

# BRUSHED PAST: US-CCP RELATIONS, 1941-45

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*This article explores the controversial “lost chance theory” that CCP leader Mao Zedong genuinely wished to build a working relationship with the Roosevelt and Truman administrations, but was rebuffed by shortsighted decision makers in Washington who passed on the opportunity to cooperate with China’s future ruler. The authors note key historiographical developments and explain the major arguments both for and against the lost chance theory before advancing a post-revisionist position that its opponents have in recent years inadvertently created the false impression that there was never any real possibility that Washington and the CCP might have built a positive working relationship during the war years, while the window for CCP-US cooperation was far more ephemeral than lost chancers understood. This paper argues that Mao’s wartime expressions of his desire to work with the United States were indeed sincere through to the end of 1944, however by the spring of 1945 cooperation had become an impossibility because the Roosevelt administration badly misread Jiang Jieshi’s ability to unite the country and clung to unfounded suspicions that the CCP would serve as an obedient Soviet proxy in East Asia.*

## INTRODUCTION

The “lost chance” debate is one of the most contentious topics in modern Sino-American relations because its implications are so profound. In broad terms, “lost chancers” argue that Chinese communist leaders were more ideologically flexible than the Truman administration gave them credit. Thus, had America’s looming Cold War with Moscow not colored all American dealings with China then Washington could have won over the country’s future rulers. The Truman administration’s failure to realize this meant that Washington ended up backing the losing faction in the Chinese Civil War and subsequently Communist China tilted heavily towards the Soviet Union. Ad-

ditional implications of this failure include direct confrontation with China in the Korean War during the early 1950s, and again by proxy in Vietnam in the 1960s. The Nixon-Mao thaw in 1972 restored a sense of normalcy, but only after much treasure and many lives had been wasted. Early advocates of the lost chance school working with the limited documentary evidence of the period included Tsang Tsou and Anthony Kubek writing in the early 1960s, followed by a young Warren I. Cohen in the late 1960s and Barbara Tuchman in the early 1970s.<sup>1</sup> The pessimistic backdrop of the Vietnam War colored these works and implicit in them is a harsh critique of what these authors saw as a pattern of profound foreign policy blunders in East Asia.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, many new source materials emerged within Russia that made “lost chancer” claims seem greatly exaggerated if not completely untenable. Michael Sheng, who acknowledges that Mao and Zhou were flexible towards the United States while the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was fighting Japan but disputes the notion that they ever genuinely considered friendship with Washington after war was over, has made an invaluable contribution to our understanding of this debate.<sup>2</sup> Chen Jian has definitely quashed the argument that opportunities for CCP-American collaboration continued to exist as late as 1948 or 1949.<sup>3</sup> Other revisionists have advanced similar and related arguments, including Steven M. Goldstein<sup>4</sup>, who advocated that American aid to Jiang Jieshi’s Guomindang (GMD) alienated the CCP to the point that it gave up on the idea of appealing to Washington for support; Michael H. Hunt<sup>5</sup>, who argued that Mao would only have kept the door to the United States open had it been willing to outbid the Soviet Union; and Steven I. Levine<sup>6</sup>, who wrote

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1 For seminal works by these authors, see: Tsang Tsou, *America’s Failure in China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963); Anthony Kubek, *How the Far East was Lost, American Policy and the Creation of Communist China* (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1963); Warren Cohen, “The Development of Chinese Communist Policy toward the United States, 1922–1933” and “The Development of Chinese Communist Policy toward the United States, 1934–1945,” *Orbis* 11, no. 1 (1967): 219–37 and 551–69; and Barbara Tuchman, “If Mao Had Come to Washington?,” *Foreign Affairs* 51, no. 1 (1972): 44–64.

2 Michael Sheng, “America’s Lost Chance in China? A Reappraisal of Chinese Communist Policy Toward the United States Before 1945,” *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, no. 29 (1993): 135–57.

3 Chen Jian, “The Myth of America’s ‘Lost Chance’ in China: A Chinese Perspective in Light of New Evidence,” *Diplomatic History* 21, no. 1 (1997): 77–86.

4 Steven M. Goldstein, “Chinese Communist Policy toward the United States: Opportunities and Constraints, 1944–1950,” in *Uncertain Years: Chinese-American Relations, 1947–1950*, eds. Dorothy Borg and Waldo H. Heinrichs (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980).

5 Michael H. Hunt, “Mao Tse-tung and the Issue of Accommodation with the United States, 1948–1950,” in *Uncertain Years: Chinese-American Relations, 1947–1950*.

6 Steven I. Levine, “Notes on Soviet Policy in China and Chinese Communist Perceptions, 1945–

that Mao would never have joined an anti-Soviet alliance under any conditions, in addition to Thomas J. Christensen<sup>7</sup>, amongst others. Cumulatively, these authors have made a powerful case that Mao was committed to an anti-American policy when the PRC was founded in October 1949. In light of all this new scholarship, Cohen had no alternative but to backtrack from the position he helped advance.<sup>8</sup>

This paper argues that the original advocates of the lost chance school had seized on an idea that was partially correct: that there was an opportunity for CCP-US cooperation before the conclusion of the Chinese Civil War. In light of what we have learned about CCP-American relations in the 1940s, it would be more appropriate to add heavy qualifiers to their position that simply reject it out of hand. This paper argues that there was a very brief period of curiosity and openness between the CCP and numerous American civil and military personnel that made contact with Mao and his compatriots in 1943 and 1944. During this time a cooperative relationship was indeed a possibility, though the authors acknowledge the revisionist position that the depth of that relationship would have been limited by Mao's ideological affinity for the Soviet Union. What might have been possible during the Roosevelt years was the establishment of a *modus vivendi* with the CCP that was limited to mutual tolerance, diplomatic recognition, trade and possibly some cultural contact once the country had been reunited. That this never came to pass was the result of the Roosevelt and Truman administrations' decision to make policy based on the advice of China hands that failed to comprehend how Mao's willingness to work with Washington could have profoundly beneficial consequences for American interests in East Asia.

The Truman administration failed to grasp that Mao's preference was to keep the door open to the prospect of cooperation with both the United States and Soviet Union and that this orientation was vastly preferable to Washington than pushing Mao fully into Stalin's embrace. Passing on this opportunity to court Mao—which would have entailed an alternate scenario in which the CCP pursued its own domestic communist agenda but took on a more neutralist foreign policy stance—was indeed a great tragedy. It is entirely reasonable to argue that Mao would have permanently shelved his ideological differences with the United States had Washington recognized the merits of cooperating with him and dropped its support for Jiang and

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1950," in *Uncertain Years: Chinese-American Relations, 1947-1950*.

7 Thomas J. Christensen, "A 'Lost Chance' for What? Rethinking the Origins of the U.S.-PRC Confrontation," *Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 4 (1995): 249-78.

