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# Preserving the Old Beijing: The First Conflict between Chinese Architects and the Communist Government in the 1950s

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## Abstract

After the Chinese Communist Party took over mainland China in 1949, Chinese modern architecture underwent a significant change both in practice and education. Before 1949, Chinese modern architecture had been well-characterized as a Western construct. Most architects and architectural educators had obtained their degrees from the US, France, Britain and Japan. A small group of outstanding architects was considered the backbone of Chinese architecture—men such as Liang Sicheng, Chen Zhi, and Yang Tingbao, who graduated from the University of Pennsylvania, where Philip Crete applied his Beaux-Arts concepts in architectural teaching. When they returned to China, these architects tried to combine the Beaux-Arts design principles with the traditional Chinese language of architecture. Some of them, like Liang Sicheng and Liu Dunzhen, engaged in research on traditional architecture and the preservation of traditional buildings and structures. Their contributions established the framework of Chinese architectural history and promoted the concept that old buildings were symbols of a previous civilization that needed to be preserved.

After the Communist Party took control of Beijing in January 1949, these architects' efforts encountered great challenges from the new government. The Communist Party considered old buildings to be icons of a previous corrupt society, and the old houses were the physical indicators of a ruling classes' ideological demands and will. Additionally, the Communist government also wanted to establish new spatial icons for their new era. Destroying old houses and building new cities was a critical priority for the Communist leaders. Therefore, a considerable conflict emerged between the professional architects and the Commu-

nist leaders during the early 1950s. From 1952, the Communist Party planned to transform Beijing, the ancient Chinese cultural and political center, into an industrial and bureaucratic city with an extended immigrant population. According to this plan, thousands of old houses, gateway structures, and traditional streets were to be demolished. Worst of all, what was considered the best remaining old city-wall in the world, the Beijing city-wall was scheduled to be removed. Some outstanding architects strongly objected to this plan. Liang and other scholars even provided alternative design solutions for preserving these old buildings while promoting economic development.

This paper explores the architectural conflict between Chinese architects and the Communist Party on the issue of preserving old Beijing in early 1950s. One of its primary goals is to investigate the factors that produced this conflict and the solutions proposed on each side to resolve it. Another primary goal is to examine the basic characteristics of Chinese policy-making process through the example of this conflict. This paper provides a historical lesson for current Chinese architects, who are facing similar problems now when dealing with local government officials on issues of historical preservation.



## 1. Introduction

For a long time, how to develop Beijing into a modern metropolis while to preserve well its historic splendor is a long-standing dilemma for Chinese architects and officials. Fifty years ago, Beijing was the world's sole well-preserved medieval city. It consisted of four layers of urban fabric: the Forbidden City at the center, the Imperial City surrounding it, and the inner city and outer city outside of the Imperial City, both referring to residential areas for common people along with temples and markets. This layout was an unparalleled masterpiece of a legacy of the Ming and Qing dynasties, reflecting Chinese ancient philosophies and achievements. Wu Liangyong, an prominent Chinese architecture and urban planning professor, considered Beijing an excellent example of Chinese traditional city planning, which “had highly integrated individual building designs, landscape designs and visual design”(Bao, 2004). After more than 50 years

of renewed construction, great changes have taken place in Beijing, which has become one of the smoggiest and the most congested cities in the world. A city of “lingering splendor” was how British writer John Blofeld saw Beijing in the late 1930s. Arriving in 1934, he was one of the last Westerners to record the city's breathtaking greatness before the communists pulled down its castellated walls (Bezlova, 2000). Clear blue skies crowned the imperial grandeur then. Today, Beijing is shrouded in such thick smog of soot and fumes that the sky is no longer blue. In 2005, in order to prepare for 2008's Beijing Olympic Game, the Chinese Communist Party has launched a massive clear-up campaign designed to turn Beijing from a choking industrial wasteland into an international metropolis of consumption and culture. This proposal planed to move more than 700 state-owned companies of heavy industry out of Beijing and to restore Beijing city walls and other significant old buildings. The Communist Party tries to restore the previous glory of Beijing by bringing Beijing closer to what it was before the communists took over China — a city dedicated to cultural delights, full of quaint shops, theaters, tea houses and lush gardens. After 55 years of mismanagement, now the Communist Party has finally recognized that what disastrous consequences its decision had produced for this city.

