

AD-763 251

US-CHINA RELATIONS 1941-1947: MYTHS,
MISCONCEPTIONS, MISCALCULATIONS

Hugh S. Aitken

Army War College
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania

30 April 1973

DISTRIBUTED BY:



National Technical Information Service
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
5285 Port Royal Road, Springfield Va. 22151

TELEGRAMS RELATING 1940-1945
TO THE DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION

CLASSIFIED - REFERENCE
10 MAY 1968

Reproduced for
**NATIONAL TECHNICAL
INFORMATION SERVICE**
U.S. Department of Commerce
GPO 1968 O-74-2153

USAWC RESEARCH PAPER

**US-CHINA RELATIONS 1941-1947:
MYTHS, MISPERCEPTIONS, MISCALCULATIONS**

A MONOGRAPH

by

**Colonel Hugh S. Aitken
US Marine Corps**

**US Army War College
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania
30 April 1973**

ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: Hugh S. Aitken, COL, USMC
FORMAT: Monograph
DATE: 30 April 1973 **PAGES:** 58 **CLASSIFICATION:** Unclassified
TITLE: US-China Relations 1941-1947; Myths, Misperceptions, Miscalculations

The basic premise is that a series of myths and misperceptions surrounded America's China policy during the first five decades of the 20th Century. Many of these myths and misperceptions developed prior to World War II and, while they impacted on our pre-war policies, the more serious miscalculations occurred during the period 1941-1947 when the United States became heavily involved in China's internal affairs. Three major endeavors, i.e., our plan to make China a great power, our efforts to reform the Nationalist Army, and our attempt to convince Chiang Kai-shek to bring the Chinese Communists into a coalition government are discussed from the standpoints of how we misperceived the issues and miscalculated our actions. In addition, our images of the Nationalists and Chinese Communists are highlighted. Finally, the realities of each situation are compared to the illusions we held at the time. Government publications and predominantly American literature provided source material. It is concluded that despite our illusions and miscalculations there was nothing we realistically could have done to alter the chain of events during 1941-1947 or the outcome of the Civil War in 1949.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	ii
INTRODUCTION	1
OPEN DOOR POLICY	2
TRADITIONAL IMAGES	4
COMMERCIAL INTERESTS	5
ASIAN BALANCE OF POWER	6
NEW POLICIES AND IMAGES	8
CONDITIONS IN CHINA	9
GREAT POWER POLICY	11
MILITARY SUPPORT	15
MILITARY STRATEGY	17
DIPLOMATIC ACTIONS	21
STILWELL'S ARMY REFORM PLAN	25
TO FORM A COALITION GOVERNMENT	31
IMAGE AND REALITY - THE NATIONALISTS	38
IMAGE AND REALITY - THE CHINESE COMMUNISTS	42
SUMMARY	48
FOOTNOTES	51
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY	55

INTRODUCTION

The coming to power of the Chinese Communists in 1949 has long been viewed as a major defeat for American foreign policy in Asia. While it is incontestable that the Communist victory was a blow to American interests, objectives, and prestige, it is not clear as to whether the United States could realistically have prevented that victory.¹ The arguments addressing this issue have persisted for the past 25 years and it is possible that consensus will never be achieved. However, most recent studies are in agreement that a series of myths and misperceptions that surrounded America's China policy throughout the first five decades of the 20th Century contributed significantly to its failure. The cumulative effects of these various misperceptions on America's policy in Asia finally crystallized during the period between Pearl Harbor and the conclusion of the Marshall Mission in January 1947.

Prior to 1941, the United States had studiously avoided employing its military force in Asia, and had provided China with only limited assistance in its war with Japan--actions it considered consistent with its Open Door policy. Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor revised our policy and support. Between 1941 and 1947, the United States found itself deeply involved in China's internal affairs as we sought to strengthen and stabilize its government and its economy. The major destabilizing force during that period was the Chinese Communist movement which took advantage of--and gained strength from--the Japanese invasion. Our assistance to the Nationalist Government

and our efforts to mediate the confrontation between the Nationalists and the Chinese Communists failed and General Marshall's departure from China signified that the United States had finally accepted that there was little it could do to influence the course of events in China.

The limitations of this paper do not permit a discussion of the myriad of complex situations and interactions that properly constitute the total matrix of Sino-American relations. Attention has therefore been focused on the critical period 1941-1947 and what were the major misperceptions that influenced our policies during those years, i.e., our belief that the Nationalist Government could realistically institute required reforms, form a coalition government with the Chinese Communists, and remain in power; and our misunderstanding of the origins and objectives of the Chinese Communist movement. However, to establish a framework for a discussion of those areas, it is first necessary to review briefly the historic behavior of the United States regarding China, beginning with the Open Door notes of 1899-1900 and carrying forward to America's entry into World War II.

OPEN DOOR POLICY

The Open Door notes--dispatched in 1899 and 1900--announced that "the policy of the United States is to . . . preserve China's territorial and administrative entity . . . and safeguard . . . the

principle of equal and impartial trade with . . . the Chinese
3 Empire." Subsequently, the word entity was recast to "integrity" and it is in that context that the Open Door policy is normally viewed. Singly, or in combination, the principles embodied in the Open Door notes formed the foundation of American policies in Asia for the next forty years.

Unfortunately, the objectives of our policies and of our actions were not always clearly enunciated by our government. They were often obscure when in force and, to some extent, they remain 4 obscure to this date. As a result, America's interests and objectives in China between 1900 and 1941 are still being argued by the numerous experts writing on the subject. The positions espoused by various authorities can be subsumed under one of three broad approaches: we had a genuine concern for the Chinese people; our interests were purely commercial; and, we were attempting to maintain a favorable balance of power in Asia. To accept any one approach to the exclusion of the other two would tend to categorize America's policy during the period as absolutely rigid--implemented without regard to the dynamic shifts in events and pressures within the United States, in Asia, and in other parts of the world. This is not a historic fact. Instead, American policy should be viewed as supportive of all three approaches with the primary emphasis being accorded to whatever approach the prevailing political situation dictated.

TRADITIONAL IMAGES

Certainly, beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, America had developed an image of China as a huge country with an ancient civilization following the lead of the United States and transforming herself into a modern, democratic, Christian nation. Pride in American moral influence in China and hopes for Chinese progress fostered a lasting solicitude for her welfare and friendship. Tang Tsou, in his book, America's Failure in China, 1941-50, cites these "noble visions and emotions as the basic driving force behind America's policy toward China."⁵ Nevertheless, America's policies and actions toward China were not so high-minded. Although the United States frequently displayed an appreciation of what might be in the interest of China and its people, this invariably occurred only when those interests conformed to our own. Moreover, the myth that the Chinese viewed American policy as being motivated by generous impulses and were therefore eternally grateful is equally erroneous. As seen by John K. Fairbank, noted author on China, "The Chinese behind their polite exterior, did not always share our national enthusiasm for Sino-American friendship."⁶ The United States has never been exempt from the anti-foreign feelings that have characterized China's attitude toward the outside world down through the years. This has often been a stronger force than the surface ties of friendship.

The illusion of a special relationship between China and the United States was, in part, inspired by the activities and pronouncements of American missionaries who were eager to publicize their successes and to describe the gratitude and affection of the Chinese people. The enthusiasm and dedication of the missionary effort was attested to by American generosity in supporting missions, medical work, schools and colleges, and famine relief. However, the missionaries were equally engaged in a multitude of activities designed to guide China into accepting American political ideals and institutions. Those activities--coupled with the role that the missionaries played in negotiating treaties according Americans the same special privileges that other countries won for their nationals through force of arms--resulted in "making the Church a partner in Western imperialism,"⁷ in the eyes of the Chinese gentry and intellectuals.

COMMERCIAL INTERESTS

The charge of imperialism against America was, to a large extent, based on the commercial exploitation that began in the 19th Century, was given sanction in the form of most favored nation clauses in various treaties prior to 1900, and was one of the major factors leading to the Open Door notes. Americans were fascinated by the illusion of a potential market of 400 million eager Chinese--an illusion that was not transformed into reality as the China market never absorbed more than five percent of America's exports.⁸

Even though this illusion has persisted, trade with China was not a major consideration in our Far Eastern policy after the early years of the 20th Century. This is not to say that American investments in, and trade with, China did not influence our China policies to some degree. The point is that American commercial interests did not drive our policy, they only influenced it-- and properly so--to varying degrees at different times. Finally, it should be recognized that the commercial ventures were primarily conducted by individuals and private agencies and that the American government was seldom directly involved. There were, of course, exceptions, President Taft's Dollar Diplomacy being the strongest example.