8 Warren Cohen, "Symposium: Rethinking the lost Chance in China. Introduction: Was There a 'Lost Chance' in China?," *Diplomatic History* 21, no.1 (Winter 1997):71-75.

the GMD. Had Truman pursued this alternative, which was advocated by numerous American civilian and military officials stationed in China during the war and later by his Secretary of State Dean Acheson, Mao would have been in his debt. The alternative to the Sino-American Cold War was not true friendship, but it was vastly superior what came between the two countries in the 1950s.

### **THE ROOSEVELT ADMINISTRATION'S WARTIME INTERESTS IN CHINA, DECEMBER 1941-1944**

The Roosevelt administration planned to adopt a “Europe First” strategy for fighting World War II, but Japan’s lightning air raid on the US Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor rudely forced Washington to refocus its attention on East Asia. Propping up Britain was Washington’s overriding military priority, but once war began with Japan, the Roosevelt administration saw military advantages for the United States in supporting the Chinese resistance, which would pin down much Japanese manpower. Additionally, the Roosevelt administration hoped to groom China as a long-term American partner in the Far East, which prompted a greater degree of American involvement in China’s internal affairs. From 1941 to 1945, the United States could have forged a cooperative, possibly even cordial, relationship with CCP that would have secured the long-term American foreign policy aim of stabilizing the region in the aftermath of Japan’s defeat. The CCP, which ultimately reunited China by force in 1949, made serious attempts to convey its desire for good relations to Washington and made earnest efforts to secure American cooperation throughout the war. However, the CCP’s goodwill was ignored or misinterpreted by all except a handful of junior diplomats who lacked policy-making authority. In the end, Washington brushed past an opportunity to set the framework for a stable security framework in East Asia due to its haste to use the more overtly pro-western GMD as the basis for its East Asian Cold War policies.<sup>9</sup>

China’s most pressing difficulty when the Sino-Japanese War broke out in 1937 was the great rivalry between the GMD and the CCP, both of which aspired to unite and rule China alone. It was nearly impossible after Pearl Harbor for the United States to use China as a weapon against Japan without wading into the complicated relationship between the two parties. GMD leader Jiang Jieshi was relatively urbane, internationally recognized as the

9 In this paper, the authors use the new Pinyin system, but have kept older transliterated names in quoted passages. These would include Such as: Guomindang—Kuomintang, Jiang Jieshi—Chiang Kai-shek, Yan’an—Yenan, and so on.

Chinese head of state and a favorite of the American press, but the United States could not neglect the CCP because it held a strong military position behind Japanese lines and controlled more bases than the GMD. American military planners soon concluded that GMD efforts to suppress the CCP weakened China's defenses against Japan and seriously threatened to undermine the country's political stability. If Washington simply caved to Jiang's demands and offered exclusive support for his government in Chongqing, China would descend into a large-scale civil war that would benefit only the Japanese invaders. At the same time, American planners were dismayed by the Chongqing regime's token resistance to Japan. Meanwhile, the staff of the American embassy could not ignore the despotic tendencies of the Jiang regime and all but abandoned hopes that a liberal GMT-ruled China could assume the mantle of Asian leadership Washington so desired of it. Lieutenant General Joseph W. Stilwell, the American commander in the China-Burma-India theatre, bluntly reported:

[Chiang Kai-shek] has no intention of making further efforts to prosecute the war... He has no intention of instituting any real democratic regime of forming a united front with the Communist. He himself is the main obstacle to the unification of China and her cooperation in a real effort against Japan...the United States will not get any real cooperation from China while Chiang Kai-shek is in power.<sup>10</sup>

These comments reflected serious frustrations with the Chongqing regime and its leader commonplace in American military and diplomatic quarters during the war.

Representatives from the CCP and the American government did not have an opportunity to meet until early 1941. The GMD had just attacked and destroyed most of the New Fourth Army in An'hui, ending hopes for any real military cooperation between the GMD and CCP against Japan. Some American officials and private observers, such as Evans Carlson and Edgar Snow respectively, sympathized with the CCP and advised the Roosevelt administration to drop its policy of dealing exclusively with the Nationalists.<sup>11</sup> One month after this incident, Roosevelt's Administrative Assistant Lauchlin Currie travelled to China to meet Zhou Enlai, the CCP's senior diplomat, in Chongqing on February 14, 1941. Currie asked Zhou if Jiang would surren-

10 Reports by General Stilwell, *The China White Paper, August 1949* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1967), 68.

11 Carlson to Hornbeck, December 19, 1940, Dept. of State, Decimal File, China, 893.00/14630; see Michael Schaller, *The US Crusade in China, 1938-1945* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 43-44.

der to Japan and what the CCP's reaction to such a development would be. Zhou offered some information designed to "expose" Jiang, stressing that if Jiang did not change his anti-Communist stance, a civil war was possible and the war of resistance would fail. This would enable the Japanese to turn their forces south against Anglo-American forces.<sup>12</sup> Currie responded with Roosevelt's message, "[t]here are more common grounds between the GMD and CCP than their differences. I sincerely hope that the two parties will eliminate their differences and strengthen their solidarity for the common purpose of resisting Japan..." This was Washington's first clear statement on China's internal difficulties. More significantly, Roosevelt did not conceal his admiration for some of the CCP's accomplishments, noting, "The Communist Party's attitude toward peasants, women and the Japanese deserves our commendation."<sup>13</sup>

It was extremely difficult for Americans to get accurate first-hand information on CCP activities in the interior provinces of Shanxi, Gansu and Ningxia given that these areas had been placed under a GMD blockade since 1939. GMD propaganda directed at the American public portrayed the CCP as completely disorganized, but most Americans viewed this with a healthy dose of skepticism.<sup>14</sup> John Patton Davies, a junior officer in the State Department's Division of Far Eastern Affairs, argued that the Communists had succeeded brilliantly in merging their doctrine of social revolution with an upsurge in peasant nationalism in the wake of the Japanese invasion. A report from American military intelligence described the process in some detail:

Wherever the Eighth Route Army (Communist) penetrated, its retinue of propagandists, social and economic workers, schoolteachers, etc., immediately started organizing and training the peasant masses for resistance through guerrilla warfare. Their central idea in all these efforts was that the social and economic level of the peasants had to be improved in order to maintain morale and to instill among the people a will to resist Japan and support their own armies.<sup>15</sup>

When measured against the GMD, many Americans respected the CCP despite its politics because of the superior fighting prowess it consistently dem-

12 Zhongyangwenxianyanjiushi, ed., *Zhou Enlailianpu* [Chronology of Zhou Enlai] (Beijing: Zhongyangwenxianchubanshe, 1998), 503.

13 Dong Guangxian, *Jiang zongtongzuan* [The Biography of President Jiang] (Taipei: Zhongyangwenhuachubanshiyeweyuanhui, 1962), 455.

14 Tao Wentao, Yang Kuisong and Wangjianlang, *Kangrizhanzhengshiqizhongguoduiwaiguanxi* [Sino-Foreign Relations during the Anti-Japanese War] (Beijing: Zhonggongdangshichubanshe, 1995), 426-27.

