

SOME RECENT AMERICAN INTERPRETATIONS OF SINO-AMERICAN RELATIONS OF THE LATE 1940's: AN ASSESSMENT

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I

It is generally agreed among historians that the meanings of events change with the unfolding of history. Since many important events took place during the last generation, it is only natural that the interpretations of Sino-American relations of the period 1945-1950 should have undergone significant changes since the publication of the China White Paper in 1949, in particular during the last decade. Judged by the studies which have appeared since 1970, the clearest change, among others, seems to be in the interpretation of the relations of the United States with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) from 1945 to 1950. Instead of the traditional view that the aggression of the CCP under the direction of the Soviet Union was the fundamental cause of the confrontation between the United States and the Communist regime in China, the revisionist historians hold the United States responsible for closing the door in China and for driving the CCP to "lean to one side." In this respect, the change in the interpretation of Sino-American relations of the late 1940's is much like the revisionism in Cold War historiography which shifts the responsibility for bringing about the global confrontation between the East and the West from the aggression of the Soviet Union to the expansionism of the United States.¹ Though significant,

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¹ Writings on the revisionism in Cold War historiography are numerous. The author of this paper has benefited from the following studies: Irwin Unger, "The 'New Left' and American History: Some Recent Trends in United States Historiography," in *American Historical Review*, LXXII (July, 1967), 1237-1263; J. Samuel Walker, "Historians and Cold War Origins: The New Consensus," in Gerald K. Haines and J. Samuel Walker, eds., *American Foreign Relations: A*

this change does not mark a complete break with the traditional interpretation. In fact, the old allocation of responsibilities for "the loss of China" has remained pretty much the same. The American government is still defended for its post-war policy toward China, while the Nationalists, particularly their leader, Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, are still denounced as a group of corrupt fools who finally brought about their own downfall. Assembled together, the recent writings on the subject seem to compose a general pattern. In broad lines, this pattern offers a combination of old tradition and new findings. The old focuses continuing criticism on the Nationalists and their leader; the new include a joy over the "friendly feelings" between the Chinese and American people which "bloomed again like the flower in spring"² and guilt for the United States for nipping that flower of friendship in the bud in 1945-1949. This pattern is what this paper is going to examine. Since this composite picture is based on selected works, it is needless to say that it is highly tentative.

II

To provide a background against which the change in recent interpretations of Sino-American relations of the late 1940's can be measured, it will be useful to recapitulate briefly the main points of the official explanation as put forward in the famous China White Paper. In his letter of transmittal, Dean Acheson, the then Secretary of State, officially declared that during and after World War II "the earnest desire" of the

Historiographical Review (Westport, Conn., 1981), pp. 207-236; Toby Trister, "Traditionalist, Revisionists, and the Cold War: A Bibliographical Sketch," in Charles Gati, ed., *Caging the Bear: Containment and the Cold War* (New York, 1974), pp. 211-222; Joseph M. Siracusa, *New Left Diplomatic Histories and Historians: The American Revisionists* (Port Washington, N.Y., 1973); and two criticisms by Robert James Maddox, *The New Left and the Origins of the Cold War* (Princeton, N.J., 1973), and William Stueck, "Cold War Revisionism and the Origins of the Korean Conflict: The Kolko Thesis," in *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. LXII, No.4 (November, 1973), pp. 573-575.

² Paul A. Varg, "Sino-American Relations Past and Present," in *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (Spring 1980), p. 101.

United States was “to assist the Chinese people to achieve peace, prosperity and internal stability.” But all the American aid could not sustain a government which “had lost the confidence of its own troops and its own people.” So,

The ominous result of the civil war in China was beyond the control of the government of the United States. Nothing that this country did or could have done within the reasonable limits of its capabilities could have changed that result; nothing that was left undone by this country has contributed to it.

It was the Nationalist government that brought about its own final collapse. Acheson also blamed the CCP which served the interests of the Soviet Union and lent “itself to the aims of Soviet Russian imperialism” to obtain “full power in China” through “a ruthless discipline and fanatical zeal” for the troubles in postwar China.³ In short, the Nationalists’ own faults and the subversion of international Communism constituted the official interpretation for “the loss of China.” American China policy was defensible.