ASIAN BALANCE OF POWER

Prior to 1949, the Open Door policy was publicly and officially justified only in the narrow terms of America's concern for China and protection of American citizens or commercial interests. In early 1949, however, the government issued its White Paper on United States Relations with China in which it explicitly acknowledged that the United States had consistently invoked the principles of the Open Door to maintain a balance of power in Asia. Our objective was to prevent any one power, or any combination of powers, from attaining a position of dominance in China--and thus in Asia. This acts to help explain America's

increasing involvement in Chinese and Asian affairs as the 20th Century progressed. This involvement intensified after 1915 when an invigorated Japan sought to take advantage of the reduced presence of European states in China and to expand its influence in Asia. The United States found itself increasingly in the position of directly opposing Japan as the political situation clearly polarized. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s--which witnessed Japan's seizure of Manchuria and other major incursions in China--America repeatedly invoked the principles of the Open Door in attempts to forestall or counter Japanese aggressions. America's responses were, however, primarily limited to vigorous pronouncements of moral judgements and the application of diplomatic pressures. The United States was not prepared to employ military power to enforce her position.¹¹ This reluctance--and at times inability--to employ force was attributable, to some degree, to domestic conditions in the United States following World War I, particularly the return to isolationism, and severely reduced military expenditures and force levels. In the main, however, the United States simply did not perceive her interests in China as being sufficiently important to justify going to war.

Even the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937 did not bring about a change in American policies and actions. While America offered China sympathy, moral support, and some small

loans, it was not until Japanese-American relations deteriorated in late 1940 that the United States was willing to incur Japanese displeasure by increasing its aid to China and, at the same time, significantly altering its policy in Asia. That change was not driven by an increased interest in China. Instead, it was brought about by the broader considerations of the threat to the Allied cause posed by: Axis successes in Europe; Japan's alignment with the Axis powers; and the threatened loss of strategic raw materials occasioned by Japan's move into Southeast Asia. At this point, the United States' position stiffened and we embarked on a program with three objectives: to stop Japan from any further advance southward, to persuade Japan to withdraw from the Tripartite Pact, and to obtain the evacuation of Japanese troops from all of China. Japan indicated a willingness to consider the first two demands but she decided to accept war with the United States rather than acquiesce to the third. The attack on Pearl Harbor followed and the United States was forced to abandon the policy of not going to war to defend her interests in Asia.

NEW POLICIES AND IMAGES

America's entry into the Pacific conflict changed the character of her approach to China and led to the development of a policy of making China a great power. In pursuing that policy, our actions were heavily influenced by our long-standing

image of China, by a continuing effort to establish a favorable balance of power in Asia, and by our developing images of the Nationalist regime and the Chinese Communist movement which we unsuccessfully sought to bring together in a coalition government.

CONDITIONS IN CHINA

By the time the United States entered the war, the Sino-Japanese conflict had already had a shattering effect on China. Much of the country, including the major urban areas which had been the primary source of strength of the Nationalist Government, had fallen to the Japanese. Driven into backward, remote regions, the Nationalists were struggling to survive under the most difficult conditions. The economy was suffering from severe inflationary pressures and showed early signs of collapse. Corruption, nepotism, and mismanagement had grown to massive proportions. China's students and educated elite were becoming increasingly alienated and were drifting toward anti-government movements. The Chinese masses were losing confidence in the government. The United Front between the Kuomintang and the Chinese Communists, which had been affected in 1936 as an outgrowth of the Sian incident and in response to Japan's aggressions, had broken down and the two parties were pursuing conflicting objectives. Morale and discipline within the government, the Kuomintang, and the Nationalist army were

steadily eroding. The government further exacerbated the situation by imposing additional repressive measures in lieu of making needed reforms. Even the monetary and materiel aid provided by the United States and other Western powers beginning in 1941 failed to halt the general deterioration.¹³

The Japanese had inflicted a series of demoralizing defeats on the Chinese Army which, in turn, had altered the balance of power between the central and regional authorities. Chiang Kai-shek's control over the regional commanders was uncertain and he maintained it only by moving adroitly to preserve the political and military equilibrium among the competing factions. He was forced to yield substantial autonomy to the regional commanders and the result was an unsteady coalition army of some 300 divisions--only 30 to 40 of which were regularly under Chiang's direct control. The question of what troops would obey whom under what circumstances could not be answered with certainty.¹⁴

As early as 1938, the Nationalists had assumed a defens've military posture as they sought to reconstitute their badly depleted units. By early 1942 it was evident that the Nationalist forces had little intention and limited capability to initiate a major offensive. Instead, the government was conserving its resources for the inevitable conflict with the Chinese Communists.

Chiang had committed some 16 corps to containing the Communists in their stronghold in Northwestern China where they had established themselves after the Long March of 1936-1937.¹⁵

Meanwhile, the Communists had reconstituted themselves as a viable force. They had taken advantage of the Japanese occupation of North China to expand their area of influence by winning the support of the populace against the Japanese while, in Mao Tse-tung's words, "cooperating with the Kuomintang and struggling against them at the same time."¹⁶ The Communists were also conducting only limited military operations in order to preserve their growing strength for the final struggle to gain control of China.¹⁷

Conditions within China continued to deteriorate and by 1943 they were clearly recognized by the United States as reported in the State Department's White Paper on China:

The reports of the United States military and diplomatic officers reveal a growing conviction through 1943 and 1944 that the Government and the Kuomintang had apparently lost the crusading spirit . . . They had sunk into corruption, into a scramble for place and power, and into reliance on the United States to win the war for them. . . . It was evident to us that only a rejuvenated and progressive Chinese government . . . could and would wage an effective war against Japan.¹⁸

GREAT POWER POLICY

Despite the conditions described, and our recognition of their existence and possible impact, the United States embarked

on a program to make China a great world power as described by Secretary of State Cordell Hull in his Memoirs:

Toward China we had two objectives. The first was an effective joint prosecution of the war. The second was the recognition and building up of China as a major power entitled to equal rank with the other three big Western Allies, Russia, Britain and the United States, during and after the war, both for the preparation of a postwar organization and for the establishment of stability and prosperity in the orient.¹⁹

In light of China's precarious position, and as will be discussed shortly, our inability to support China adequately, it is most difficult to understand why the United States conceived and pursued the great power policy. Various authors offer different explanations. As seen by Tang Tsou, the policy had always been implicit in the twin principles of the Open Door; its unfolding at this time "signalized the . . . fulfillment ²⁰ of the traditional policy of the United States toward China." However, America's policies and actions prior to 1941 do not fully support Tsou's contentions. In the prewar period there were no indications--explicit or implicit--that we had as our purpose, the raising of China to a great power status. Instead, we were content to act as her protector, while assuring that our own interests were protected. It was not, for example, until 1943 while under strong Chinese pressure, that we recognized China's sovereignty by formally relinquishing our extraterritorial

rights and rescinding the law excluding Chinese immigrants.

Also, it was not until mid-1941 that we saw fit to assist China against Japan by providing lend lease aid. Even then, the amount was relatively insignificant until Pearl Harbor forced our hand and we substantially enlarged the program.

A second viewpoint suggests that the policy was an outgrowth of President Roosevelt's sentimental image of China and his idealistic vision of the world order in the postwar period. It is generally accepted that in the very early stages of the war American officials, including President Roosevelt, allowed the traditional image of China as a huge country of increasing strength and tremendous potential to cloud their thinking. Prime Minister Churchill, who did not hold the same view, described the environment in Washington in early 1942:

At Washington I found the extraordinary significance of China in American minds. . . . strongly out of proportion. . . . I told the President how I felt American opinion overestimated the contribution China could make to the general war. He differed strongly. . . . I said . . . that he must not expect me to adopt what I felt was a wholly unreal standard of values.²²

It appears that the current realities of the situation were not of prime concern to the President and that his approach to China was rooted not so much in what existed as what should exist. Like many other Americans, he thought less in terms of actuality than of the potential of five hundred million Chinese.²³

There is further evidence to support the belief that the President and Secretary Hull were captivated by a vision of an idealistic world order of "international peace, freedom, and justice based upon the moral principles of the Atlantic Charter and the . . . United Nations."²⁴ They were also convinced that all conflicts of interest between major powers were reconcilable. The President envisaged his personal role as that of arbiter, conciliator, and teacher, adjudicating the differences between the other major powers, and educating them in the new ways of international behavior. This illusion led the President to believe that it was not necessary to apply pressure tactics, i.e., quid pro quo, to Chiang to attain his cooperation; instead, Chiang could be expected to respond to Roosevelt's leadership and unconditional support.²⁵

A fourth point of view as to the origin of the great power policy expands on the preceding one by contending that our traditional images and idealistic visions provided only a framework within which pragmatic military considerations related to our strategy in the Pacific exerted a paramount influence. Our initial strategy envisaged China as the base of operations for conducting aerial strikes against Japanese shipping and home islands, and as a jumping off point for the final assault against Japan proper. To implement that strategy, it was necessary to keep China in the war. In order to convince Chiang Kai-shek

not to withdraw, President Roosevelt foresaw the need for an overwhelmingly attractive inducement. That inducement was the great power policy. As subtly described by General Marshall, "President Roosevelt's policy was to 'treat' China ²⁷ as a great power."