15 Report of December 27, 1941, Far Eastern Section, G-2, Regional File; see Schaller, 45.

onstrated against the Japanese. American Ambassador Clarence E. Gauss correctly gauged the American mood in noting that the GMD's numerous mistakes had given the CCP an opportunity to shine.<sup>16</sup>

Washington's greatest concern was whether the GMD could effectively unite other partisan groups against Japan. Early in 1943, John Service, a Foreign Service officer working partly for Stilwell, reported that the United Front was "definitely a thing of the past." There was no longer any question of whether civil war could be avoided, "but whether it can be delayed at least until a victory over Japan" given that both parties had braced themselves for renewed fighting. The GMD in particular had cracked down on all political dissidents, which Service predicted might swing the revolution to the left, "going beyond the moderate democracy which the Chinese Communists now claim to be seeking."<sup>17</sup>

Service feared that Washington's alliance with the GMD would alienate it from all other Chinese groups, which could drive the CCP toward friendship with the Soviet Union out of desperation or revenge. This led Service to reconsider an effective means for the United States to distance itself from the GMD while still maintaining its support for China's war against Japan. He argued that the war had to be fought against Japan and fascism, not for Jiang Jieshi. Above all, he insisted that the United States not take up arms directly or indirectly against the CCP, which was still a relatively unknown force to Washington. Service further urged that American officials should go to the Communist base at Yan'an to discover who the revolutionaries really were.<sup>18</sup>

John Davies made a similar recommendation following a conversation with Zhou in March 1943. Zhou reiterated his invitation of the previous summer for a small group of American officers to set up observer posts in Shanxi, though he wondered whether Washington would accept this opportunity. Zhou stressed that this offer was not conditional on American aid to the CCP.<sup>19</sup> Davies responded by advising his superiors that Jiang had to be immediately coerced into fundamental military and political reforms if any of Roosevelt's East Asia plans were to be salvaged. If Jiang could not or would

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16 "Memorandum of Conversation by the Second Secretary of Embassy in China (Davies)," The US Department of State, ed., *Foreign Relations of United States: Diplomatic Papers*(hereafter FRUS), 1942, Vol. 1, China, GPO, 1956, 247.

17 "Memorandum by the Third Secretary of Embassy in China (Service), Temporarily in the United States," *FRUS, 1943.China*, 193.

18 *Ibid.*

19 *Ibid.*

not change, Washington had to consider working with the Chinese Communists as a real alternative.<sup>20</sup>

### THE DIXIE MISSION TO YAN'AN AND ITS AFTERMATH: SUMMER-EARLY AUTUMN, 1944

Jiang demonstrated his unwillingness towards cooperating with the CCP by launching a new attack on CCP territories in mid-1943. This prompted Stanley Hornbeck, senior Political Advisor to the State Department, to remind senior GMD diplomat Song Ziwen on August 19 that Jiang's actions flew in the face of Washington's position that China should avoid descending into civil war at all costs. General Stilwell went even further in his comments, suggesting that the GMD's blockade prevented Communist troops from being sent to the front against Japan and was thus thwarting the war effort. By the end of 1943, Stilwell and his embassy supporters were so disillusioned with the GMD that they decided to break the blockade of Yan'an in order to put Americans in a position where they could learn more about the CCP and gauge its interest in cooperation with the United States. The first group of Americans to set foot in wartime Yan'an was made up of roughly a half dozen journalists who arrived between mid-July and October 1944. Their reports emphasized that a popular CCP government was leading the peasants in an active guerrilla campaign against the Japanese, but even these statements frightened GMD censors, who heavily redacted them before they could be sent outside of China. The GMD was so rattled that it cancelled any further visits by foreign journalists to Yan'an in October. This meant that American readers only gained the barest glimpse of what Edgar Snow called "the other side of the river."<sup>21</sup>

On June 21, 1944, Vice President Henry A. Wallace flew to China for high-level talks with Jiang. Wallace informed Jiang that Roosevelt demanded that an American delegation be permitted to meet the Communists. John Service had stressed to Wallace in Chongqing the significance of relieving Washington of its total dependence on the GMD by building ties with the CCP. Service argued that with adequate support the Communists could transform China

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20 See Gauss to Hull, October 21, 1942, *FRUS 1942, China*, 161-62. "We should avoid committing ourselves unalterably to Chiang. We should be ready during or after the war to adjust ourselves to possible realignments in China. We should wish, for example, to avoid finding ourselves at the close of the war backing a coalition of Chiang's Kuomintang and the degenerate puppets against a democratic coalition commanding Russian sympathy."

21 Kenneth Shewmaker, *Americans and Chinese Communists, 1927-1945* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971), 158-79.

into a viable, pro-American ally. He added that this involved only “very modified and indirect intervention in Chinese affairs.”<sup>22</sup>

During his meeting with Wallace, Jiang denounced the CCP as a Comintern-allied Soviet puppet. Jiang’s ultimatum for cooperation with the CCP included CCP obedience to the GMD government, GMD command of CCP armies and the surrender of all CCP territory. In exchange, Jiang would grant “political amnesty” and give the CCP the right to continue operating as a political party. This was Jiang’s perennial demand and it provided no room for bargaining. Wallace immediately sensed that there could be no Communist-Nationalist coalition on these terms, but he did salvage Jiang’s authorization for an American observer team to go to Yan’an.<sup>23</sup>

The United States Army Observer Group, informally called the “Dixie Mission” because of its location in “rebel territory”, arrived in Yan’an on two flights in July and August. Led by Colonel David D. Barrett, this small group represented all the major American agencies in China: the Army, Air Corps, Navy, State Department and Office of Strategic Services (OSS). Barrett, who later became involved in several military schemes, supervised the mission, while political advisors Raymond Ludden and John Service investigated the nature of Communist policies toward the United States and Soviet Union. The OSS officers were to explore the possibilities of utilizing Communist guerrilla forces against Japan.<sup>24</sup>

Yan’an had every reason to welcome the US Army Observer Section. The CCP intended to frame itself as the practitioner of American “democracy” as opposed to the GMD’s one-party dictatorship. It also stood to benefit from showcasing its military prowess and setting it against the Nationalists’ unwillingness to fight the Japanese. Ultimately, it hoped to convince the Americans visitors to provide military aid.<sup>25</sup> The Central Committee saw the arrival of the Dixie Mission as an important turning point that would position the CCP as a major participant in the unified international anti-Fascist front. Party elites predicted that cooperation with the United States would enable the CCP to bring more liberated areas under its control and foresaw the possibility of continuing this cooperation after the war.

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22 See Memorandum by Service, June 24, 1944, Senate Committee in the Judiciary, *The Amerasia Papers: A Clue to the Catastrophe of China*, Vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1970), 575-91.

23 Alexander Bevin, *The Strange Connection – U.S Intervention in China, 1944-1972* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1992), 6-7.