Having served for 850 years as the national capital, Beijing had the best-preserved imperial city in the world, with a huge palace complex still intact, the residential area which includes courtyards and hutongs, as well as the enclosed city-walls and their watch towers. It took Chinese emperors centuries to build their fabulous capital, but only a decade for the Party to obliterate its excellence. By 1965, before the Cultural Revolution was launched, nearly all city-walls, 95% of pailous — the column-beam framed structures used as gateways — and 90% of watch towers had been demolished and eradicated for the seek of accommodating administrative development (Wang, 2003, p12). Despite the huge resources and massive efforts the government is using to restore the history of Beijing today, there is no remedy for the damage. In order to preserve the old city of Beijing, a group of celebrated Chinese architects had sacrificed their reputation, liberty, comfortable

life, family and future. The conflict of how to preserve and develop the city of Beijing between them and the Communist Party fifty years ago reflected the two different understanding and approaches in the ideological structure between Chinese top intellectuals and the party leaders. To some degree, this conflict had intensified Mao's immanent suspicion of intellectuals and the fates of architects who objected the government's proposal had indicated the oppressed fate of the majority of Chinese intellectuals later in the "Hundred Flower" campaign and Cultural Revolution.

## 2. Liang Sicheng and Chen Zhanxiang: Chinese Essence and Western Application

Son of an outstanding Chinese scholar and reformer Liang Qichao, Liang Sicheng was born in Japan when his father was going into exile at Japan. He had studied with Paul Cret at the University of Pennsylvania with a group of Chinese colleagues like Yang Tingbao and Chen Zhi. After graduated in 1927, Liang spent a brief period of time in the U.S. working for Cret with his wife, Lin Huiying (Phyllis Lin), also a Penn graduate in fine arts (Lin Zhu, 1996, p.238-242). In 1928, Liang and Lin returned to China and established the architecture program at the Northeast University (Dongbei Daxue) at Shenyang, one of the first architectural education programs in China. In 1931, he had to terminate the program due to the Japanese invasion. He and his wife took up posts at the Society for Research in Chinese Architecture (Zhongguo Yinzaos Xuehui) established in 1930 by Zhu Qiqian. While teaching in several universities, Liang and Lin, joined by Liu Dunzheng, an architecture graduate from Tokyo Institute of Technology in 1920, had consistently kept the interest to track the developments of Chinese traditional architecture. During the 1930s-1940s, Liang directed a research team to travel more than 200 counties in northern China. This small research team consisting of 15- 20 participants had discovered some of the oldest timber structures in China. They measured, surveyed and analyzed more than 2,000 traditional Chinese buildings (Deng, 2005).

Comparing with Liang Sicheng, few Chinese people remembered Chen Zhanxiang (Charlie Chen), an architecture graduate from University of Liverpool, U.K. with a master degree in Urban Planning. After returning to China in 1946, Chen had joined the National Central University (Zhongyang Daxue) as an urban planning professor and the director of Urban Planning Division in the Shanghai Planning Committee in 1948 (Wang, 2003). Right after Shanghai was taken over by the communist army in 1949, Chen was invited to Beijing to work with Liang Sicheng.

Both Liang Sicheng and Chen Zhanxiang were born into the paradoxical China of the early century, when traditionalism crossed and co-existed with modernity. They came from families that greatly value traditions and strongly took pride of the culture. Filial devotion of son to father was still primary virtue expected of any Chinese boy then. Liang's father, Liang Qichao earned his fame as when he became a leader of the reform movement of 1898, when Japan's unexpected defeat of China in 1895 and the imperial powers' seizure of spheres of interest in early 1898 seemed to threaten the actual dismemberment of the Chinese state (Fairbank, 1994, p3). In the summer of 1898, Liang Qichao participated to organize a sudden attempt to adopt western political system as application while remaining Confucianism as the essence of Chinese society. Following his teacher Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao considered that Confucianism was not just a self-admitted transmitter of ancient knowledge but an innovator that used the cloak of antiquity to advance more radical ideas about life and moral experience. Liang Qichao was forced to exile by the Qing court when the conservatives put down the reform. Liang Qichao and other leaders of the failed reform demonstrated more a desire for power sharing and, more importantly, the emergence of a new generation of Chinese intellectuals who were willing to accept the know-how western knowledge and systems while still enjoying the entrenched tradition of Confucianism. Being a son of this new generation of Chinese intellectuals, Liang Sicheng was sent to a westernized preparatory school and a westernized college, while being rigorously tutored Chinese classic philosophies by his father (Fairbank, 1996, p.2). Trying to