It seems clear that at least one of the ingredients of the revisionist pattern of interpretation of Sino-American relations in the 1945-1950 period is inherited from the China White Paper. It is the denunciation of the Nationalists as their own destroyers. In fact, ever since the publication of the China White Paper, except for perhaps a few conservative historians like Anthony Kubek,⁴ almost all the American scholars who did research on Sino-American relations of the 1940’s maintain implicitly or explicitly a critical view of the Nationalists and accept the State Department’s verdict on “the loss of China.” Ineptitude, corruption, brutality, incompetence, tactical blunders, unwillingness to fight the Japanese, duplicity, opposition to reform, selfishness, shortsightedness – these and many other words with bad connotations dot the pages of most of the writings on this subject. If there are any works

³ U.S. Department of State, *United States Relations with China: With Special Reference to the Period 1944-1949* (Washington, D. C., 1949), p. xvi.

⁴ Anthony Kubek, *How the Far East Was Lost: American Policy and the Creation of Communist China, 1941-1949* (Chicago, 1963).

which conspicuously lack such terms, it is simply because their authors took the faults of the Nationalists for granted and did not bother to elaborate further. Take Michael Schaller and Nancy Bernkopf Tucker as examples of how critical some historians can be toward the Nationalists and the Generalissimo. Tucker's whole article, "Nationalist China's Decline," appears to be a detailed criticism of almost everything the Kuomintang and Generalissimo Chiang did or did not do in 1945-1950. "Chiang Kai-shek's ability to rule . . . hinged on two features of the Kuomintang political system: dictatorship and disunity." By skillfully manipulating the different factions which competed with each other for "the rice bowl," Generalissimo Chiang gained and maintained his firm control of the Kuomintang. Factionalism was bound to have a disastrous influence on foreign policy and made the government weak, inefficient and paralyzed. Generalissimo Chiang's interference after retirement from the presidency in early 1949, turned both the military and political affairs of the Nationalist government into a mess and thus quickened its downfall. Finally, Tucker ended her article by an overall indictment:

"Having demonstrated military ineffectiveness and political vulnerability, the Nationalists proceeded during 1949 and early 1950 to display their diplomatic ineptitude as well. In the face of disaster, Kuomintang leaders refused to work together, distrusting their colleagues and seeking to preserve what personal power they could. This disunity hampered innovative thinking, much as it convinced observers abroad that the Chinese government could not be energetic, honest, or efficient."⁵

While Tucker delineated the faults of the Nationalists in terms of the power structure and power struggle within the Kuomintang, Michael Schaller presented a scathing indictment of the Nationalists by quoting widely those who were known critics of the Generalissimo and his followers. Though basically the same in content, the tone of his criticism in his

⁵ Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, "Nationalist China's Decline and Its Impact on Sino-American Relations, 1949-1950," in Dorothy Borg and Waldo Heinrichs, eds., *Uncertain Years: Chinese-American Relations, 1947-1950* (New York, 1980), pp. 131-171. The quotations are on pp. 137-141, 142 and 170.

major book, *The U.S. Crusade in China, 1938–1945*,⁶ appears to be somewhat less shrill than that of his shorter book, *The United States and China in the Twentieth Century*. In the later book, some accusations can be found almost on every page. Schaller described the corrupt practices used in incruiting soldiers, and the miseries the peasants suffered from famines, corrupt tax collectors and cruel landlords. In spite of great American aid, the “decaying” Nationalist government continued to lose popular support. After the entrance of the United States into the war, the Generalissimo, living in his unreal world of make-believe, refusing to fight the Japanese and waiting for the Americans to rescue him, busied himself in playing the Americans off against each other, “conspiring” with Patrick J. Hurley to convince President Roosevelt to fire Stilwell and hoarding American money and weapons for eventual use against “fellow countrymen for economic and political supremacy”. If these already sound like too much, there are still other even more blind and unbelievable sweeping accusations. Without virtually any principle “save for anticommunism and a dedication to greed, the Nationalist regime allowed its adherents to indulge in an orgy of selfishness.” “During the reoccupation of China from the Japanese, KMT civil and military officers indulged themselves in an orgy of personal aggrandizement. They seized for personal use public property and land, connived with collaborators, ignored the most fundamental economic problems and disregarded public sentiment calling for a compromise with the CCP.” In short, during the years from 1945 to 1949, the Kuomintang not only squandered “its military advantage but managed to alienate all segments of Chinese society.”⁷

To be fair, not all of the American China specialists agree on the negative assessment of the Kuomintang and its leadership. In a conference of about thirty scholars on American-

⁶ (New York, 1979).