24 Schaller, 181-82.

25 Sheng, 151.

The Communists gave their visitors total cooperation from the moment the Dixie Mission arrived. Several members of the high command—Chief of Staff Ye Jianying, Chen Yi, He Long, Peng Dehuai and Lin Biao—gave extensive briefings on the military situation and tailored their research to suit American needs. At lower levels, cadres were assigned to each member of the mission to provide information and assistance in a variety of areas: enemy and Communist orders of battle, weather, targets, rescue of downed airmen, communications, coastal defenses, propaganda and interrogation of Japanese prisoners. Special units guided the Americans on long excursions to Communist bases behind enemy lines.<sup>26</sup> Finally, the Communist press celebrated this new partnership with enthusiasm in its Fourth of July editorial:

Democratic America has already found a companion and the successor to the cause of Sun Yat-sen, in the Chinese Communist Party and the other democratic forces.... The work which we Communists are carrying on today is the very same work which was carried on earlier in America by Washington, Jefferson and Lincoln; it will certainly obtain and indeed has already obtained, the sympathy of democratic America.<sup>27</sup>

The CCP did not request assistance of any kind at this point, but sought to demonstrate its energy and determination in a bid to convince the foreigners to offer help of their own accord. This quest for foreign aid, Yan'an explained, must not erode the commitment to self-reliance:

We must intensify the feeling of national self-respect and faith in ourselves, but without boycotting foreigners; we must study the positive experience of others while improving cooperation with them, but without worshipping and flattering the foreigners. This is what constitutes the correct national platform; this is what constitutes the essence of the prototype of the new man in new democratic China.<sup>28</sup>

American government officials that visited Yan'an in 1944 liked what they saw. American accounts have identified a handful of Foreign Service officers with a special sympathy for the Communists and a desire to aid them, but it was Colonel Barrett who, after less than a month in Yan'an, first recommended sending arms to the Communists. In his report of August 18 calling

26 David D. Barrett, *Dixie Mission: The United States Army Observer Group in Yen-an, 1944* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), 29, 43-45.

27 *Jiefangribao*, July 4, 1944.

28 CPC Central Committee Directive on Diplomatic Work, "see James Reardon-Anderson, *Yenan and the Great Powers: The Origins of Chinese Communist Foreign Policy, 1944-1946* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 41.

for immediate military assistance, Barrett wrote, “Since the Section came to Yan’an, we have certainly been subject to no high pressure salesmanship except a burning desire to convince us that they want to fight the Japanese and help the people.” He added:

If the Communists are willing to fight and have the people on their side, it would appear that they are worthy of the support of the United States. I believe that a small amount of aid in the way of ammunition, automatic weapons, pack artillery and signal equipment would bring immediate results. If it did not, we would have lost very little. I am in favour of giving this aid now, not to wait until we have sent out observers to cover areas from which reports cannot be received for a long time.<sup>29</sup>

The American observer most sensitive to this point was John Service, who prepared extensive reports from Yan’an between July and November 1944 that provided a unique glimpse into the origins of American-CCP cooperation. On July 28, he wrote, “We have come into a different country and are meeting a different people.”<sup>30</sup> The Communist capital of Yan’an seemed both a city and a state of mind opposite to that of Chongqing. Relations between the city residents, peasants and Communist officials appeared relaxed and informal. All voiced one thought in Yan’an: a desire to cooperate with the United States in the struggle to defeat Japan and build a new China. Service believed the Communists espoused a moderate revolutionary program that was well suited to China and deserving of American support.<sup>31</sup>

### MAO'S APPEAL TO WASHINGTON: SUMMER, 1944

On August 23, 1944, CCP head Mao Zedong spoke with Service regarding his interest in encouraging friendship with Washington and warned that the threat of civil war was growing. Chongqing would eventually attack the Communists and “China will become a major international problem.” Any hope for preventing civil war depended on the ability of outside powers to restrain the GMD and “among these, by far the most important is the United States.” Mao wished to know if the American government was willing to force the GMD to accept a democratic proposal.<sup>32</sup> In addition, Mao specifically de-

29 Ibid., 39, 178. Report from Colonel David D. Barrett to Commanding General, The Records of US Forces, China Theater, August 14, 1944.

30 Report No. 1 by Service, July 28, 1944, *The Amerasia Papers*, Vol. 1, 681-84.

31 Ibid., Report No. 2 by Service, July 28, 1944, 684; Report No. 3 by Service, July 30, 1944, 690, 691-717.

32 American policy was of vital concern to the “democratic peoples of China.” Mao told Service the Communists’ broad terms for political compromise in China included the basic demand that the Chinese government “broaden its base to take in all important groups... to convene a provisional

sired information about Washington's current attitude toward the Communists, namely in terms of economic assistance. Mao believed that a CCP-led China could work with the American government by becoming a vast export market for the United States and a stabilizing force within the region:

Even the most conservative American businessman can find nothing in our program to take exception to...China must industrialize. This can be done—in China—only by free enterprise and with the aid of foreign capital. Chinese and American interests are correlated and similar. They fit together, economically and politically. We can and must work together.

Giving Service the impression that Yan'an could deliver what America wanted, Mao implied that he preferred to deal with Washington over Moscow:

America does not need to fear that we will not be cooperative. We must cooperate and we must have American help. This is why it is so important to us Communists to know what you Americans are thinking and planning. We cannot risk crossing you – cannot risk conflict with you.<sup>33</sup>

Mao may well have exaggerated the compatibility of the long-term CCP and American goals, but there is little reason to doubt the sincerity of his remarks.

In the same period, Zhou Enlai frequently contacted the United States Embassy in Chongqing to inform the Americans that the GMD was stalling on an offensive against the Japanese in order to conserve its strength for a civil war against the CCP. He suggested that Washington take steps to insure that Lend Lease supplies to the GMD would not be hoarded for a civil war. Zhou emphasized that Washington should recognize the Communist army “as a participant in the war against fascism,” consider intervening to the end the GMD blockade of Communist bases and that Communist armies should receive a proportionate share of American supplies sent to China.<sup>34</sup>

Communist power was undeniably growing and its appeal to the peasantry was especially strong. The CCP's military strength had developed to the point that it was stronger than that of the GMD in northern China, continually increasing the possibility of civil war, and with it the likelihood of some form of Soviet intervention. Service thought Washington must consider the advantages of dealing with this reality in the event that the CCP gained per-

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National Congress.” Delegates from all parties should attend this congress which would then reorganize the government and make new laws until a formal constitutional structure was created.

33 Ibid., Report No. 14 by Service, August 19, 1944, 776; Report No. 15 by Service, August 27, 1944, 690, 786-97.

34 See *FRUS, 1942, China*, 99-102, 207-11, 277-328; 1943, 193-99.

manent control of at least part of the country. He noted that American aid to Yan'an would "affect the nature, policies and objectives of the Chinese Communist Party, which was of vital, long term concern to the United States."<sup>35</sup>

The Communists' efforts were not wasted and they won the support of most American officers in China. Members of the OSS team in Yan'an broached the subject of American military cooperation with the CCP before Service had even suggested it. On August 7, the OSS began detailed discussions with Communist military personnel on how they might provide assistance to OSS operations and what sort of training it might provide Communist units. In its earliest form, this plan envisioned the creation of an American training program in Yan'an teaching selected students communications, demolition and espionage skills. It was proposed that joint OSS and specially trained and equipped Communist units might begin anti-Japanese operations sometime in September.<sup>36</sup> By August 30, OSS personnel had started simple training classes in the use of American explosives and small arms.<sup>37</sup>

John Davies was convinced that American policy in China was doomed unless the Joint Chiefs of Staff could be induced to support Stilwell's new military scheme. To seize the initiative, Davies developed a plan to land American forces in north China in cooperation with the Communists. Communist forces would be provided with American arms and enlisted under American command. Davies asserted that this held the key to both military and political success, leading him to ask Stilwell's permission to fly to Yan'an to develop his plan.<sup>38</sup> In Davies' view, civil war was inevitable and a Communist victory a near certainty. The issue that Washington had to face was whether it would get drawn into the battle on Jiang's side, forcing Yan'an to turn toward the Soviet Union.