balance the western knowledge learned from school, Liang Qichao made use of semester breaks and holidays to teach his sons classic philosophies and culture. He started from “the Origins of the Classic Philosophies (Guoxue Yuanyuan)”, then “Mencius” and Mohism (Lin zhu, 2004, p.24). According to Liang Sicheng, his father always showed apparent attitudes towards different cultural, philosophical and political issues and had been so strongly confident about his judgment that there should be no any argument (Lin zhu, 2004, p.33). The infused strong cultural pride and the waning condition of China’s situation had provoked a powerful nationalism in Liang Sicheng’s heart. When back to China and studying at the Qinghua School, he gradually involved in political debate and became “an outstanding artist with matured political attitude” (Lin zhu, 2004, p.24). In the May Fourth Movement in 1919, Liang had been the leader of the “Ten Bonds of Patriots” and was active in organizing student demonstrations (Lin zhu, 2004, p.24). A sudden car accident in 1923 on Liang Sicheng’s way to attend a “National Disgrace” event had postponed his college life in the U.S. for one year. Even though Sicheng felt so disappointed, his father, Liang Qichao considered it a good opportunity to reinforce his son’s classic Chinese background. In a letter to Sicheng, Liang Qichao wrote “I want you to read ‘the Analects’ (Lun Yu) and ‘Mancius’ (Meng Zi) during the two months in hospital. Reading harder, trying to recite and cite some parts of the texts will be considerably useful to cultivate your morality, develop your intelligence and improve your writing style. If you have more time, I strongly suggest you to read ‘Xun Zi’.” (Lin zhu, 2004, p.48). Even Sicheng had started his college life in the U.S., Liang Qichao still intervened his son’s study by sending his advices via letter. For example, when Sicheng complained the overloaded study on learning classic Greek and Roman architectural forms, Liang Qichao wrote “I am so glad to hear that you have this feeling, which indicates the progress you had made in your study. Mencius said that skills only offered you propriety and rule, not creativity. What you learned from school is to learn propriety and rules, which are just tools of seeking creativity. A creative person will become more creative once he has mastered propriety

and rules (Lin zhu, 2004, p.50).

Chen Zhanxiang was born in a tailor family in Shanghai at 1916 (Wikipedia, 2001). While studying in a Chinese school, Chen also was tutored English by a Portuguese teacher hired by his father (Chen & Chen, 2002). He went to the Architecture School of Liverpool University in 1938 (Chen, 1980), when China was struggling to resist Japanese invasion. During his college life in Britain, Chen had actively participated in public presentation, in which he introduced China’s resistance and struggle against Japanese invasion. Supported by the British Council Scholarship and advised by Sir Patrick Abercrombie, Chen joined the doctor program in London University in 1944 (Wikipedia, 2001). In 1946, Chen accepted the invitation from the Nationalist (KMT) government to direct Beijing planning projects and terminated his doctor study in Britain. After back to China, he stayed at Nanjing and Shanghai for three years as the civil war in northern China prevented him from working in Beijing.

Involving themselves in education, professional practice and research, both Chen and Liang paid little attention on the massive political crisis in China after the World War II. As the many other Chinese intellectuals, Liang and Chen did not have the slightest interest in politics. However, seeing the tremendous corruption, chaos of economic and social system, and continuous conflicts between the KMT government and common people, many Chinese intellectuals had deserted the KMT government and hoped a new replacement. The strong passion of traditional culture and the worry of the state’s future had drove them to unconsciously favor the communist’s political attitude, which advocated removing all foreign priorities and feudalistic restraints in China and establishing a democrat and socialistic new China. Without any direct contact, Liang and Chen just considered the communists a new strength of replacement as if a new dynasty took over the old one, repeatedly occurred in Chinese history. Two trivial direct encounters between the communist army and these two architects totally changed their perception of the communists and, later, their life.

