would be free for use elsewhere, and the isolation of the Nationalist armies in Xuzhou would be greatly deepened. At 0600, 29 November the CMC outlined its revised campaign vision in the following message addressed to Liu, Chen, and Deng and also sent to Su Yu and Tan Zhenlin:

(1) Your 1700 28 November message has been read. Looking at the enemy's strong defense, your plan to concentrate firepower and destroy the enemy in detail step by step over a period of ten or more days is safe and reliable.

(2) Finishing off Huang Wei's army is the key to finishing off all 66 enemy divisions in the Xuzhou and Bengbu areas. You must consider what the enemy's last ditch struggle will be like. You must ensure that you have extra strength at hand sufficient to meet unexpected situations. Because of this, after Su, Chen, and Zhang have destroyed the enemy in the Guzhen-Caolaoji area they should immediately bring the 2nd, 6th, 10th, 11th, and 13th columns together to rest and serve as a general reserve for the destruction of Huang Wei. As for the matter of crossing south of the Huai River, we will wait until after Huang Wei is destroyed to discuss that again.

(3) We hope that Tan, Wang, and Li can firmly block the armies of Qiu, Li, and Sun and not allow them to reach Suxian. What is the situation on the northern front? Please inform us.<sup>95</sup>

Su Yu's response to the previous three messages, his analysis of the emerging situation the Communists faced, and his suggestions for how to proceed came in a message he sent to the CMC; Liu, Chen, and Deng; and the CCP's East China Bureau at 1500, 29 November. The CMC's message of 2200, 28 November had mentioned the possibility of the Nationalists abandoning Xuzhou after the Twelfth Army was destroyed. In his message, Su reported signs that such a development might be imminent, and he also indicated he thought the direction the Nationalists would take when they abandoned Xuzhou would be toward the south or southeast. Su told the CMC that he was moving the 2d, 6th, 10th, and 11th (E) Columns into positions southeast and northeast of Suxian where they would become a reserve for the fight against Huang Wei and would be ready to counter any attempt by the Nationalist armies in Xuzhou to flee toward the southeast.

Su Yu also presented another Sunzian vision in which, if the situation presented itself, he would try to entice those armies to move into an area between Xuzhou and Shuanggou and destroy them there.

If the Nationalists did not abandon Xuzhou but drew back toward the city and defended in place, Su wanted the mission of destroying them given to the ECFA alone. His primary justification was that keeping the ECFA together would facilitate the exercise of command. He also pointed out that sending the CPFA south of the Huai River was more appropriate than sending part of the ECFA because the CPFA already had links to people in that area established during the Liu-Deng army's strategic leap to the Dabie Mountains in late summer 1947 and the battles that followed. The excerpt from Su's message presented below shows his careful analysis of the situation before him and again illustrates how, as an operational commander, he continually asked and answered the questions that lay at the heart of operational art.

Liu, Chen, and Deng's message of 1700 28 November, and the CMC's messages of 2200 28 November and 0600 29 November have all been read. In addition to expressing complete agreement with the directives in the CPFA message of 1700 28 November and the CMC message of 0600 29 November, I am adding the following ideas:

(1) Huang Wei, having no hope of being relieved by a force moving north from Bengbu, seems to be drawing back and concentrating to firmly defend while waiting for the force in Xuzhou to move south to relieve him.

Liu [Ruming] and Li [Yannian] . . . have already withdrawn to Bengbu and the area just to the north of Bengbu. The opportunity to destroy them while they were moving has passed.

The Xuzhou 'suppression headquarters' has already changed its command location. Most of the personnel have flown to Nanjing. On this basis, I estimate that the armies of Qiu, Li, and Sun will either use all of their strength in an attack toward the south to reinforce Huang Wei and then withdraw southward with him, or they will take advantage of this situation where one major force is still engaged in fighting Huang Wei and another in pursuing Li and Liu . . . to seize an opening and either go south or go toward the two Huai cities. If they do not do this, then after Huang Wei is taken care of, Qiu, Li, and Sun will be in a difficult situation that will be even more conducive to our destroying them one by one.

(2) In accordance with commands, I'm adjusting deployments.

The two Jiang Huai divisions will be sent south of the Huai River and will coordinate with the force sent there in October to conduct operations to destroy the Pu-Beng railroad so the enemy cannot reinforce Bengbu.

The 13th Column will control the Guzhen-Caolaoji area to block any attempts by the enemy forces in Bengbu to advance northward or westward to aid Huang Wei.

All other southern front forces except for the 11th [C] (Wang Zhang), 7th, and ST columns that are attached to the CPFA for the fight against Huang Wei, that is, the 2nd, 6th, 10th, and 11th [E] columns, will assemble in the area between Suxian, Lingbi, and Guzhen and the area northeast of Suxian. There they will await opportunities and prepare to add needed troop strength at the right time for the final destruction of Huang Wei. At the same time, these columns will also prepare to entice the Qiu, Li, and Sun armies to come down the east side of the railroad until they reach the north banks of the Tang River. There they will attack in conjunction with the northern front columns and this attack from two sides will destroy the enemy between Xuzhou and the area

west of Jiagou. If the enemy breaks out toward the southeast, I can also maneuver in time to cut him off.

Before Huang Wei has been fundamentally taken care of, the primary focus has to be on blocking the Xuzhou force in order to guarantee the destruction of Huang Wei. Only after the greater part of Huang Wei's force has been destroyed can we look for opportunities to lure the enemy southward so we can more easily concentrate and destroy his main force outside of Xuzhou. (The degree of resistance to the enemy advance will be decided by looking at how conditions in the CPFA's operation against Huang Wei are developing.) When the time has arrived, not only will the ECFA participate, but if there aren't enough troops, part of the CPFA can join in, adding the strength to the finishing off of Qiu, Liu, and Sun. If we're able to destroy Huang Wei on schedule, and at the same time, or later, also wipe out Qiu and Li, then the battle for the Central Plains will be basically decided. Therefore, with our CPFA and ECFA where they are now in terms of the campaign as a whole, it is appropriate for us to adopt a plan to use all their strength to gain the consecutive destruction of Huang, Li, and Qiu.

(3) If Huang Wei is finished off quickly and the armies of Qiu, Li, and Sun are still concentrated in Xuzhou, then, after a short period for rest and replenishment, the CPFA and the ECFA can divide forces between south and north and take Xuzhou and Bengbu. Regarding the assignment of missions, the Xuzhou enemy force of Qiu, Li, and Sun has 21 divisions and numbers between 250,000 and 300,000. The Bengbu force of Li and Liu has 15 divisions and almost 150,000 soldiers. To facilitate the command of operations and the use of the forces, don't split the organizational structure. We suggest that the entire ECFA take on the task of destroying the enemy in Xuzhou, and that it's more appropriate for the CPFA to seize Hefei and the Beng-Pu railroad and work at opening up the area south of the Huai River. Moreover, the CPFA already has ties with the work going on in the Dabie Mountains and central and southern Anhui. What we will actually do depends upon future developments and will be decided by the CMC.<sup>96</sup>

On 29 November the CMC and Su Yu were both thinking that if and when the Nationalist forces abandoned Xuzhou their most likely route would be an attempt to flee southeast through Shuanggou toward the two Huai cities of Huaian and Huaiyin. This was based in large part on where the strongest attacks against the ECFA blocking force had been conducted to date and on intelligence showing the location of Nationalist army units. At 1000, 1600, and 2130 on 29 November Tan Zhenlin; Wang Jianan, deputy commander, Shandong army; and Li Yingxi, chief of staff, Shandong army, sent messages to Su Yu and the CMC repeatedly stating their view that the center of mass of the armies in Xuzhou was toward the east and that Qiu, Li, and Sun were about to flee to the southeast.<sup>97</sup> In these messages they proposed that to quickly and firmly encircle these armies and keep them from fleeing, "it was necessary to add two more main force columns to the defense of the line from Shuanggou to Danji."<sup>98</sup>

After receiving these reports and recommendations from commanders in the field and after receiving intelligence from agents (perhaps Guo Rugui) in Nanjing, at 1700, 30 November the CMC sent a message to Liu, Chen, and Deng, and also to Su Yu and Tan Zhenlin suggesting that three more columns be sent to the Shuanggou area. The tone of the message, however, did not reflect a sense of urgency. Apparently, the CMC still did not feel the Nationalist armies in Xuzhou were about to abandon Xuzhou:

(1) All of the messages sent by Su, Chen, and Zhang and Tan, Wang, and Li on

29 November have been received. All of the calculations and ideas are very good.

(2) After the enemy on the Guzhen-Caolaoji line has been taken care of, sending the two Jiang Huai divisions south of the Huai River and using the 13th Column to control Guzhen and Caolaoji is very appropriate. We hope that this will be done.

(3) As for the 2d, 6th, 10th, and 11th (E) columns, two of those four columns should be positioned north of Guzhen to rest and prepare to be used at any time by Liu, Chen, and Deng. They will be a general reserve for finishing off Huang Wei. This is a good plan. Could the other two columns go to the Shuanggou-Da Wangji line as Tan, Wang, and Li suggested and coordinate with the 1st Column to block the possible break out attempt by Qiu [Qingquan] and Li [Mi] toward the two Huai cities? We ask Liu, Chen, and Deng and Su, Chen, and Zhang to decide what to do on the basis of conditions.

(4) The 7th Column artillery has already been given to Liu, Chen, and Deng to use. This won't be discussed further. The entire Special Type [ST] Column should be committed to the fight against Huang Wei so as to strengthen our firepower.

(5) Where is the Bohai Column? It seems that that column should also be used in the Shuanggou area to counter the strength of Qiu and Li.

(6) Liu, Chen, and Deng's radio transmitter should quickly make a connection with Tan, Wang, and Li's transmitter.

(7) Our current inclination is that after Huang Wei is destroyed we will concentrate the entire strength of the ECFA and CPFA to finish off Qiu, Li, and Sun. Afterwards, we will rest and reorganize for a period of time and then carry out the Jiang-Huai [advance south of the Huai River to the Yangzi] campaign together.<sup>99</sup>

If, at 1700, 30 November the CMC did not feel an urgent need to shift forces to counter a possible Nationalist attempt to flee Xuzhou, several hours later the situation was different. At 0200, 1 December the CMC ordered three columns to immediately shift to the area east and southeast of Xuzhou. The CMC had finally decided the Nationalists would be trying to escape by moving in either of those directions. As this message shows, they wanted preparations to block such a move to begin quickly:

Foreign news agencies have revealed that the enemy forces in Xuzhou have a plan to flee to Lianyungang. We estimate that when Huang Wei's army is near destruction and Qiu, Li, and Sun have given up hope of fleeing to the south, it is most likely that their direction of flight will be toward either the two Huai cities or Lianyungang. Because of this, you should immediately make preparations as follows: (1) order the Bohai Column to quickly concentrate in the Daxujia-Danji area; (2) from among the 2nd, 6th, 10th, and 11th (E) columns, immediately send two columns to the Shuanggou-Suining line; (3) warn all of the military districts and sub-districts in southern Shandong and in the area between Huaian/Huaiyin and Haizhou to make arrangements regarding the local militia so that when the time comes they can act. We look for your word on how you are deploying your forces.<sup>100</sup>

### **The Nationalists Decide to Abandon Xuzhou**

This CMC message and the other messages sent from 29 to 30 November reflect the Communists' customary attempt to anticipate possible future Nationalist actions and to begin preparing counter-moves even before the Nationalists acted. Up to this point in the campaign, Communist commanders had already correctly anticipated a number of Nationalist moves. A good intelligence system provided

information superiority that greatly aided them in doing so. It is, therefore, surprising that at the very moment the CMC was ordering more columns to the eastern side of Xuzhou to block a Nationalist breakout toward the east or southeast, Du Yuming's army group was marching away from Xuzhou toward the west.

The complete story on why, in this case, the Communists were so wrong in anticipating what the Nationalists were going to do remains to be determined. Obviously, there was an intelligence failure within an intelligence system that not only usually provided Communist commanders with an accurate picture of enemy dispositions and movements within their operational areas but often gave them information on Nationalist intentions. This was a significant advantage that was missing in this instance. But the Communists' failure to correctly determine what the Nationalist armies in Xuzhou were doing and what they intended to do was also the result of effective Nationalist operational security and deception. In large measure, credit for giving the Nationalist armies in Xuzhou a chance to escape the fate Su Yu and others planned for them must go to Du Yuming.

Du Yuming's leading role in the Nationalist decision to abandon Xuzhou goes back to 28 November, which was a pivotal day for Nationalist decision making. On this day, in an attempt to strengthen the command structure at Bengbu, Jiang Jieshi ordered Liu Zhi's Bandit Suppression Headquarters to move from Xuzhou to Bengbu. There Liu was to establish a command headquarters to command and control the Sixth and Eighth Armies.<sup>101</sup> Jiang also assigned the LIV Corps to the Sixth Army to improve the ability of the forces in the Bengbu to move north when called on to do so. Moving Liu Zhi out of Xuzhou increased the independence of Du Yuming's forward command headquarters, which remained in Xuzhou, and basically made him responsible for the fate of the three armies he controlled. It was in this position of responsibility that he flew to Nanjing the morning of 28 November to attend another major strategy session Jiang Jieshi had convened.

Du arrived in Nanjing before noon and went straight to the presidential building. Soon Army Chief of Staff Gu Zhutong arrived, and since there was time before the meeting started, he invited Du into a reception room for a private discussion about the crisis the Nationalists were facing. The plan for regaining the central position adopted on 23 November had clearly failed. The Xuzhou armies were not pushing through Tan Zhenlin's blocking force. Li Yannian and Liu Ruming were withdrawing toward Bengbu. The Twelfth Army was encircled and, worse yet, on 27 November had shown itself incapable of breaking out of that encirclement on its own. Something had to be done to turn the situation around. Du frankly told Gu that the single solution was to add troops to the only place they could be added, the Bengbu front. He expressed his frustration over Jiang Jieshi's failure to add the several extra corps he had promised to shift to the Bengbu front at their meeting on 23 November and asked angrily, "Why wasn't even one added? Now we are riding a tiger and can't get off."<sup>102</sup>

After Gu Zhutong explained that Jiang Jieshi had wanted to shift several corps to Bengbu but that every possible corps was already committed somewhere else, Du replied, "If Jiang already knew that he was unable to pull troops from elsewhere to fight a decisive battle, then from the very start he should not have decided to fight and let Huang Wei fall into this tight encirclement with no way out. Now the only approach for saving Huang Wei is to concentrate all possible forces and fight a decisive battle with the enemy. Otherwise, Huang Wei is finished, Xuzhou will be lost, and Nanjing will be in danger."<sup>103</sup> Gu then told Du that Jiang had decided to "abandon Xuzhou and come out to fight" and went on to ask, "Can you safely get out of Xuzhou?"<sup>104</sup> This question troubled Du deeply because, in his view, if additional forces were not brought in to reinforce the Bengbu front, Huang Wei would be destroyed, and after that so would all of the armies in Xuzhou. After a long silence, he finally said:

In this difficult situation, the problem of leaving Xuzhou is not a big one. However, if we pull out of Xuzhou, there can be no thought of fighting. If we are to fight, then we can't leave Xuzhou. To abandon Xuzhou and come out to fight will just be taking the three armies in Xuzhou and immediately sending them to the enemy. The only approach is to have Huang Wei hold in place to tie down the enemy while the Xuzhou force leaves Xuzhou and goes by way of Yongcheng to the Mengcheng-Guoyang-Fuyang area. Once there, with the Huai River behind us, we can turn toward the enemy and fight to break the encirclement of Huang Wei.<sup>105</sup>

After listening to Du's idea, Gu agreed that there really was no other alternative. Hearing this, Du asked Gu to please not raise this option in the coming meeting. Du's request, as Gu well knew, was based on his distrust of Guo Rugui. In spring 1948 Du had told Gu directly of his suspicions that Guo Rugui was in contact with the Communists and had asked Gu not to appoint him chief of the High Command's operation section.<sup>106</sup> At the time, Gu had told Du that his concerns were unfounded, but Du had never felt at ease with Guo in that position and had always tried to keep him in the dark about his plans until the last possible moment. When Gu and Guo had flown to Xuzhou to see why the Second and Thirteenth Armies were moving so slowly in their push toward Nianzhuangxu, Du had told Gu of his plan to send the LXXIV Corps on a flanking attack, a plan that inadvertently probably saved the relief force from being cut off and isolated, but he had kept that information from Guo.<sup>107</sup> Now he wanted to be sure that Guo did not learn he was thinking of moving out of Xuzhou toward the west. Respecting Du's wishes, Gu said, "After the meeting I'll talk to the old man, and you can tell him this alone."<sup>108</sup>

The strategy meeting began, as always, with a report from Guo Rugui. The proposed plan that he laid out was for the armies in Xuzhou to push toward the southeast through Shuanggou and then turn south to Wuhe on the Huai River. There they would move west and join with Li Yannian in an attack to relieve Huang Wei.<sup>109</sup> Some of those in attendance raised the issue of the route being unsuitable for a large, partially motorized force because it was marshy, crossed by many waterways, and had poor roads, but according to Guo Rugui Du at the time "*falsely said*" that this was the best route to take (*italics mine*).<sup>110</sup> It was at this point in the discussion that Gu decided to tell Jiang Jieshi that Du wanted to share a few words with him in private. Jiang agreed, and while the general strategy meeting continued without them, he and Du went to an adjoining small meeting room. There Du presented his concept for abandoning Xuzhou that Gu had approved earlier. Jiang also agreed that this was the best approach, and they returned to the meeting. With time of the essence, Jiang quickly asked if anyone had any more comments or ideas. When none were offered, he declared the meeting over. For those who had attended, it appeared that Guo Rugui's proposal was to become Du Yuming's course of action.

Following the meeting, Du Yuming flew back to Xuzhou to initiate the planning and preparation process for leaving Xuzhou. That afternoon Gu Zhutong also boarded an airplane and flew to the air above Shuangduji to talk to Huang Wei by radio. Part of the new Nationalist plan was to have the Twelfth Army defend in place, and Gu wanted to explain to Huang how Twelfth Army's actions fit into a broader strategy. Gu asked Huang to mount a tenacious defense and try to expand the size of the pocket. The Twelfth Army's food and ammunition requirements, Gu assured him, would be met by airdrop.<sup>111</sup>

The evening of 28 November, Du Yuming met with his three army commanders to discuss the decision to abandon Xuzhou. All agreed with Du's concept of moving west and then turning south and his determination not to engage in battles along the way. Once out of Xuzhou, continuing to move would be their protection. They knew that if caught and surrounded, they would be in grave difficulty.

The plan Du developed called for a continuation of large-scale assaults on the 29th and 30th to mislead the Communists. Then the evening of 30 November the withdrawal was to begin and continue through the night. Small units would be left behind to cover the withdrawal and keep the enemy from discovering what was happening as long as possible. By the evening of 3 December the entire force was supposed to assemble in Yongcheng to prepare for the advance toward Guoyang and Mengcheng.<sup>112</sup> Every unit was to bring food for seven days, fuel to drive trucks and other motor vehicles 500 km and as much ammunition as possible. It was assumed that there would be no resupply before reaching Fuyang, which lay 200 km away.<sup>113</sup>

On 29 and 30 November the Nationalist feints to the east and southeast of Xuzhou achieved the results that Du Yuming had hoped for. Su Yu was particularly concerned about the location of Du's most powerful corps, the Second Army's V Corps, and what it was doing. In his 1500, 29 November message to the CMC Su noted that "the V Corps and the [Thirteenth Army's] IX Corps have both concentrated east of Xuzhou and not yet moved."<sup>114</sup> When, on 30 November, "the V Corps attacked with full force against the Eastern Route Blocking Army's positions," this helped confirm in his mind, that the Nationalist attempt to break out of Xuzhou had begun and that the breakout was directed toward the east or southeast.<sup>115</sup>

Whether intelligence reports from Guo Rugui or others in Nanjing contributed to the CMC's similar belief that the Nationalists would try to break out from Xuzhou toward the east or southeast is unclear. If this was so, it would be another way Du Yuming's secrecy and deceptiveness contributed to his army group successfully evacuating Xuzhou. On 1 December he did, as he had told Gu Zhutong he would, get his force out of Xuzhou. The challenge he now faced was moving that force safely to the Huai River and out of danger.

### **Encircling Du Yuming's Army Group**

The ECFA's after-action report for the Huai Hai Campaign notes that when the Nationalists destroyed the warehouses at the Xuzhou airfield on 30 November, it was clear they were about to abandon Xuzhou but "the direction of their flight had still not been determined."<sup>116</sup> Not until noon on 1 December when it was confirmed that the Second Army was west of Xuzhou did Su Yu decide that Du Yuming was indeed fleeing in that direction.<sup>117</sup> Then he moved swiftly, ordering his main force columns to pursue Du's force and the military districts and subdistricts southwest of Xuzhou to do all in their power to obstruct and delay Du's advance. Except for the 6th Column, which was to remain on the southern front to defend against any Nationalist forces moving north from Bengbu, and the 7th and 13th Columns, which were to continue to fight with the CPFA against Huang Wei, all other columns were to stop Du Yuming's movement and encircle him.<sup>118</sup> Local militias were ordered to take control of all boats and crossing points along the Guo and Sha Rivers. They were also ordered to send radio reports to ECFA headquarters indicating when Nationalist forces reached their area. The information would then be used to direct the main force columns' movement.<sup>119</sup>

At approximately 1500, 1 December Su Yu informed the CMC and Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi, and Deng Xiaoping about Du Yuming's movement to the west and the measures he had taken in response. His plan had columns moving to attack the rear and left flank of Du's force and also racing to get in front of Du to set up blocking positions. The Bohai Column was ordered to follow the Long-Hai railroad into Xuzhou from the east, leave one division in the city to establish control, and continue west in pursuit of Du. The 12th, 1st, and 4th Columns, the eastern route blocking army, were ordered to move west from their positions southeast of Xuzhou, cross the Xu-Beng railroad 12-15 km south of Xuzhou and pass through gaps in the line of hills running southwest from Xuzhou to reach Xiaoxian. Once



there, they were to attack against the rear and flank of Du's force as the situation dictated.