In reports he sent to the OSS theater and Washington headquarters, Captain Charles Stelle asserted that the Communist position in north China was rock solid and predicted that the CCP's military and popular strength would continue to grow after Japan's defeat. Stelle acknowledged that the Communists were genuine revolutionaries who had "sympathy with Russia," but saw no evidence that Yan'an was in thrall to Moscow. Instead, the leaders of the CCP appeared to believe that "the actions of the United States will determine the immediate trend of events and thus their own long term poli-

35 *The Amerasia Papers*, Report No. 16 by Service, August 29, 1944, 797-800; Report No. 20 by Service, September 3, 1944, 823-25; Report No. 22 by Service, September 4, 1944, 836-42.

36 Schaller, 187.

37 *Ibid.*, 187-88. Memorandum to Lt. Colonel R. Peers, August 30, 1944, OSS-Yenan Documents.

38 *Ibid.*, 190. Davies to Stilwell, October 2, 1944, Box 10, Stilwell Papers.

cy.” Should Washington continue to supply the GMD after civil war erupted, Stelle warned, Yan’an would seek Russian assistance “against what they would undoubtedly regard as American intervention in Chinese affairs.”<sup>39</sup>

Roosevelt seemed primarily interested in using the Dixie Mission to maneuver both Chinese factions into a crude coalition. Neither Roosevelt’s words nor actions indicated he planned to support the CCP, either independently or against the GMD. For the time being, policymakers in Yan’an could do nothing but wait. Talks on Stilwell’s command were proceeding at a pace that Yan’an could not control. Meanwhile, in Washington, the Roosevelt administration was preoccupied with the upcoming election in November. Coverage of the campaign in the Chinese Communist press strongly favored the familiar and friendly Roosevelt over the “isolationist” Republican, Thomas Dewey. Both Mao and Zhou told Service that they expected no change in American policy until after the election.<sup>40</sup>

### **ROOSEVELT’S REBUFF OF CCP OVERTURES: LATE SUMMER-FALL 1944**

Stilwell was removed from China before any of the plans he, Service, Davies, and the OSS advocated could be put in place. As early as on July 6, Roosevelt advised Jiang to place Stilwell in command of all Chinese forces, including the Communists. In return for Roosevelt’s efforts to treat China as a great power, Jiang received this request, but asked the President to send a representative to China to discuss it further. Roosevelt agreed, dispatching Major General Patrick J. Hurley to Chongqing on September 6. By this point his initial curiosity about the CCP had worn off and Roosevelt suddenly shifted course to a new policy of undercutting the CCP and other perceived pro-Soviet groups. Washington now offered virtually unqualified political support to Jiang.

In September 1944, Zhu De invited Hurley to Yan’an and on November 7, Hurley finally flew in for two-day conference. Hurley told Mao he had come as Roosevelt’s personal representative to discuss matters pertaining to China. He claimed that Jiang approved of American mediation to promote democracy and speed the defeat of Japan through the unification of Chinese military forces. To accomplish this goal, Hurley said, the Generalissimo was prepared to recognize the legality of the CCP and allow some form of Communist participation on the Supreme War Council.

During the discussions, Hurley revealed a new document that had been revised by the GMD. Although Hurley had originally planned to ask the CCP

39 Ibid., 193-94. Stelle to OSS, R&A/Kunming No.37, October 23, 1944, OSS-Yenan Documents.

40 “Report by the Second Secretary of Embassy in China (Service),” *FRUS, 1944. China*, Vol. 6, 636.

to subscribe to a broad declaration in support of the Nationalist regime, Mao insisted that any “unity proposals” must include a procedure for the true sharing of military/political power and American aid with the Communists. His conditions resulted in a Five Point Proposal calling on both the CCP and GMD to pledge to work for political and military unity. It stated that the existing central government and its military organs were to be reorganized as a broad-based “Coalition National Government.” This new government and the GMD would adhere to a set of principles closely paralleling the American Bill of Rights. Finally, the proposal ran, American military aid would be equally distributed by the ruling coalition. The proposal was signed by Mao Zedong as Chairman of the Central Executive Committee of the CCP and by General Hurley as a witness.<sup>41</sup>

These political discussions in Chongqing reached an impasse on November 21, 1944. The Three Point counter offer was a rehash of old GMD demands calling for the CCP to submit control of its armed forces to the government in return for some token of political representation. Even more troubling were Zhou’s discussions with Hurley and General Albert C. Wedemeyer, the new commander of American Forces in China, in which the Americans insisted that there were positive elements to the GMD’s proposals. On December 8, 1944, Zhou told Hurley of his refusal to continue talking on the basis of the GMD’s Three Points. Nevertheless, he carefully avoided shutting the door on direct cooperation with Washington. Zhou expressed the CCP position to explore “concrete problems of our future military cooperation” and thereby working with the US. However, this was shot down by Hurley almost immediately.<sup>42</sup>

The CCP reaction to these developments came directly from Mao through Barrett. Mao asked why the Americans raised hopes for a genuine coalition in the Five Points and then asked Yan’an to “tie its hands behind itself” by accepting Jiang’s Three Points. If no coalition were possible, then the CCP would move to establish a separate Chinese government even if the formal existence of two Chinese governments destroyed all pretensions of Chinese unity. Mao told Barrett that Yan’an could turn to Britain or the Soviet Union if American aid was not forthcoming because he knew this was exactly what Washington hoped to prevent. Whatever the outcome of the political duel with the GMD and the CCP, the Washington still might be able to salvage their relationship through military cooperation, Mao noted. The CCP would

41 For more detail on the Five Point Proposal, see *The China White Paper, August 1949*, 74-75.

42 Schaller, 201. Zhou to Hurley, December 8, 1944, Box 97, folder 13, Hurley Paper; Hurley to Zhou, December 11, 1944.

cooperate in joint operations and willingly serve alongside or even under American forces.<sup>43</sup>

From mid-December 1944, the Communists engaged in a desperate gamble to circumvent Hurley. However, almost from the moment of his arrival in China, Patrick Hurley took it as his mission to achieve the unification of all Chinese military and political groups under Jiang's leadership. In doing so, Jiang and Hurley fed each other's fear of conspiracy. Jiang warned the ambassador that all of their shared opponents, including Stilwell, Service, Davies, Barrett and various journalists, were Communist agents, to which Hurley indicated agreement. Jiang also thanked Hurley for saving all Asia of from Communist conquest, while Hurley assured his host that "when the war with Japan is over your well-equipped divisions will have a walk over in their fight with the Communists."<sup>44</sup>