⁷ Michael Schaller, *The United States and China in the Twentieth Century* (New York, 1979), pp. 72-115. The quotations are on pp. 101, 72, 74 and 115.

Chinese relations covering 1947-1950 held in June, 1978, under the sponsorship of the East Asian Institute of Columbia University, some of the participants criticized their colleagues for treating both the Kuomintang and its leader too harshly. They pointed out that little attention has been paid to the variety and magnitude of the problems the Generalissimo faced and to the leadership, sense of continuity, and competence which he provided the Nationalists over a long period. However, their arguments apparently failed to convince the other participants in the conference.⁸ Thus, after reading the writings on Sino-American relations by American scholars, it is very hard not to be saddened by the wickedness, selfishness and incompetence of the Nationalists which in large part, if not imagined, was certainly exaggerated. On the other hand, it is equally difficult not to wonder, if all these alleged accusations were true, how the Nationalists could have managed to reunify China in 1926-1928, carry out a number of reforms and constructions during the following decade, fight alone against the militarily superior Japanese invaders for four years before the United States entered World War II, afterward pin down at least a million Japanese troops in China so that they could not be used elsewhere to make troubles for the Allies, and finally work a miracle on Taiwan since 1949? However, no one of the authors consulted in writing this paper bothered to answer this question.

But there is another question arising from the Kuomintang's alleged moral degradation and political misrule which can not be so easily evaded because it directly concerns the policy aim of the United States in China. If the accusations were true and if the United States had already come to the conclusion by the end of 1946 that the Nationalist government could not be saved,⁹ then why did the United States continue to aid at

⁸ Dorothy Borg, "Summary of Discussion" of Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, "Nationalist China's Decline," in Borg and Heinrichs, eds., *Uncertain Years*, pp. 174-175.

⁹ Warren I. Cohen, *America's Response to China: An Interpretative History of Sino-American Relations* (New York, 1971), p. 193.

least partially the unworthy and in any case unsavable Nationalist government against the better judgment of its officials? The answer varied with the views of the historians examined on the United States China policy and its implementation.

Though different in details, most of the historians consulted shared Warren I. Cohen's interpretation of the postwar China policy of the United States. Cohen saw the aim of the China policy of the United States in the creation of a strong, unified, democratic and friendly China to be a stabilizing force in East Asia. However, China's low standing on the scale of American priorities and the limits of American power precluded the possibility of an all-out support to the Nationalist government to unify China. Because of this consideration and the internal situation in China during the immediate postwar years, the creation of a strong unified China "required a peaceful solution of the long-standing Kuomintang-Communist dispute." Hence the Marshall Mission. After its failure, the Truman Administration would certainly be willing to cease completely meddling in the Chinese civil war. But it could not go that way because the public took pity on China and also because the bipartisan pressure in Congress for resuming aid to the Nationalist government, if refused, might have jeopardized the passage of European aid programs. Moreover, by continuing partial aid to China after 1946, the Truman Administration hoped to avoid any possible charge of being responsible for the loss of China.¹⁰ Schaller held more or less the same view. He saw the postwar China policy of the Truman Administration as a continuation of the one pursued by Roosevelt during the war,¹¹ the core of which was to create a unified, strong and reformed China through American aid as a stabilizing power in postwar Asia. However, things did not work that way. The futile effort of Marshall's mediation between the Kuomintang and the Chinese Communists for a coalition government

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 192-197. The quotation is on p. 192.