Although the preceding viewpoints are valid as far as they go, there were other broader and more crucial objectives embodied in the great power policy. Our primary military objective in the Pacific was the unconditional surrender of Japan. If attained there would be a clear need for China to fill the power vacuum created by Japan's demise. Thus, it was essential that China emerge from the war as a major political and military power. As a result, our actions to implement the great power ²⁷ policy were directed toward those two objectives.

MILITARY SUPPORT

Initially, the United States perceived China as making three major military contributions to the war effort: tying down large numbers of Japanese forces that might otherwise be employed elsewhere against the Allies; providing airfields and bases for operations against Japan; and, providing an immense reservoir of ²⁸ manpower. The first contribution was realized. Although the Nationalists and Communists both retained their basically defensive postures, in excess of one and one half million Japanese troops

were tied down in China throughout the war. The other two hoped for contributions were never fully achieved as a result of China's lethargy and America's failure to provide the necessary materiel support--and by the decision in late 1943 to conduct the main thrust toward Japan from the Central Pacific vice China.

As early as 1940, Chiang insisted that the Chinese Army, if properly equipped, would be able to take the initiative in a decisive way. This reasoning was shared by many American officers, including Generals Stilwell and Marshall who, although they recognized the difficulties involved, saw the need to create a strong and effective Chinese army. There were simply no other forces available to commit to major operations in
29
the Far East. In order to utilize the immense reservoir of Chinese manpower, the United States took steps to significantly increase lend lease assistance and military aid to China. Despite a continuing improvement which saw approximately three times as much material provided in January, 1944, as compared to the entire year of 1942, the amount of supplies never approached the level required. The European Theatre was accorded priority of support and the Allies simply could not allocate sufficient assets to China although they continued to make commitments to do so.

The problems associated with equipping China's forces were magnified by Japan's seizure of the Burma Road in April, 1942.

From that time until the Stilwell Road was opened in mid-1944, all materiel had to be flown in via the Hump in what has been described as, "The most difficult supply operation of the entire war."³⁰ By the war's end we had provided only one third of the equipment required by the thirty Chinese divisions that constituted the initial increment in General Stilwell's plan (to be discussed shortly) to reform the Chinese Army. Another one-third of the materiel was in the China-Burma Theater but had not been turned over to the Chinese Government; another one-fifth was on its way.³¹ Much of that which had been provided was misused or misappropriated once it passed to Chinese control.³² In the final analysis, the plan to use China's immense resources of manpower never had a chance to succeed. Its ambitious objectives were in sharp contrast to the meager resources that the Allies could allocate. It is now clear that American officials failed to perceive the magnitude of the task, or the nature and extent of the political obstacles and practical difficulties involved.³³ These misperceptions are evidenced in the military strategy and diplomatic actions we followed in pursuit of the great power policy.

MILITARY STRATEGY

Our initial strategy in the Pacific war envisaged a campaign in Burma in 1943 to reopen the lines of communications to China and make it possible later to obtain "bases essential to eventual

offensive operations against Japan proper." Staging areas and airfields in North China were the strategic goals. This strategy was endorsed at the Casablanca, Washington, and Quebec Conferences which were held in January, May, and August, 1943, respectively. At the Quebec Conference, however, two events occurred which were eventually to have far reaching impact on this strategy. First, the campaign in Burma to open the essential lines of communications to China was reduced in scope and the target date was postponed from late 1943 to early 1944. The planners had recognized the stark reality of a shortage of Allied resources, and that the offensive capabilities and inclinations of the Chinese Army had fallen far short of hopes. Second, a Joint Chiefs of Staff proposal for an island-hopping campaign across the Central Pacific was approved as a secondary effort. As seen by Romarus and Sunderland, "that proposal did not minimize the importance of the China bases, for the part that the Pacific Islands could play in the strategic aerial bombardment of Japan was not yet realized."³⁵

In late 1943, our military planners recognized that operations against Japan proper could not be undertaken until 1947 if the plan to recapture North China for a base of operations was followed. As a result, they began to think in terms of a "short term plan for operations against Japan . . . with principal emphasis from the Pacific rather than from the Asiatic mainland."³⁷

Thus, even at this early date, our interest in China as an essential element in our Pacific strategy was being questioned.

The President met with Chiang for the first time at the Cairo Conference in late November, 1943. From Cairo, Roosevelt and Churchill traveled to Tehran in early December to meet with Stalin. These two conferences were the turning point in President Roosevelt's efforts to establish China as a great power. As John Service states in The Amerasia Papers, "hard facts began to impinge upon illusions."³⁷ The President yielded to Churchill's insistence and cancelled the amphibious operations in the Bay of Bengal which Chiang had insisted upon as an indispensable component of the projected campaign in Burma, and which Roosevelt had promised to undertake. Chiang, who was not invited to the Tehran Conference, was angered at the cancellation and, in effect, demanded a three part consolation prize:

- (1) increased support for American and Chinese air forces in China;
- (2) rapid expansion of the Hump airlift to twenty thousand tons per month; and, (3) a one billion dollar loan "to assure the Chinese people and army of your serious concern in the Chinese Theater of war."³⁸ All three demands were refused and Chiang's blatant attempt at blackmail acted to accelerate Roosevelt's growing disenchantment both with Chinese ineptness and lethargy and with the great power policy.

As a result of the Cairo Conference, the Burma campaign was once again postponed, this time to late 1944. More important,

the concept underlying the military decisions at Cairo was no longer the future importance of China as an essential base of operations. Rather, it was that the main effort against Japan should be made in the Pacific. Operations in the China-Burma India Theater would be in support of that effort. The actual strategy pursued did not urgently require the creation of a reorganized and reequipped Chinese Army. It did not enable the Nationalists--if they had been so inclined--to liberate the occupied areas from Japan, nor did it put them in firm control of Central and North China in the course of the war. In the long term, this may have contributed to the final outcome in China. However, this is merely conjecture, as it is not certain what Chiang's actions would have been if provided the assets to
39
accomplish the task. In part, this will be looked at in the subsequent discussion of General Stilwell's efforts to reform the Chinese Army.

Following Cairo, Chiang Kai-shek realized that the repeated postponement and reduction in size of the Burma campaign signalled a decreasing Allied interest in the China-Burma-India Theater. He also recognized the inevitability of Japan's defeat without a major effort by China, and he elected to continue to conserve his strength for the expected postwar confrontation with the Communists. As interpreted by Jonathan Spence in his book,

To Change China:

In the intervening years he planned to go on employing the hallowed Chinese tradition of "Using the barbarians to fight the barbarians"--in this case, the Americans to fight the Japanese--while squandering as few of his own resources as possible.⁴⁰

DIPLOMATIC ACTIONS

As soon as the United States entered the war, we began to impress upon our Allies the political importance of making China a great power and, in the process, treating her as such. As indicated earlier, Prime Minister Churchill did not share our view of China's capabilities or potential. Marshal Stalin shared Churchill's opinion and both were alert to indicate their skepticism when the United States energetically pursued the great power policy at a series of international conferences that took place between late 1943 and early 1945.

At the Moscow Conference in October, 1943, Secretary Hull overcame Soviet objections to the inclusion of China as a signatory of the Four Nation Declaration through the use of veiled threats concerning possible American actions in the Far East which could be unfavorable to the Soviet Union. In the United States view, China as one of the original signatories of the Moscow Declaration formally committing the four powers to establishment of a general international organization, had moved another step toward a position as one of the Big Four in world affairs.

41

As mentioned earlier, President Roosevelt met Chiang Kai-shek for the first time at the Cairo Conference much to the misgivings of both Churchill and Stalin who believed that Roosevelt, with his optimistic opinion as to the part China could play during and after the war, might enter into unwarranted agreements with Chiang. However, in response to Roosevelt's initiatives, both Churchill and Stalin agreed that China should have every chance to become a great power. The Cairo Declaration, among other points, provided for China regaining all territories lost to Japan as an inducement to Chiang to stay in the war and to initiate sustained offensive action against Japan.