Columns that had been in the central and western route blocking armies—the 3d, 8th, 9th, and Lu-zhongnan Columns—were directed to move as quickly as possible around the southern end of the hills southwest of Xuzhou and then go west toward Suixikou, Wazikou, Changshoulou, and Zulaolou to get in front of Du's force. The 10th Column was ordered to move from its position 20 km north-northeast of Suxian through Suxian to Yongcheng. The Subei army headquarters was to go with the 2d Column from Guzhen to Yongcheng to set up a second blocking line. The 11th Column was to move from its position southwest of Guzhen to Guoyang and Bozhou by way of the Guzhen-Guoyang Road and establish a third blocking line. For the moment, the Liangguang Column and the two Ji-Lu-Yu divisions were to stay in their positions southwest of Xuzhou.<sup>120</sup> Su Yu wanted to keep Du Yuming's army group from escaping to the south, but he also wanted to make it impossible for it to turn back to Xuzhou. Furthermore, he hoped that after his columns encircled Du's force they could penetrate between his armies and corps and cut it to pieces before Du realized what was happening and organize a coherent defense in place.

Du Yuming had a head start in what was now a race to Yongcheng, an advantage that was achieved through surprise. But that surprise was gained by drastically limiting the time available to plan a large, complex operation and virtually eliminating the time to prepare for it. This was a calculated risk. Du was asking his armies to conduct realistic feints in one direction on 30 November and then, under the cover of darkness and protected by rear guard forces, withdraw in the opposite direction. This would have been a difficult transition to make under the best of circumstances. To try it with hardly any preparation, an inadequate communication network for exercising command and control, and a battle-fatigued force of 250,000 was going to be very hard. Du, however, felt there was no alternative. He rightly feared that if more time was spent planning and preparing to implement his vision, the operational plan would be compromised. He knew that if that happened Su Yu would be able to make preparations against him, and his force surely would be doomed. Now if he could keep on schedule and reach Yongcheng on 3 December, there was a chance that much of his force could be saved.

In *On War*, Clausewitz emphasizes the impact of what he calls “friction” on military operations. He defines friction as the “countless minor incidents . . . that combine to lower the general level of performance.”<sup>121</sup> It is “the force that makes the apparently easy so difficult.”<sup>122</sup> It is a concept that distinguishes “real war from war on paper.”<sup>123</sup> As such, friction is something that generals must understand, not to make them hesitant because they realize its presence and unpredictable effects but to make them realistic in their expectations of what is possible. In the words of Clausewitz, “The good general must know friction in order to overcome it whenever possible, and in order not to expect a standard of achievement in his operations which this very friction makes impossible.”<sup>124</sup>

Whether Du Yuming was asking his force to do something that friction made impossible is not clear, but certainly friction's drag was felt in many ways and places as the operation progressed. Divisions that were to establish security along the route his force was to take moved out late. Divisions that were to hold rear guard positions and maintain the deception left their areas of responsibility early. Units made wrong turns and went down wrong roads, leading to jumbling units within divisions and corps. Army vehicles—tanks, armored cars, trucks, and jeeps—competed for space on highways clogged with tired soldiers, panic-stricken civilians, and an assortment of wagons and carts pulled by draft animals. When Du Yuming's headquarter staff began moving early the morning of 1 December, he had no idea where any of the three armies were located because he had no communication links to the commanders.<sup>125</sup> All he knew was what he could see, a panorama of confusion as his army struggled to move west away from Xuzhou as quickly as friction allowed.

The afternoon of 1 December Du established direct contact with Qiu Qingquan, but it was not until late morning on 2 December that he received a status report on the Thirteenth Army from Li Mi.<sup>126</sup> According to Du's plan, the army group was to continue moving through the night of 2 December so it would reach Yongcheng the evening of 3 December. However, several factors combined to cause Du to order a halt before nightfall. First, Qiu and Li told him their armies needed to stop to reorganize and rest. Second, Du had not yet heard from Sun Yuanliang, so he was unsure of the Sixteenth Army's situation. Third, during the afternoon aerial reconnaissance flights from Nanjing had reported large Communist formations in the Suixikou area moving west toward Yongcheng. Worried that continuing to move while there was so much confusion and disorder would possibly expose his army to penetrating thrusts by pursuing Communist forces, Du decided to stop in place and prepare to resume the march toward Yongcheng the next morning.<sup>127</sup>

Around 0800 the morning of 3 December, Sun Yuanliang reported to Du that his Sixteenth Army had arrived in its designated area west of the Thirteenth Army and apologized for not having reached there the night before. He explained that after two days without rest his troops had been unable to move, but now he was prepared to advance toward Yongcheng. By 1000 Du had his army group on the move.<sup>128</sup> The Second Army was in the van. The Thirteenth Army was screening the left and left rear. The Sixteenth Army was screening the right flank and the right rear.

Shortly before noon events took a fateful turn when a handwritten order from Jiang Jieshi was airdropped from an airplane that had flown up from Nanjing. The order changed Du's mission from saving his force to relieving Huang Wei. Instead of moving southwest toward Yongcheng, he was now directed to move southeast toward Suixikou and Shuangduiji. This new concept of operations was based on an optimistic interpretation of Communist moves. Jiang had decided that the withdrawal of most Communist forces from the Guzhen area and the movement of a large body of Communist troops toward Yongcheng was a retreat caused by Du's breakout from Xuzhou. To take advantage of this new situation, he had ordered the Sixth Army to begin advancing north from Bengbu to relieve the Twelfth Army. Now he was ordering Du to strengthen the effort to relieve Huang Wei by moving on Shuangduiji from the northwest.<sup>129</sup>

Du Yuming did not share Jiang Jieshi's optimism and was very upset by this change from the concept he and Jiang had agreed to on 28 November. His planning and preparations had been based on the vision that his army group would not fight after leaving Xuzhou. Now Jiang was asking him to engage tens of thousands of Communist troops moving in his direction, troops that Du believed were not trying to evade him but were moving to attack him.

The first thought that crossed Su's mind when he read this order was Sunzi's admonition that when the general is in the field "*jun ming you suo bushou*" (there are commands from the ruler not to be obeyed).<sup>130</sup> He wanted to ignore the order and keep moving toward Yongcheng. However, after considering the matter, he decided he did not want to take full responsibility for a decision that might mean the difference between the Twelfth Army being saved or lost. If continuing to follow his plan of first going south to the Huai River enabled his force to relieve Huang Wei, his disobedience might be excused. But if his plan failed and the Twelfth Army was destroyed, he would be blamed for losing the campaign and would be harshly punished for not following orders. After weighing his options for several minutes, Du decided to order his force to halt and have his army commanders meet for a council of war.

Li Mi was unable to attend the meeting but he sent two of his deputies. Qiu Qingquan and Sun Yuanliang came in person. Du showed them Jiang's order and gave his views on the merits of either staying with their current plan or following the new order. After much discussion, Qiu and Sun both

stated they felt obligated to follow Jiang's order. Qiu Qingquan also volunteered to have his Second Army continue leading the way with the Thirteenth and Sixteenth Armies providing flank and rear security. With his army commanders committed to doing as Jiang had directed, Du issued orders changing the orientation of the army group's advance. The morning of 4 December they would begin moving toward Suixikou.

On the evening of 3 December Du received additional orders by radio from the High Command in Nanjing. He was particularly disturbed when he read the estimate that there were only about 40,000 Communist soldiers in the Suixikou area and the following paragraph directing him to attack them quickly:

Your force should swiftly and with determination destroy the Communist force in the Suixikou-Mazhuang area during the next 2-3 days. This is the only good opportunity to destroy a solitary Communist force. If you delay, Communist armies from all over will swarm around you and you will again lose the initiative. Absolutely do not lose this opportunity. By all means, do not move toward Yongcheng again, taking a roundabout way to avoid battle.<sup>131</sup>

This was a direct order not to consider following his original plan, and its insinuation that by moving toward Yongcheng Du was trying to avoid battle like a coward was insulting. As Du read the order and the unrealistic course of action it contained, he saw the handiwork of Guo Rugui and felt his army group was now exposed to destruction. Years later he described how, at that moment, his heart was filled with regret for ever stopping and thus allowing his armies to fall into such grave danger:

After receiving this order I felt again that Jiang Jieshi had changed his mind because he was influenced by the ideas of that little devil Guo Rugui. I regretted that on 28 November I had not clearly expressed my views about Guo Rugui to Jiang and had not gotten the agreement of Gu Zhutong . . . and others to support my plan of withdrawal from beginning to end. Now Jiang had listened to Guo's manipulation and had used first, a hand written order, and second, an order transmitted by radio, to send us to attack the PLA. By doing so he had placed the Nationalist army in danger of being completely wiped out. I also regretted my timidity and lack of resolution in the morning. I should not have halted the armies and called a council of war. A day of movement had been lost. Now it was too late to escape and fighting was hopeless. . . . All I could do was . . . be 'loyal' to the end.<sup>132</sup>

Du Yuming's pessimism was justified. Halting the night of 2 December, a decision he later viewed as an error, and again on 3 December had taken away the time-space advantage his force had possessed at noon on 1 December.<sup>133</sup> At 1100, 3 December in a message sent to his army and column commanders and also to the CMC, Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi, and Deng Xiaoping, Su Yu described a situation in which his columns had already basically surrounded Du's force. The 9th Column and 8th Column were astride the Xuzhou-Yongcheng Road northeast of Yongcheng and were building defensive works. East of these two columns the Luzhongnan Column was also building defenses. Su expected the 2d and 10th Columns to reach the Qinglongji-Dahuicun area, which was east of the Luzhongnan Column's position and southeast of Du's army group, that evening. Meanwhile other columns were moving close to the rear and flanks of Du's force. In this message, Su gave responsibility for directing the arrangement of columns to Tan Zhenlin, would perform this task from his headquarters 13 km west of Suixikou until other commanders arrived. Su also announced that he was relocating his own headquarters from Shicun to an area near Suixikou and that he would be there the next evening, 4 December. All columns were

directed to report to higher headquarters as soon as possible what they saw as the emerging shape of enemy actions and the unit designations of the enemy forces with which they were in contact. They were also ordered to establish full radio and telephone communication links as soon as possible.<sup>134</sup>

At dawn on 4 December, Su Yu's position was significantly stronger than it had been 24 hours earlier. On 3 December his columns had conducted hasty harassing attacks as they overtook various parts of Du's force. On 4 December Su was ready to conduct a coordinated operation designed to implement his strategy of blocking the forward advance of Du's army group while attacking Du's flanks and rear. To do this he had the following array of forces ready to defend or attack as required. Moving counterclockwise around the Nationalist perimeter, beginning in the southwest, the 8th Column was preparing to defend northeast of Yongcheng. Next, the 10th and Luzhongnan Columns were in defensive positions south and southwest of Qinglongji with the 2d Column moving into position behind the 10th Column. The 3d Column was in Zulaoji preparing to attack to the west as was the 4th Column in Zhangshoulou. On the north side of the pocket, ready to advance south, were the 1st Column in Yuanxu and the Lianguang Column and the two Ji-Lu-Yu Military District divisions in the Hongheji area. The 9th Column was now west of Mengji and was ready to attack toward the east.<sup>135</sup> In addition to these columns, the 11th (E) Column was north of Guoyang moving toward Yongcheng, the 12th Column was positioned in Wazikou to control that area and serve as a general reserve, and the Bohai Column was in a reserve position behind the 1st Column.<sup>136</sup>

Due to this formidable force deployed against him, Du Yuming's attack on 4 December made little progress. The Second Army managed to advance 2-3 km, but as it did so, the rear of Du's pocket was being compressed. At the beginning of the day Du's force occupied an area that was basically a square 10 km on a side. By nightfall, that area had become an 8-km by 10-km rectangle, as gains in the south were less than the territory lost in the north.

On 5 December Su Yu made some adjustments in deploying his columns with the 2d Column replacing the 10th Column on the south side of the Nationalist pocket. He also established a new command structure. Three army-level organizations were established. The forces on the north side of the Nationalist pocket—the 1st, 4th, 9th, Lianguang, and Bohai Columns, the two Ji-Lu-Yu divisions, and part of the ST Column—were placed under Tan Zhenlin and Wang Jianan's command and ordered to attack from north to south.<sup>137</sup> The 3d, 10th, and Luzhongnan Columns were placed under command of 10th Column commander Song Shilun and his political commissar, Liu Peishan. Their mission was to defend southeast of the pocket and, if conditions were right, to attack to the northwest.<sup>138</sup> Wei Guoqing and Ji Luo commanded the 8th, 2d, and 11th (E) Columns and were assigned to defend to the southwest of the pocket and, if the opportunity arose, attack to the northeast.<sup>139</sup>

Du Yuming's Second Army continued to try to move to the southeast on 5 and 6 December but again made little forward progress. Meanwhile, on the north side of the pocket Tan Zhenlin's columns maintained their slow but steady advance. Tan made much of that advance against Sun Yuanliang's Sixteenth Army, and the afternoon of 6 December Sun gained Qiu Qingquan's agreement to make a joint appeal to Du to change his strategy. After hearing their complaints, Du asked them to accompany him to Li Mi's command post where they discussed what they should do. Sun strongly advocated that each army immediately attempt to break out. Qiu and Li also argued that their situation was untenable and supported Sun's suggestion that each army should punch a small opening in the enemy lines opposite its sector and then dash for Fuyang. This would be going against their orders to move to Shuixikou and Shuangduiji, but all three commanders saw this as the only course of action with any reasonable possibility of success. To justify this act of independence, they all referred to Sunzi's statement that a

general can ignore certain orders from the ruler when he is in the field.<sup>140</sup>

Du Yuming was reluctant to go along with the request to order a breakout. He told Qiu, Li, and Sun he wished they had taken their current position three days earlier. “Then,” he said, “we could have returned with our entire force and would have been able to face the old man.”<sup>141</sup> In the end, however, Du agreed to order a breakout under two conditions. First, each army was to conduct a detailed reconnaissance of enemy positions opposite it and be very careful in selecting the place where it would penetrate enemy lines. Second, heavy weapons and vehicles were not to be abandoned unless there was absolutely no way to continue moving with them.<sup>142</sup>

After their meeting ended around 1500, Du and the army commanders returned to their respective command posts and began preparing to break out that night. Sun Yuanliang, the most enthusiastic proponent of this course of action, assembled his corps and divisions commanders and told them they should be ready to launch their breakout attack no later 1800.<sup>143</sup> Then, contrary to Du’s orders, Sun failed to conduct reconnaissance and assess the viability of a breakout attempt, and he also directed his heavy weapons be destroyed.<sup>144</sup> Furthermore, he dropped his communication links with Du Yuming’s headquarters. This meant Du was unable to inform Sun that after evaluating the strength of Communist defenses, Li Mi and Qiu Qingquan had decided not to try to break out.<sup>145</sup>

Not surprisingly, the result was a disaster. The Sixteenth Army attacked as Sun had ordered, but since it was the only Nationalist force attacking, it was soon overwhelmed as the Communist defenders concentrated their fire against it. Of its 40,000 soldiers, some 10,000 straggled back into the pocket where the next day Du directed that they be organized into a division and attached to the LXXII Corps. Almost all of the remaining 30,000 were either killed or captured, with only a few, like the army commander Sun Yuanliang, being able to disguise themselves as ordinary peasants and make their way across Henan to Nationalist lines north of Wuhan.<sup>146</sup>

The Sixteenth Army’s destruction on 6 December was a heavy blow to Du Yuming. Not only had 30,000 soldiers been lost, so, too, had a large quantity of weapons and supplies. Discouraged by this event and his army group’s continuing inability to make meaningful progress toward the south, on 7 December Du sent a message to Jiang Jieshi describing his situation and proposing a way out. My army group, Du told Jiang, is “tightly surrounded . . . and has no chance whatsoever of breaking Huang Wei’s encirclement.”<sup>147</sup> The only hope, he added, lay in the High Command committing more forces to the campaign.

### **The Nationalists Advance Again on the Southern Front**

Du Yuming’s request that more troops be added to the southern front echoed requests he had made on 23 and 28 November. The problem the Nationalists had, and this was one that had received much attention during their August strategy meeting in Nanjing, was the lack of a large strategic reserve. When Du had complained to Gu Zhutong on 28 November about Jiang Jieshi’s failure to reinforce the Bengbu front, Gu had told him Jiang had wanted to do that but could find no units that were not already committed somewhere. On 8 December Jiang stated this reality directly in his reply to Du’s 7 December plea: “At present there are no troops that can be added. I hope that you will not continue to have illusions about more troops being committed. You should quickly supervise each army so their attacks make forward progress and you can break the encirclement of Huang’s army.”<sup>148</sup>

If the Nationalists had had a reserve to commit to the campaign, the days following Du Yuming’s withdrawal from Xuzhou would have been a good time to have done so. Continuous fighting on three battlefields was stretching the ECFA and CPFA very thin. Su Yu’s response to Du’s leaving Xuzhou

had been to order a major economy-of-force operation on the Bengbu front. All ECFA columns that had been in that area, except for the 6th, were shifted to the Suixikou-Yongcheng area to be used in Su's effort to block and encircle Du's army group. The result was that even without adding a corps or two to their forces at Bengbu, the Nationalists suddenly had numerical superiority on this front. On 2 December Jiang Jieshi moved quickly to take advantage of this new opportunity, ordering the Sixth and Eighth Armies, to undertake another operation to link up with the Twelfth Army.

The Sixth and Eighth Armies had already failed an earlier attempt to do this from 20 to 26 November. Since then the LIV Corps had been added to the Sixth Army, but one of that corps' three divisions was committed to manning a portion of the defensive line near Bengbu and was not available for the operation. Another addition was the assignment of an independent division, the 296th, to the Sixth Army, and Jiang also decided to commit the prized armor regiment his son, Jiang Weiguo, commanded to this effort.<sup>149</sup> The question was would three more infantry divisions and an armor regiment generate enough additional combat power to achieve what the Sixth and Eighth Armies had been unable to accomplish a little over a week earlier?

The morning of 3 December, at approximately the same time Jiang's written orders to Du Yuming directing him to move toward Shuangduiji were being sent, the Sixth Army began its operation to reach Shuangduiji. The XXXIX Corps and XCIX Corps crossed the Fei River from positions north of Bengbu, and east of Bengbu the LIV Corps crossed the Huai River at Linhuaiguan. Behind the XCIX Corps came the Eighth Army's LV Corps with the mission of advancing north to the Xie River and then moving northwest along the south side of the Xie River to provide right flank and rear security to the Sixth Army. Meanwhile the Eighth Army's other corps, the LXXVIII, began moving west from Bengbu along the Guo River to protect the Sixth Army's left flank. Opposition was light for the LIV Corps advancing east of the Su-Beng railroad, and by 5 December it was approaching Xinmaqiao near where the Su-Beng railroad crossed the Xie River. The XXXIX and XCIX Corps encountered heavier opposition and their progress was slower. By 6 December the LIV Corps had moved abreast of these two corps, and from that point forward all three corps advanced in one line with the LIV Corps on the right, the XCIX Corps in the center, and the XXXIX Corps on the left.<sup>150</sup> To the left of the XXXIX Corps was the 296th Division, which had come north from Huaiyuan after the XXXIV Corps had cleared the northern bank of the Xie River in that area.