Before taking over the city of Beijing, Mao’s army had occupied Qinghua campus on the edge of urban area. One night, a PLA of-

ficer came to visit Liang and his wife Lin and ask to mark all areas of cultural value, so that they would be preserved if the fighting extended to the city. Liang was surprised impressed and then remembered that he had sent Zhou En-lai, the primary minister of the People's Republic later, in Chongqing a few copies of his analogous lists for wartime preservation (Fairbank, 1996, p.169). Liang had sent many reports to the Nationalist (KMT) government once finding a new traditional building, but usually no response made (Lin Zhu, 2004, p.50). Now the communists willingly referred to him for preserving the old buildings. Liang suddenly felt the strong emotional bond between him and the communists and kept telling everyone that the communist party was a "wonderful" party (Lin Zhu, 2004, p.57).

Chen was preparing to leave for Taiwan when the communists took over Shanghai. He witnessed that the PLA soldiers was sleeping on the street in rain without disturbing any citizens. He asked his wife to bring some soups to these soldiers but being declined with thanks. Chen was so moved and impressed that he torn the air tickets to Taiwan into pieces and said "a party can educate her soldiers so well like this, why I still suspect her to establish a wonderful new China?" (Wang, 2003, p78).

In addition, both Liang and Chen had favored the socialistic planning before the communists' victory in 1949. They believed that the nationalized land and unchallengeable state authority made it possible that all city plans were well controlled by the government. Chen remembered that "even though we had little idea about the socialistic system, we were longing for it and considered the Soviet Union the heaven of city planning professionals." (Wang, 2003, p91). Liang thought that any urban planning effort was restricted by the private land system (Lin zhu, 2004, p.75). By 1950, the new government carted away 33,000 tons of garbage and 61,000 tons of stinking scum and excrement littering the street and byways of Beijing since the Ming Dynasty (Lin zhu, 2004, p.74). Liang recognized that only under the socialistic system could people be organized and work together efficiently to complete a city-wide construction (Chen, 1980).

### 3. The Conflict between Preservation and Development

After WWI, many social and structural problems had emerged in the major European cities. The radical increased rural-to-urban population exacerbated the shortage of urban residence and brought the urban slums. With the expansion of city scale, many new residences were built beside industrial factories, making environment more polluted. Coming with the change are traffic jams, soared living expense, high unemployment and crime rate, and inefficient civic service. The WWII reinforced the urban crisis with more workers needed in urban heavy industry and city authority highly centralized. To solve these social and functional problems, the British government completed a London planning proposal before the end of the WWII. Sir Patrick Abercrombie, the adviser of Chen Zhanxiang, took in charge of the London planning. In this proposal, a few satellite towns would be built outside of the edge of London. Unlike average small towns in countryside, these satellite towns possessed all civic services that a major city had and fulfilled the similar functions that a major city performed. The only difference was the scale. This proposal was designed to reduce the urban social and functional pressures by transferring parts of urban functions to these satellite towns. It overcame the negative outcomes of the Garden City planning, in which the satellite towns around London were only considered the dormitory cities.

The London Planning provided an instruction to Chinese architects. Chen Zhanxiang recalled that "We learned that a city could not be considered a container, in which we could place anything. Otherwise, this city would die. The 1944 London project taught us that some urban functions had to move out and seek for new places for accommodation. To reduce the urban population, planners developed more than ten satellite towns around London. As a result, the urban population in the old London area had reduced from 12 million to 7 million." (Wang, 2002).

Invited by Liang Sicheng, Chen Zhanxiang moved to Beijing in May 1949, becoming the director of Planning Office, Beijing Urban Planning Commission. In the same time, the Communist Par-

ty planned to establish a new government and locate the capital city at Beijing. Before Chen's joining, Liang had already a preliminary plan to develop a new urban center to the west of the old Beijing city, where during the WWII, the Japanese authority had developed a small scale residential plan. Chen recalled that "Liang Sicheng's objective was to preserve the old city of Beijing. I strongly agree on this. However, I thought Liang put the new urban center too far away from the old city, which would hurt the development of old city and bring in bad communication." (Chen, 1980).