Other political matters, besides those specifically addressed in the Cairo Declaration, were discussed at Cairo and Tehran.

Roosevelt outlined his concept of the United Nations which gave China equal status with the Soviet Union, Great Britain, and the United States, to include membership in a body called the

"Four policeman . . . whose duty it would be to police the world. . ."

Stalin was opposed to granting China a leading role in the settlement of world political affairs as he did not believe

China would be strong enough after the war to carry out her

assigned part. Although Stalin's motives may have been somewhat ulterior, he persistently urged Roosevelt to reexamine his great power policy. Stalin also reiterated an earlier statement that Russia would join the war against Japan after the defeat of Germany. As Barbara Tuchman sums it up, "Coming on top of

43

44

the discouraging encounters with the Chinese, it raised the possibility of a substitute for China both as a wartime partner and afterward"⁴⁵

America's confidence in China declined sharply during 1944 as Chiang continued to exploit every opportunity to gain increased lend lease assistance, military aid, and financial support, while continuing to conserve his resources and failing to support programs to reform the Army and establish a coalition government with the Chinese Communists.

China participated in the Dumbarton Oaks Conference between August and October, 1944, at which the United States worked assiduously to insure that China was assigned a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council. In doing so, we overcame the skepticism of Great Britain and the Soviet Union as we continued to press for acceptance of China as a great power despite a clear recognition of her existing and potential weaknesses.⁴⁶

By the time of the Yalta Conference in February, 1945, the President realized that a new approach was required to replace the great power policy. As he told Churchill enroute to the conference, "Three generations of education and training would be required before China could become a serious factor in world affairs."⁴⁷ While the primary considerations impelling the United States to conclude the Yalta Agreement were military in nature, i.e., obtaining a Soviet pledge to enter the war against Japan in return for postwar territorial concessions, it had its

political implications. The Agreement was an attempt to substitute Soviet-Sino-American cooperation in the postwar period for our previous efforts to bring China to the point where she would have been strong enough to withstand interference from external sources and could realistically contribute to stability in Asia. As such, it seems clear that the Agreement foreshadowed a fundamental change in the Far Eastern balance of power. As events unfolded in the postwar era, the confrontation between the Soviet Union and the United States constituted the essence of new bipolar international system, and strife-ridden China became the immediate focus of that
48 confrontation in Asia.

America's policy to make China a great power was a complete failure. The concept was ill conceived in that there was no real basis for believing that the objective was attainable. Further, the policy was pursued primarily by diplomatic actions; it was not supported by an application of the requisite military means. However, it is not clear that the United States could have averted the final outcome even if our political and military actions were in accord. Conditions within China were such that it is likely that our actions only served to postpone the inevitable. The United States was deeply involved in China's internal affairs during this period, as was highlighted by our continuing efforts to reform the Chinese army and our attempt to bring the Nationalists and Chinese Communists together in a coalition government. Our

actions in both areas were, of course, a reflection of our misperceptions of the Nationalist Government and the Chinese Communist movement.

STILWELL'S ARMY REFORM PLAN

In May, 1942, after the Allied rout in Burma in which the Chinese units were badly mauled, it became clear that, unless the Chinese army was modernized and brought to an acceptable level of combat readiness, it would be inadequate for the tasks ahead. As a result Stilwell, backed by Secretary of War Stimson and General Marshall, proposed to Chiang Kai-shek that: the army be reduced from three hundred to thirty divisions; all arms and equipment in the hands of the Chinese forces be redistributed to the thirty divisions; and all inefficient and corrupt commanders be purged.
49

Stilwell's principal aim was to reequip and retrain the thirty divisions as the nucleus of a new army for the immediate purpose of a Burma campaign to break the blockade of China. Once that was accomplished, he foresaw the need for additional forces to expell the Japanese from Chinese territory as a prelude to establishing China as a base for future operations against Japan. Therefore, in late 1942 he proposed that the number of divisions be increased to sixty, and in late 1943, to ninety--although, as discussed earlier, by the war's end we had failed to provide a major portion of the equipment required for the initial thirty divisions.

If we assume for a moment that it was possible for Chiang to implement Stilwell's proposals, and that the United States and her Allies could have produced the required arms and equipment on a timely basis, then--and only then--would China have had a marginal opportunity to achieve great power status.

A new powerful army could have brought the Nationalist armies back to the strategic regions on the China coast and in North China, could have firmly reestablished the authority of the government in the liberated areas, could possibly have given it renewed prestige and influence throughout the countryside, and could have strengthened the government against the Communists.

It was with these thoughts in mind that Stilwell wrote to Chiang in September, 1943, that, "With it i.e., reorganization of the Army⁵⁰ China will emerge at the end of the war with the means of assuring her stability."

The reform program, however, was not well received by Chiang; Stilwell was told that his recommendations could not be acted on--that one had to be "realistic," and that the "head cannot be lopped off otherwise nothing would be left." Chiang--more than any other individual--realized the full implications of Stilwell's proposal. There can be no doubt of Chiang's belief in the importance of creating a well equipped and powerful force. He had been striving in that direction for years and had achieved a degree of success in the early 1930s only to see much of it destroyed in the war with Japan.

Chiang was, as aptly characterized by John K. Fairbank,
"a military policeman; supremely capable of holding power in
a country where armies and generals, not electorates, provide
the final sanction."⁵² He well knew that, with the exception
of some thirty divisions led by the Whampoa clique personally
loyal to him, the remaining Chinese units were in themselves
political forces. Those units were divided among twelve
war area commanders who were virtually autonomous rulers, tied
to Chiang in a mutually beneficial military coalition. A
rapid or drastic implementation of the reform program would have
altered the delicate balance of personal loyalties and alliances.
Chiang knew that he had to insure that the reform program would
enhance his own power rather than become the source of an
independent political force. He had to be sure that elimination
of the inefficient commanders would not remove those loyal to
him, would not cut at the heart of his power structure, and would
⁵³
not lead to his downfall. Any attempt to drastically reduce the
number of divisions would have met with the strongest resistance
from those commanders who were faced with losing their personal
power base. Open rebellion, defection to the Chinese Communists,
or, possibly, defection to the Japanese could have been the result
of premature actions. Chiang preferred to proceed at a slower pace,
basing his hope of strengthening his armies primarily on obtaining
American arms and equipment while not being forced to redistribute

those already in possession of the provincial armies. For these, and other reasons, Chiang placed many obstacles in the way of Stilwell's program and it was never fully implemented.

Surprisingly enough, the problems confronting Chiang were recognized by many of our officials, including Stilwell, as evidenced by his diary entry of October 5, 1942:

Troubles of a peanut dictator [Chiang Kai-shek]. At first the peanut thought that the military and political function could not be separated, so he combined the authority under the military commanders. Now he finds that it makes the boys too powerful, and he's been trying for over a year to shake them loose The plain fact is that he doesn't dare take vigorous action--they are sure to be sulky and may gang up on him. . . .⁵⁴

However, Stilwell continues by questioning Chiang's failure to plunge ahead, "Why doesn't the little dummy realize that his only hope is the 30-division plan, and the creation of a separate, efficient, well-equipped and well-trained force?"⁵⁸ The dichotomy in Stilwell's reasoning is not explained; but his view that Chiang should push ahead with the reform plan was also shared by many other American officials.

Convinced that he was absolutely right from a military standpoint--and failing to grasp the political implications--Stilwell, supported by Marshall and Stimson, pressured Chiang incessantly. Embittered and frustrated by Chiang's delaying tactics, Stilwell became adamant and vocal in his belief that the only possible way to deal with Chiang was on a quid pro quo basis as expressed in his report to the War Department in late 1942:

In order to carry out my mission of increasing the combat efficiency of the Chinese army, trading must be on the basis of action. Logic and reason, or personal influence will not produce satisfactory results. Pressure and bargaining are the means that must be relied on.⁵⁶

Later he wrote to Marshall, "For everything we do for him /Chiang/⁵⁷ we should expect a commitment from him."

Stilwell's advocacy of the quid pro quo approach was, of course, clearly recognized by Chiang and his government and it contributed to a general deterioration in relations between the two men and, in the final analysis, between the two countries. Combined with Stilwell's subsequent proposal that he equip and employ Chinese Communist forces against the Japanese, and with President Roosevelt's recommendation that Stilwell be assigned command of all Chinese forces, it led to Chiang demanding Stilwell's recall in late 1944.