The Sixth and Eighth Armies' advance caused immediate concern within the CMC and the General Front Committee. In a message sent to Liu, Chen, Deng, Su, and Tan at 1600, 4 December the CMC stated, "Li Yannian's force has already crossed the Fei River and is advancing toward Baojiaji. How are you going to counter this enemy? We look forward to Liu, Deng, and Chen telling us by radio."<sup>151</sup>

Also on 4 December, at 2200 the CMC transmitted the following message to Liu, Chen, and Deng and also to Su Yu and his staff that again raised this issue:

- (1) Li Yannian is now using seven divisions (they include units of the LIV Corps) north of the Huai River. A part of his force has already reached Caolaoji. We hope that you will order the 6th [E] Column to strengthen its blocking action so that the enemy will not be able to advance too far north and threaten our annihilation of Huang Wei.
- (2) Liu, Chen, and Deng are already using the 13th Column to attack Huang Wei, so for the moment that column cannot be shifted.
- (3) After Huang Wei is finished off, the 6th and 13th columns and the entire strength of the CPFA can be used to fight Qiu, Li, and Sun.<sup>152</sup>

At 0500, 5 December the CMC sent yet another message to Liu, Chen, and Deng and also to Su Yu

and his staff. This was a clear directive to shift more forces to the Bengbu front:

In order to guard against the threat posed by the enemy force advancing from Bengbu toward your battlefield, you should order the 6th Column and other troops that you can use (for example the two local divisions from northern Jiangsu that were formerly preparing to go south of the Huai River), to build strong defensive positions in depth. This point can absolutely not be neglected.<sup>153</sup>

To counter the broad, multiple corps advance of Li Yannian's army, at this time the 6th Column had spread itself out along a 35-km front. On 6 December Su Yu decided that this frontage was too great for the column to cover and that a Sixth Army breakthrough was a real possibility. In a message to Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi, Deng Xiaoping, and the CMC, he proposed that the CPFA 2d Column; the five regiments of the Yu-Wan-Su Military District; the 11th Division, Bohai Column; and the two regiments from the Yu Xi Military District be shifted to the Bengbu front to assist the 6th Column. Liu, Chen, and Deng agreed with Su's analysis and the course of action he proposed and immediately ordered the units he had listed to move to aid the 6th Column.<sup>154</sup>

The 6th Column was in this difficult position as the result of Su Yu's decision on 1 December to use all possible columns to block Du's army group as it moved out of Xuzhou. On that day and for several days thereafter Su was extremely worried that Du's force would be able to escape his clutches. Ensuring that did not happen was his highest priority, and this led him to accept risk on the southern front. Perhaps when assessing the risk of leaving only one column north of Bengbu he had underestimated the speed and vigor with which the Nationalists would respond to his economy-of-force operation. On 6 December Su acted to rectify the situation by asking that additional forces be sent south to assist the 6th Column in its fight against Li Yannian.

The seriousness of the 6th Column's situation can be seen in a personal letter that Chen Yi wrote to the commander and political commissar of the column on 7 December. In his letter, Chen asked them to clench their teeth and grit it out. They had to be prepared to sacrifice "more than half of the column" to ensure the success of the fight to destroy Huang Wei. Chen also told them to keep their spirits up because reinforcements would soon be there.<sup>155</sup>

The CPFA 2d Column was the first reinforcing unit to arrive. It was deployed along the Nationalist force's right flank. On 9 December the Bohai Column's 11th Division and the military district divisions reached the area in front of Li Yannian's army and went under 6th Column control. Even after the addition of these forces, Li Yannian was still able to continue moving forward, but his rate of advance was only 1-3 km per day. On 15 December, the day on which the last Twelfth Army elements were destroyed, the Sixth Army was still 30 km from Shuangduiji.<sup>156</sup>

### **The Hard Fight to Destroy the Twelfth Army**

While the supporting operations to keep the Nationalist armies from reaching the Shuangduiji area were under way, the Communist main effort continued to be to destroy Huang Wei's force. On 27 November Liu Bocheng had predicted the battle to destroy the Twelfth Army would be over the next day. On 28 November, he estimated it would take 10 days to achieve the objective. Even this estimate proved optimistic due to the Twelfth Army's tenacious defense and two CPFA weaknesses, a lack of experience in conducting positional warfare against a large, well-entrenched enemy and limited firepower.

As discussed earlier, the CPFA lacked firepower because it had lost so much artillery during the march to the Dabie Mountains in late summer 1947.<sup>157</sup> This artillery shortage meant the CPFA had to rely on ECFA artillery to develop the combat power necessary to overcome Twelfth Army defenses. It

also seems to have contributed to an attitude within the CPFA that infantrymen armed with an offensive spirit could compensate to a large extent for the lack of artillery. This attitude can be seen by comparing remarks ECFA chief of staff Chen Shiju and Liu Bocheng made at an after-action evaluation session CPFA commanders at the battalion level and above attended several weeks following Luoyang's capture in March 1948.

By the time of this battle, the ECFA already had extensive experience in artillery-infantry coordination, and the ECFA columns that joined CPFA columns in the battle for Luoyang used artillery effectively to destroy Nationalist defenses and reduce infantry casualties. In his review of events, Chen heaped praise on the ECFA artillery's contribution to the victory to such an extent that many in the audience began to wonder about the CPFA's ability to win battles like this on its own.<sup>158</sup> Liu Bocheng sensed this and was so disturbed that, even though night had already fallen when Chen had finished speaking, he kept all the officers there and presented a rebuttal that criticized the psychology of relying on artillery for everything.<sup>159</sup> In words designed to reassure his infantrymen of their importance and their ability to generate destructive force, he reminded them of the effects that soldiers throwing hand grenades produced.<sup>160</sup>

Chen Shiju's emphasis on artillery and Liu Bocheng's emphasis on infantry reflect what might be described as a difference in culture between the CPFA and ECFA. Chen Yi became aware of this "cultural" difference after he went to work in the Central Plains Military Region (CPMR) and the CPFA in May 1948. He was troubled by the way it affected how the two armies' commanders and soldiers looked at each other. The reality was that the ECFA, because it had more and better artillery than the CPFA and had a small armor force while the CPFA had none, was conducting combined arms training and carrying out combined arms operations while the CPFA was still relying primarily on infantry action. For this reason, there were those within the ECFA who considered the CPFA to be less skilled and competent than they were and, in dealings with CPFA personnel, were displaying what CPFA commanders and soldiers perceived to be "arrogance."<sup>161</sup> On 24 July 1948 Chen raised this issue in a telegram he sent to Su Yu, Chen Shiju, and the CMC. He suggested that measures to address this problem needed to be implemented as part of the training and reorganization sessions to be conducted during the upcoming rainy season.<sup>162</sup> This was done, but at the time of the Huai Hai Campaign, what might be called sensitivity training was still given to ECFA columns before they joined operations with CPFA columns.<sup>163</sup>

What role CPFA reliance on infantry and infantry spirit to overcome enemy defenses played in the heavy casualties CPFA columns suffered on 28-29 November is unclear. To a certain extent, those casualties occurred, just as the high casualties ECFA columns experienced in the first days of fighting the Seventh Army at Nianzhuangxu had occurred, because it took time for commanders to realize the enemy had established a defense in place and that the hasty attacks appropriate for pursuit or exploitation operations were no longer going to be successful. However, many CPFA commanders' faith in the ability of courageous infantry to defeat defensive steel certainly contributed to those losses. Even after the losses of 28-29 November, there were still commanders who expressed a willingness to keep throwing soldiers into the fight: "Our lives belong to the people. Let's just put them on the line and be done with it."<sup>164</sup> These commanders viewed heavy losses as inevitable and responded to mounting casualties by asking, "Can one fight a war without casualties?"<sup>165</sup>

The General Front Committee, however, felt that continuing to suffer losses at the rates seen on 28-29 November was unacceptable. The evening of 29 November they issued a tactical directive telling all commanders that because the enemy was now defending in place while awaiting relief, they needed

to adopt a careful, step-by-step approach when planning and preparing attacks. A new strategy was laid out. The pocket was to be squeezed gradually by taking enemy positions one by one through deliberate, well-planned actions.<sup>166</sup>

The General Front Committee's directive was the result of it recognizing the battlefield conditions it was facing required a change in tactics and fighting style. At the same time the highest echelons of command were realizing this, CPFA soldiers engaged in combat were reaching the same conclusion. Furthermore, those soldiers were developing new tactics and techniques for coping with what for them was a new experience—extended combat with a well-armed enemy entrenched on flat terrain.

Events in the CPFA's 9th Column during this period show how a confluence of senior leader desire to preserve forces, and rank and file interest in saving lives combined to quickly change the face of the Shuangduiji battlefield. On 29 November, after receiving the General Front Committee's directive, the 9th Column commander issued an order that every unit was to cherish its soldiers' lives. Commanders were told to stop using morale-promoting political slogans like "*pin lao ming*" ("dare to die") as the basis for their tactical thought. They were to seriously study tactics and appreciate why "intelligence needed to be added to bravery" when trying to crack the enemy's "tough nut."<sup>167</sup> Interestingly, within this column, soldiers on the front line had already initiated a change in this direction two days earlier. This was the 27th Division's discovery of the value of digging approach trenches before conducting an assault.

The 27th Division's idea to dig approach trenches came from an incident that occurred on the afternoon of 27 November. At that time, several 27th Division soldiers dug into the ground for protection after Nationalist fire stopped their regiment's assault on the small village of Xiaozhangzhuang, and they were caught in the open. Unable to advance or withdraw, they dug deep enough so that, despite intense Nationalist fire, they were able to maintain their positions close to the Nationalist trenches throughout the night and the next day. This event was a revelation to regiment and division commanders, and it changed their tactical thinking. Suddenly, as the 9th Column commander later described it, they saw that the key to successfully attacking their well-dug-in enemy was to "reduce the distance to be crossed while under enemy fire."<sup>168</sup> At the same time they realized that digging approach trenches was the way to achieve that objective.

The General Front Committee's 29 November directive stated that future CPFA attacks were to be carefully planned, deliberate operations that had limited objectives and followed the principle of "take a village, hold a village."<sup>169</sup> Digging approach trenches fit this tactical concept well, and with the 27th Division's commander as a strong advocate, it was made an integral part of the 9th Column's new plan for attacking Xiaozhangzhuang. Greater emphasis was also placed on using firepower to destroy enemy defenses. In the end the plan focused on three points:

- (1) Approach trenches should reach as close to the enemy as possible, so that the assault troops will be able to quickly leap into the enemy's outer trenches.
- (2) All of the division's firepower will be concentrated in order to develop the powerful effects of gunfire and explosives. The column will guarantee the supply of ammunition.
- (3) Concurrent with the military attacks on the fortifications there will be a political attack on the enemy's spirit and will.<sup>170</sup>

Soon after the 27th Division's plan of attack was completed the night of 29 November, the digging of trenches began. Company commanders led the way, crawling forward with rice bags on their backs

that were filled with ashes to use to mark the path the trench would take. Behind them came a line of crawling soldiers, all carrying spades and using the white ashes as a guide. After the lead officer had moved forward about 250 meters to a point 70 to 100 meters from the Nationalist lines, he gave a silent signal and the digging started. By dawn on 30 November three approach trenches were well on their way to being finished, and during the day they were deepened until soldiers could stand up without being seen.<sup>171</sup>

While the trenches were being dug, the division's heaviest weapons—five mountain howitzers, more than 30 mortars, 12 heavy machine guns, and several explosive launching tubes—were placed in position to support the infantry assault. At 1700, 1 December the attack began, and, unlike the attacks on 27, 28, and 29 November, it ended with taking Xiaozhangzhuang 12 hours later. At a relatively low cost in casualties, during the battle the 27th Division killed or captured 1,200 soldiers and seized more than 30 machine guns and five mortars.<sup>172</sup>

This victory and the methods used to achieve it quickly gained the General Front Committee's attention and earned praise from Deng Xiaoping as an example of the kind of battlefield creativity that could hasten Huang Wei's defeat.<sup>173</sup> Other columns sent unit commanders to study the 27th Division's experience in achieving "a rather large victory at a rather small cost."<sup>174</sup> The most important innovation, it was seen, was digging trenches, and many slogans were quickly developed to help drill that lesson deep into the tactical thought of commanders and soldiers alike. The rhymes of those slogans are lost in translation, but their meaning comes through in the following example:

Use trenches to take trenches, use strongholds to take strongholds.

More sweat flowing means less blood running. Make earthworks well and our losses in annihilating the enemy will be low.

Whoever digs in front makes a great contribution.

The faster we dig, the sooner the enemy will collapse.<sup>175</sup>

While the CPFA's own experience was turning it toward the extensive use of trenches, the ECFA's experience at Nianzhuangxu was also influencing this change in fighting method. After direct telephone communication was established between the CPFA (General Front Committee) headquarters at Xiaoli-zhuang and Su Yu's ECFA headquarters at Shicun on 1 December, Chen Yi called Su Yu and asked for a detailed explanation of how the ECFA had destroyed the Seventh Army.<sup>176</sup> Su Yu's answer emphasized what the CPFA was already learning—digging trenches was the way to put assault forces in positions from which they could successfully attack Nationalist defenses.<sup>177</sup> The CMC made this same point in a message sent to Liu, Chen, and Deng at 1600, 4 December:

The experience gained fighting both Huang Baitao and Huang Wei proves the following. An enemy with strong combat power cannot be annihilated by relying on the method of hasty attacks. We must use the techniques of cutting the enemy into segments, conducting reconnaissance, digging trenches up close to the enemy, concentrating troops and firepower, and coordinating the infantry and the artillery, every one of these techniques. Only then can we destroy him.<sup>178</sup>

Simply applying these various techniques in a carefully planned and well-prepared attack, however, was no guarantee of success. Nationalist combat engineers and infantry were adept at constructing field fortifications, and once the order to defend in place had been issued, the Twelfth Army had quickly created formidable defenses in depth. Strongpoints were established in villages and linked by trenches.

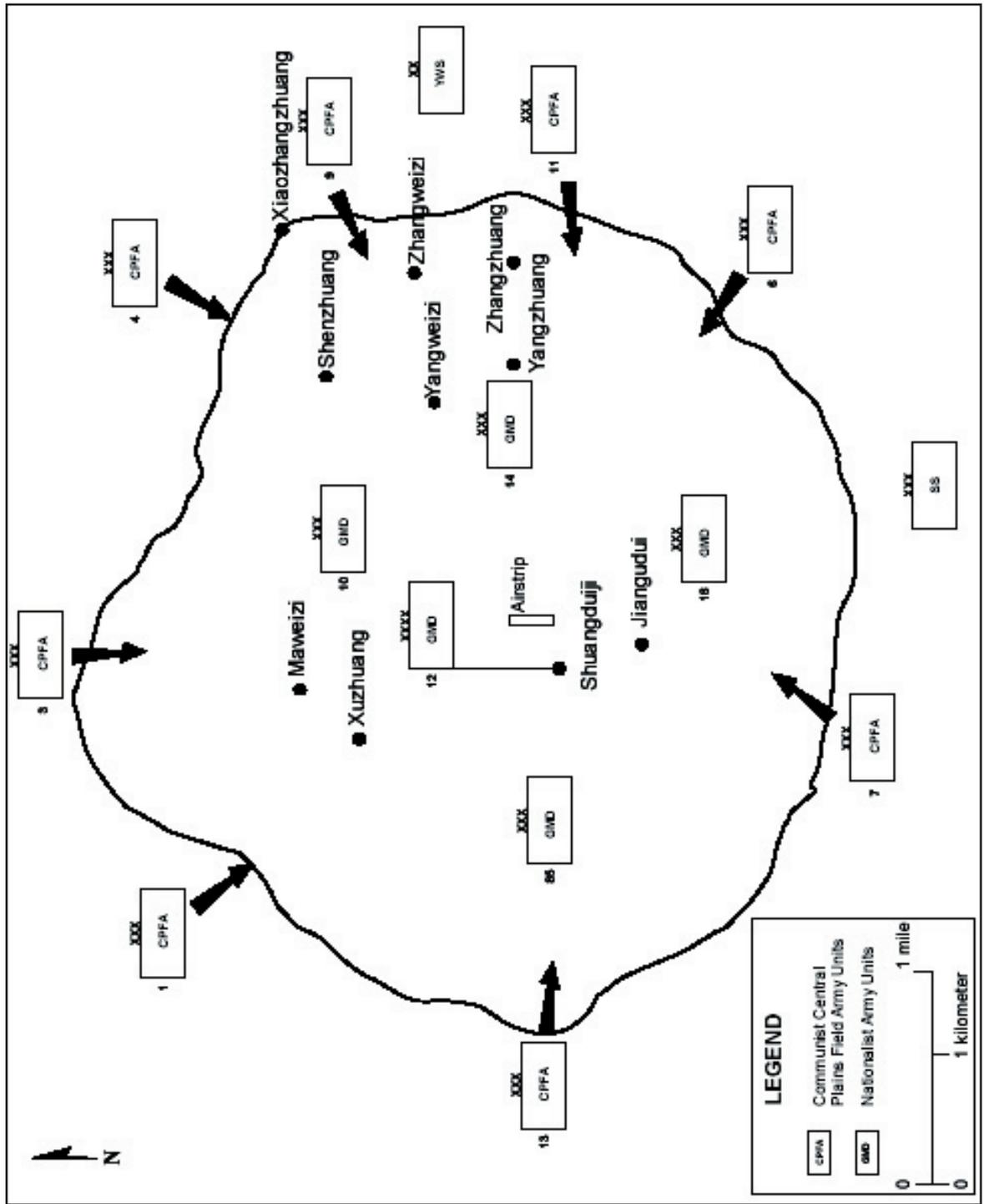
In places, trucks and other motor vehicles were lined up and filled with dirt to create defensive lines. The Nationalists also used bombardment and spoiling attacks to disrupt Communist preparations for attacks. During the day artillery fire, aerial bombing, and ground attacks supported by tanks destroyed Communist trenches and defense works. At night illumination shells and large fires made by burning piles of wood and grass cast light on Communist soldiers digging in no man's land and enabled the Nationalists to fire on them or send ground units to attack them.<sup>179</sup> Initially, Nationalist spoiling attacks were quite successful because Communist preparations for attacking did not include preparations for mounting a defense if the Nationalists attacked first.<sup>180</sup>

Further complicating CPFA efforts to destroy the Twelfth Army was the boost in morale Twelfth Army officers and soldiers received on 1 December when the well-respected deputy commander, Twelfth Army, Hu Lian arrived in Shuangduiji.<sup>181</sup> Hu had not been with the Twelfth Army on its march across Henan because before the army left Queshan he had requested leave to go to Wuhan to visit his acutely ill father and receive treatment for a serious dental problem.<sup>182</sup> After learning the Twelfth Army had been surrounded, however, he immediately flew to Nanjing and asked Jiang Jieshi to let him rejoin his troops. Jiang was happy to oblige, and after a makeshift airstrip was prepared just east of Shuangduiji, Hu flew into the pocket in a light aircraft.<sup>183</sup> His arrival had a dramatic effect because it represented tangible evidence of a link to Nationalist lines to the south and the High Command's commitment to this surrounded force. After reaching Shuangduiji, Hu met with all corps and division commanders and visited every division's front-line position to see conditions for himself. Everywhere he went he explained Jiang Jieshi's strategy of having the Twelfth Army mount a strong defense while other armies were sent to its relief.<sup>184</sup> His optimism brought a ray of hope that lifted spirits and kept the army fighting hard.

Hu Lian's presence could not, however, alter the objective reality of the Twelfth Army's situation. As a surrounded force fighting a battle of attrition, it was growing weaker with each passing day. Local Nationalist successes could not keep the overall balance between the Nationalists and the Communists from continuing to shift in the Communists' favor. In light of this changing balance and because of their desire to gain a clear numerical superiority in the Huai Hai Campaign as a whole as soon as possible, on 3 December Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi, and Deng Xiaoping decided to change CPFA strategy. As the following message they sent to the CMC at 1600, 3 December indicates, given their estimate that the Twelfth Army only had six mobile, fully capable regiments remaining, it was time to shift from small-scale, local attacks to seeking victory by employing the reserves in a general attack:

During the past three days all of our units have strengthened their work of digging trenches close to the enemy and have conducted local attacks. We have only completely wiped out the 341st Regiment of the X Corps' 114th Division (less one battalion). The enemy has selected several strong regiments and, with several, or even more than ten tanks in support, has concentrated power and destroyed our preparations for attacks. Every time, they have been beaten back with heavy losses.

Up till now, we have only captured 5,000 enemy soldiers, but we calculate that enemy killed and wounded cannot be less than 20,000. Adding in the 5,500 from the revolt of Liao's division, the enemy has already lost about 30,000 men. According to evidence from several sources, since the breakout attempt, most of the XVIII Corps' 49th Division has been wiped out. The corps' powerful 118th Division is already largely wrecked. In that corps, only the 11th Division can still be called intact. In the X Corps, two of the 18th Division's regiments have largely been destroyed and the remnants have become two battalions. Only the third regiment is still complete.



Map 4. The CPFA's deployment for the 6 December general attack against the Twelfth Army.

The X Corps' 114th Division has already lost a regiment and casualties in the 75th Division are very heavy. The LXXXV Corps' 23rd Division has had about 2,000 casualties and its 216th Division is made up of new troops. The XIV Corps' two divisions have also been hit hard.