¹¹ Schaller, *The United States and China in the Twentieth Century*, p. 112.

finally convinced Truman and Marshall that it was no use to “gamble much on such an ally” as the corrupt Nationalist government. Yet under the mounting pressure from the China bloc in Congress, the administration could not pull out of China completely. Thus, Truman lifted the arms embargo, resumed other forms of economic aid, and tolerated the China Aid Act of 1948 to “appease senators and congressmen whose votes were needed for European aid programs.” In addition, by continuing partial aid, the Truman government also hoped to avoid being charged later of playing into the hands of the Communists.¹²

But not all historians stressed the importance of the pressure of public opinion and the China bloc in Congress. Although all the major components of the themes of both Cohen and Schaller can be found in William Whitney Stueck's book, he also introduced a new factor into the consideration of foreign policy. It is the Truman Administration's concern with United States credibility and prestige abroad. Believing that the United States had to play a major role after World War II in constructing a stable, peaceful and prosperous world, American officials acknowledged that a commitment to China was necessary. This necessity coupled with the continuity of war-time obligations, the perception of close cooperations between the CCP and the Soviet Union and the political pressure of the China lobby dictated the policy of continuing aid to China. However, on the other hand, the Europe-first strategy, China's industrial backwardness and limited natural resources, and the limits of American capabilities all kept China “well down on the list of priorities for American attention.” China was important, but “not sufficiently so to risk American objectives in Europe.” Large-scale aid was out of the question. On the other hand, the concern for American credibility abroad dictated the same conclusion because, though it did encourage the continuation of some aid to China, massive Ameri-

¹² Schaller, *The U.S. Crusade in China*, pp. 99, 300-303. The quotations are on pp. 303 and 301.

can intervention in the Chinese civil war would “commit American prestige to an unwinnable venture.” Hence partial aid to the Nationalist government after World War II.¹³ Stueck already downplayed the importance of the pressure of public opinion and the China bloc in the formation of postwar policy toward China. John H. Feaver ruled out that consideration completely. He argued that decisions on the question of aid to China in 1947 and 1948 were “almost entirely” the results of consultations among concerned officials and governmental agencies concerning broad strategic and tactical foreign policy problems and without regard to public pressures. To apply finite resources to the global opposition to international Soviet aggression required the United States to order the foreign policy priorities of different areas of the world; and in the resulting list of priorities, China was only of “secondary importance in the overall strategic pattern of American foreign policy.” Hence the Truman Administration concluded not to make an all-out commitment to Nationalist China. Yet, the policymakers in Washington had never contemplated to cut off aid to the Nationalists because they feared that “doing so would adversely affect U.S. interests in other areas.”¹⁴ In other words, they were worried that a total withdrawal from China would hurt the credibility of the United States. In this respect, Feaver is in agreement with Stueck.

All the above historians argued that China’s low standing in the list of priorities of the United States was a factor in the decisions of American postwar policy toward China. Challenging the traditional simplistic dichotomy of American interests into a vital and a peripheral category, Russell D. Buhite inserted a third category of major interests between the other two and interpreted the development of American postwar China

¹³ William Whitney Stueck, Jr., *The Road to Confrontation: American Policy Toward China and Korea, 1947-1950* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1981), pp. 5-8, 18-19 and 28. The quotations are on pp. 19 and 7.

¹⁴ John H. Feaver, “The China Aid Bill of 1948: Limited Assistance as a Cold War Strategy,” in *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (Spring, 1981), pp. 107-120. The quotations are on pp. 109, 110.

policy from that category. After World War II, he argued, China was transformed from a peripheral to a major interest of the United States because in the American global view, China was to play a stabilizing role in Asia and policymakers in Washington hoped to "establish a pro-American China as a counterpoise to the U.S.S.R." Later on, stopping the Soviet expansion became the dominant consideration in the United States' contemplation of China policy and underlay the Marshall mediation of the Nationalist-Communist conflict. Though Marshall failed in his mission, both the general and the American government, recognizing "China's value in the cold war context," were "extremely reluctant to write China off." The price of full-scale support to China seemed "too high, so too did total withdrawal." Therefore, "China remained a major interest from 1945 through 1949" and received substantial financial aid and other help from the United States.¹⁵