### FADING HOPES FOR US-CCP COOPERATION: WINTER 1945

The CCP reacted by committing itself against Hurley. Mao intended to let the world see the practical cooperation document Jiang refused to endorse. This would obviously embarrass Hurley, who had signed the Five Point Proposal as testimony to its reasonableness, but now insisted that Yan'an accept the GMD's radically different Three Points.<sup>45</sup> At the end of December, Zhou sent Hurley a message informing the American that he would never resume "abstract discussions" with the GMD until the blockade of Yan'an was lifted, political prisoners were released, repression of political dissent ceased and the Five Point Plan was accepted as the basis for all negotiations.<sup>46</sup>

As those Americans who supported cooperation with Yan'an lost influence, the CCP desperately sought to communicate with President Roosevelt. On January 9, 1945, Mao and Zhou handed Major Roy Cromley, the acting commander of the Dixie Mission, a message to be sent directly to Washington through military channels. If Roosevelt received them as "leaders of a primary Chinese party," Mao and Zhou would travel to Washington.<sup>47</sup> This revealed the lengths to which the CCP was prepared to go in its effort to win American support and a measure of international legitimacy. After learning of this, Hurley urged Roosevelt to refuse to meet with the Communists and instead press on with a plan to win Soviet support for Jiang at the upcoming

43 Barrett, *Dixie Mission*, 75-76.

44 See Memorandum of conversation by John Service, February 28, 1945, *The Amerasia Papers*, Vol. 2, 1372-73.

45 Schaller, 199. Barrett to Wedemeyer, December 10, 1944.

46 See Zhou to Hurley, December 28, 1944, *FRUS*, 1944, Vol. 6, 755.

47 Barbara Tuchman, *Notes from China* (New York: Collier, 1972), 78.

ing Yalta Conference. Hurley insisted this two-pronged response would bring the CCP back to Chongqing and pave the way for an American-mediated compromise.

Still, the CCP imagined that if it could send representatives directly to America they might be able to make contact with sympathetic officials. For both this reason and their desire to achieve an aura of political legitimacy, the CCP demanded that it be included in the Chinese delegation to the upcoming San Francisco conference of the United Nations. They requested that Roosevelt pressure Jiang to include several Communists in the Chinese delegation, expecting him to take Zhou. However, at Hurley's urging, the president deftly parried this request. On March 15, Roosevelt did ask Jiang to permit Communist participation as a sign of good faith, but Jiang responded by selecting a single Communist, the aging and obscure Dong Biwu.<sup>48</sup>

At Stilwell's departure, Hurley's growing hostility and the diminished power of the GMD in many areas compelled the CCP to think in terms of expanded military action. The CCP de-emphasized the likelihood of achieving a coalition with the GMD. However, on December 15, 1944, John Davies, Colonel Barrett and Colonel Willis H. Bird of the OSS flew to Yan'an, giving the CCP's leaders new hope. They told Bird that "the people of north China looked upon the United States as their best friend and General Wedemeyer as the commander-in-chief and would follow his military orders if he chose to give them."<sup>49</sup> Nevertheless, the CCP had little success with General Wedemeyer. Wedemeyer preferred to cooperate with Jiang and defer to his authority. Although he remained opposed to aiding the CCP without Jiang's approval, Wedemeyer retained some interest in utilizing Communist guerrillas against the Japanese.

While some American officers in China still thought Washington needed to cooperate with the CCP, Solomon Adler, the Treasury Department representative, wrote to the Treasury Secretary that the president's special envoy totally misunderstood and misrepresented reality. He argued that it was the GMD, and not the CCP that desperately needed American pressure. Jiang possessed a "death wish," a drive to precipitate civil war and Adler hoped that the president would put a leash on Hurley. At the very least, American policy must not promise Jiang support in a civil war, which Hurley's continued blunders might well provoke. Adler warned against the complete aliena-

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48 See Roosevelt to Chiang, March 15, 1945, FRUS, 1945, Vol.7, 283-84.

49 Schaller, 203. Colonel Willis Bird to McClure, January 24, 1945.

tion of the CCP, which threatened to turn China into a focal point of the coming Soviet-American conflict.<sup>50</sup>

On February 28, 1945, all the political officers in the American embassy sent a cable to the Secretary of State, Edward Stettinius, Jr. while Ambassador Hurley and General Wedemeyer were off in Washington for consultations. They warned that the ambassador's actions had compromised any chance for peace and unity in China. The only hope for averting civil war lay in demonstrating America's willingness to cooperate with Yan'an and to press Jiang into sharing power. Even the small group of OSS officers still in contact with the Communists warned General Donovan that Hurley had destroyed almost any chance for peace in China and had no credibility outside Jiang's clique.

However, American decision makers in both China and Washington chose to ignore or reject the prospect of working independently with the CCP. Despite some conciliatory gestures, American policy focused almost solely on the question of how to minimize the CCP's power, either through cooperation with the Soviet Union or by bolstering the GMD. From December 1944 until June 1945, the pattern was punctuated only by Yan'an's tenacity in struggling against the tide.

Although the CCP felt many disappointments during the preceding months, the Communists still believed "America would eventually realize that support of the Central Government was not the best way to fight the war, to speed China's progress toward democracy or to ensure stability in the Far East." Mao was convinced that unless Washington forced the GMD to establish a more representative regime "all that America has been working for will be lost." Mao was disturbed by the contradictions in American behavior. Those Americans visiting Yan'an usually praised the Communists and expressed a desire to work with them, yet Washington and Hurley continued to support the GMD. Although Hurley might choose to call this nonintervention, Mao thought otherwise. He argued, "[T]here is no such thing as America not intervening in China! You are here, as China's greatest ally. The fact of your presence is tremendous."<sup>51</sup>

50 Ibid., 208. Adler to White and Morgenthau, January 16, 1945.

51 See Memorandum by Service of conversation with Mao, March 13, 1945, *The Amerasia Papers*, Vol. 2, 1400-402.

## THE WINDOW CLOSES: LATE WINTER/EARLY SPRING 1945

The dramatic developments in China during early 1945 coincided with the momentous Yalta Conference of early February. Roosevelt sought to strike a bargain, accepting the reality of an expanded Soviet sphere in hopes of securing general Soviet cooperation in postwar diplomacy.<sup>52</sup> Clearly, the president hoped to seal off China from Soviet political influence and in this controlled environment compel the CCP to join a GMD-dominated coalition. The president looked to a postwar world divided into “spheres of interest.” If China could not be a great power, it must at least fall into the American sphere, thus Roosevelt urged Stalin to secure his desired Manchurian port and railroad privileges by negotiating a treaty with Jiang’s government. Stalin seemed willing to trade a pro-American China for special Soviet privileges in Manchuria.<sup>53</sup>

The CCP’s position continued to deteriorate. Service’s tenure in Yan’an was cut short on March 30 on Hurley’s orders that he return to Washington immediately. Mao asked that Service convey to Washington the CCP’s pledge to fight Japan and assist American forces “whether or not they received a single gun or bullet.” Mao stressed that after Japan’s defeat, Washington and the CCP should try to avoid conflict.<sup>54</sup> It was all for naught, though; Service’s forced exit on April 4 eliminated the last remaining communications channel between the CCP and United States.