To sum up the situation, we estimate that the enemy has no more than six regiments that are still capable of trying to break out. As a result, we have decided to immediately use the ECFA 7th and 13th columns (the reserve) in an attack. Our fighting method will be based on the Nianzhuang experience, that is, having attacks converge against a single point from several directions. Because the enemy is tightly compressed and is resisting stubbornly, we will still need several days to finish him off. During the past several days our casualties have not been light, but our determination to destroy the enemy remains strong.<sup>185</sup>

When this message was sent, Liu, Chen, and Deng estimated that two days would be required to bring up the reserves, conduct reconnaissance, dig approach trenches, and replenish ammunition stocks. Their plan, therefore, was to launch the general attack the evening of 5 December. However, because preparations took longer than expected, they delayed the start of the attack until 1630, 6 December.<sup>186</sup> This time remained firm, even though all of the preparatory work was not fully completed. For example, the ECFA 7th Column, one of the reserve columns, had still not finished digging its approach trenches when it began its attack.<sup>187</sup>

To carry out the general attack, Liu, Chen, and Deng organized their columns into three army-sized groups that were designated the eastern, western, and southern groups. The eastern group consisted of the CPFA 4th, 9th, and 11th Columns and the Yu-Wan-Su Military District division under command of 4th Column commander Chen Geng and his political commissar, Xie Fuzhi. The western group consisted of the ECFA 13th Column and the CPFA 1st and 3d Columns under command of 3d Column commander Chen Xilian. The southern group contained the CPFA 6th Column, the ECFA 7th Column, and the 12th Division from the Southern Shaanxi Military District under command of 6th Column commander Wang Jinshan and his political commissar, Du Yide.<sup>188</sup> To increase the firepower available to these three groups, one artillery regiment (six companies) from the ST Column was brought in and divided among them.<sup>189</sup>

The order to launch the attack, which is presented below, was issued by telephone at 1105, 5 December to the three attacking groups' commanders.<sup>190</sup> Strong emphasis was placed on establishing and maintaining a high tempo of operations. Pressure was to be applied continuously around the Nationalist perimeter to make it difficult for Huang Wei to respond effectively with his weakened force. Pauses, delays, hesitation, anything that might cause a loss of momentum were to be avoided at all cost. Opportunities were to be seized quickly. Swift, appropriate responses were to minimize the possible negative effects of setbacks. The initiative was to be held by attacking until the Twelfth Army was destroyed:

Order Issued at 1105 5 December.

(1) After our operations of the past half month, the enemy Huang Wei's army has already lost at least one-third of its overall strength. Losses in the combat units stand at at least forty percent. His most powerful force, the XVIII Corps, is already shattered. This is the great result of every one of our units fighting bravely.

(2) In accordance with overall operational requirements and the actual conditions before us, we issue this order with the following five points:

(a) Tomorrow afternoon (6 November) at 1630 the entire line will launch a

general attack on the enemy. No delays will be permitted for any reason.

(b) The Chen [Geng]-Xie [Fuzhi] group must destroy the enemy in the Shenzhuang-Zhangweizi-Zhangzhuang area. The [Chen] Xilian group must destroy the enemy in the Sanguanmiao-Maweizi-Yuwangmiao-Xuzhuang area. The Wang [Jinshan]-Du [Yide] group must destroy the enemy in the Yuwangmiao-Zhaozhuang area south of Shuangduiji and the Qianzhouzhuang-Zhouzhuang-Songzhuang area west of Shuangduiji. All groups must also establish control in these above-mentioned places. Afterwards, they will launch a general attack on Shuangduiji and completely wipe out the enemy.

(c) After the general attack begins, there should be continuous attacks until the missions assigned above have been completed. Stopping or asking for a delay will not be permitted.

(d) No unit should hesitate to make the greatest sacrifice in order to guarantee the completion of these missions. They must also take action promptly under their own initiative to help adjacent units seize victory.

(e) As for those who waver in front of enemy positions and thereby cause opportunities for victory to be lost, every army and column commander has the authority to exercise strict disciplinary measures. They should not be lenient.

(3) This order will be transmitted orally to companies.<sup>191</sup>

Although not stated in this order, the attack's main effort was to be in the east where Chen Geng's group was to take Shenzhuang, Zhangweizi, and Zhangzhuang and move on to capture Yangweizi and Yangzhuang.<sup>192</sup> The objective was to ruin the Nationalist defensive system by penetrating far enough into the pocket so the airstrip and the area where Twelfth Army headquarters was located were exposed to Communist fire. The attacks the western and southern groups conducted were to support this main effort by tying down Nationalist forces that might otherwise shift to the east side of the pocket.

At 1530, 6 December the artillery preparation for the general attack began. At 1700 the infantry began its assault.<sup>193</sup> Results did not live up to expectations.

Fundamentally, the problem was that changing an army's way of fighting takes time, and the CPFA had not had much time to train and prepare its commanders and soldiers to conduct the kind of operations in which they were now engaged. For example on the first day, the eastern group (9th and 11th Columns) attacking Zhangweizi encountered a long list of difficulties. A major one was poor artillery-infantry coordination. When the ECFA ST Column's artillery units had first begun assisting the CPFA in attacking the Twelfth Army pocket, they commonly had to teach the CPFA infantry commanders about something as basic as the preparatory work needed to make artillery fire effective.<sup>194</sup>

Not surprisingly then, the complexities of coordinating artillery fire with infantry movement had not been mastered by 6 December. Another difficulty was coordinating infantry assaults. Assaults from different directions on a single objective did not occur simultaneously, so the defenders were able to shift troops and fires to block them. Also, the space between the assault teams was too great for them to be mutually supporting, and the distance they had to cover (80 to 200 meters) while exposed to enemy fire proved to be too far still. The attacking forces had no answer for how to deal with flamethrowers, which proved to be formidable weapons in the defense.<sup>195</sup>

After the 6 December attack on Zhangweizi failed to take the village, these problems were thoroughly analyzed and solutions were proposed. Once agreed upon, the following changes were incorporated into preparing for the next attack, scheduled for 1700, 7 December. Fire support was strengthened

by moving artillery firing positions forward and by adding several guns. A four-gun battery of mountain howitzers was brought in and given the mission of counterbattery fire against Nationalist artillery emplaced far behind the front line. The artillery providing direct fire support to the assaulting infantry was positioned so its impact area was fan shaped. This meant that both the infantry that continued to move forward after penetrating the Nationalist defenses and the soldiers defending the shoulders of the breach against enemy counterattacks had artillery support. Extending the approach trenches forward to points around 50 meters from the Nationalist lines reduced the distance the assault forces had to cross before reaching the Nationalist trenches. Also the assaulting infantry's firepower was increased. Every squad in the first assault wave was given a light machine gun. Two so-called "dagger" squads in each platoon received submachine guns and carbines to use to kill the soldiers carrying flamethrowers. Attention was also given to strengthening the assault troops' fighting spirit and determination. They were reminded of the importance of the battle and exhorted to show great courage, especially if their company commander or platoon leader was lost.<sup>196</sup>

Perhaps because of these adjustments, the attack that began at 1700, 7 December succeeded in taking Zhangweizi. Around 0400, 8 December the Nationalist defenders abandoned their positions and withdrew to Yangweizi. Around dawn, the Nationalists sent a regiment-sized unit supported by six tanks out of Yangweizi in an attempt to retake Zhangweizi, but the attack was beaten back. It had taken two days of hard fighting, but the CPFA's eastern group had succeeded in taking and holding an important link in the Nationalist defense line and had further compressed the Twelfth Army's pocket.<sup>197</sup> Around the Twelfth Army perimeter similar developments were occurring. Even if the CPFA attacks were at first not succeeding, they were continuing, and as they went on, they were steadily eroding the Twelfth Army's strength.

Faced with the pressure of the CPFA's general attack, inadequate aerial resupply, no way to treat his wounded properly, word that Du Yuming's force was tightly encircled northeast of Yongcheng, and reports that Li Yannian was having trouble advancing toward him, on 7 December Huang Wei sent Hu Lian back to Nanjing to explain to the High Command the increasingly desperate situation his force was in and to seek new guidance on what he should do.<sup>198</sup> At first Jiang Jieshi told Hu he was transferring the XX and XXVIII Corps and other units to Bengbu to reinforce Li Yannian's effort to reach Shuangduiji and the Twelfth Army should continue to defend in place until it was relieved.<sup>199</sup> However, after reports of Communist advances on 7-8 November reached Nanjing, Jiang changed his mind, and before Hu left Nanjing on 9 December to return to Shuangduiji, Jiang told him that Huang Wei had permission to break out of his encirclement. Hu asked that aerial bombing missions be increased and an adequate supply of food and ammunition be airdropped before any breakout operation. Jiang assured him he would personally see to it that this was done.<sup>200</sup>

According to Huang Wei, when Hu Lian returned to Shuangduiji his message from Jiang Jieshi was "You can break out. Do not concern yourself with Du Yuming and don't count on any support from Li Yannian."<sup>201</sup> This disturbed Huang because it made him feel that the High Command no longer had an overarching strategy for fighting the campaign.<sup>202</sup> He didn't see how the Twelfth Army could possibly break out without a significant increase in support from the air force and a strong advance by Li Yannian's army.<sup>203</sup> He was also concerned that if he did break out, Du Yuming would be left in a much more difficult situation.<sup>204</sup> After considering these various factors and their own circumstances, Huang and Hu both agreed not to begin planning for a breakout or even to let others know of Jiang's decision to allow them to break out.<sup>205</sup> They wanted to help Du Yuming by continuing to fight on. They also were waiting for a clearer picture of just how much support the air force would be able to give them.

While the Nationalist High Command and the commanders in the field were struggling to stem the tide of events running against them, the Communists were also feeling the need to take steps to ensure they maintained the initiative. They had reasons for concern. One was the heavy casualties in the general attack against Huang Wei and the Twelfth Army's continued strong resistance. For example, after two days of fighting to try to take Shenzhuang, the eastern group's 4th Column was forced to reduce the number of companies in certain regiments from nine to six and the number of battalions from three to two to maintain viable units at the front.<sup>206</sup> Also, the column had to adopt the practice of *lifu lipu*, (immediately upon capture, immediately fill in) for changing captured Nationalist soldiers into PLA soldiers.<sup>207</sup> Second, the force engaging Li Yannian was only able to slow his advance, not stop it. Third, those ECFA units that were not engaged in fighting Li Yannian and Huang Wei were committed to the operation to contain and destroy Du Yuming's army group. With their troops spread out and fighting on three battlefields, Communist commanders faced a shortage of soldiers almost as great as the Nationalists.

As Su Yu looked at this situation, he was troubled by intelligence reports that not only were the Nationalists shifting the XX and XXVIII Corps to the Bengbu front, they were preparing to transport the 40,000-man, American-equipped II Corps down the Yangzi River by boat from Hubei for use on the Bengbu front and were gathering ships in Shanghai to bring soldiers from the Beiping-Tianjin area south to fight on this front.<sup>208</sup> In Su's estimation, if the fighting to destroy the Twelfth Army and Du's army group dragged on, the Nationalists might be able to gain a clearly dominant position in the south. If that happened, they could relieve the Twelfth Army and perhaps even relieve Du's force. Su's proposal for forestalling the development of this potential threat was to pull several ECFA columns out of the fight against Du and employ them against Huang.<sup>209</sup> The purpose would be to eliminate the Twelfth Army quickly and free the CPFA to counter any foreseeable Nationalist threat coming from the Bengbu area.<sup>210</sup>

Su Yu submitted this proposal for his economy-of-force operation to Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi, Deng Xiaoping, and the CMC on 9 December. The morning of 10 December, Liu, Chen, and Deng agreed to Su's concept and asked how he would maintain the encirclement of Du's force and what units he would send south to fight Huang Wei.<sup>211</sup> Su's reply came at 1300, 10 December. His strategy for keeping Du's army group in check was to mount a defense on the south side of the pocket while continuing to attack on the north. The forces he was sending to the Shuangduiji battlefield included his powerful 3d Column, two weaker columns, and additional artillery from the ST Column. This force was under command of Su's chief of staff, Chen Shiju, a commander who was well known for his love of artillery:

Your telephonic message call has been received. We have decided to pull out three columns, the 3rd, 11th (E), and the Luzhongnan (these three columns actually amount to two column's worth of combat power) add some artillery, and send them south tonight to join in the battle to destroy Huang Wei. This force will be under the command of Chen Shiju on the way south. Please assign their operational missions.

As for our battle with Du [Yuming], Qiu [Qingquan], and Li [Mi], the 2d, 8th, 10th, and 12th columns are defending against the enemy advancing toward the south. Those four columns are only able to carry out local attacks. The three columns on the north, the 1st, 4th, and 9th, on the other hand, are still actively attacking so the enemy has no chance to catch his breath.<sup>212</sup>

To promote mutual respect and close relations between ECFA and CPFA units, Chen Yi sent messages to the ECFA column commanders Su Yu was sending south to remind them they were

representing the ECFA. He specifically requested they do three things to foster unity with the CPFA. They should be the first to reach their attack objectives, thereby greatly assisting their CPFA “brothers in arms.” They should humbly learn from their brothers in arms and take the initiative in building unity with them. Every item that was captured, from large things like weapons, ammunition, and soldiers down to things as small as personal items used in daily life and pieces of paper would be turned over to their brothers in arms. No one was to be permitted to hold back anything for their own use.<sup>213</sup> Chen’s directive was passed to all division and regiment commanders with the guidance that everyone should be made to understand the coming operation was not only about defeating the enemy, but it was also an opportunity to create a stronger ECFA-CPFA relationship.<sup>214</sup>

While the ECFA’s 3d, 11th, and Luzhongnan Columns marched south toward Shuangduiji, the Communist columns surrounding the Twelfth Army continued to press their attacks. On 11 December the CPFA 4th Column captured the XIV Corps headquarters at Yangweizi and killed the corps commander.<sup>215</sup> On 12 December, with the Twelfth Army pocket reduced to a circular area with a diameter of only about 3 km, Liu Bocheng and Chen Yi sent Huang Wei a letter detailing the hopelessness of his situation and warning him that if he did not surrender he would be destroyed.<sup>216</sup> Huang ignored the warning and kept his army fighting, but the gains the Communists made the nights of 12 and 13 December made it clear to both him and Hu Lian the end was near. Especially damaging to the Twelfth Army’s defenses was losing the prehistoric mound at Jianguogui to the ECFA 7th Column the night of 13 December.<sup>217</sup>

The area around Shuangduiji, which literally means “pair (*shuang*) of mounds (*dui*) village (*ji*),” had a number of large cone-shaped mounds prehistoric people built. The diameters of the mounds were around 40 meters, and they were about 20 meters high. On the flat plain they provided good vantage points for observing enemy positions and movements and for directing artillery. The Nationalists used several mounds in creating their defenses, and none was more important than the Jianguogui mound. It anchored a defensive line that ran east to west about 1 km south of the makeshift airfield and Twelfth Army headquarters. By taking it, the Communists could see directly into the heart of the pocket and bring observed artillery fire down on it.<sup>218</sup>

On 14 December with Communist artillery fire becoming more accurate as a result of their capture of Jianguogui, his own artillery out of ammunition, food in short supply, and his effective troop strength at a new low, Huang Wei knew it was either break out or be wiped out. Not wanting to wait to be destroyed, he decided to break out.<sup>219</sup> He radioed Nanjing that he would launch a breakout operation 15 December and then ordered the planning and preparation to begin.<sup>220</sup> Huang was not optimistic about the results of the operation, but he felt that “with luck” a portion of his army could be saved.<sup>221</sup> That, he thought, would be better than losing everything by staying in place.

On paper the Twelfth Army’s breakout plan had order and coherence. The plan was based on the assumption that the strongest Communist forces were on the southern and southeastern sides of the pocket. Therefore, the plan called for what was left of the army to break out in the other directions, with some units going west, some north, and some east. Once they had broken through the Communist front lines and advanced into the Communist rear, all units were to swing to the south and head for Bengbu.<sup>222</sup> Weapons light enough to be carried by hand were to be brought along. All artillery pieces and most communication equipment were to be destroyed. Several thousand seriously wounded troops were to be left behind, some in trenches that had been dug to protect them but most simply lying on open ground. Tanks that were still operable were to be used to lead the breakout. The operation was to begin at dusk 15 December.<sup>223</sup>

When Liu Bocheng and Chen Yi had sent their letter to Huang Wei on 12 December demanding he surrender, they were well aware that the battle to destroy the Twelfth Army was nearing its climax. On 13 December they decided that because of the Twelfth Army's weakening condition and the shrinking pocket, it would not be necessary to use the ECFA 11th and Luzhongnan Columns in the battle. They ordered the Luzhongnan Column to assemble north of Shuangduiji and serve as a general reserve.<sup>224</sup> They directed the 11th Column to turn around and head back north to rejoin the fight against Du Yuming.<sup>225</sup> The ECFA 3d Column and the ST Column artillery that came with it, however, were assigned important roles in a general attack that was to begin late the afternoon of 14 December.

Along with the decision to use the 3d Column came a major reorganization of the forces attacking the Twelfth Army. On 13 December the 3d Column and the newly arrived ECFA ST Column artillery were placed in the southern group of columns, and the ECFA 13th Column was shifted from the western group to this group.<sup>226</sup> Chen Shiju became commander of this group, and it was designated the main effort in the 14 December general attack.<sup>227</sup> At this time, the southern group consisted of three ECFA infantry columns; the 3d, 7th, and 13th Columns; several batteries of ECFA ST Column artillery; and the CPFA 6th Column.

The afternoon attack on 14 December began with the largest artillery preparation of the Shuangduiji battle. On the southern side of the pocket the artillery fire began at 1550 and continued for 2 hours.<sup>228</sup> At 1750 the infantry began their assaults. During the night and into the morning of 15 December the Twelfth Army continued to defend, but as Communist artillery fire destroyed more communication trenches and telephone lines, it became increasingly difficult for Huang Wei and the corps commanders to exercise command and control. When the time came, late in the afternoon, to execute the breakout operation, confusion reigned. The orderliness of the plan, as written, disintegrated into what was basically a rush by small groups of soldiers seeking escape. Within hours the surrounding Communist forces swept up almost all the Twelfth Army remnants, and the battle was over. Among those captured were Huang Wei and his X, XVIII, and LXXXV Corps commanders.<sup>229</sup> Ironically, Hu Lian, who had twice voluntarily flown into the Shuangduiji pocket, was able to make his way out of the tiger's mouth and safely return to Nanjing.

## Notes

1. “Zhongyang junwei guanyu jianji nanxian diren de bushu zhi Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi, Deng Xiaoping deng de dianbao” (“Telegram From the CMC to Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi, Deng Xiaoping, and Others [Including Su Yu] Concerning the Deployment for Attacking the Enemy on the Southern Front”), *Zhonggong zhongyang dangshi ziliao zhengji weiyuanhui* (Chinese Communist Party Central Committee’s Committee for the Collection of Party Historical Material), *Huaihai zhanyi* (*The Huai Hai Campaign*) (Beijing: Communist Party Historical Material Publishing House, 1988), (hereafter cited as *HHZY*), vol. 1, 169.
2. “Zhongyang junwei guanyu geduan Xu, Beng jianji Liu Zhi jituan de zong fangzhen zhi Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi, Deng Xiaoping deng de dianbao” (“Telegram From the CMC to Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi, and Deng Xiaoping and Others [Including Su Yu] Concerning the General Policy for Separating Xuzhou and Bengbu and Annihilating Liu Zhi’s Army Group”), *HHZY*, vol. 1, 190-91.
3. “Zhongyang junwei guanyu zhunbei lianxu zuozhan sange yue zhi wu ge yue, zhengqu zhanyi quansheng zhi Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi, Deng Xiaoping deng de dianbao” (“Telegram From the CMC to Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi, Deng Xiaoping, and Others [Including Su Yu and the CCP’s Central Plains and East China Bureaus] Concerning Preparations for Conducting Continuous Operations for 3-5 Months and Gaining Complete Victory in the Campaign”), *HHZY*, vol. 1, 193-95.
4. Sunzi, *The Art of War*, Lionel Giles, trans. (Singapore: Graham Brash [Pte] Ltd., 1988), 60.
5. Huang Wei, “Di shier bingtuan bei jian jiyao” (“A Summary of the Destruction of the Twelfth Army”), *Huaihai zhanyi qinli ji* (*A Record of Personal Experiences During the Huaihai Campaign*), *Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi quanguo weiyuanhui wenshi ziliao yanjiu weiyuanhui* (The Historical Materials Research Committee of the National Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference), eds. (Beijing: *Wenshi ziliao chubanshe*, 1983), hereafter cited as *QLJ*, 486.
6. Li Da, “Huigu Huaihai zhanyi zhong de zhongyuan yezhanjun” (“Recollections of the CPFA in the Huai Hai Campaign”), *HHZY*, vol. 2, 8.
7. Huang Wei, *QLJ*, 486.
8. Yang Botao, “Di shiba jun cong jingong dao beijian” (The XVIII Corps From Its Advance in the Attack to Its Destruction), *QLJ*, 513.
9. Huang Wei, *QLJ*, 486.
10. Ibid.
11. Yang Botao, 512-13.
12. He Xiaohuan, Fu Jijun, and Shi Zhengxian, *Huaihai zhanyi shi* (*A History of the Huai Hai Campaign*) (Shanghai: *Renmin chubanshe*, 1983), 57, hereafter cited as *HHZYS*, 114.
13. Du Yuming, “Huaihai zhanyi shimo” (The Huai Hai Campaign from Beginning to End), in *QLJ*, 27.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. “Su Yu, Chen Shiju, Zhang Zhen guanyu xietong zhongye jianji Huang Wei, Li Yannian bingtuan de bushu zhi Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi, Deng Xiaoping de dianbao” (“Telegram From Su Yu, Chen Shiju, and Zhang Zhen to Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi, and Deng Xiaoping [and also the CMC] Concerning the Deployment for Cooperating With the CPFA in Attacking the Armies of Huang Wei and Li Yannian”), *HHZY*, vol. 1, 181.
18. Sun Jixian and Ding Qiusheng, “Zongheng chicheng, aozhan Huaihai” (“Sweeping Freely Across Wide Expanses, Fiercely Fighting the Huai Hai Campaign”), *HHZY*, vol. 2, 239.
19. “Su Yu, Chen Shiju, Zhang Zhen guanyu xietong zhongye jianji Huang Wei, Li Yannian bingtuan de bushu zhi Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi, Deng Xiaoping de dianbao” (“Telegram From Su Yu, Chen Shiju, and Zhang Zhen

to Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi, and Deng Xiaoping [and also the CMC] Concerning the Deployment for Cooperating With the CPFA in Attacking the Armies of Huang Wei and Li Yannian”), *HHZY*, vol. 1, 182.