While the military desirability of Stilwell's proposal is obvious, it is difficult to understand why, in light of its certain destructive impact on Chiang's power base, its erosive effect on Sino-American relations, and our inability to support it logistically, the proposal was pursued with such vigor and vituperation. In Stilwell's case, it may have been a reflection of his soldierly and uncompromising dedication to carrying out his mission. This factor, when combined with his political naivete, acted to limit his ability to perceive the situation as it was. However, it is

less understandable in the case of those more politically astute officials--both with and without a thorough knowledge of China--who supported Stilwell. It is hard to accept that individuals like John Paton Davies who was, in effect, Stilwell's political advisor, and Ambassador Gauss did not fully understand the political ramifications of Stilwell's proposal. It appears that they too were ignoring reality and dealing in illusions, i.e., the traditional American conviction that almost anything is possible if you only have enough gumption and stick-to-it-iveness. The reality of the situation is remarkably well described by Davies:

Stilwell's big mistake, in which I sometimes went along with him, was to think that he could bargain with the Generalissimo: . . . /to/ reform his military establishment and take the offensive against the Japanese. Had Chiang been able and willing to do what Stilwell asked, China might well have emerged from the war as a great power. And of more primitive concern to the Generalissimo, he might have been able to fend off the Communists. As Chiang could no more reform his power base than overcome his idiosyncrasies, the bargain was doomed--as was Chiang.⁵⁸

As events developed, the proposed army reform program and the concept of using pressure tactics were the forerunners of a broader and certainly more critical contest of wills which was given birth by the American proposal in 1944 that the Nationalists and Chinese Communists come together in a unified military command and a coalition government.

TO FORM A COALITION GOVERNMENT

During the first two and one half years following Pearl Harbor, the United States repeatedly attempted to persuade the Nationalist leadership to reach an agreement with the Chinese Communists in an endeavor to prevent the outbreak of Civil war. In addition, on several occasions we attempted to pressure Chiang into employing Communist forces in combined operations against the Japanese. The shape, scope, and substance of the agreements we proposed the Nationalists enter into were never made clear. However, in each instance, our proposals fell short of explicitly suggesting the formation of a coalition government. Beginning in August, 1944, the United States intensified its efforts and took positive and clearly enunciated measures to bring the two sides together in a unified military command and--for the first time--a coalition government.

Our primary objectives in seeking to reconcile the differences between the two parties were: to insure that the Nationalists did not dissipate their resources and energies against the Communists in lieu of waging war against the Japanese; to employ the Communist forces in order to shorten the war and preclude the eventual use of American ground forces in China; to prevent complications from arising in Sino-Soviet relationships which we were striving to stabilize; to prevent any moves toward civil war from eroding Soviet-American friendships; and, in Ambassador Hurley's words,

"To support the aspirations of the Chinese people to establish
for themselves a free, unified, democratic government."⁶⁰

The rationale behind our efforts to prevent the dissipation of Nationalists assets and the employment of Communist forces is obvious. Our concern as to the Soviet Union was predicated on clear signs that Sino-Soviet relations were under stress. In mid-1943, and for the first time in the war, Moscow had unequivocally voiced its concern over the situation in China, criticized the Nationalists, and championed the cause of the Chinese Communists.

Marshal Stalin's remark in June, 1943 that "The Chinese Communists are not real Communists. They are only 'margerine' Communists. . . ." had done little to relieve our--and Chiang's--concern that the Soviets would attempt to gain a position of dominance in China once the war with Japan had ended. These concerns, in part, led to those provisions of the Yalta Agreement pertaining specifically to China, and to the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Alliance of 1945, which it was hoped would insure a stable and favorable postwar political structure in the Far East.⁶¹

Our striving for the establishment of a free, unified, and democratic China was an embodiment of traditional sentiments, genuine concern, and policies toward China discussed earlier. In regards to the attitude of our State Department officials and American representatives in China, on this issue, Herbert Feis observes that:

They were . . . moved by a longing that since China was their cause, and it was their cause, it should be a worthy cause. They did not think or write solely as American officials

who wanted to win a war, indifferent to the plight of the people of China. They wanted China to become a well governed and well-cared-for country as well as a strong ally.⁶³

It is not possible, within the context of this paper, to identify all of the complex and variable currents of thought in regard to our China policy which prevailed within the government from late 1944 until the failure of the Marshall mission in January, 1947. Thus, attention will be focused on the differences between the policy proposed by Major General Hurley and that proposed by the Foreign Service Officers in China. Hurley was originally sent to China as President Roosevelt's personal representative to mediate the Chiang-Stilwell crisis, but ended up being cajoled by Chiang, advocating his support, and recommending Stilwell's recall. After Ambassador Gauss resigned in late 1944, Hurley was appointed Ambassador and became the chief executor of American policy. He was without experience in China or Asia while his detractors in the Foreign Service, notably John S. Service and John Paton Davies, were long-time China hands detailed to Stilwell's headquarters as political advisers.

Both Hurley and the Foreign Service Officers were in agreement that the political and military division in China should be ended by creation of a democratic government. The dispute centered on two other issues: the specific methods to be used in bringing the two sides together; and the divergent estimates of the probable

development of Chinese politics and the prospects of the Kuomintang staying in power.

Hurley believed that a united and democratic China could be achieved by providing encouragement, advice, and strong support to Chiang with no requirement to resort to the quid pro quo tactics long espoused by Stilwell and Marshall. As Hurley perceived events, the Nationalist Government, with the support of the United States, would be able to bring the Communist military forces into a unified command, and to incorporate the Communist Party within a coalition government under terms favorable to the Kuomintang. Hurley believed that the Communists were not strong enough to exercise a decisive political influence in China and that, if we unconditionally supported Chiang, he would be able to bring the Communists under control.

In Hurley's view, the Soviet Union would support our policy of sustaining Chiang and, as a result, the Chinese Communists would eventually have to accept Chiang's terms. Under his concept, immediate social, economic, and political reform keyed to eliminating governmental corruption, and to improving the lot of the masses was not essential to the Nationalists remaining in power; they could await the end of the war. The net result would be a strengthened central government, still controlled by the Kuomintang, and capable of maintaining itself in power. Hurley's approach reflected his overconfidence in the political strength of the Communists, his inadequate knowledge of the Soviet Union and its intentions, and an undue optimism regarding the future political orientation of the Chinese Communist party.

In contrast to Hurley's opinions, the Foreign Service Officers believed that a policy of unconditional support for Chiang would only make him more intransigent, and thus prevent him from reaching an accord with the Communists. They believed that Chiang was rapidly losing all popular backing and was, in effect, politically bankrupt. In their view, a united and democratic China could be brought about only by exerting pressure on Chiang to institute immediate and extensive reforms, and by offering the Chinese Communists realistic and reasonable terms. Underscoring their views was the belief that the Communists were strong enough to be a decisive influence in China unless the Kuomintang did implement the necessary reforms. The Foreign Service Officers were also convinced--as Hurley was not--that Communist participation in a reorganized government would not militate against American interests. Such a broadened regime, in their view, would gravitate toward the United States, seeking our traditional friendship; consequently, the United States should not commit herself irrevocably to the Nationalist regime. Instead, she should try to maintain an independent position from which she could deal effectively with both sides.

64

Hurley would not accept the advice of the experienced China hands in the Foreign Service or military. Once he had established himself as a go-between with the Nationalists and Communists he negotiated for a coalition government "with optimism, enthusiasm, and a minimum of acquaintance with the causes, nature, and history

65

of the problem." Our initial efforts to persuade Chiang to form the coalition government were met by his normal intransigent attitude and delaying tactics. By March, 1945, the coalition efforts were deadlocked and Hurley and Wedemeyer, Stilwell's successor, travelled to Washington for consultations.

At this time, the political officers in the Chunking Embassy--with the strong support of Wedemeyer's Chief of Staff--joined in an unprecedented action of sending the State Department a lengthy telegram condemning Hurley's policy. It pointed out clearly that the Communists represented a rising force in China; that it was dangerous to American interests to be precluded from dealing with them independent of Chiang's influence; and, that time was running short before we would have to decide whether to cooperate with them or not. They recommended that the President inform Chiang of our intent to "supply and cooperate with the Communists, and that such decision will not be delayed or contingent upon coalition."⁶⁶ President Roosevelt would not accept the advice of the Foreign Service Officers or the State Department's position that it was time to reexamine our policies. Instead, he sustained Hurley; the embassy officials involved, representing nine decades of Chinese experience, were removed from China, thus leaving the conduct of our policy to the tyro Ambassador.

Hurley was unsuccessful in affecting a reconciliation between the Nationalists and Chinese Communists and he resigned in November,

1945, claiming bitterly that he had been thwarted by a section of the State Department which was "endeavoring to support Communism generally as well as specifically in China."⁶⁷ He could not admit, and perhaps never understood, that his own estimate of the situation was inadequate and the complex current of Chinese affairs simply too strong for him.