In December, 1949, Liang and Chen attended the Beijing City Planning Conference at the city hall building. A group of Soviet architects and planners joined this conference and brought their proposal for developing the new capital of the communist China. This proposal, named "The Plan of Beijing's Future Development", suggested that "Beijing should be built not only the center of culture, art and politics, but also the center of industry. There is little industry existing in Beijing now and the percentage of workers is only 4% of the total Beijing population. In Moscow, the worker class has occupied more than 25% of the total population. Therefore, Beijing is not a city of worker class by far. Most urban population is not workers, but businessmen and exploiters. The city of Beijing should be re-organized." (The Editing Committee of the History of Beijing Construction, 1995). As to the issue of city planning, this proposal considered constructing the central square the most important issue when developing Beijing. Like the Red Square in Moscow, once the new central square was determined, all urban major streets would be determined (The Editing Committee of the History of Beijing Construction, 1995). Soviet planners suggested that the new central city square should be built at the Tian Anmen area, where the entrance of old imperial city located and the inauguration of the new government was hold.

Without knowing Liang and Chen's idea, the Soviet proposal criticized the idea of building new urban centers outside of old Beijing because "it is not economic, but an effort to give up the old town." (The Editing Committee of the History of Beijing Construction, 1995). Having the central city square in the old city, Soviet planners considered it necessary to build new political and civic

centers in the old city, and then the staffs housing near the political centers. According to this proposal, the most economic way to develop Beijing was to replace old city with new city. A new town needed new civic service facilities, which could be 40-50% of the total cost of building a new town; however, with the existing facilities in the old city, that expense could be saved if developing the new center in the old city (The Editing Committee of the History of Beijing Construction, 1995). In addition, the materials from the demolished old houses could be re-used during rebuilding.

The Soviet proposal was definitely beyond Liang and Chen's expectation. These Soviet experts in fact denied the historical value of old Beijing and mechanically replicated the experience of building Moscow without considering the specific condition of Beijing. The first dissension happened. Chen recalled that "It was the first time for me to attend this kind of conference. I was too naïve then and did not know any outcome if I expressed my disagreement. I just thought these Soviet experts were friends and just came here to discuss the future of Beijing. So I stood up right after the Soviet planner finished his speech. I thought the Soviet proposal was to intensify the old city's burden, which had been overweighed. I asked these Soviet experts how they thought the relationship between the urban and the rural. One of them answered that the relationship was too complex to answer now and needed to be solved by socialistic development." (Chen, 1991).

In this discuss, an important message was released from a Soviet planner. "Peng Zhen, the mayor of Beijing had told us that he had discussed how to develop Beijing with Chairman Mao. Accord to him, Chairman Mao agreed that the major government agencies must stay in the city and the secondary offices may move out to the new towns." (The Editing Committee of the History of Beijing Construction, 1995). In addition, the Soviet planner politicalized this discussion — "when constructing Moscow, we also have this kind of suggestion like yours to preserve the old Moscow and build a new one besides it. Comrade Stalin pointed out it was petty bourgeois' unpractical fantasy. Developing an old object to a new phrase and finally changing its nature is a practice of Marxism.

Therefore, we rejected it and rebuilt Moscow with socialistic development.” (The Editing Committee of the History of Beijing Construction, 1995).

Liang and Chen consequently became the minority during this conference. On Dec., 19, 1949, Cao Yanxin, the director of Beijing Ministry of Construction along with the vice director, Zhao Pengfei, formulated the final document of this conference “The Suggestions for Developing Beijing” (Guanyu Beijing Shi Jiang-lai Fazhan de Yijian), in which they expressed this document totally agree on the Soviet experts’ proposal. (Cao yanxin and Zhao Pengfei, 1995). It concluded that “regarding the limit of time and resources, building new town outside of the existing city scale would generate the indifference of old city and the imbalance of development and preservation. It is impracticable even though it came from good wish.” (Cao yanxin and Zhao Pengfei, 1995). Liang and Chen’s idea was not considered a political mistake and still were deemed as the patriotic intellectuals.

But Liang and Chen did not give up their efforts. They thought it was considerably necessary to develop a detailed proposal for clearer expressing their idea. Liang took charge of research while Chen primarily worked on planning (Wang, 2002). In February 1950, the Liang and Chen finished their proposal and named it “The suggestion of the location for the Central government political center” (Guanyu Zhongyang Zhengfu Zhongyang Xinzheng Qu Weizhi de Jianyi). Liang Sicheng spent his personal expense to publish this proposal into pamphlet and sent it directly to the primary minister Zhou En-lai (Ye, 2004). This proposal with 25,000 characters consisted of three sections 1) the reasons of locating the political center as soon as possible, 2) the reasons of building a new center to the west of old Beijing, and 3) Developing the western new urban center would be more economic than replacing the old city (Wang, 2002). In the first section, Liang and Chen posited that the potential political center would be larger than the imperial city and its size determined the primary importance of selecting a good location to accommodate this center. They clearly pointed that Beijing was the capital city of China during the recent 800 years. Many old buildings had