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22. “*Su Yu, Chen Shiju, Zhang Zhen guanyu xietong zhongye jianji Huang Wei, Li Yannian bingtuan de bushu zhi Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi, Deng Xiaoping de dianbao*” (“Telegram From Su Yu, Chen Shiju, and Zhang Zhen to Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi, and Deng Xiaoping [and also the CMC] Concerning the Deployment for Cooperating With the CPFA in Attacking the Armies of Huang Wei and Li Yannian”), *HHZY*, vol. 1, 182.

23. “*Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi, Deng Xiaoping guanyu huaye chou bing canjia da Huang Wei bingtuan zhi Su Yu, Chen Shiju, Zhang Zhen deng de dianbao*” (“Telegram From Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi, and Deng Xiaoping to Su Yu, Chen Shiju, and Zhang Zhen [and also the CMC] Concerning the ECFA Pulling Out Troops to Join the Attack on Huang Wei’s Army”), *HHZY*, vol. 1, 185.

24. “*Su Yu, Chen Shiju, Zhang Zhen guanyu jianji Li Yannian bingtuan de bushu zhi Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi, Deng Xiaoping deng de dianbao*” (“Telegram From Su Yu, Chen Shiju, and Zhang Zhen to Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi, Deng Xiaoping and Others [Including the CMC] Concerning the Deployment for Attacking Li Yannian’s Army”), *HHZY*, vol. 1, 187.

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26. “*Su Yu, Chen Shiju, Zhang Zhen guanyu jianji Li Yannian bingtuan de bushu zhi Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi, Deng Xiaoping deng de dianbao*” (“Telegram From Su Yu, Chen Shiju, and Zhang Zhen to Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi, Deng Xiaoping, and Others [Including the CMC] Concerning the Deployment for Attacking Li Yannian’s Army”), *HHZY*, vol. 1, 187.

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28. *Ibid.*

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32. *Ibid.*

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34. Sunzi, Ames, 123.

35. “*Zhongyang junwei guanyu Huaihai zhanyi tongyi zhihui wenti zhi Chen Yi, Deng Xiaoping, Su Yu de dianbao*” (“Telegram From the CMC to Chen Yi, Deng Xiaoping, and Su Yu Concerning the Question of Unity of Command for the Huai Hai Campaign”), *HHZY*, vol. 1, 107.

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37. “Zhongyang junwei yuji di yi zhang jiandi ershiyi, er ge shi di er zhang da Huang Wei, Sun Yuanliang zhi Su Yu, Chen Shiju, Zhang Zhen deng de dianbao” (“Telegram From the CMC to Su Yu, Chen Shiju, Zhang Zhen, and Others Estimating That in the First Phase of the Campaign 21-22 Enemy Divisions Would be Destroyed and That the Second Phase Would be an Attack on Huang Wei and Sun Yuanliang”), *HHZY*, vol. 1, 129.

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40. “Zhongyang junwei wanquan tongyi xian da Huang Wei bingtuan zhi Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi, Deng Xiaoping de dianbao” (“Telegram From the CMC to Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi, and Deng Xiaoping [and also Su Yu] Agreeing Completely to First Attack Huang Wei”), *HHZY*, vol. 1, 197.

41. “Su Yu, Chen Shiju, Zhang Zhen guanyu peihe zhongye jianmie Huang Wei bingtuan de bushu zhi Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi, Deng Xiaoping de dianbao” (“Telegram From Su Yu, Chen Shiju, and Zhang Zhen to Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi, Deng Xiaoping [and also the CMC, Wei Guoqing, and Tan Zhenlin] Concerning the Deployment for Coordinating With the CPFA to Destroy Huang Wei’s Army”), *HHZY*, vol. 1, 200-201.

42. Yang Botao, *QLJ*, 515.

43. *HHZYS*, 115.

44. *Ibid.*

45. *Ibid.* This order of events differs from Liu Bocheng’s statement in his 1000, 24 November message to the CMC that the Twelfth Army was already moving east that morning. What information led him to that conclusion is unclear.

46. Yang Botao, *QLJ*, 516.

47. *HHZYS*, 115-16.

48. *Sanjun daxue zhanshi bianzuan weiyuanhui* (The Joint Staff College’s War History Compilation Committee), *Xubeng Huizhan zhi bu* (The Xu-Beng Battle Section), ed. (Taipei: *Sanjun daxue*, [n.d.], 61.

49. “Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi, Deng Xiaoping guanyu yi wanquan baowei Huang Wei bingtuan zhi zhongyang junwei de dianbao” (“Telegram From Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi, and Deng Xiaoping to the CMC Concerning Their Having Already Completely Surrounded Huang Wei’s Army”), *HHZY*, vol. 1, 203.

50. *HHZYS*, 152.

51. Liao Yunzhou, “Di yiyiling shi zhanchang qiyi shimo” (“The Revolt of the 110th Division on the Battlefield From Beginning to End”), *QLJ*, 563.

52. *Ibid.*, 561.

53. *HHZYS*, 152.

54. *Ibid.*, 153.

55. *Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun quanguo jiefang zhanjeng shi* (*The History of the Chinese PLA’s War to Liberate the Entire Country*), Wang Miaosheng, ed. (Beijing: *Junshi kexue chubanshe*, 1997), hereafter cited as *QJZS*, vol. 4, 310-11.

56. Liao Yunzhou, “Di yiyiling shi zhanchang qiyi shimo” (“The Revolt of the 110th Division on the Battlefield From Beginning to End”), *QLJ*, 555.

57. *Ibid.*, 563-64.

58. Ibid, 563.
59. Ibid., 564.
60. Ibid., 566.
61. Ibid. Liao Yunzhou makes it clear that no one would have been permitted to stay behind. Even the wounded who could not walk were carried with the division. As for the offer of free choice in deciding whether to go or stay, Liao says this, “Actually, that was only a way to place a weight on their mind. I calculated that even if there were those who did not want to go, none of them would dare say so.”
62. Ibid., 567.
63. Ibid.
64. “Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi, Deng Xiaoping guanyu qingshi jiejie Huang Wei bingtuan hou de zhanlue fangxiang wenti zhi zhongyang junwei deng de dianbao” (“Telegram From Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi, and Deng Xiaoping to the CMC and Others [Including Su Yu] Asking for Guidance Concerning the Strategic Direction to be Taken After Finishing Off Huang Wei’s Army”), *HHZY*, vol. 1, 206.
65. “Su Yu, Chen Shiju, Zhang Zhen guanyu weijian Li Yannian bingtuan de bushu zhi Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi, Deng Xiaoping deng de dianbao” (“Telegram From Su Yu, Chen Shiju, and Zhang Zhen to Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi, Deng Xiaoping, and Others [Including the CMC, the CCP East China Region Bureau, and Tan Zhenlin] Concerning the Deployment for Encircling and Destroying Li Yannian’s Army”), *HHZY*, vol. 1, 205.
66. Ibid.
67. *HHZYS*, 125.
68. *Su Yu zhuan (A Biography of Su Yu)*, *Su Yu zhuan bianxiezu (The Group for Compiling A Biography of Su Yu)*, ed. (Beijing: *Dangdai zhongguo chubanshe*, 2000), 760, hereafter cited as *SYZ*.
69. *QJZS*, vol. 4, 323.
70. Ibid.
71. Ibid.
72. This number of deaths is an estimate based on statistics presented in *HHZY*, vol. 1, 337.
73. Zhou Kaicheng, “Huaihai zhanyi zhong de di bajun” (“The VIII Corps in the Huai Hai Campaign”), *QLJ*, 248.
74. Du Yuming, *QLJ*, 28.
75. Ibid.
76. Ibid.
77. “Su Yu, Chen Shiju, Zhang Zhen guanyu xietong zhongye jianji Huang Wei, Li Yannian bingtuan de bushu zhi Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi, Deng Xiaoping de dianbao” (“Telegram From Su Yu, Chen Shiju, and Zhang Zhen to Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi, and Deng Xiaoping [and also the CMC] Concerning the Deployment for Cooperating With the CPFA in Attacking the Armies of Huang Wei and Li Yannian), in *HHZY*, vol. 1, 180.
78. Ibid.
79. Nie Fengzhi, “Ganda ganpin yingyong fen zhan” (“Daring to Fight, Bravely Giving Our All”), *HHZY*, vol. 2, 314.
80. Qian Jun, “Guanyu luzhongnanzongdui canjia Huaihai zhanyi de huiyi” (“Recollections of the Luzhongnan [LZN] Column’s Participation in the Huai Hai Campaign”), *QLJ*, 385.
81. Ou Yangping, “Zhandou zai Huaihai zhanchangshang de bohái zongdui” (“The Bohai Column’s Combat on the Huaihai Battlefields”), *QLJ*, 389.
82. Ibid.

83. Sunzi, Giles, 17.
84. *Ibid.*, 16.
85. “*Zhongyang junwei yuji diyizhang jian di ershiyi, er ge shi dierzhang da Huang Wei, Sun Yuanliang zhi Su Yu, Chen Shiju, Zhang Zhen deng de dianbao*” (“Telegram From the CMC to Su Yu, Chen Shiju, Zhang Zhen, and Others [Including Chen Yi and Deng Xiaoping] Concerning the CMC Estimate That During the First Phase of the Campaign 21-22 Enemy Divisions Would Be Destroyed and That the Second Phase Would Be an Attack on Huang Wei and Sun Yuanliang”), *HHZY*, vol. 1, 129-30.
86. “*Huadong yezhanjun qianwei guanyu quanjian Huang Baitao bingtuan de zhengzhi dongyuan ling*” (“Order From the ECFA Front Committee for Political Mobilization to Completely Destroy Huang Baitao’s Army”), *HHZY*, vol. 1, 135.
87. “*Su Yu, Chen Shiju, Zhang Zhen guanyu huaye quanjun da beixian zhudi zhi Tan Zhenlin, Wang Jinan, Li Yingxi de dianbao*” (“Telegram From Su Yu, Chen Shiju, and Zhang Zhen to Tan Zhenlin, Wang Jianan, and Li Yingxi [and also to Liu, Chen, and Deng, and the CMC] Concerning the Entire ECFA Fighting the Various Enemy Forces on the Northern Front”), *HHZY*, vol. 1, 167.
88. *QJZS*, vol. 4, 323.
89. Guo Huaruo, Mei Jiasheng, and Han Nianlong, “*Zhongyuan duo jizhan chuan xi dao jingnan*” (“The Many Fierce Battles on the Central Plains Send a Call to Arms South of the Yangzi”), *HHZY*, vol. 2, 253.
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91. *Ibid.*, 252.
92. “*Zhongyang junwei guanyu zhanyi di san jieduan jie jue Xu-Beng zhi di zhi Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi, Deng Xiaoping de dianbao*” (“Telegram From the CMC to Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi, Deng Xiaoping [and also to Su Yu and Tan Zhenlin] Concerning Finishing Off the Enemy Forces in Xuzhou and Bengbu During the Third Phase of the Campaign”), *HHZY*, vol. 1, 207-208.
93. “*Zhongyang junwei guanyu jianmie Huang Wei bingtuan hou fang Xu di keneng taopao zhi Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi, Deng Xiaoping deng de dianbao*” (“Telegram From the CMC to Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi, Deng Xiaoping, and Others [Including Su Yu and Tan Zhenlin] Concerning Defending Against the Possibility of the Enemy Forces in Xuzhou Taking Flight After Huang Wei’s Army Has Been Destroyed”), *HHZY*, vol. 1, 211.
94. “*Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi, Deng Xiaoping guanyu caiqu jizhong huoli xian da yi dian de zhanfa zhi zhongyang junwei deng de dianbao*” (“Telegram From Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi, and Deng Xiaoping to the CMC and Others [Including Su Yu] Concerning the Adoption of the Fighting Method in Which Firepower is Concentrated to First Attack One Point”), *HHZY*, vol. 1, 209-210.
95. “*Zhongyang junwei guanyu jianmie Huang Wei bingtuan xu zhangwo zong yubeidui zhi Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi, Deng Xiaoping de dianbao*” (“Telegram From the CMC to Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi, and Deng Xiaoping [and also to Su Yu and Tan Zhenlin] Concerning the Need to Have in Hand a General Reserve When Fighting to Destroy Huang Wei’s Army”), *HHZY*, vol. 1, 212.
96. “*Su Yu, Tan Zhenlin deng dui xujian Huang Wei bingtuan ji Xuzhou zhi di de buchong yijian zhi zhongyang junwei deng de dianbao*” (“Telegram From Su Yu, Tan Zhenlin, and Others [Chen Shiju, the ECFA Chief of Staff and Zhang Zhen, the ECFA Deputy Chief of Staff] to the CMC [and also to Liu, Chen, and Deng] Presenting Ideas for the Consecutive Destruction of Huang Wei’s Army and the Enemy in Xuzhou”), *HHZY*, vol. 1, 213-15.
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98. *Ibid.*, 332.
99. “*Zhongyang junwei guanyu huaye zhunbei yi liangge zongdui wei gongjian Huang Wei bingtuan de zong yubeidui zhi Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi, Deng Xiaoping deng de dianbao*” (“Telegram From the CMC to Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi, Deng Xiaoping, and Others [Including Su Yu and Tan Zhenlin] Concerning the ECFA Preparing to Use

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104. *Ibid.*

105. *Ibid.*

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111. Huang Wei, *QLJ*, 488.

112. Du Yuming, *QLJ*, 31.

113. *Ibid.*, 32.

114. "Su Yu, Tan Zhenlin deng dui xujian Huang Wei bingtuan ji Xuzhou zhi di de buchong yijian zhi zhongyang junwei deng de dianbao" ("Telegram From Su Yu, Tan Zhenlin, and Others [Chen Shiju, the ECFA Chief of Staff and Zhang Zhen, the ECFA Deputy Chief of Staff] to the CMC [and also to Liu, Chen, and Deng] Presenting Ideas for the Consecutive Destruction of Huang Wei's Army and the Enemy in Xuzhou"), *HHZY*, vol. 1, 213.

115. *QJZS*, vol. 4, 325.

116. "Huadong yezhanjun silingbu guanyu Huaihai zhanyi jingguo gaishu" ("The ECFA Headquarters' General Description of What Happened During the Huai Hai Campaign"), *HHZY*, vol. 1, 298.

117. *Ibid.*

118. *Ibid.*

119. *QJZS*, vol. 4, 335.

120. *HHZYS*, 134-35. See also "Huadong yezhanjun silingbu guanyu Huaihai zhanyi jingguo gaishu" ("The ECFA Headquarters' General Description of What Happened During the Huai Hai Campaign"), *HHZY*, vol. 1, 299.

121. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, Michael Howard and Peter Paret, trans. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 119.

122. *Ibid.*, 121.

123. *Ibid.*, 119.

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127. Ibid.
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129. *HHZYS*, 137.
130. Du Yuming, *QLJ*, 34. For the quote from Sunzi's *The Art of War*, see Sunzi, Ames, 134-35.
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132. Ibid., 35-36.
133. Ibid., 33.
134. “*Su Yu, Chen Shiju, Zhang Zhen guanyu jianmie Du Yuming jituan de bushu zhi ge bingtuan, ge zongdui shouzhang de dianbao*” (“Telegram From Su Yu, Chen Shiju, and Zhang Zhen to Every Army and Column Commander [and also to the CMC and Liu, Chen, and Deng] Concerning the Deployment for the Destruction of Du Yuming’s Army Group”), *HHZY*, vol. 1, 226-27.
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136. Ibid.; *HHZYS*, 142.
137. Ibid., 143.
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140. Du Yuming, *QLJ*, 37.
141. Ibid.
142. Ibid., 38.
143. Xiong Shunyi, “*Sun Yuanliang bingtuan beijian jingguo*” (“The Way the Destruction of Sun Yuanliang’s Army Occurred”), *QLJ*, 425.
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148. Ibid.
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152. “*Liuzong ying jiaqiang zuji Li Yannian beijin*” (“The 6th Column Should Strongly Block Li Yannian’s Advance to the North”), *MZDMD*, vol. 5, 323.
153. “*Wei fangzhi Bengbu diren weixie ying gouzhu duoceng jianqiang fangyu zhendi*” (“In Order to Guard

Against the Threat Posed by the Bengbu Enemy, We Should Construct Strong Defensive Positions in Depth”), *MZDMD*, vol. 5, 325.

154. *QJZS*, vol. 4, 329.

155. *Ibid.*

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163. Zhou Zhijian, “*Yongmeng qianjin fenzhan Huaihai*” (“Boldly March Forward, Bravely Fight the Huai Hai Campaign”), *HHZY*, vol. 2, 360.

164. Qin Jiwei, “*Zhongye jiuzong zai Huaihai zhanchangshang*” (“The CPFA 9th Column on the Huai Hai Battlefields”), *HHZY*, vol. 2, 161.

165. *Ibid.*

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167. *Ibid.*

168. *Ibid.*

169. “*Di er yezhanjun silingbu guanyu jianmie Huang Wei bingtuan zuozhan jingguo deng wenti de zongjie*” (“A Summary by Second Field Army [the Name of the CPFA After the Huai Hai Campaign] Headquarters of What Happened During the Operation to Destroy Huang Wei’s Army and Other Questions”) *HHZY*, vol. 1, 313.

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197. Ibid., 177-78.
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212. “*Su Yu, Tan Zhenlin deng guanyu zengdiao sange zongdui canjia da Huang Wei bingtuan zhi Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi, Deng Xiaoping deng de dianbao*” (“Telegram From Su Yu, Tan Zhenlin, and Others to Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi, Deng Xiaoping, and Others [Including the CMC and the CCP East China Bureau] Concerning the Transfer of Three Additional Columns to the Fight Against Huang Wei’s Army”), *HHZY*, vol. 1, 234.
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216. “*Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi cu Huang Wei liji touxiang shu*” (“Letter From Liu Bocheng and Chen Yi Urging Huang Wei to Immediately Surrender”), *HHZY*, vol. 1, 236.
217. Cheng Jun, “*Cong tupo yunhe dao gongzhan Dawangzhuang, Jiangudui*” (“From Breaking Through at the Grand Canal to Taking Dawangzhuang and Jiangudui”), *HHZY*, vol. 2, 284.
218. Du Yide, *HHZY*, vol. 2, 155.
219. Yang Botao, *QLJ*, 529.
220. Huang Wei, *QLJ*, 492.
221. Ibid.
222. Yang Botao, *QLJ*, 530-31.
223. Ibid., 531.
224. *HHZYS*, 164.
225. Hu Bingyun, “*Zai Huaihai dazhan de riri yeye li*” (“The Days and Nights of the Great Huai Hai Campaign Battle”), *HHZY*, vol. 2, 340.
226. Chen Xilian, *HHZY*, vol. 2, 123.
227. Ibid., 124.
228. Sun Jixian and Ding Qiusheng, *HHZY*, vol. 2, 244.
229. Huang Wei, *QLJ*, 493.



*Those skilled in war subdue the enemy's army without battle.  
They capture his cities without assaulting them.*

—Sunzi, *The Art of War*

## **Chapter Eight**

### **End Moves in the Campaign**

Annihilating the Twelfth Army was a major victory for the Communists at the operational level. It made their hold on the central position absolute and, in doing so, set the conditions for achieving the main objective of the expanded Huai Hai Campaign—destroying Du Yuming's army group. This force had been encircled since 4 December and had lost the Sixteenth Army during a failed breakout attempt on 6 December. It had been losing soldiers steadily as it continued to follow Jiang Jieshi's orders to attack toward the southeast to relieve the Twelfth Army and fought to defend itself from East China Field Army (ECFA) attacks against the other sides of the pocket. Its stocks of food and ammunition were running low. Clearly, on 15 December, this force was much weaker than it had been when it had left Xuzhou. The surrounding Communist forces, on the other hand, due to the Twelfth Army's destruction, were about to become stronger.