Through March and early April, Hurley and Wedemeyer made the Washington rounds, securing support from the Joint Chiefs, the president and the War Department. Late in March, Wedemeyer and Commodore Milton Miles of Naval Group China all appeared before the Joint Chiefs to discuss the situation in China. These three leading Americans all agreed that the Communists were a minor, weak party whose “rebellion in China could be put down by comparatively small assistance to Chiang’s central government.”<sup>55</sup> Wedemeyer went on to tell his colleagues in the War Department and Secretary of War Henry Stimson that Jiang had vastly improved the quality of his forces and would have little difficulty destroying his domestic opposition.<sup>56</sup>

The dissidents among the junior officers—Davies, Service and Atcheson—had been removed from China. Congress expressed the only strong opinion

52 For more details, see Diane S. Clements, *Yalta* (New York: Oxford University Press), 1970.

53 In fact, the Soviet Red Army already occupied most of Eastern Europe in February 1945 and would eventually launch a campaign against Japanese forces in Manchuria, whether the United States wished it or not.

54 See Report by Service, April 1, 1945, *FRUS, 1945*, Vol. 7, 310-17.

55 William D. Leahy, *I Was There* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1950), 337.

56 Albert Wedemeyer, *Wedemeyer Reports* (New York: Henry Holt, 1958), 342.

other than Hurley's that the president took into account. In March, Congressman Walter Judd delivered a savage speech in the House denouncing American critics of Jiang. Judd defended the generalissimo as a great patriot and loyal ally, denouncing the CCP as an evil Soviet puppet that desired a "Red China" that would endanger the interests of the United States. John Foster Dulles warned against any desertion of the GMD so "that the 400 million of China shall not become harnessed to the predatory design of any alien power." Jiang had come to rely on the "ultimate support of the Christian democracies, notably the United States."<sup>57</sup>

Whatever hopes the CCP retained for a presidential reversal of America's China policy were ruined on April 2. In a Washington press conference, Hurley announced that Washington would exclusively support China's central government and would have nothing to do with what he called "the armed party" and warlords. Furthermore, in addition to denying that the Communists had ever requested American military aid or political recognition, he also insisted that only minor issues separated the Communists and Nationalists. This implied that Yan'an's refusal to enter into a coalition with the GMD was completely unwarranted. Hurley went on to lump the Communists together with various separatist movements and "decadent" warlord factions.<sup>58</sup> He also warned that he would not tolerate any dissent from his directive that the United States and its agents would support only the GMD regime. Anyone who did not follow his orders would meet the same fate—recall and disgrace—that had befallen Stilwell, Gauss, Davies, Barrett, Service and Atcheson.<sup>59</sup>

Reacting quickly to Hurley, the April 5 edition of the *Xinhua ribao* printed an editorial denouncing these assertions. The CCP organ claimed that Hurley completely misunderstood and distorted the true Communist effort to collaborate with the United States against Japan. It argued that American policy would only encourage civil war and prolong China's suffering.<sup>60</sup> This was followed on April 9 and 10 with the publication of a major article attacking American imperialist policy in Latin America.<sup>61</sup> The unspoken message was that postwar Asia would look similar to an oppressed and exploited Latin America controlled by United States.

57 Schaller, 217-18. Speech by Congressman Walter Judd, March 15, 1945, Vol. 91, pt. 2 (1945), 2294-2302, Dulles to Henry Luce, January 29, 1945, Box 130, Dulles Papers.

58 See Transcript of Hurley's press conference, April 2, 1945, *FRUS, 1945*, Vol.7, 362-65.

59 Schaller, 221. Notes on talk with Hurley, May 8, 1945.

60 See *Xinhua ribao*, April 5, 1945.

61 See *Jiefangribao*, April 9 and 10, 1945.

Whatever slim possibility remained for a modification of American policy in China died in mid-April along with Franklin Roosevelt. Inexperienced in foreign affairs and heavily suspicious of the Soviet Union, Harry Truman was easily swayed by the anti-Communist opinions of advisors like ambassador to Moscow Averell Harriman, Assistant Secretary of State Joseph Grew and Navy Secretary James Forrestal. These consultants deeply feared Soviet behavior in Europe and Moscow's possible expansion in Asia. By and large these men agreed that Stalin planned to seize a foothold in northeast Asia and leave only after installing puppet revolutionary movements in power. In May, Harriman warned Truman that international Communism under Soviet direction had begun an aggressive march. He predicted that within a year at least half, possibly all, of Europe would be "Communitic." If the United States made the terrible error of supporting Communist armies in China against Jiang they would ultimately put two or three hundred million people under the Kremlin's marching order.<sup>62</sup>

On June 6, the New York office of the leftist Asian affairs journal, *Amerasia*, was raided by the FBI in what became the so-called "Amerasia Case." John Service and five others were charged with violations of the espionage law for possessing stolen government documents. Yan'an considered the six as "friendly Americans sympathetic to China's cause of resistance and democracy," and the arrests were interpreted as a clear sign of the reactionary tendency in the United States.<sup>63</sup> This incident finally shattered the CCP's last hope that more moderate views might prevail in Washington.

Hurley's public condemnation and ridicule of the CCP, Roosevelt's death, Truman's growing resistance to Communism and developments inside China forced the CCP to reappraise its policy towards the United States. Between April 23 and June 11, the Seventh Party Congress met in Yan'an, where Communist officials argued the merits of continuing to seek American cooperation in solving China's political and military crises. Mao warned of an American-GMD conspiracy to launch a civil war as soon as the forces the Chinese mainland had been cleared of Japanese aggressors. On July 11, 1945, Mao Zedong released his famous "*Yugongyishan* (The Foolish Old Man Who Removed the Mountains)" speech to conclude the Congress. In it Mao decried the two "dead weights" of imperialism and feudalism that lay upon the Chinese people. Hurley and other unspecified American leaders were clearly identified as enemies of China who plotted to send American

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62 John Melby, *The Mandate of Heaven* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968), 22.

63 Reardon-Anderson, 94.

forces against the Communists' "liberated areas." Mao pledged that the CCP would fight any such American effort.<sup>64</sup>

Mao's general theme was elaborated specifically in *Jiefangribao* on June 25, 1945. The editorial charged that the true friends of China—identified as the dead Roosevelt and the powerless Welles, Wallace, Gauss and Stilwell—had been replaced by an imperialist and reactionary clique who advocated a policy that recognized the GMD government's regressive leader, Jiang, rather than the great strength of the Chinese people. The Communists warned that any decision to intervene on Jiang's behalf would inevitably involve Americans in a Chinese civil war. The CCP stressed that if imperialists like Hurley did not "withdraw their hands ... then the Chinese people will teach them a lesson they deserve."<sup>65</sup> In mid-July, Mao, no longer doubtful that Hurley's policy was the policy of the American government, wrote three articles for the CCP press attacking the United States. Even though the war against Japan had not yet ended, cooperation between the CCP and Washington now seemed impossible.