Hurley's role of chief executor of our China policy was assumed by General Marshall, who, acting under the instructions of President Truman and the State Department, reoriented our policy and pursued one of quid pro quo. In brief, our new policy was designed to force Chiang to offer the Communists better terms in order to obtain a viable political and military settlement and a lasting peace. Marshall's efforts also failed.

By mid-1946 he had despaired of achieving his objectives. That despair led to his decision to withdraw from China in January, 1947, and to his successful effort to convince President Truman to disengage from China.⁶⁸

In the years since, there have been acrimonious charges and counter charges concerning our efforts to force a coalition government on Chiang. Again, the scope of this paper does not permit a detailed explanation of all aspects of this issue. However, it is now clear that we were sorely lacking in our understanding of both the Nationalists and the Chinese Communists. Time, additional data, and historical analysis have now disabused the images we held and

provided insight into the ideologies and actions of both parties.

It is now evident that we were attempting to reconcile the irreconcilable.

IMAGE AND REALITY - THE NATIONALISTS

A major factor in the failure to bring the two Chinese parties together was the inability of some American officers to envisage China without Chiang. His reputation as a national leader made it an article of faith to most outsiders that no one else could hold China together and that his fall would bring chaos in its wake. This belief led to assumptions such as that made by Hurley that his principal mission, to support China, was necessarily synonymous with his interpretation of that mission, to sustain
⁶⁹ the Generalissimo. As a result, our policy toward China ignored suggestions such as that made by Vice President Wallace after his visit to China in June, 1943, that our policy:

Should not be limited to support of the government. . . . /instead we should support/ a new coalition consisting of progressive banking and commercial leaders, the large group of Western-trained men, /and/ the considerable group of generals and other officers who are neither subservient to the
⁷⁰ landlords nor afraid of the peasantry.

While it is certainly not clear, even in retrospect, that the Nationalist Government or a free and democratic China could have survived under other leadership, it is clear that the situation in China was of such a nature and moving at such a pace that our policy required a great deal more flexibility than we recognized. Surely,

American interest in a friendly, united China should have been accorded priority over the personal support of Chiang Kai-shek.

Our actions were, to a large extent, predicated on our tendency to view China and its internal power struggles through American eyes and to judge Chinese affairs by American standards. This was particularly true in our relations with Chiang. Regardless of whether we provided unconditional support or applied quid pro quo pressures, it appears that we expected that he would react according to our values. In this regard, we seem to have ignored his cultural background, his ideology, his idiosyncracies, his lack of absolute control over his power base, and the realities of Chinese politics. Chiang met the demands of both ancient tradition and of warlord politics. In this respect, he was the traditional Chinese hero who founds a dynasty by skill and violence. At the same time, he was a party member, fervently dedicated to the cause of nationalism, which he came to regard as indistinguishable from his own career. His power rested on a tripod of army, party, and government. Any office he held was the focus of government decisionmaking. As described by John K. Fairbank, "All this reflected not merely Chiang's ability but even more the demand of the Chinese political scene for personal rule by a modernized Son of Heaven."⁷¹

This is not to suggest that only Chiang could have held China together. That issue may never be resolved. However, it does suggest that China was neither prepared for nor capable of instituting

rapid reforms to existing political, social, and economic structure while employing orderly and democratic processes, as we persistently demanded. The rapidity with which we demanded change totally ignored the structure of Chiang's power base, i.e., a coalition of primarily corrupt landlords, army commanders, bankers, and conservative bureaucrats dedicated to maintaining the status quo. Only a revolutionary movement could move with the speed we desired. The Communists moved with that speed after 1949, but without democratic objectives and with great violence and terror. Chiang's appreciation of the need to proceed slowly is clearly set forth in a diary entry of August, 1944, concerning American efforts to foster a working agreement with the Chinese Communists:

So long as I am alive and healthy, the nation will have a future. Although the Communist party has an international background and mysterious plots, one day it will ultimately come to a dead end. There is no need to be unduly anxious, if I can only bear the abuse and wait the opportune moment.⁷²

In September, 1943, Chiang averted a preemptive military move by conservative elements in the Kuomintang, pronouncing, "I am of the opinion that . . . the Chinese problem is a purely political problem and should be solved by political means."⁷³ This was clearly nothing more than a tactical move and recognized as such by both Chinese parties. In essence, to solve a problem by political means signified the use of military force to induce the opponent to accept one's demands.

However, we accepted Chiang's pronouncement on face value, and viewed it as a genuine commitment. More than that, it was construed as recognition that force could not solve the Communist problem and that efforts to solve it in other ways--by peaceful means--had to be continued, no matter how difficult the task.

We persisted in our beliefs despite the fact that Chiang repeatedly made it clear that, in his unalterable view, the Chinese Communists were not Chinese, but rather internationalists; that they were not simply agrarian reformers as perceived by most Americans; that they were tied directly to the Soviet Union; and that they were dedicated to using force to gain control of China. Under these circumstances it was totally unrealistic for us to attempt to pressure Chiang into granting the Chinese Communists a position of influence and power in the central government.

Despite Chiang's well enunciated views, Hurley remained convinced that he had persuaded Chiang to accept Russia's assurances that the Soviet Union was not interested in China's affairs as he set forth in his report to the Secretary of State in December 1944:

At the time I came here Chiang Kai-shek believed that the Communist party in China was the instrument of the Soviet government of Russia. He is now convinced that the Russian government does not recognize the Chinese Communist party as Communists at all and that (1) Russia is not supporting the Communist party in China; (2) Russia does not . . . want dissensions or civil war in China; and (3) Russia

desires more harmonious relations with China. These facts have gone far towards convincing Chiang Kai-shek that Communist Party is not an agency of the Soviet. He now feels that he can reach a settlement with the Communist Party as a Chinese political party without foreign entanglement.⁷⁴

As subsequent events proved, Hurley was grossly misinformed. His lack of understanding of the true nature of conditions in China led to a series of major miscalculations on his part-- and on that of the American government--particularly in relation to our image of the Chinese Communists.

IMAGE AND REALITY -- CHINESE COMMUNISTS

American perceptions and understanding of the Chinese Communist movement were hampered by the fact that our officials directly concerned with China had an extremely limited knowledge of Communist theory, ideology, and practices upon which to base their interpretations and judgements concerning the "brand" of communism espoused by Mao and his followers. The problem confronting our officials was intensified to some extent by the fact that it was not until mid-1944 that our military and diplomatic representatives gained access to the Communist controlled areas of China, were able to establish continuing contact with the Communists leaders, and had the opportunity to observe Chinese-style communism in action. Until that time our officials had to depend on, and were susceptible to, the influence of authors like Edgar Snow, Agnes Smedley, Gunther Stein, and Lawrence

K. Rosinger, who had either enjoyed a long standing association with the Chinese Communists or who had gained access to the Yenan stronghold prior to 1944. In the main, and for a variety of reasons, these authors presented distorted views--generally favorable to the Communist movement.

General Hurley suffered from the same lack of knowledge of communism in general, and Chinese communism in particular. However, soon after arriving in Chunking, General Hurley publicly concluded that the Chinese Communists were not dedicated Marxist-Leninists in the sense that the Russian Communists were. In making this comparison, Hurley stated, in part, that "Now, when anybody tells one this /the Chinese movement/ is communism, I know that they are mistaken." Hurley's views were shaped during his visits to Yenan in November, 1944, and reflected an acceptance of Communist propaganda which endorsed a range of admirable democratic principles, to include a number espoused by Sun Yat-sen. These slogans were viewed by Hurley as fundamental objectives and policies despite their transient and transparent nature. In fairness to Hurley, the brand of communism espoused by Mao and practiced by the Chinese Communists at this stage did not correspond to the Russian model, nor to the common understanding of Communism. Hurley had witnessed the Chinese movement in an early stage of development best described by Mao:

Everybody knows that, as regards the social system or program of action, the Communist Party has its present program and its future

program, or its minimum program and maximum program. For the present, New Democracy; and for the future, Socialism - these are the two parts of an organic whole, guided by one and the same Communist ideology.⁷⁶

Unfortunately, Hurley was either without knowledge of this vital distinction, or failed to grasp its significance. That factor is evidenced by the comparison that he made between the Chinese Communist party and the Nationalists in April, 1945:

It is a matter of common knowledge that the Communist Party of China supports the principles of Dr. Sun Yat-sen. That was generally referred to as the peoples three principles of China. The three principles are government of the people, by the people, and for the people. All the demands that the Communist Party has been making have been on a democratic basis. That has led to the statement that the Communists . . . in China are not, in fact, real Communists. The Communist Party of China is supporting exactly the same principles as those . . . conceded to be the objectives of the National Government. . . . The divergence between the two parties . . . seems not to be in the objective desired because they both assert that they are for the establishment of a government in China that will decentralize authority and conduct itself along democratic lines, employing democratic processes. The divergence between them is the procedure by which they can be achieved.⁷⁷

This statement sums up Hurley's misperceptions as to both the Nationalists and the Communists and the ideological differences between them. It also evidences, in some degree, why our attempts to affect a coalition government during Hurley's tenure in China were fraught with so many miscalculations.