become the symbols of Chinese civilization. The integrated connection of these buildings and their hierarchical orders were exactly the feature of the old city of Beijing. If the old city was replaced by demolishing old building while building new ones, the entire Beijing would be dead. In the section of “the reasons of building a new center to the west of old Beijing”, Liang and Chen criticized the Soviet proposal by claiming that the Soviet proposal had repeated the same mistake by simply laying buildings along streets and avenues, which would amplify urban population and generate huge traffic jams. In the last section, Liang and Chen concluded five major disadvantages of developing a new city in the old city — 1) it would intensify the existing urban pressure of overweighed population; 2) if the old city were replaced by the new buildings, the existing needs would require to demolish at least 130,000 houses and to move out 182,000 residents, which was also a large financial burden; 3) If many high-rise buildings were built in the old city, it would destroy the entire physical face of old Beijing; 4) Increasing buildings along major streets and roads would worsen the existing traffic condition and increase the possibility of traffic jams and car accidents; and 5) new and old buildings being placed together would generate considerable functional conflicts (Wang, 2002). At the final pages, Liang and Chen expressed that where the new urban center was built should be carefully pondered over; otherwise the mistakes would be huge and could not be compensated. Two months had passed, Liang and Zhou did not receive any feedback from Zhou En-lai. Therefore, Liang wrote a letter to Zhou, in which he solicited Zhou to read the proposal and offer a meeting (Liang, 1986).

The political leaders’ responses never came to Liang and Chen, but the disagreement from Liang and Chen’s colleagues from the Beijing Urban Planning Commission, where Liang and Chen were working. Zhu Zhaoxue and Hua Lanhong submitted their report to the Ministry of Construction on April, 20, 1950 (Zhu Zhaoxue and Hua Lanhong, 1995). In this report, Zhu and Hua claimed that Beijing was one of the oldest capital cities during Chinese history with both traditional splendor and modern civic facilities, which bestowed Beijing the perfect condition to become the capital of the new state. They in-



sisted that new buildings would prevent the decline of the old city and bring prosperity to all residents, which exactly reflected the socialistic development (Zhu Zhaoxue and Hua Lanhong, 1995).

Zhu and Hua's opinions still focused on the academic discussion. However, a few weeks later, some colleagues and mid-level party leaders began to politicalize Liang and Chen's proposal. They claimed that Liang and Chen tried to stand up to the Soviet experts as an equal and disobeyed the central government's policy of "supporting the Soviet Union and learning from the Soviet Union". In addition, some people denounced Liang and Chen attempted to defy Tian Anmen as the national political center that all Chinese people yearned for (Zhao, 1990). The unlimited politicalization of academic discussion proved to be a good tool to put down Liang and Chen's struggle of preserving old city of Beijing. For example, Chen and Hua once had a dispute on whether preserve the old city walls when planning Beijing train station. The superior leader involved in and held a meeting, in which the leader claimed that the attitude towards the city walls actually indicated the political attitude towards class preference (Chen, 1980). The city walls were considered the symbol of feudal exploitation. Chen's design team members were so scared that he immediately was separated (Wang, 2002). Liang Sicheng also helplessly wrote down that "The entire ideological world develops so fast that I always am behind. How can I do?" (Lin, 1996).

The top communist leaders never indicated their opinions to Liang and Chen. But their attitude was so apparent. The rebuilding of Beijing old city quietly started followed the Soviet proposal. From 1951 to 1959, the entire outer city-walls had been dismantled, hundreds of gateway entrances (pailou) and gate towers had been removed, and thousands of old dwellings (hutong) had been demolished.