Differing from all these historians, Steven I. Levine put the American China policy of the immediate postwar years in "the global context of the emerging Cold War."¹⁶ According to him, for most of the immediate postwar period, China was seen as "a secondary area" in the scale of American global interests. But for a short moment from late 1945 to 1946, "vital interest was presumed to exist" in China.¹⁷ This was mainly because the activities of the Soviet Union in Manchuria aroused the suspicion of the United States about the Soviet expansion there. To check the Soviet aggression, the United States not only helped the Nationalist government to regain control of

¹⁵ Russell D. Buhite, "Major Interests: American Policy Toward China, Taiwan and Korea, 1945-1950," in *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. XLVII, No. 3, (August, 1978), pp. 425-432. The quotations are on pp. 428, 430 and 432.

¹⁶ Steven I. Levine, "A New Look at American Mediation in Chinese Civil War: The Marshall Mission and Manchuria," in *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (Fall, 1979), p. 349.

¹⁷ Steven I. Levine, "Soviet-American Rivalry in Manchuria and the Cold War," in Chün-tu Hsüeh, ed., *Dimensions of China's Foreign Relations* (New York, 1977), p. 19.

Manchuria but also tried to mediate a coalition government between the Nationalists and the Communists in the hope that the communist "threat to China from within and without could be contained and even dispersed."¹⁸ However, in the second half of 1946, the United States finally discovered that it was impotent in influencing the course of the Chinese civil war, that the civil war in China nullified "its capacity to affect significantly the global balance of power" and that the Soviets had no intention to help the CCP further. As a result, the United States left China to run its own way, and China slipped back into the background again in American policy considerations.¹⁹ In short, to Levine, China's importance or unimportance to the United States was only meaningful in the context of the Soviet-American global contest for power and influence.

From the above brief description, it seems clear that all the historians under consideration blamed the disparagement of the Nationalists on their own moral depravity, political ineptitude, and military blunders. They also agreed on the basic goals of the postwar China policy of the United States. To stabilize the international order and to maintain peace in East Asia after the defeat of Japan required a strong, unified and friendly China. And the United States tried to create such a China under the leadership of Generalissimo Chiang through the mediation of Marshall but failed. They also emphasized that the limited resources and capabilities of the United States, the top concern of the Truman Administration with containing the Soviet aggression in Europe and the low standing of China in the American scale of priorities were among the factors which contributed to the failure of the American efforts in China and the reluctance of the United States to commit resources more fully to the support of the Nationalists. Beyond this, they differed on several points. For example, to Cohen and Schaller, the policy of partial aid to the Nationalist government was mainly a stalling device to appease the China

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

bloc whose opposition might hurt the adoption by Congress of the aid programs for Europe and to remove the possibility of being charged with responsibility in case of the collapse of China. On the other hand, the other historians downplayed or ruled out completely this factor in the formulation of the China Policy to which they accorded rather positive functions. But, whatever opinions they might have on the postwar policy of the United States toward China, no one of them criticized the government for adopting that policy. In general, all of them upheld the American policy toward the Nationalist government. Thus, in the final analysis, so far as the postwar policy of the United States toward the Nationalist China is concerned, the recent studies on postwar Sino-American relations follow essentially the official interpretation as given in the China White Paper and Acheson's letter of transmittal. No significant interpretative change took place.

III

The contrary is true in regard to the recent interpretations of the United States policy toward the Chinese Communists and their relations. From the studies of the last dozen years, the Chinese Communists emerge not only as objects of the historian's sympathies and admiration but also as the victims of American aggression, while the Nationalists were delivered into oblivion.