Du Yuming was unaware of what was happening on the Shuangduiji battlefield. He was shocked, therefore, when on the evening of 16 December he received a message from Liu Zhi saying, "Yesterday evening Huang Wei's army conducted a breakout operation. Li Yannian's army is withdrawing south of the Huai River."<sup>1</sup> Du's immediate reaction was to wonder why he had not been ordered to break out at the same time. The question of whether the Central Plains Field Army (CPFA) would join with the ECFA to attack his force had been a matter of concern in his command.<sup>2</sup> Now, he thought, with Huang Wei's army having broken out and the Sixth and Eighth Armies in the process of withdrawing, it was likely that the Communists would add to the forces arrayed against him.<sup>3</sup> He also understood that his force was becoming even more isolated. After the Sixth and Eighth Armies retired south of the Huai River, the distance between Du's force and the main Nationalist defense line would be 140 km. After receiving Liu's message he ordered his two armies to cease their attacks to the southeast, to strengthen their field fortifications, and to prepare to defend in place. He also sent a message to the High Command asking for guidance and repeating his 7 December plea that it commit more troops to the campaign.<sup>4</sup>

#### **Nationalist Planning to Save Du Yuming's Army Group**

On 17 December, Jiang Jieshi responded to Du Yuming's message by directing him to send a representative to Nanjing for consultation and planning. The next morning an airplane arrived at the makeshift airstrip near Du's headquarters at Chenguanzhuang and took Du's chief of staff for operations, Shu Shicun, back to Nanjing.<sup>5</sup> In the meantime, Du had received another message from Liu Zhi informing him that "As far as the breakout of Huang Wei's army is concerned, only Hu Lian has reached Bengbu. The whereabouts of the rest of the force is unknown."<sup>6</sup> This news confirmed Du's belief that trying to break out was futile.<sup>7</sup>

When Shu Shicun flew back from Nanjing to Chenguanzhuang early the afternoon of 19 December he brought with him a lengthy handwritten letter from Jiang Jieshi to Du Yuming. In the letter, Jiang placed responsibility for the failure of the Twelfth Army's breakout operation on Huang Wei, blaming him for trying to break out at night instead of during the day when the air force could have provided support. Jiang informed Du that, try as he could, it was impossible for him to shift forces from other parts

of China to the Bengbu area and fight to relieve him. “The only approach,” he stated, “is to concentrate all your strength and with air force support rupture enemy defenses on one side and then break out.”<sup>8</sup> Jiang was prepared to lose half of Du’s force if the other half could be saved and brought south.<sup>9</sup>

To help develop the breakout plan and improve coordination between Du Yuming’s planning staff and air force headquarters in Nanjing, Dong Mingde, deputy chief of staff for operations, air force headquarters, accompanied Shu Shicun back to Chengguanghuzng. Jiang Jieshi wanted Du’s force to break out as soon as possible, so planning began that evening and carried on late into the night. Based on aerial photographs of Communist positions that Dong brought, a decision was made to attack toward the west.<sup>10</sup> The Second and Thirteenth Armies were to advance abreast with the Thirteenth on the right and the Second on the left. Just before the ground forces launched their attack, the air force was to fly 100 sorties, dropping tear gas bombs onto the Communist defense line.<sup>11</sup> The first Nationalist assault wave was to be equipped with gas masks, and it was assumed that with the defenders temporarily incapacitated by gas, they could quickly breach the Communist defenses.<sup>12</sup> Once that happened, the second assault wave would push through. After the force had broken out, the air force was to maintain a combat patrol of fighter aircraft over Du’s force to provide support when and where needed.<sup>13</sup> Du personally paid great attention to the methods the troops on the ground would use to identify themselves as friendly forces to the pilots above. He did not want the air force firing on his soldiers.<sup>14</sup> The operation was set to begin after three full days of airdrops had brought food and ammunition stocks up to the desired levels.<sup>15</sup>

Although he participated actively in the planning process for the breakout operation, Du Yuming was pessimistic about his army group’s chances of successfully making it through Communist lines and crossing approximately 150 km of open country with the Communists in pursuit. After retiring to his room the night of 19 November, he sat down and wrote a personal letter to Jiang Jieshi. Du told him he thought an attempt to break out would end in disaster and asked Jiang to reconsider. Du suggested two alternatives. One was to have Jiang move forces from Xian and Wuhan, even abandoning Wuhan if necessary, and concentrate those forces for a decisive battle with the People’s Liberation Army (PLA). The second was to have Du’s force defend in place and hope that time would bring positive political developments. Only as a last resort, Du said, should a breakout operation be attempted. Du felt there was little hope of dissuading Jiang from ordering a breakout operation, but he also felt he had to make one final appeal.<sup>16</sup>

Du intended to have Shu Shicun take his letter to Nanjing on 20 December when Su and Dong were scheduled to fly back with the completed breakout plan. However, as they were preparing to leave, heavy snow began to fall and their aircraft was grounded. For more than a week, wind, snow, rain, and a low ceiling kept their airplane on the ground. This bad weather also stopped airdrops of food, ammunition, medicine, and other supplies into the Chengguanzhuang pocket, which meant the Nationalist supply situation was becoming more critical. Meanwhile the ECFA bided its time. Instead of continuing, or even intensifying, its attacks against the surrounded Nationalist forces, as it was fully capable of doing, it stopped attacking and focused on conducting a political offensive designed to weaken Du’s armies’ will and sap their spirits.

### **An Operational Pause for Strategic Purposes**

The operational pause the Central Military Commission (CMC) ordered was part of its grand strategy for conducting the civil war. As was described and discussed in earlier chapters, the Huai Hai Campaign was originally conceived as a way to achieve the operational objective of occupying northern Jiangsu. Achieving this objective would place additional human and materiel resources in Communist

hands. It would also establish favorable conditions for future military operations. Later the primary campaign objective was changed to destroying the Seventh Army. This objective fit the Communist overarching attrition strategy that sought to steadily, systematically annihilate Nationalist forces. After the campaign had begun, following Su Yu's suggestion, the campaign's main objective was expanded to become destroying all Nationalist armies in the central plains. This reflected a new strategic vision born in the Communist victories in northeastern China in October and November. After destroying the large Nationalist armies in the Northeast, Communist leaders had decided to try to destroy the other Nationalist army groups that were fighting north of the Yangzi River. If this was done, those forces could not be shifted south to man a defensive line along the Yangzi River, and conquering southern China would be easier.

In accordance with this new strategic vision, at roughly the same time the CMC approved Su Yu's proposal to expand the Huai Hai Campaign, it began developing a campaign plan to keep Fu Zuoyi's 500,000-man force in the Beiping-Tianjin area and annihilate it there. The concept for this campaign, called the Ping Jin (Beiping-Tianjin) Campaign, was simple—trap Fu's force by blocking possible routes of withdrawal from the Beiping-Tianjin area and then either attack his force or negotiate his surrender. A major problem was that until the Northeast China Field Army (NECFA) reached the campaign area the Communists would not be able to block Fu's movement south by sea. To keep Jiang Jieshi from becoming alarmed and ordering Fu to do exactly that, when the CMC, in late November, ordered the North China Field Army (NCFA) to start cutting Fu's line of communication northwest of Beijing, large attacks on Nationalist forces were not permitted. Meanwhile, the NECFA was secretly moving as rapidly as possible toward Tianjin and its port of Tanggu to get into position to cut Fu's access to the sea.

In early December the CMC began to feel that Communist successes in the Huai Hai Campaign might also cause Jiang Jieshi to shift Fu Zuoyi's forces to the Yangzi River valley. A message the CMC sent to NECFA commander Lin Biao, political commissar Luo Ronghuan, and chief of staff Liu Yalou at 0200, 11 December indicated that by this time the CMC was less concerned about what was going to happen to the Twelfth Army and Du Yuming's army group than it was about what was going to happen regarding Fu Zuoyi. In this message the CMC shows no doubt about the fate of Huang Wei and Du Yuming's armies: "The 34 divisions southwest of Xuzhou can be completely destroyed in about 10 days."<sup>17</sup> But the message expressed concern that Jiang could still decide to send the many ships concentrated in Shanghai north to evacuate Fu's soldiers from Beiping, Tianjin, and Tanggu.<sup>18</sup>

To keep the destruction of Du Yuming's army group from being the catalyst that pushed Jiang Jieshi to adopt a new strategy and completely redeploy his forces, later on 11 December the CMC decided to order Su Yu not to move quickly to annihilate Du. In a message sent that day to Lin Biao, Luo Ronghuan, and others, the CMC, in its role of providing overall strategic guidance and direction to Communist forces, clearly linked the conduct of the Huai Hai Campaign to the Ping Jin Campaign. The former was to be shaped to support the latter:

8. In order not to make Jiang Jieshi decide to quickly ship his troops in the Beiping-Tianjin area south by sea, we are preparing to order Liu Bocheng, Deng Xiaoping, Chen Yi, and Su Yu to, after wiping out Huang Wei's army, spare what is left of the armies commanded by Du Yuming, those under Qiu Qingquan, Li Mi and Sun Yuanliang (about half of which have already been destroyed), and for two weeks make no dispositions for their final annihilation.

9. To prevent the enemy from fleeing toward Qingdao, we are preparing to order our troops in Shandong to mass certain forces to control the section of the Yellow River

near Jinan and to make preparations along the Qingdao-Jinan railroad.

10. There is little or no possibility that the enemy will flee towards Xuzhou, Zhengzhou, Xian, or Suiyuan.

11. The main or the only concern is that the enemy might flee by sea. Therefore, in the coming two weeks the general method should be to encircle without attacking or to cut off without encircling.

12. This plan is beyond the enemy's range of expectation. It will be very difficult for him to discern what is happening before you complete your final dispositions.<sup>19</sup>

The morning of 14 December, with the final destruction of Huang Wei's force imminent, the CMC implemented this concept by directing Su Yu to cease attacking Du Yuming: "We suggest that each of your columns now encircling and attacking Du[Yuming], Qiu [Qingquan], and Li[Mi] rest in place for several days. Only conduct defensive operations; do not attack."<sup>20</sup>

Two days later, at 2400, 16 December, the CMC sent Su Yu a message that elaborated its thinking. The ECFA units surrounding Du Yuming were to rest and reorganize for 10 days while CPFA forces were brought in. Then they could attack. In the meantime, to lower Nationalist soldiers' morale, the CMC wanted Su's columns to conduct a political offensive:

(1) Huang Wei's army has been wiped out. All of Li Yannian's army has withdrawn to defenses on the south bank of the Huai River.

(2) All of our units encircling Du Yuming can take approximately 10 days for rest and reorganization. Moreover, the entire strength of the CPFA should be concentrated. Then launch an attack.

(3) Ceaselessly carry out a political offensive against Du, Qiu, and Li. In addition to what your units are doing, we ask you to draft some colloquial broadcast scripts. Change their content every three or four days in accordance with changes in actual battlefield conditions. Then send them to us by radio so that we can revise our broadcasts.<sup>21</sup>

### **The CMC and the General Front Committee Look Ahead**

As these messages indicate, several days before the Twelfth Army's annihilation the CMC already viewed the destruction of that army and Du Yuming's army group as a foregone conclusion. The CMC's decision to have the ECFA support a strategic deception plan by ceasing offensive action against Du was a manifestation of that attitude. So, too, was the following message the CMC sent to Liu Bocheng, Deng Xiaoping, Chen Yi, Su Yu, and Tan Zhenlin on 12 December. In this message the CMC requested that the five of them meet to discuss arrangements for having the ECFA and the CPFA rest, reorganize, and replenish supplies after Du Yuming's force was destroyed. The CMC also wanted them to consider possible future operations, especially crossing the Yangzi River. Once it had reached a consensus, the CMC wanted Liu Bocheng to bring its recommendations to CMC headquarters at Xibaipo for more discussions:

(1) We request that after Huang Wei's army is destroyed, Comrade Bocheng come to CMC Headquarters to discuss strategic concepts. We estimate that Huang Wei can be completely wiped out within a few days. A longer period will be required before we can wipe out Qiu and Li. We ask that after Huang Wei is destroyed Liu, Chen, Deng, Su, and Tan, all five comrades, convene a meeting of the General Front Committee. The purpose is for you to reach a consensus on plans for rest and reorganization after Qiu and Li have been destroyed, plans for subsequent operations, and plans for the

future crossing of the Yangzi River so that the views of the General Front Committee can be presented to the CMC.

If Su Yu and Tan Zhenlin are unable to take time from their main work [commanding forces in the field against Du Yuming] to go to the location of the General Front Committee [CPFA headquarters], then we ask Bocheng to go to Su and Tan's command posts so he can meet with them in person, gain an understanding of conditions in the ECFA, and ask for their opinions. Then he can come to the CMC. We hope that Bocheng can reach the CMC sometime between 20 and 25 December.

(2) Our thoughts on operational concepts for subsequent operations are, more or less, as follows:

a. After the complete destruction of Huang, Qiu, and Li, the ECFA and the CPFA will rest and reorganize for two months. (This period will be divided into four periods, each half a month long.) Furthermore, the two armies will roughly finish preparing the items needed for a Yangzi River crossing operation (rainwear, money, artillery ammunition, therapeutic medicine, steam powered boats, etc.) They will also finish the first steps in the political education of the troops.

b. If the enemy forces now positioned between the Yangzi River and the Huai River do not withdraw south of the Yangzi River, the two armies will join in a 1-2 month campaign to wipe out enemy forces between the Huai River and the Yangzi River . . . and establish control over the north bank of the Yangzi River.

c. After this, another period of appropriate length will be spent completing all of the final preparations for crossing the Yangzi River. Then the river crossing operation will be executed, probably some time in May or June of next year.<sup>22</sup>

Liu, Chen, and Deng felt that fulfilling the CMC's request for the General Front Committee to meet as a group was important. To meet with Su and Tan and not take them away from their command work for very long, after the Twelfth Army was destroyed, the three traveled to Su Yu's ECFA headquarters at Caiao for a meeting. After completing tasks that had to be done following the Shuangduiji battle, they left Xiaolizhuang the evening of 16 December and arrived in Caiao the next morning. At about the same time Tan Zhenlin arrived from his Shandong army headquarters.<sup>23</sup> This was the first and only time that all five General Front Committee members would meet together during the campaign. Su briefly described the situation at Chengguanzhuang, but the main topics of discussion were how to cross the Yangzi River and unit reorganization.<sup>24</sup> During a brief break, they posed outside their meeting place for a picture and then resumed the meeting. That evening Liu Bocheng, accompanied by Chen Yi, left for Xibaipo.<sup>25</sup> Deng Xiaoping went back to Xiaolizhuang, and Tan Zhenlin returned to his headquarters. Su Yu remained in place, directing the political offensive against Du Yuming, thus ensuring his force's continued ability to block any attempt by Du to break out and preparing the ECFA to resume combat.

### **The Political Offensive Against Du Yuming's Army Group**

Since the beginning of the Communists' struggle against the Nationalists, political work, which involved spreading the Communist message and attempting to convince enemy officers and soldiers they should join the Communist ranks, was an integral part of Communist military operations. It was the basis for Communist operational principle number 9 that stated the PLA's main source of manpower was at the front and that most of the captured enemy personnel (80 to 90 percent of the men and a small number of junior officers) could be incorporated into their units.<sup>26</sup> Communist leaders believed their cause was just and that when explained to enemy soldiers it would convince many of them to come over to their side.

The Communists carried out political work both clandestinely and openly. During the Huai Hai Campaign clandestine political work paid off handsomely when Zhang Kexia and He Jifeng led most of the Third Pacification Area to defect at the beginning of the campaign. It also produced the Liao Yunzhou-orchestrated 110th Division's defection that doomed Huang Wei's attempt to break through the encircling forces at Shuangduiji on 27 November. But open political work also produced significant results, both in terms of the number of soldiers who were induced to surrender and those who became Communist soldiers after surrendering. It was viewed as being especially effective when conducted over time against surrounded Nationalist units.

Open political work had been conducted against Du Yuming's army group since its encirclement on 3-4 December. Several thousand Nationalist soldiers had surrendered in the nearly two weeks that had passed since then. However, the intensity of political work, or what might be referred to as psychological operations, increased after 16 December. As part of the new political campaign, on 17 December a radio broadcast urged Du Yuming and his subordinates to surrender. As the following excerpt from this broadcast indicates, the Communists' appeal to surrender asked Du and others to face reality and stop fighting, not only to save their lives but also the lives of many others:

General Du Yuming, General Qiu Qingquan, General Li Mi and all corps, division and regiment commanders of the two armies under Generals Qiu Qingquan and Li Mi:

You are now at the end of your rope. Huang Wei's army was completely wiped out on the night of the 15th. Li Yannian's army has turned about and fled south. It is hopeless for you to think of joining them. Are you hoping to break through? How can you break through when the People's Liberation Army is all around? During the last few days you have tried to break through, but what was the result? Your planes and tanks are useless. We have more planes and tanks than you, that is, artillery and explosives which people call our home-made planes and tanks. Aren't they ten times more formidable than your foreign-made planes and tanks? Your army that Sun Yuanliang commanded has already been wiped out. What remains is your two armies, and more than half the men in them have been wounded or captured. You brought along many miscellaneous personnel from various organizations and many young students from Xuzhou and forced them into your army, but how can these people fight? For more than ten days, you have been surrounded layer after layer and have received blow after blow. Your position has shrunk greatly so that you're in a tiny place little more than five kilometers square. So many people are crowded together that a single shell from us can kill a lot of you. Your wounded soldiers and the families who have followed the army are complaining to high heaven. Your soldiers and many of your officers have no stomach for any more fighting. You all . . . should understand and sympathize with the feelings of your subordinates and families, hold their lives dear, find a way out for them as early as possible, and stop sending them to a senseless death.

Now that Huang Wei's army has been completely wiped out and Li Yannian's army has fled towards Bengbu, we are able to concentrate an attacking force several times your strength. This time we have fought for only 40 days, and you have already lost 10 divisions under Huang Baitao, 11 under Huang Wei, 4 under Sun Yuanliang, 4 under Feng Zhian, 2 under Sun Liangcheng, 1 under Liu Ruming, 1 division in Suxian and another in Lingbi—altogether you have lost 34 whole divisions. . . . You have seen with your own eyes the fate of the 3 armies under Huang Baitao, Huang Wei, and Sun Yuanliang.

. . . You should . . . immediately order all your troops to lay down their arms and cease resistance. Our army will guarantee the life and personal safety of your high-ranking officers, and all officers and men. This is your only way out. Think it over! If you feel this is the right thing to do, then do it. If you still want to fight another round, then continue fighting. But in the end, you will be finished off anyway.

Headquarters of the Central Plains  
People's Liberation Army

Headquarters of the Eastern China  
People's Liberation Army<sup>27</sup>

Radio broadcasts such as this were only a small part of the political offensive against Du Yuming's force. The following excerpt from a message the ECFA Political Department sent to the political departments in armies, columns, and divisions shows the wide variety of methods employed to influence the minds of the Nationalists and soldiers at the front:

Important concrete methods [for political work].

1. Front line shouting toward the enemy.
  - a. First exert every effort to determine the enemy's unit designation, composition, and internal situation. After this, make the actual decision as to the content of what will be shouted toward the enemy.
  - b. Cadre should take the lead in organizing key educational personnel as appropriate. Using newly captured soldiers (officers are good, also) from the same home area to shout is very effective. So, too, is having liberated personnel shout about their present situation.
  - c. Pay attention to selecting an opportune moment for shouting. By all means avoid the enemy's officer supervisory units.
  - d. To enable the enemy to hear clearly, megaphones can be used, shouting can be spread out to different places, or those shouting can move nearer to the enemy positions. Sentences must be spoken slowly and clearly.
  - e. Individual units have sung songs for the enemy or established a telephone link. These methods can also be adopted as appropriate.
2. Distribution of propaganda items.
  - a. There should not be too many different kinds, and they should clearly be meaningful. Columns should unify the printing of the actual propaganda items going to the enemy across from them.
  - b. Small units can be used to penetrate enemy positions and distribute these items. They can be placed on routes traveled by the enemy. Prisoners can pass them out. Kites can spread them around. Rice and steamed buns can be sent. (Do not send too many.) Propaganda shells can be fired. (The 4th Column is making 30-50 60mm mortar propaganda shells every day.)
3. Using prisoners to call for surrender.
  - a. Take the captured officers, and soldiers and dependents who have been captured, run them through a brief education course, and then send them back to make oral appeals to surrender or have them carry back written calls to surrender. The 68th Regiment used prisoners to cause 110 men to come over in one night.
  - b. Be careful not to reveal secrets.

- c. Establish methods for liaison. Guarantee the safety of prisoners.
4. Put up large size slogans. Use old flags, doors, or mats for putting up big characters. These slogans can be changed frequently.<sup>28</sup>

Shifting the army from conducting armed attacks to political work was not a simple task. Front-line soldiers had to be convinced that shouting, singing, and placing hot buns in no man's land was meaningful and useful. They easily became frustrated when they did not see quick results from all the time and effort spent organizing, preparing, and executing the activities described in the preceding quote. This is why the ECFA Political Department asked subordinate political departments to explain the need for patience. Let soldiers know, the message quoted above stated, that "at present it is impossible to bring about the surrender of a large body of enemy troops, but having small detachments disintegrate across a wide area is good, too."<sup>29</sup> The message also presented examples of impermissible behavior that had occurred as a result of unrealistically high expectations and impatience: "One unit that didn't get any response from their shouting began to dislike doing it. Another unit that received no response from their propaganda shell fired off a real one. These kinds of behavior are improper."<sup>30</sup>

During the first several days of the political offensive, from 16-24 December, the number of Nationalist soldiers who went over to the Communists totaled approximately 2,500, including 16 officers with the rank of second lieutenant or above.<sup>31</sup> As days passed and conditions within the Nationalist pocket worsened, the number of those surrendering steadily increased. Growing hunger was a major contributor to this phenomenon. Du Yuming's force had begun to experience a food shortage shortly after being encircled because, in accordance with Du's assumption that they would move quickly to link up with a base of supply, they had not brought a large amount of food with them from Xuzhou. After the force was surrounded, the amount of food that was airdropped in a single day never even once matched the force's daily requirements.