Also contributing to these miscalculations was Hurley's low estimate of the political and military strength of the Chinese Communists. He was convinced that without Soviet support the Chinese Communists could not successfully compete with the Nationalists for the control of China, that the Soviet Union could heavily influence Chinese Communist policy, and that, once Russia concluded a treaty pledging support for the Nationalists, the Chinese Communists would come to terms with the latter. He was also convinced that the strength of the Communist military forces, the territory controlled by them, and the extent of popular support that they claimed by the war's end were all exaggerated. Nevertheless, he believed that "with the support of the Soviets, the Chinese Communists could bring about a civil war. . . . without that support . . . the Chinese Communist party will eventually participate as a political party

78

in the National Government."

Hurley's estimates of the strength of both the Nationalists and the Communists ran directly counter to the appraisals of the Foreign Service Officers in China. These individuals were of the belief that the Kuomintang and the Generalissimo were weaker than they had been for ten years. They maintained that the Kuomintang was not only incapable of averting disaster, but its policies were precipitating the crisis. In contrast, since 1943,

the Communists had been growing stronger at an accelerating rate and had expanded their control over a wide area of China.

As seen by John P. Davies:

The reason for this phenomenal vitality and strength is simple and fundamental. It's mass support, mass participation. The Communist government and armies are the first . . . in Chinese modern history to have positive and widespread popular support.⁷⁹

Whereas Hurley believed that the establishment of a coalition government would strengthen the Nationalists, Davies and John Service contended that it would result in the Communists emerging as the dominant political force in China. As reported by Davies, "The Generalissimo realizes that if he accedes to the Communist terms for a coalition government, they will sooner or later dispossess him and his Kuomintang
⁸⁰ of power," and later, "Chiang's feudal China cannot long exist alongside a modern, dynamic, popular government in North China. The Communists are in China to stay. And China's destiny
⁸¹ is not Chiang's but theirs." Subsequent events and Chiang's strenuous attempts to avoid arriving at a settlement with the Communists except on his own terms suggest that Davies' and Service's appraisals of the relative strength of the Nationalists and Communists were much more accurate than Hurley's. Yet it was Hurley's views that continued to provide the basis for our policies in China. These same policies--with the exception of applying pressure vice providing unconditional support--prevailed beyond Hurley's tenure and remained in effect until conclusion of, the Marshall Mission.

The credit accorded Service and Davies above does not suggest that they were without error. Service in particular displayed a profound misconception of the nature and intentions of the Chinese Communists. Although he never characterized the Communists as agrarian reformers as others were prone to do, he did hold an image of the Communists as "seeking an orderly democratic growth toward socialism. . . . a party which is not seeking an early monopoly of political power but pursuing what it considers the long-term interests in China."⁸² This misperception of the nature and workings of the Chinese Communist party stemmed from an ignorance of the dynamics of the movement; i.e., that its totalitarian character was inherent in its Leninist principles of organization and in its aspiration for total power as an indispensable means to effect rapid and profound changes in the social order.

Service was also convinced that the Communist professions of friendship toward the United States were sincere, should be accepted as such, and thus reflected in our support of the Chinese Communists in their efforts against Japan and in their attempts to obtain a realistic political voice in any accord reached with the Nationalists. Chiang strongly opposed closer American-Communist relations and the United States deferred to his views. One can only speculate whether the course of events in China and our subsequent relations with the Chinese Communists

might have been different if closer contacts had been developed. Certainly, the relations could not have been more unsatisfactory than they have been for the past twenty-five years.

SUMMARY

Historically, it is not yet clear as to whether the United States could have significantly altered the chain of events in China between 1941-1947--and thus the outcome of the civil war which found the Chinese Communists victorious in 1949. Certainly, we tried desperately to do so. However, the situation may well have been completely beyond our capability to influence as expressed by Secretary of State Dean Acheson in the White Paper:

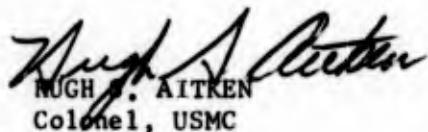
The unfortunate but inescapable fact is that the ominous result of the civil war in China was beyond the control of the government of the United States. Nothing this country did or could have done within reasonable limits of its capability could have changed the results; nothing that was left undone by this country has contributed to it. It was the product of internal Chinese forces, forces which this country tried to influence but could not. A decision was arrived at within China, if only a decision by default.⁸⁵

What is clear, however, is that from 1900 on our policies were heavily influenced by a seemingly endless array of myths and misperceptions concerning China, its people, government, leaders, internal conditions, and potential. Many of these illusions

developed prior to World War II, and while they impacted adversely on our prewar policies the more serious miscalculations occurred during the period 1941-1947 when the United States became heavily involved in China's internal affairs. Our ill-conceived and poorly executed efforts to make China a great power, to reform the Nationalist army, and to convince Chiang Kai-shek to form a coalition government were, in the main, products of our illusions concerning Chiang Kai-shek, his political structure and power base, the Chinese Communist movement, and the potential for reconciliation of the Nationalists and Communists. In part, the problems we encountered were compounded by the personalities we tasked with implementing our policies. Although Stilwell possessed some experience in China, he seemingly could not come to grips with the realities of the situations confronting him. Hurley was without knowledge, experience, or understanding. The Foreign Service Officers were experienced and knowledgeable of China but not of communism nor the Chinese Communist movement. Finally, even if we had possessed a greater understanding of all aspects of the situation it is possible that we would have continued to pursue policies and programs that we could not support politically or militarily--convinced that desire, effort, and persuasion alone would insure success.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to argue against Secretary Acheson's contention that the situation in China was beyond our

ability to control; all the returns are simply not in yet despite the passage of some twenty-four years. If he is correct, we must question our total involvement in China. If he is incorrect, we may then concur with our basic objectives in China--but question our policies, programs, and methods. In either case, we should seek ways to insure that in the future our objectives and policies are based on fact and analysis--not on myths and misperceptions.



Hugh A. Aitken
Colonel, USMC

FOOTNOTES

1. A. Doak, Barnett, Communist China and Asia, p. 1.
2. Tang Tsou, America's Failure in China, 1941-50, pp. 3-33.
3. Ibid., p. 3.
4. Bernard K. Gordon, Toward Disengagement in Asia, p. 33.
5. Tsou, p. 6.
6. John K. Fairbank, The United States and China, p. 402.
7. Paul Varg, Missionaries, Chinese, and Diplomats, p. 44.
8. Foster R. Dulles, American Policy Toward Communist China, p. 8.
9. Fairbank, pp. 286-287.
10. US Department of State, United States Relations with China, with Special Reference to the Period 1944-1949, p. IV.
11. Fairbank, pp. 295-303.
12. Tsou, pp. 3-33.
13. Barnett, pp. 5-13.
14. Tsou, pp. 49-50.
15. F.F. Liu, A Military History of Modern China, 1924-1949, p. 205.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid., pp. 205-206.
18. US Department of State, United States Relations with China, 1944-1949, p. VII.
19. Cordell Hull, The Memoirs of Cordell Hull, Volume II, p. 1583.
20. Tsou, p. 36.
21. US Department of State, United States Relations with China, 1944-1949, p. 36.

22. Winston Churchill, The Second World War, Volume IV; The Hinge of Fate, p. 119.
23. John Paton Davies, Jr., Dragon by the Tail, p. 224.
24. Tsou, p. 38.
25. Ibid., pp. 36-38.
26. Charles F. Romanus and Riley Sunderland, Stilwell's Mission to China, p. 62.
27. Hull, p. 1587.
28. Herbert Feis, The China Tangle, pp. 95-125.
29. Romanus and Sunderland, p. 23.
30. US Department of State, United States Relations with China, 1944-1949, pp. 26-28.
31. Feis, p. 369.
32. US Department of State, United States Relations with China, 1944-1949, p. 28.
33. Tsou, pp. 33-86.
34. Romanus and Sunderland, p. 267.
35. Ibid., p. 359.
36. Charles F. Romanus and Riley Sunderland, Stilwell's Command Problems, p. 53.
37. John S. Service, The Amerasia Papers: Some Problems in the History of US-China Relations, p. 59.
38. O. Edmund Clubb, 20th Century China, p. 235.
39. Tsou, pp. 57-87.
40. Jonathan Spence, To Change China, p. 234.
41. US Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943: China, p. 826.
42. Feis, pp. 103-114.
43. Tsou, p. 59.