In recent writings of American diplomatic histories, the image of the Chinese Communists changed from that of the puppets of the Soviet Union to that of independent reformers full of spirit and confidence. As pictured by Dean Acheson in his letter of transmittal in the China White Paper, the Chinese Communists were aggressors serving the interests of the Soviet Union which "during the last 50 years has been most assiduous in its efforts to extend its control in the Far East." The Americans were helping the Chinese to resist communist aggression. In other words, in 1949, the United States regarded the Chinese Communists and the Soviet Communists as belonging to a monolithic group and helped China to resist

the communist scheme to seize power in China.²⁰ This view was inherited by the official historian Herbert Feis.²¹ But later, a change occurred to this official image. Historians no longer entertained the idea that the Chinese and Soviet Communists were bound by an ideology into a tight group. Instead, they came to believe that, though they might fall back on the Soviet Union for help in time of crisis, the Chinese Communists, whether painted as aggressive reformers or social revolutionaries, were not puppets of the Soviet Union. The two often pursued their own aims and adopted their own policies.²² For instance, Schaller demonstrated that the two communist mammoths were often at odds,²³ Donald S. Zagoria found "deep mutual mistrust and suspicion" in the relations between Mao and Stalin right up to the latter's death in 1953,²⁴ and Michael H. Hunt stressed Mao's effort to strike a balance between autonomy and dependency in relations with the USSR in 1947 and 1948.²⁵

Thus, within twenty years, the image of the same Chinese Communists from Yenan were transformed from aggressors and vicious enemies into admirable reformers and fighters, robust, confident, full of spirit and determined to carry their social revolution to a happy finish. At least this is the picture of the Chinese Communists that recent American historians have painted. Basing their portrayal on the favorable dispatches and reports of anti-Kuomintang or pro-communist journalists, scholars, missionaries, traders and American

²⁰ U.S. Department of State, *United States Relations with China, 1944-1949*, pp. iii-xvii.

²¹ Herbert Feis, *The China Tangle: The American Effort in China From Pearl Harbor to the Marshall Mission* (New York, 1965), pp. 377-378.

²² Cohen, *America's Response to China*, pp. 174, 182, and 207-208; Paul A. Varg, *The Closing of the Door: Sino-American Relations, 1936-1946* (East Lansing, Mich., 1973), pp. 110-111 and 117.

²³ Schaller, *The U.S. Crusade in China*, pp. 179-180, 266-268 and 294-295.

²⁴ Donald S. Zagoria, "Choice in the Postwar World (2): Containment and China," in Gati, ed., *Caging the Bear*, pp. 109-126.

²⁵ Michael H. Hunt, "Mao Tse-tung and the Issue of Accommodation with the United States, 1948-1950," in Borg and Heinrichs, eds., *Uncertain Years*, p. 209.

military or civilian officials who visited Yen-an,²⁶ almost every historian examined here described the Chinese Communists in rosy terms. The Communists were said to be "appealing to the aroused nationalistic feelings of peasants and students, and gaining the confidence of others by self-sacrifice." Capturing the feelings of all Chinese humiliated by imperialism for a century and determined to eliminate all foreign privileges in China, the Communist party became "the sole agent of historic redemption." Their patriotism and devotion to fighting the Japanese invaders even won the sympathy of Joseph Stilwell, a reactionary in domestic affairs. The Communist troops, well-disciplined, friendly, always ready to assist the people, were welcome everywhere they went and received enthusiastic support and help from the people in turn. To govern the people, the Communists practiced democracy. The three-third principle allowed every group, including landed interests and merchants, to freely participate in the local government.²⁷ In countless Chinese villages, the Communists won complete confidence and support by working with and for the humble peasants and small landholders. They reduced rents, stopped

²⁶ The best study of those Americans who had visited Yen-an and their reports during wartime is Kenneth E. Shewmaker, *Americans and Chinese Communists, 1927-1945: A Persuading Encounter* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1971). He shows clearly that their reporting on the Communists is unanimously favorable, while that on the Nationalists is critical. Although he argued that the unanimity was not because these writers were duped (p. 336), yet according to Warren W. Tozer, "The Foreign Correspondents' Visits to Yen-an in 1944: A Reassessment," in *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. XLI, No. 2 (May, 1972), pp. 207-224, of the foreign correspondents who visited Yen-an, two were either communists or strongly pro-communist; one was very sympathetic to the communist cause; three, though not pro-communists, were anti-Nationalist. Only one of them was pro-Kuomintang. Hunt, "Mao and Accommodation with the United States," in Borg and Heinrichs, eds., *Uncertain Years*, p. 195, wrote about the "full-scale purge of the government's China experts, whom Mao and his colleagues had carefully cultivated. Their disappearance from the China scene cost Mao sympathetic contacts through whom he had hoped to make his view known." Their reports or writings were surely more or less biased.