As Du's chief of staff for operations, Wen Qiang, noted, "on the best day, the food that was airdropped was only enough to feed 10,000 soldiers."<sup>32</sup> The food would be divided to give 30,000 soldiers one meal in a day, but that was still far below what was needed.<sup>33</sup> Yet, it was something. After the airdrops were halted by bad weather on 20 December, the food shortage quickly became a crisis. Soldiers killed and ate army horses for food and ate wild grass, tree bark, and winter wheat sprouts to satisfy their hunger.<sup>34</sup> Another problem was that fuel for cooking and keeping warm was running out. After all the trees in the pocket were chopped down and every house had been taken apart searching for wood, soldiers even dug up graves and burned coffins.<sup>35</sup> Looking around, Wen Qiang felt the pocket had become "hell on earth."<sup>36</sup> It was only natural that the passage of time created the desire to escape this hell in more and more soldiers.

With the morale of Du's force declining and the number of Nationalist soldiers surrendering on the rise, the CMC began to think that perhaps it would be possible to eliminate Du Yuming's force without a final climactic battle. The afternoon of 28 December the CMC sent a message to Su Yu and Tan Zhenlin directing them to increase the tempo of the ECFA's political offensive and try to bring about the complete internal collapse of Du Yuming's armies. It was hoping that something similar to what had happened at the surrounded city of Changchun in Northeast China could be repeated. There the surrender of one corps had led Nationalist commander Zheng Dongguo to surrender his entire command to the NECFA on 19 October. However, this CMC message also made it clear that while expanding the political offensive, the ECFA should still be preparing for other eventualities:

Now the situation of Du Yuming's force is worse than that of Zheng Dongguo's force at Changchun. Hunger and cold are pressing against them. The surrender of large

groups is increasing daily. If the speed and scale of the enemy's internal disintegration is tending to increase, perhaps in ten or twenty days the result will be the same as at Changchun. You should now exert the utmost efforts to strengthen the political offensive. Using the name of every possible position (yours, each column and division commander, and the commands of officers who have surrendered), write letters to enemy commanders at all levels and openly disseminate them in order to stir up the great mass of soldiers. Do this work openly. There are three possibilities before you:

1. Eliminate the enemy with a strong attack.
2. Eliminate the enemy partially through his own disintegration and partially through a strong attack.
3. The enemy's disintegration will develop to the point of complete, mass surrender.

Please pay close attention to enemy developments and keep us informed. Liu and Chen have arrived.<sup>37</sup>

### **The ECFA and CPFA Make Ready to Resume Combat**

While conducting the political offensive against Du Yuming's force, the ECFA was also energetically carrying out a program to rest its soldiers, reorganize units, and replenish supplies. Some columns did this while on the line around the Chenguangzhuang pocket. Others did it in their positions as reserves behind the front lines. To the south the CPFA was resting and reorganizing in a triangular area bounded by Suxian on the east, Mengcheng to the southwest, and Guoyang to the northwest, except for five regiments from the Yu-Wan-Su Military District that were on watch along the Fei River north of Bengbu. Its mission was to serve as a general reserve, preparing to either reinforce the ECFA in fighting with Du Yuming or block any new effort by Li Yannian and Liu Ruming to advance north from Bengbu.<sup>38</sup>

After 40 days of continuous operations, the troops in both field armies needed a respite from combat and marching. They were tired; they had endured much. As a way to reward his soldiers for their efforts, on 16 December Su Yu asked the CMC for permission to give each ECFA soldier one-half kilogram of pork and five packs of cigarettes. Those soldiers who did not smoke would receive items of equivalent value. On 17 December the CMC agreed to Su's request and also extended this extra ration to CPFA soldiers.<sup>39</sup>

The unit reorganization that took place during the period was also important. Casualties had been heavy, especially in the lower command ranks, and a major effort was needed to restore combat units to full strength. During the fighting up through 15 December, the ECFA had suffered 73,300 casualties.<sup>40</sup> Only 12,700 of those casualties had returned to their units, meaning that more than 60,000 soldiers and leading cadre who had started the campaign needed to be replaced just to stay even.<sup>41</sup>

To replace the cadre in units of regimental size and smaller, the ECFA drew on many sources. More than 1,000 cadre were taken from column headquarters staffs, political departments, logistics departments, and units directly under column command. Training regiment cadre were assigned to combat units. Ordinary soldiers who had distinguished themselves were promoted. There were even cases where Seventh Army soldiers taken during the fighting at Nianzhuangxu served as platoon and company commanders.<sup>42</sup> In addition, 1,500 low-level cadre were brought in from military districts in Shandong province.<sup>43</sup>

Replacements for the rank-and-file soldier came from two sources. One source was the militia units in each military district. In mid-December 24,000 soldiers from military districts in eastern China were

brought into the ECFA.<sup>44</sup> The other source was continuously infusing captured Nationalist soldiers. As of 16 December the total number of Nationalist soldiers the ECFA captured exceeded 100,000.<sup>45</sup> A large percentage of these entered the ECFA because in late December, despite the losses and relatively small number of militia soldiers who had entered the force, the ECFA's strength stood at 460,000, which was 40,000 more than when the campaign started.<sup>46</sup>

Due to the large number of former Nationalist soldiers who had been placed in the ranks and because the civil war was about to enter a new phase, with the old ECFA veterans about to be sent to places far from their homes in Shandong and Jiangsu, the rest and reorganization period included a political education campaign. The campaign extolled the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP's) virtues and explained the benefits that all ordinary Chinese would gain when the Communist revolution was completed. It explained not only why it was important to achieve total victory in the Huai Hai Campaign but also why it was necessary for the soldiers to fight to completely overthrow the Nationalist government. The campaign aimed at motivating soldiers and preparing them psychologically for the battles that lay ahead. It also called for greater discipline and establishing a reporting system that would give the CMC and CCP Central Committee more information on what was occurring in the field and more control.<sup>47</sup>

In conjunction with political education and mobilization, military training and preparations to resume combat were also carried out. The large influx of new personnel into units made this especially important. Meetings were held to discuss battlefield experiences and seriously examine artillery-infantry coordination, antitank tanks, methods for attacking bunkers, and ways to counter gas attacks. Small training exercises were conducted. All the while, digging approach trenches and lateral trenches continued. So, too, did reconnaissance and planning for an all-out attack on Du Yuming's force.<sup>48</sup>

### **Du Yuming's Preparations to Break Out**

On 29 December the skies over Chenguanzhuang and Nanjing cleared and the airdrop of supplies to Du Yuming's army group resumed. The good weather also allowed Shu Shicun and Dong Mingde to finally take the breakout plan to Nanjing. Shu also carried with him Du's letter, written 10 days earlier, asking Jiang Jieshi to order a breakout only as a last resort.

Jiang did not respond directly to Du's letter, but the following day he sent a message to Du expressing concern for his health and offering to send an airplane to bring him back to Nanjing for treatment. Du replied that his chronic ailments were making it more difficult to get around but that he would not abandon tens of thousands of loyal officers and men. Once more he appealed to Jiang, "Please your excellency, adopt my first alternative [concentrating forces for a decisive battle]. As long as I still have breath I will serve you faithfully."<sup>49</sup>

On 1 January Jiang Jieshi issued a statement calling for Nationalist-Communist negotiations to bring about a peaceful end to the civil war. Just maybe, Du thought, this might be the opening to political developments that could save his armies from destruction.<sup>50</sup> However, on 3 January Jiang directed him to prepare for a breakout operation. The operation was supposed to be launched following three full days of airdrops that were to begin on 5 January. Du asked for a delay because his troops were still hungry and lacked sufficient ammunition. Jiang agreed to airdrop supplies for one extra day but told Du that after that he absolutely had to execute the operation.<sup>51</sup>

### **Destroying Du Yuming's Army Group**

Halting the armed attacks against Du Yuming's army group and moving to a political offensive against his force served three purposes. First, it contributed to the strategic deception effort that supported the Ping Jin Campaign. Second, it gave the ECFA and CPFA a much-needed opportunity to rest,

reorganize, and replenish. Third, it added impetus to the internal disintegration of Du's armies. Regarding this last point, the political offensive was a way to keep psychological pressure on the enemy even while it rested. The results it produced were significant enough to cause the CMC, in its message of 28 December, to suggest that the political offensive might be sufficient to eliminate Du's force.

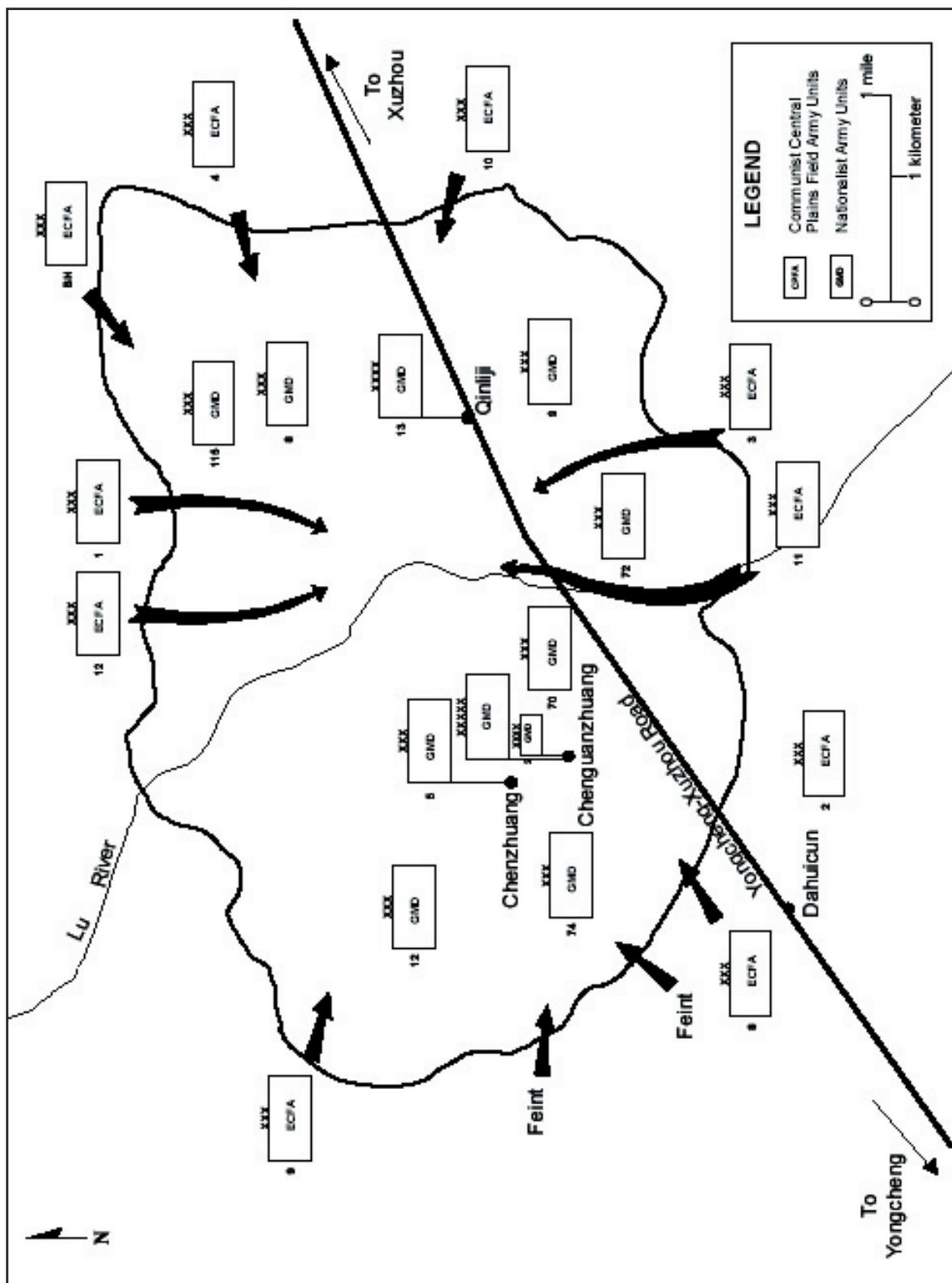
The political offensive took time, its progress could not be accurately measured, and there was no way to know when, or even if, it would actually reach its ultimate objective. As a result, once the need to not shock the Nationalists so hard that Jiang Jieshi would order Fu Zuoyi to abandon Beiping and move south had passed, and the army was well on the way to finishing its rest and reorganization, field commanders began to press for a return to direct military action against Du. On 26 December, with the NECFA in position to block Fu Zuoyi's route to the sea and the NCF and NECFA having recently combined to defeat large Nationalist forces along his possible routes of withdrawal to the northwest, Su Yu proposed to the CMC that the ECFA prepare to attack Du Yuming on 5 January.<sup>52</sup> The CMC's response was its message on 28 December asking him to give the political offensive a chance for 10 more days to see what would happen.<sup>53</sup> However, in that message the CMC may have been exposing its own doubts about what the political offensive would produce when, in laying out the possible ways by which Du's force would be eliminated, it placed "a strong attack" by the ECFA at the top of its list.<sup>54</sup>

Nationalist airdrops resumed into the Chengguanzhuang pocket on 29 December, stimulating Su Yu to once again propose to the CMC that he be allowed to attack Du. He felt that after a 10-day interruption in airdrops Du's army group was especially weak and it would be good to attack before more food and ammunition could be delivered.<sup>55</sup> On 31 December he sent a proposed plan of attack, complete with troop dispositions and objectives, to the CMC.<sup>56</sup> His concept was to put pressure on Second Army positions on the western side of the pocket while columns on the northern, eastern, and southern sides pushed into the pocket. His first objectives were to separate the weaker Thirteenth Army from the stronger Second Army and cut the Thirteenth Army in two. This would establish the conditions for destroying the Thirteenth Army. Once that goal was achieved, he would move immediately to attack the Second Army.

At 0200, 2 January the CMC approved Su Yu's proposal.<sup>57</sup> At 2400 the same day ECFA Headquarters issued its order for a general attack. The time set for the start of the attack was 1600, 6 January.<sup>58</sup> In case of overcast and rainy weather, the time would be moved up to 1300 the same day.<sup>59</sup>

For the attack Su Yu organized the 10 columns around the pocket into three groups, the eastern, southern, and northern groups. The eastern group consisted of the 3d, 4th, 10th, and Bohai Columns under command of 10th Column commander Song Shilun and his political commissar, Liu Peishan. The southern group contained the 2d, 8th, and 11th Columns and three military district regiments under command of Wei Luoqing, with Ji Luo as political commissar. The northern group consisted of the 1st, 9th, and 12th Columns and two military district regiments under command of Tan Zhenlin, with Wang Jianan as political commissar.<sup>60</sup> The ST Column's 105mm howitzer batteries were divided into four units and allocated to support these three groups.<sup>61</sup>

Behind these front-line columns several more columns were deployed in a second ring around the pocket.<sup>62</sup> The XXXV Corps was in the north attached to Tan Zhenlin's command.<sup>63</sup> Interestingly, as another example of the ECFA's organizational agility and command flexibility that was characteristic at this time, the XXXV Corps artillery was attached to the eastern group's Bohai Column.<sup>64</sup> The Luzhongnan Column, which had a Yu-Wan-Su Military District division and the ECFA cavalry regiment attached, was in the Yongcheng area southwest of the pocket under Wei Luoqing's command.<sup>65</sup> The Lianguang Column, with the ECFA guard regiment and a militia unit from the Third subdistrict of the



The ECFA's plan for attacking Du Yuming's army group, 5 January 1948.

Ji-Lu-Yu Military District attached, was located in the Huitinglou-Xiayi area west of the pocket.<sup>66</sup> The 13th Column was southwest of Yongcheng behind the Luzhongnan Column, the Sixth Column was in the Suixikou area, and the 7th Column was in Xiaoxian.<sup>67</sup> All of the columns in the second ring were to maintain close liaison with the columns in front of them so they were aware of what the enemy was doing. Their mission was to be prepared to respond quickly if Du Yuming's forces attempted to break out and coordinate with the front-line columns to block and destroy them.

At the heart of Su Yu's concept of operations for the initial attack was the 3d Column's thrust to the north-northwest from the southeastern side of the pocket and the 1st Column's thrust to the south from the northern side of the pocket. The lines upon which these two columns were to advance ran roughly along the boundary between the Thirteenth and Second Armies. Their objective was to link up with and separate these two armies. Once that was accomplished, these columns would block any efforts by Qiu Qingquan to aid Li Mi and help the 4th, 10th, and Bohai Columns destroy the Thirteenth Army. According to the plan, by the time the 1st and 3d Columns met, the three other columns should have sliced through the middle of the Thirteenth Army and reached the 1st Column/3d Column line. If not needed in the fight to destroy the Thirteenth Army, after linking up, the 1st and 3d Columns were to turn west and attack toward Chenguanzhuang, the location of the headquarters of both the army group and the Second Army.<sup>68</sup>

To help maintain the 1st and 3d Columns' forward momentum after they breached the Nationalist front and penetrated the pocket, other columns were assigned to provide flank security against possible Second Army counterattacks. The northern group's 12th Column was to penetrate the pocket west of the 1st Column's penetration and advance on a route parallel to that of the 1st Column. In the south, the southern group's 11th Column was to push into the pocket in the area where the Lu River exited the pocket and advance north along the east side of the river.<sup>69</sup>

As for the rest of the front-line columns, the 2d Column's main body, which was to the left of the 11th Column, was to stay in place to defend against a breakout to the southwest. On the 2d Column's left, the 8th Column's main body was to attack toward Chenguanzhuang while a portion of the column coordinated with part of the western group's 9th Column to conduct a feint toward certain LXXIV Corps positions west of Chenguanzhuang. The 9th Column's main body was to attack villages northwest of Chenguanzhuang. These attacks and feints against the portion of the pocket's perimeter that Second Army units manned were shaping operations in support of the main effort, the attacks against the Thirteenth Army.<sup>70</sup>

In addition to designing a plan that had columns supporting columns as a way to build and maintain momentum in decisive areas, Su Yu also presented a way for columns to develop momentum within their own attacks. He used infiltration to support penetration. The following excerpt from his order shows his vision of how infiltration would increase operational tempo, thereby not only aiding a column's penetration but also magnifying its effects. Infiltration thus became a way to introduce a Sunzian *qi* (maneuver) force into the close confines of the Chenguanzhuang pocket. Like Sunzi, Su Yu saw that by disrupting the enemy rear a *qi* force would accelerate the advance to victory:

In order to swiftly insert forces deep into the enemy rear to create confusion and cut communication links between enemy positions, while at the same time keeping its main body focused on its assault, each column should select and organize a group of well-trained, highly competent soldiers (a battalion or regiment carrying ample ammunition and two days of prepared food) who, at the very time that the attack begins, will search out gaps in the defenses and then boldly advance into the enemy

rear. There they will establish control over key strongpoints and resolutely block and wipe out enemy units coming from all directions, no matter whether they are drawing back in disarray, counterattacking, or moving somewhere as reinforcements. This will also make it easy for them to join with the main body in quickly rounding up and annihilating the enemy.<sup>71</sup>

The general attack began on schedule at 1600, 6 January following a .5-hour artillery barrage. That night 13 villages around the pocket perimeter were taken, and conditions were set for strong attacks the next day. On 7 January in the face of the 3d and 10th Columns' advances, Li Mi abandoned his headquarters at Qingliji and fled west with his staff into the Second Army sector. By the end of the day more than 20 villages had been taken and what remained of the Thirteenth Army was in disarray. Heavy losses had also been inflicted on the Second Army's LXXII Corps, which had been positioned east of the Lu River on the south side of the pocket. What was left of that corps was also withdrawing to the west. In less than two days Su Yu's force had achieved what he had estimated would take three to seven days.<sup>72</sup>

The Thirteenth Army's rapid collapse was also a surprise to Du Yuming. It ruined his defensive structure and exposed the Second Army's entire eastern flank. This meant the Second Army's ability to respond to attacks against the northwest, west, and southwest sides of the pocket was greatly reduced. Furthermore, Du's ability to exercise command and control and reestablish a coherent defense was diminishing by the hour. Du did not know the location of units that were withdrawing under pressure, and his communications system was breaking down.