## CONCLUSION

American policy towards China during the anti-Japanese war can be summarized as supporting Jiang and tolerating the CCP so long as it was useful in resisting Japan. It is important to keep in mind that the very basic aim of American policy was to acknowledge that Jiang's Nationalist Government was the only legitimate government representing China while the CCP was only one faction to be used against the Japanese. Although Roosevelt was not satisfied with Jiang, he truly believed that there was no man in China who could serve as a better leader. Deputy Secretary of State Sumner Welles expressed the same idea that Jiang was the only Chinese leader who could keep the Chinese armies in the field against the Japanese and who would be able to hold the Chinese people together after the war.<sup>66</sup> The president, said Wedemeyer, ordered all American military officers to "support the existing Chinese government." No aid would be given to any "elements" in China that Jiang did not approve, whether or not "the decision seemed wise." Henceforth, Wedemeyer instructed all army personnel in China not to "assist, negotiate, or collaborate in any way with Chinese political parties, activities or

64 For more details, see *Mao Zedong xuanji* [Selected Works of Mao Zedong], Vol. 3 (Beijing: Waiwenchubanshe, 1965), 255-324.

65 See *Jiefangribao*, June 25, 1945.

66 Sumner Welles, *Seven Decisions that Shaped History* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1951), 15.

persons” without his authorization.<sup>67</sup> Hurley assembled embassy personnel to hear him lecture on the danger of dallying with Communists, declaring that Americans were in China to ensure that all military and political factions were united under Jiang’s leadership.<sup>68</sup>

On the other hand, the CCP’s dealings with the Americans were based to a large extent on a realistic acknowledgement that the Soviet Union was absent from the Far East and that the United States was the only allied power with resources in the area. The CCP would have cooperated with Washington despite American repugnance for its beliefs. The CCP chose its way according to its environment and the obstacles it faced, hoping to gain American acceptance as a legal party. In order to woo the Americans, the CCP even identified their political program with the American brand of democracy.<sup>69</sup>

As early as 1936, Mao Zedong had told Edgar Snow that he considered America as a potential ally against Japan.<sup>70</sup> When the United States entered the war after Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the CCP applauded the American war effort and portrayed the United States as a progressive ally against fascism. More specially, the Communists applauded both Roosevelt and Wallace as progressive heroes fighting against American reactionaries.<sup>71</sup> Zhou, the CCP representative in Chongqing, did everything imaginable to court the personal friendship of Americans, continually inviting embassy staff and journalists to informal discussions. Zhou declared that the Communists led an independent revolutionary movement, that the history of the Party was marked by “Comrade Mao’s idea to form a line for Chinese Communism—to make Marxism and Leninism Chinese.”<sup>72</sup> This revealed his desire to maintain a pragmatic and independent stance.

The New Democracy initiative prescribed cooperation with the Nationalists as the legitimate government of China. In July, 1944 Mao told foreign journalists:

The fundamental policy of democracy had been unchanged. It would remain unchanged under any conditions because concrete conditions

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67 Schaller, 207. Memorandum of a talk with Wedemeyer, January 17, 1945, Chennault Papers, Memorandum by Wedemeyer, January 30, 1945, Box 1, Wedemeyer Files.

68 John P. Davies, *The Dragon by the Tail* (New York: Norton, 1972), 402.

69 The CCP’s United Front performance was so impressive that the Chinese Communists managed to persuade John Service to believe that their political program is simple democracy. This is much more American than Russian in form and spirit. See John Service’s memo in J. W. Esherick (ed.), *Lost Chance in China* (New York: Random House, 1974), 308-16.

70 See Edgar Snow, *Red Star over China* (New York: Random House, 1938), 80-81.

71 Mao, *Selected works*, Vol. 3, 27-29.

72 Schaller, 182-83. Transcript of speech by Zhou Enlai at Yan’an, August 10, 1943, Dept. of the Army, G-2 Regional File, China, 1933-44.

in China dictated continuation of democratic policies for a long time to come. What China needs most was democracy—not socialism. We were still very far from socialism.<sup>73</sup>

With regard to foreign policy, Mao emphasized the main theme of unity against Fascism, minimizing the role of the Soviet Union in China and maximizing that of the Americans. He thought cooperation between the United States and CCP would be beneficial and satisfactory to all concerned.

The CCP was never the Soviet puppet that many Americans supposed. Although the Soviets had instigated the formation of the CCP in 1921, Mao had repudiated Soviet control in 1935 and had eased out of the topmost positions the “twenty-eight Bolsheviks,” young Chinese trained in the Soviet Union who had been running the party largely as an arm of the Comintern. The experience of strained relations with Stalin’s Russia made the CCP leadership want to maintain a certain distance from the Soviet Union.

To Soviet Communists Mao Zedong was an apostate, both because of his heretical beliefs and his rejection of Soviet direction.<sup>74</sup> On June 10, 1944, Stalin told Harriman that Jiang was the best man available to run China under the existing circumstances. He maintained that the Chinese Communists were “not real Communists” but “margarine Communists.” The year before, Stalin had dismantled the main Soviet foreign infiltration organization, the Third (Communist) International (Comintern).<sup>75</sup> On August 31, 1944, talking to Hurley in Moscow before he arrived to China, Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov denied any Soviet connection with the CCP and insisted they had no relationship whatsoever to Communism. This was even more of a blanket repudiation of any Soviet relationship with the CCP than Stalin had made in June to Harriman.<sup>76</sup>

Nevertheless, American leaders assumed that Moscow would use the CCP after the war to undermine the Nationalists and gain control of at least part of China. Therefore, the shadowy Naval Group China began assisting the Nationalists’ preparations for civil war by secretly training an army of anti-Communist guerrillas in 1942. Although flexibility was the CCP’s short-term objective, it did not imply that there was no common interest between

73 For Mao’s presentation of CCP domestic policy to foreign journalists, see interviews with Gunther Stein and Maurice Votaw, in Service, Report no. 3, July 30, 1944, *The Amerasia Papers*, Vol. 3, 691-702.

74 Bevin, 6. In China, Mao Zedong also asserted the revolution would be won by the oppressed peasants, not, as Marxist theory called for, by the industrial proletariat, which represented less than one percent of the Chinese population.

75 *Ibid.*, 4-5.

76 *Ibid.*, 12.

itself and the United States. If only the Americans could be made to understand that the CCP was not Stalin's puppet in Asia, mutually advantageous relations between Washington and the CCP could have developed. In the end, the United States passed on the opportunity to keep the CCP from gravitating closely towards the Soviet Union, which resulted in a quarter century of needless hostility between Washington and China's new rulers. **Y**