44. Feis, p. 111.
45. Barbara Tuchman, Stilwell and the American Experience in China, 1911-1945, p. 407.
46. Tsou, p. 59.
47. Paul S. Holbo, United States Policies Toward China, p. 48.
48. US Department of State, United States Relations with China, 1944-1949, pp. 113-126.
49. Davies, p. 242.
50. Romanus and Sunderland, Stilwell's Mission to China, p. 373.
51. Ibid., p. 154.
52. Fairbank, p. 242.
53. Spence, p. 247.
54. Joseph Stilwell, The Stilwell Papers, p. 157.
55. Ibid.
56. Tsou, pp. 92-93.
57. Ibid.
58. Davies, p. 259.
59. Tsou, pp. 141-175.
60. Ibid., p. 141.
61. Feis, pp. 140-141.
62. Tsou, pp. 237-287.
63. Feis, p. 144.
64. Ibid., pp. 255-264.
65. Barbara Tuchman, "If Mao Had Come to Washington," Foreign Affairs, October 1972, p. 60.
66. Ibid., pp. 56-57.
67. Ibid., p. 59.

68. Tsou, pp. 401-440.
69. Service, p. 80.
70. Tsou, p. 165.
71. Fairbank, p. 243.
72. Tsou, p. 173.
73. Feis, p. 88.
74. Tsou, p. 182.
75. Ibid., p. 184.
76. Mao Tse-tung, Selected Works, Vol. III, p. 131.
77. Tsou, p. 185.
78. US Department of State, United States Relations with China, 1944-1949, p. 100.
79. Ibid., pp. 566-567.
80. Ibid., p. 572.
81. Ibid., p. 573.
82. Tsou, pp. 203-204.
83. US Department of State, United States Relations with China, 1944-1949, p. XVI.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Barnett, A. Doak. Communist China and Asia - A Challenge to American Policy. New York: Knopf, 1960. (DS777.55 B3)
(An excellent general reference by an eminent student of China. Somewhat dated in that Sino-Soviet rift, China's nuclear development, and renewed Sino-American relations have occurred since printing.)
2. Barnett, A. Doak. "The Changing Pattern of US China Relations." Current Scene, Vol. 10, 10 April 1972. pp. 1-9.
3. Churchill, Winston. The Second World War, Volume IV; The Hinge of Fate. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1950. (D743 C45 v.4)
4. Clubb, Edmund O. Twentieth Century China. New York: Columbia University Press, 1972. (DS774 C55)
(A well written and current book in which the power struggle in China is traced from Yuan Shih-kai to Mao Tse-tung. An excellent reference.)
5. Davies, John Paton, Jr. Dragon by the Tail. New York: Norton, 1972. (DS775 D38)
(An easily read addressal of the breakup of traditional Chinese society, and how Western nations intruded upon China and triggered the fusion of a new order in China. Author lived most of his life in China prior to 1947.)
6. Dulles, Foster Rhea. American Policy Towards Communist China, The Historical Record: 1949-1969. New York: Crowell, 1972. (JX1428 C61D85)
(A succinct and readable summary of the evolution of American public attitudes and policies toward China. Provides excellent background prior to 1949.)
7. Fairbank, John K. "The New China and the American Connection." Foreign Affairs, Vol. 51, October 1972, pp. 31-43.
8. Fairbank, John K. The United States and China. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971. (JX1428 C6F3 c.2)
(A third and current edition summarizing the history and traditions of China, and outlining the current hopes and anguishes of the Chinese people. Author is an accepted China expert. Book is an excellent overview.)

9. Feis, Herbert. The China Tangle. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953. (E183.8 C6F4 c.2)
- (A documented, concise, well-written analysis of American actions in China during the 1940s. A valuable, standard reference.)
10. Gordon, Bernard K. Toward Disengagement in Asia. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1969. (JX1428.1 A8G6)
- (An excellent treatment--historical and current--of the power conflicts and balances in Asia.)
11. Holbo, Paul S. United States Policies Toward China. London: Macmillan, 1969. (E183.8 C6H6)
- (An outline of United States actions in China from the unequal treaties to the cultural revolution. Readable; not scholarly.)
12. Houn, Franklin W. A Short History of Chinese Communism. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1967. (HX63 C6H6 c. 10)
13. Hsu, Immanuel C.Y. The Rise of Modern China. New York: Oxford University Press, 1970. (DS754 H761 c.9)
- (A comprehensive history of China which conveys a Chinese view of the evolution of modern China. Covers period 1600-1970. An excellent reference work.)
14. Hull, Cordell. The Memoirs of Cordell Hull, Volume II. New York: Macmillan, 1948. (E748 H8A3)
- (A easily readable, first hand account by a long time Secretary of State under President F. Roosevelt. Numerous illuminating insights.)
15. Liang, Chin-tung. General Stilwell in China, 1942-1944: The Full Story. New York: St. John's University Press, 1972. (E745 S68L52)
16. Liu, F.F. A Military History of Modern China, 1924-1949. Port Washington: Kennikat Press, 1956. (DS738 L5 c.2)
- (An outstanding scholarly, but highly readable reference work.)

17. Romanus, Charles F., and Sunderland, Riley. Stilwell's Command Problems. Washington: US Department of the Army, 1956. (D769 A533 v.2)
- (An official Army history. An outstanding reference work.)
18. Romanus, Charles F. and Sunderland, Riley. Stilwell's Mission to China. Washington: US Department of the Army, 1953. (D769 A533 v.1)
- (An official Army history. An outstanding reference work.)
19. Service, John S. The Amerasia Papers: Some Problems in the History of US-China Relations. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971. (JX1428 C6S44)
- (A concise, well documented analysis of American actions in China as a rebuttal to many of the allegations by the China Bloc. Author is a long time China hand directly involved in the events described.)
20. Shewmaker, Kenneth E. Americans and Chinese Communists, 1927-1945, A Persuading Encounter. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971. (JX1428 C6S46)
- (Concentrates on period 1937-1945 in describing and analyzing the favorable reactions of the first Americans to encounter the Chinese Communists.)
21. Spence, Jonathan. To Change China; Western Advisers in China 1620-1960. Boston: Little, Brown, 1969. (JX1570.5 S65)
- (A succinct, well-written analysis of the Western intrusion into China as exemplified by fifteen case studies.)
22. Stilwell, Joseph. The Stilwell Papers. New York: W. Sloane Associates, 1948. (D811 S83)
- (A somewhat emotional, not always objective disclosure of Stilwell's experiences in China. Heavily based on his diary entries.)
23. Tse-tung, Mao. Selected Works, Volume III. New York: International, 1954. (DS778 M3A52)

24. Tsou, Tang. America's Failure in China, 1941-50. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963. (DS777.53 T8 c.5)
- (A detailed, comprehensive, thoroughly documented analysis of American actions in China. A scholarly effort. An invaluable reference work.)
25. Tuchman, Barbara. "If Mao had Come to Washington." Foreign Affairs, Vol. 51, October 1972, pp. 44-64.
26. Tuchman, Barbara. Stilwell and the American Experience in China. New York: Macmillan, 1971. (E745 S68T8)
- (A highly readable but somewhat biased (in favor of Stilwell) and contestable account that concentrates on the period 1939-1946.)
27. US Congress. Senate. Committee on Foreign Relations. China Today and the Course of Sino-US Relations Over Past Few Decades. Hearings, 92d Congress, 2d Session. Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1972. (KF-72 S381-13 c.2)
28. US Congress. Senate. Committee on the Judiciary. Subcommittee to Investigate the Administration of the Internal Security Act and Other Internal Security Laws, Morgenthau Diary (China), Volume I. Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1965. (E183.8 C6M6 v.1)
29. US Department of State. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943: China. Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1944. (JX233 A6C6)
- (An excellent source of primary documentation.)
30. US Department of State, United States Relations with China, With Special Reference to the Period 1944-1949. Washington: US Government Orrice, 1949. (JX1428 C6U5 c.9)
- (The White Paper on China. A valuable source of primary documents for the period in question.)
31. Varg, Paul. Missionaries, Chinese, and Diplomats. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1946.