On 8 January the compression of the pocket had progressed so that the east side of the pocket no longer had room for all four columns of the eastern group to operate. Because of this and because there were indications that the Nationalists were going to try to break out to the west, Su Yu decided to shift the Bohai Column from the east side of the pocket to the west side. It was placed under southern group command and sent into the line between the 8th and 9th Columns.<sup>73</sup>

Despite Nationalist efforts to aid Du Yuming by increasing bombing and strafing sorties, on 9 January ECFA advances continued. By nightfall the 3d, 4th, and 10th Columns were all nearing the heart of the Nationalist command, the villages of Chenguanzhuang and Chenzhuang. Chenguanzhuang was the site of army group and Second Army headquarters. Chenzhuang, a village near Chenguanzhuang to the northwest, was the location of the Second Army's V Corps headquarters. The evening of 9 January Du Yuming and Qiu Qingquan abandoned Chenguanzhuang and went to Chenzhuang to meet with Li Mi and V Corps commander Xiong Xiaosan. Due to the rapidly deteriorating situation, Qiu, Li, and Xiong advocated that Du immediately order a breakout. Du wanted to have the breakout operation begin in the morning when the air force could provide air support, but after a heated argument with his subordinates, he agreed to their request.<sup>74</sup> The units that could be reached were ordered to break out to the west, and Du sent the following message to Jiang Jieshi: "All units are disorganized. It is impossible to hold out until tomorrow. Our only option is to break out separately this evening."<sup>75</sup>

The Nationalist attempt to break out was a complete failure. A few officers and soldiers, for example, Li Mi, did make it through the surrounding net and eventually found their way to Nationalist lines in the south. However, for practical purposes, one can say the entire force was either killed, like Qiu Qingquan, or captured, like Du Yuming. Behind them, that part of Du Yuming's army group that had not received the order to break out met the same fate. Before dawn on 10 January the 10th Column entered Chenguanzhuang and the 4th Column entered Chenzhuang. During the next several hours these two columns and those attacking from other directions swept across what remained of the

pocket. By 1000 the fighting was basically over with only a few scattered Nationalist units still offering resistance.<sup>76</sup> By 1600 these remnants had been wiped out and the battle to destroy Du Yuming's army group was officially over.<sup>77</sup> The Huai Hai Campaign had ended.

## Notes

1. Du Yuming, “*Huaihai zhanyi shimo*” (“The Huai Hai Campaign From Beginning to End”), *Huaihai zhanyi qinli ji* (*A Record of Personal Experiences During the Huaihai Campaign*), *Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi quanguo weiyuanhui wenshi ziliao yanjiu weiyuanhui* (The Historical Materials Research Committee of the National Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference), eds. (Beijing: *Wenshi ziliao chubanshe*, 1983), hereafter cited as *QLJ*, 41.
2. Wen Qiang, “*Xuzhou ‘jiaozong’ zhihuibu de hunluan*” (“The Confusion in the Xuzhou ‘Bandit Suppression Headquarters’ Command Post”), *QLJ*, 99.
3. Du Yuming, *QLJ*, 41.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Qiu Weida, “*Di qishisi jun de zaici beijian*” (“The Second Destruction of the LXXIV Corps”), *QLJ*, 402.
11. Ibid., 403.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid., 402.
16. Du Yuming, *QLJ*, 42.
17. “*Guanyu Pingjin diqu de xingshi ji bushu*” (“Concerning the Situation in the Ping Jin Area and Troop Deployments There”), *Mao Zedong junshi wenji* (*A Collection of Mao Zedong’s Military Documents*) (Beijing: *Junshi kexue chubanshe*, 1993), vol. 5, 358, hereafter cited as *MZDMD*.
18. Ibid.
19. “*Guanyu Pingjin zhanyi de zuozhan fangzhen*” (“Concerning the Concept of Operations for the Ping Jin Campaign”), *MZDMD*, 362.
20. “*Weijian Du Yuming Qiu Qingquan Li Mi de gezong zhi zuo fangyu bu zuo gongji*” (“Every Column Engaged in Surrounding and Wiping Out Du Yuming, Qiu Qingquan, and Li Mi Will Only Defend, Not Attack”), *MZDMD*, 401.
21. “*Xiang Du Yuming Qiu Qingquan Li Mi bu lianxu jinxing zhengzhi gongshi*” (“Continuously Carry Out a Political Offensive Against the Forces of Du Yuming, Qiu Qingquan, and Li Mi”), *MZDMD*, 410.
22. “*Dui jinhou zuozhan fangzhen de yijian*” (“Thoughts on Future Operational Concepts”), *MZDMD*, 382-83.
23. He Xiaohuan, Fu Jijun, and Shi Zhengxian, *Huaihai zhanyi shi* (*A History of the Huai Hai Campaign*) (Shanghai: *Renmin chubanshe*, 1983), 181, hereafter cited as *HHZYS*.
24. Ibid., 182.
25. Ibid.
26. Mao Zedong, “The Present Situation and Our Tasks,” *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung* (Peking: Foreign

Languages Press, 1967), vol. 4, 162, hereafter cited as *SWM*. See also “Strategy for the Second Year of the War of Liberation,” *SWM*, vol. 4, 145.

27. “*Duncu Du Yuming deng touxiang shu*” (“Message Urging Du Yuming and Others to Surrender”), *Zhonggong zhongyang dangshi ziliao zhengji weiyuanhui* (Chinese Communist Party Central Committee’s Committee for the Collection of Party Historical Material), *Huaihai zhanyi* (*The Huai Hai Campaign*) (Beijing: Communist Party Historical Material Publishing House, 1988), vol. 1, 239-40, hereafter cited as *HHZY*.

28. “*Huadong yezhanjun zhengzhibu guanyu zhuajin shiji dali kaizhan zhengzhi gongshi de zhishi*” (“Directive From the ECFA Political Department Concerning Seizing This Opportune Moment and Vigorously Developing a Political Offensive”), *HHZY*, vol. 1, 250-51.

29. *Ibid.*, 250.

30. *Ibid.*

31. *Ibid.*, 249.

32. Wen Qiang, *QLJ*, 98.

33. *Ibid.*

34. Du Yuming, *QLJ*, 44.

35. Wen Qiang, *QLJ*, 99.

36. *Ibid.*, 98

37. “*Zhongyang junwei guanyu ying dali kaizhan zhengzhi gongshi zhi Su Yu, Tan Zhenlin de dianbao*” (“Telegram From the CMC to Su Yu and Tan Zhenlin Saying They Should Vigorously Expand the Political Offensive”), *HHZY*, vol. 1, 252.

38. *Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun quanguo jiefang zhanjeng shi* (*The History of the Chinese PLA’s War to Liberate the Entire Country*), Wang Miaosheng, ed. (Beijing: *Junshi kexue chubanshe*, 1997), vol. 4, 347, hereafter cited as *QJZS*.

39. *Ibid.*, 351.

40. *Ibid.*, 347.

41. *Ibid.*

42. *Ibid.*, 348.

43. *Ibid.*

44. *Ibid.*

45. *Ibid.*

46. *Ibid.*

47. *Ibid.*, 349-50.

48. *Ibid.*, 350-51.

49. Du Yuming, *QLJ*, 45.

50. *Ibid.*, 46.

51. *Ibid.*, 47.

52. “*Zhongyang junwei guanyu ying dali kaizhan zhengzhi gongshi zhi Su Yu, Tan Zhenlin de dianbao*” (“Telegram From the CMC to Su Yu and Tan Zhenlin Saying They Should Vigorously Expand the Political Offensive”), *HHZY*, vol. 1, 252.

53. *Ibid.*

54. Ibid.
55. *QJZS*, vol. 4, 357.
56. Ibid.
57. Ibid.
58. Ibid.
59. “*Huadong yezhanjun quanjian Du Yuming jituan de mingling*” (“Order for the ECFA to Completely Annihilate Du Yuming’s Army Group”), *HHZY*, vol. 1, 255-56.
60. Ibid., 254-55.
61. *QJZS*, vol. 4, 359.
62. For the listing of these units and their placement, see *QJZS*, vol. 4, 359.
63. “*Huadong yezhanjun quanjian Du Yuming jituan de mingling*” (“Order for the ECFA to Completely Annihilate Du Yuming’s Army Group”), *HHZY*, vol. 1, 254. The XXXV Corps’ appearance in the ECFA order of battle deserves an explanation. Nationalist units that revolted (voluntarily defected) intact had their Nationalist unit designations changed, but their original organizational structure did not change. The XXXV Corps was the former Nationalist XCVI Corps that had defected intact under command of Wu Huawen on 19 September during the ECFA campaign to take Jinan. Wu was still the commander of this corps at this time.
64. Ibid.
65. Ibid., 255.
66. *HHZYS*, 206.
67. Ibid.
68. *QJZS*, vol. 4, 358.
69. Ibid., 358-59.
70. Ibid.
71. “*Huadong yezhanjun quanjian Du Yuming jituan de mingling*” (“Order for the ECFA to Completely Annihilate Du Yuming’s Army Group”), *HHZY*, vol. 1, 256.
72. *QJZS*, vol. 4, 360.
73. Ibid.
74. Ibid.
75. Du Yuming, *QLJ*, 44.
76. “*Huadong yezhanjun silingbu guanyu Huaihai zhanyi jingguo gaishu*” (“The ECFA Headquarters’ General Description of What Happened During the Huai Hai Campaign”), *HHZY*, vol. 1, 309.
77. Ibid.

*As water conforms to the shape of the ground in setting its flow an army follows the form of the enemy to establish its victory. In war there is no constant situation or unchanging form. The commander who has the ability to stay in step with every change the enemy makes and gain victory can be called divine.*

—Sunzi, *The Art of War*

## Conclusion

### Epilogue

Victory in the Huai Hai Campaign was followed days later by victory in the Ping Jin Campaign. On 14 January Northeast China Field Army (NECFA) units attacked Tianjin, and the next day the 130,000 Nationalist troops defending the city surrendered. On 21 January Fu Zuoyi, well aware of Du Yuming's fate, agreed to surrender the 200,000 soldiers he still commanded in and around Beijing. This marked the elimination of the last major Nationalist force north of the Yangzi River. The next Communist step would be to cross that river and take the war to Nationalist-controlled southern China.

On 21 April the Second Field Army (new designation for the Central Plains Field Army [CPFA]) and the Third Field Army (new designation for the East China Field Army [ECFA]) crossed the Yangzi on a 500-km front centered about 100 km west of Nanjing. By the end of the day Communist forces were on the south bank in force and were moving toward key cities. Nanjing was taken on 23 April, Hangzhou on 3 May, and Shanghai on 27 May. In early May part of the Fourth Field Army (new designation for the NECFA) opened a new front in the Wuhan area. During the next several months the Communist armies continued to advance against little opposition, and on 1 October 1949, with most of China under Communist control, Mao Zedong proclaimed the establishment of the People's Republic of China. By the end of the year the Nationalist government had fled to Taiwan, and the civil war on the mainland was basically over.

The Huai Hai Campaign's contribution to this rapid turn of events was immense. Destroying five armies and killing or capturing 550,000 troops during the campaign made it impossible for the Nationalists to offer more than sporadic and ineffectual resistance when the Communists crossed the Yangzi and pushed across southern China. When Su Yu had proposed expanding the Huai Hai Campaign to destroy the Nationalist armies in the central plains, he had done so with the idea of making the Yangzi River crossing operation and the advance into southern China easier. Events proved that his assessment had been correct. Victory in the Huai Hai Campaign had produced the military conditions that made those subsequent operations so successful. It was the decisive campaign in the Communists' drive to gain their ultimate strategic goal—political power.

During the first decade of Communist rule in China, the members of the Huai Hai Campaign Front Committee—Chen Yi, Liu Bocheng, Deng Xiaoping, Su Yu, and Tan Zhenlin—all received major responsibilities. For Su Yu and Liu Bocheng, their work was primarily in national defense. Deng Xiaoping rose higher in the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) bureaucracy. Tan Zhenlin held the post of Jiangsu Provincial Governor for several years and then became a leader in promoting agricultural collectivization. Chen Yi went from being mayor of Shanghai to being China's Foreign Minister. Later these men's careers had their ups and some serious downs, but those events lie beyond the scope of this study.

As for the fate of Du Yuming and Huang Wei, after their capture they were tried as war criminals and sentenced to long prison terms. Because of family connections, Du was released in 1959 after 10 years of confinement. Huang Wei would not be released from prison until 1975. After their release from

prison, both men were appointed to positions in the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, a united front organization the CCP led. There they encouraged the reunification of Taiwan with mainland China and conducted research on Nationalist history. Du died in Beijing in May 1981 at the age of 76. Huang died in Beijing in March 1989 at the age of 85.

### **The Huai Hai Campaign as Operational Art**

The introduction of this study discussed the increasing attention being given to the operational level of war and the practice of operational art in U.S. Army doctrinal literature. In that literature, operational art is described as a way to ensure that military actions take place in the best sequence, use resources effectively, and achieve objectives with the least possible loss and risk. It is portrayed as a way to link the planning and execution of campaigns, major operations, and battles to produce synergistic effects. By encouraging operational-level commanders to look deeper in space and time, operational art is supposed to help them develop visions and shape events to their advantage. These many benefits have made operational art an increasingly important doctrinal concept.

One of the purposes of this study is to examine the Huai Hai Campaign as an example of operational art. Its intent is to provide information that illustrates what operational art means and shows how it can contribute to conducting war at the operational level. This campaign, because of its large scale, complexity, length, and strategic significance clearly represents operational-level warfare. That having been said, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) commanders who directed the campaign were, by definition, practitioners of operational art. This study discusses what those commanders did as such practitioners. It describes how they evaluated current situations, developed visions for the future, designed plans to create and seize opportunities, and commanded operations in the pursuit of desired objectives. The extensive quotes from messages between the commanders in the field and between those commanders and their superiors at the strategic level are presented to help readers better understand the careful thought and analysis that lay behind the operational art Su Yu, Liu Bocheng, and their fellow commanders displayed. Those messages bring us as close as we can get to the heart of operational art—the invisible process of creative thought that occurs within a commander's mind as his instincts, intuition, knowledge, and experience interact to form responses to the challenges he faces.

### **The Huai Hai Campaign and Sunzi's *The Art of War***

In addition to looking at the practice of operational art during the Huai Hai Campaign, this study also examines the campaign from the perspective of the ideas and concepts contained in Sunzi's *The Art of War*. The result confirms both *The Art of War*'s continuing influence on Chinese military thought and Sunzi's position as an advocate of operational art. As noted in the introduction, the expression "moving the enemy" that is part of the title of this work is taken from Sunzi's statement, "The expert in battle moves the enemy and is not moved by him."\* This sentence captures the essence of what operational art seeks to achieve. It implies the ability to look ahead, to visualize the possibilities inherent in the flow of events, to shape events so possibilities become opportunities, and to grasp those opportunities for one's benefit. This is what Su Yu, Liu Bocheng, and others did as they fashioned a series of battles that produced a great victory. Looking into the future, they saw what could be accomplished by isolating enemy armies and forcing the Nationalists to move. By seizing and maintaining the initiative, they turned their visions into reality.

This study presents many instances in which the operational concepts PLA commanders developed and their actions during the campaign are similar to the thought contained in *The Art of War*. Su Yu's original concept of operations for the Huai Hai Campaign, his plan for extending ECFA operations east

of Xuzhou, and Liu Bocheng's plan for encircling the Twelfth Army all emphasized leveraging the *shi* (energy/momentum) existing in a situation and using a combination of *zheng* (fixing/holding) and *qi* (maneuver/surprise) forces to keep an enemy off balance. Both Sunzi and the PLA commanders of 1948 placed great importance on information, knowledge, deception, speed, timing, logistics, and numerical superiority at the time and place of attack. They dealt extensively with human psychology and how to motivate and manipulate others. The PLA commanders certainly followed Sunzi's advice to capture soldiers and use them in their own armies. That was not only PLA practice, it was also PLA doctrine.

To a real extent, then, the Huai Hai Campaign can be viewed as the product of *The Art of War* meeting "operational art." It was operational art with Sunzian qualities or, some might say, operational art with Chinese characteristics. This raises an interesting issue because, given the completely Chinese origin of *The Art of War*, some might argue that the Sunzian operational art that Su Yu and Liu Bocheng displayed represents a Chinese way of war. Perhaps it does. But the more important point to be raised is the high standard for executing operational art that Su Yu, Liu Bocheng, and their fellow commanders set. The quote at the beginning of the conclusion expresses Sunzi's view that in war the only constant is change. It refers to the difficulty of staying in step with the enemy. As this study has shown, Su Yu, Liu Bocheng, and their fellow commanders not only did an excellent job of staying in step with the enemy, but they also were usually a step or two ahead of the enemy. They accomplished this by practicing operational art at the highest level. They accomplished this by being extremely competent professionally. This is another lesson to be learned from the Huai Hai Campaign, especially as the U.S. Army pursues engagement with the PLA.

\*Sunzi, *The Art of War*, Roger T. Ames, trans. (New York: Ballantine Books, 1993), 123.



## Glossary

CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CPFA	Central Plains Field Army
CPMR	Central Plains Military Region
ECFA	East China Field Army
ECMR	East China Military Region
FM	field manual
GMD	Guomindang (Kuomintang)
JFC	joint forces commander
METT-TC	mission, enemy, terrain and weather, troops and support available, time available, and civil considerations
NCFA	North China Field Army
NECFA	Northeast China Field Army
PLA	People's Liberation Army (Chinese)
PRC	People's Republic of China



## **List of Names and Positions**

(Selected Entries From Text and Endnotes)

Bai Chongxi	Commander, Nationalist Central China Bandit Suppression Headquarters
Chen Geng	Commander, CPFA 4th Column
Chen Ruiting	Commander, ECFA Special Type Column
Chen Shiju	Chief of Staff, ECFA
Chen Xilian	Commander, CPFA 3d Column
Chen Yi	Commander and Political Commissar, ECFA
Chen Zhang	Commander, Nationalist LXIII Corps
Cheng Jun	Commander, ECFA 7th Column
Deng Xiaoping	Political Commissar, CPFA and CPMR
Deng Zihui	Deputy Political Commissar, CPMR and CPFA
Dong Mingde	Deputy Chief of Staff, Operations, Nationalist Air Force Headquarters
Du Yide	Political Commissar, CPFA 6th Column
Du Yuming	Deputy Commander, Xuzhou Bandit Suppression Headquarters
Feng Yuxiang	Warlord Controlling Northwest China in the 1920s
Feng Zhian	Commander, Nationalist Third Pacification Area
Fu Zuoyi	Commander, Nationalist Forces in North China
Gu Zhutong	Chief of Staff, Nationalist Army
Guo Huaruo	Political Commissar, ECFA 4th Column
Guo Rugui	Chief of Operations, Nationalist Defense Ministry
He Jifeng	Deputy Commander, Nationalist Third Pacification Area
He Yingqin	Nationalist Defense Minister
Hu Bingyun	Commander, ECFA 11th Column
Hu Lian	Deputy Commander, Nationalist Twelfth Army
Huang Baitao	Commander, Nationalist Seventh Army
Huang Wei	Commander, Nationalist Twelfth Army
Ji Luo	Deputy Political Commissar, ECFA's Subei Army

Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai-shek)	President of China; Commander in Chief, Chinese (nationalist) Armed Forces
Li Da	Chief of Staff, CPFA
Li Jinxuan	Deputy Commander, IX Corps, Nationalist Thirteenth Army
Li Mi	Commander, Nationalist Thirteenth Army
Li Shuzheng	Chief of Staff to Liu Zhi
Li Yannian	Commander, Ninth Pacification Area; later, Commander, Nationalist Sixth Army
Li Yikuang	Forward Battle Observer, Nationalist High Command
Li Yingxi	Chief of Staff, ECFA's Shandong Army
Liao Tiejun	Chief of Intelligence, Nationalist Seventh Army
Liao Yunzhou	Commander, Nationalist 110th Division, Twelfth Army's LXXXV Corps
Lin Biao (Lin Piao)	Commander, NECFA
Liu Bocheng	Commander, CPFA
Liu Peishan	Political Commissar, ECFA 10th Column
Liu Ruming	Commander, Fourth Pacification Area; later, Commander, Nationalist Eighth Army
Liu Shaoqi	CMC member
Liu Zhi	Commander, Nationalist Xuzhou Bandit Suppression Headquarters
Luo Ronghuan	Political Commissar, NECFA
Mao Zedong (Mao Tse-tung)	Leader, CCP; Chairman, Political Bureau, CCP Central Committee; Chairman, CMC
Meng Shaolian	Deputy Commander, Nationalist LIX Corps, Third Pacification Area
Nie Fengzhi	Commander, ECFA 9th Column
Qiu Qingquan	Commander, Nationalist Second Army
Rao Shushi	Political Commissar, ECMR
Shu Shicun	Du Yuming's Chief of Staff, Operations
Song Shilun	Commander, ECFA 10th Column
Su Yu	Deputy (and Acting) Commander and Political Commissar, ECFA

Sun Jixian	Commander, ECFA 3d Column
Sun Yuanliang	Commander, Nationalist Sixteenth Army
Tan Zhenlin	Political Commissar and Acting Commander, ECFA's Shandong Army
Teng Haiqing	Commander, ECFA 2d Column
Wang Bingzhang	Commander, CPFA 11th Column
Wang Jian'an (Jianan)	Deputy Commander, ECFA's Shandong Army
Wang Jinshan	Commander, CPFA 6th Column
Wei Guoqing	Commander, ECFA's Subei Army
Wen Qiang	Du Yuming's Deputy Chief of Staff, Operations
Xiao Dexuan	Regimental Commander, XLIV Corps, Nationalist Seventh Army
Xie Fuzhi	Political Commissar, CPFA 4th Column
Xiong Shunyi	Deputy Chief of Staff, Nationalist Sixteenth Army
Xiong Xiaosan	Commander, Nationalist V Corps
Xu Shiyou	Commander, ECFA's Shandong Army
Yang Botao	Commander, Nationalist XVIII Corps
Zhang Kexia	Deputy Commander, Nationalist Third Pacification Area
Zhang Zhen	Deputy Chief of Staff, ECFA
Zhou Enlai	CMC member
Zhou Zhijian	Commander, ECFA 13th Column
Zhu De	Commander in Chief, PLA