Mao Zedong's attitude in fact determined the outcome of the dispute of whether preserving old city of Beijing or building the new urban center. As mentioned above, the Soviet planners knew that Mao liked to stay at the old city. Ma Jun, the secretary of Pengzhen, the mayor of Beijing, recalled that "When Chairman Mao read the proposal submitted by the Soviet experts, he was very satisfied and wrote down the decision of 'this is the guideline'." (Wang, 2002). Liang Si-

cheng's son also remembered that "one friend working with senior leaders said Chairman Mao became disgruntled when the Liang-Chen proposal was submitted. He complained there was a professor who wanted to drive him out of Beijing. Mao once shouted angrily 'why emperors could live in Beijing, but I cannot?'" (Wang, 2002). In fact, Liang Sicheng might forget that Pengzhen had told him once that Chairman Mao wanted to see the city full of factory chimneys from Tian Anmen where he was standing (Lin, 1996). From Mao's speech at the Great Leap movement in later 1950s, Mao clearly expressed his opinion regarding this issue. In January 1958, Mao said "I felt houses in Beijing and Kaifeng are so nasty"; and "antique can be good, and also can be bad. Someone cried when Beijing dismantled the city walls and gateway entrances, which indicated the political attitude." (Mao, 1958). In the same month, during the 14<sup>th</sup> State Council meeting, Mao said "It's quite nice that Nanjing, Changsha and Jinan have removed all city-walls. It'd better to replace Beijing and Kaifeng's old houses with new buildings." (Mao, 1958)

#### 4. Conclusion:

The 800 years of old city of Beijing was preserved from cannon in 1949 by the communist's attempt to persuade the KMT general Fu Zuoyi to surrender. However, the protectors in 1949 destroyed the whole old city of Beijing in the 1950s-1960s. To preserve old Beijing, Liang Sicheng sacrificed his entire life. The conflict of preserving Beijing old city in 1949- 1951 was just the beginning of a series of struggle and fight. Later, Liang Sicheng was broadly and publicly criticized in 1955 because the government thought his insistence of remaining traditional Chinese architectural features in new buildings waster a large number of money. In 1957, during the Hundred Flower movement, Chen was identified a rightist and was forced to leave his post and move to a labor camp near Beijing. Due to Peng Zhen's protection, criticism on Liang Sicheng was ceased in 1958. But the movement of dismantling old Beijing never ceased. By the mid-1960s, the inner city walls had been wholly removed. After 5 years of tremendous oppression during Cultural Revolution Liang

was dead in a cold winter morning in 1971.

Comparing with later fate, the 1949 conflict did not bring fierce political oppression to Liang and Chen. At the beginning of the People's Republic, the communist government still kept a relative open mind and friendly attitude to the liberalistic intellectuals. Just after the civil war, the primary duty for the communists was to develop economy. The ideological remolding campaign was not launched until 1955, when Communist China had enjoyed considerable success with its economic approach. In addition, the government still depended upon using "old intellectuals" (Jiu Zhi Shi Fengzi) to develop economy. On the other side, most Chinese intellectuals seldom involved in political affairs. They were easily accepted communists' seeming but worthless political propaganda because of abhorring the corruption and dictatorship of the KMT government. The friendly and demographic atmosphere in Chinese political field during the beginning of the 1950s made most intellectuals believed that the true democracy was coming.

The current urban problems that Beijing is encountering are exact these Liang and Chen has predicted 55 years ago. Few features of old Beijing have been left. There are hundreds of high-rise buildings erected in Beijing, which have totally destroyed the traditional skylines of Beijing and also affected the visual effect of Beijing central axis and the Forbidden City. When the 2008 Olympic Game is coming, traffic jams and urban environment pollution are the two primary problems the Beijing city government has to figure out. Among all 400 traffic intersections in urban Beijing, 99 intersections are extreme traffic jam locations (Wang, 2003). As a single center for cultural, industrial, business, political and educational center, the urban Beijing has increased five times since 1949 and the urban population has increased 4 times. Reducing the urban population is a long-term duty for the Beijing city government. However, without changing the city organization — the major civic services and business areas still located in the old city, urban population keeps increasing. The highly increased population directly brings in

the environment disaster. The green land in 1959 was 350 square kilometers, while it quickly reduced to 244 kilometers in 1992, nearly one third lost (Wang, 2003). People in Beijing possess 342 cube meter water per capita, while the average for entire China is 2,517 cube meters (Wang, 2003). Today, Beijing city government is planning to build several new satellite towns outside of Beijing. The history has been back to the original point that Liang and Chen proposed 55 years ago. In 1954, when trying to prevent Peng Zhen, the mayor of Beijing about from demolishing old city-walls, Liang said "if you refuse to accept my suggestion, and then let's wait 50 years, when history will prove that I am right ultimately." (Lin, 1996).

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