²⁷ Varg, *The Closing of the Door*, Chapter V, "The Rise of the Chinese Communists" amounts to a eulogy of the Chinese Communists. The quotations are on pp. 112, 113.

exploitation by landlords and usurers, and sponsored local defense groups, agricultural cooperatives, and educational programs.²⁸ In short, they were energetic, open, optimistic, efficient, self-sacrificing, and democratic fighters for both social justice and national liberation from the imperialist yoke. At least to one historian, "the values of the CCP were more compatible with American values than were those of the KMT."²⁹

The changed image of the Chinese Communists was bound to be accompanied by a revisionism in the interpretation of the United States relations with the Chinese Communists before they clashed on the battle grounds in Korea. If the Chinese Communists were indigenous revolutionaries independent of Soviet control and determined to fight gallantly against the Japanese invaders, a question would naturally be raised, why did the United States not seek cooperation with the Chinese Communists to fight the Japanese or to stabilize the situation in China after the war? To answer this question, the American historians dug into archives, memoirs, personal papers and other materials for clues and came up with different answers. The majority opinion was that from 1945 to 1949, the Chinese Communists had made several overtures of friendship to the Americans, but each time they were coldly turned down by the United States. So, contrary to the previous view, it was the United States, not the Chinese Communists, who shut the door to friendly relations between the two peoples.

The American historian's interest in the early contacts between the Chinese Communists and the United States began in the early 1970's. Although Tang Tso in 1963 and Seymour Topping in 1972 briefly mentioned the Stuart-Huang Hua meeting in Nanking in 1949, no historian seemed to take this episode seriously until the end of 1972.³⁰ From then on, the possibility of accommodation and its effects on the relations between the United States and the CCP before 1950 have

²⁸ Schaller, *The United States and China*, p. 94.

²⁹ Shewmaker, *Americans and Chinese Communists, 1927-1945*, p. 346.

³⁰ Zagoria, "Choices in the Postwar World (2): Containment and China," in Gati, ed., *Caging the Bear*, note 3 on p. 111.

become probably the most speculated and hotly debated subject in the history of Sino-American relations of the 1940's.

In 1972, there appeared simultaneously two articles dealing with the Chinese Communist proposals for accommodation in 1945 and 1949 respectively.³¹ Though dealing with two different episodes, the messages were the same. Had the United States responded favorably to these overtures, the history of United States-Chinese Communist relations might have been completely different from what it actually was. Tuchman speculated that if President Roosevelt had received and agreed to the mysterious proposal from Yen-an, and Mao had come to Washington and succeeded in persuading Roosevelt to cease unqualified support of the Nationalist government and to give some aid to Yen-an, then the Chinese civil war would have been curtailed, then there would have been no ill feelings between the Americans and the Chinese, then there would have been some kind of relations established between the two countries, and then there would have had no Korean War and Vietnam War. But unfortunately the beautiful vision was blown up by Patrick J. Hurley who was determined to help the Nationalist government and Roosevelt who was persuaded by Hurley to follow his policy.³² In like manner, Zagoria argued that given the deep mistrust and suspicion between Mao and Stalin during the 1930's and 1940's, had the United States accepted the overtures made by the CCP in the spring of 1949, it would have been highly possible to establish some kind of relations between the two countries at that time. In that case, "the Sino-Soviet split would have erupted much earlier. Moreover, in

³¹ Barbara W. Tuchman, "If Mao Had Come to Washington: An Essay in Alternatives," in *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 51, No. 1 (Oct., 1972), deals with the 1945 and 1946 bids, while Donald S. Zagoria, "Containment, China, and America," a paper presented to the American Political Science Association Convention on September 5, 1972, discussed the 1949 overture. This paper was rewritten into "Choices in the Postwar World (2): Containment and China," in Gati, ed., *Caging the Bear*, pp. 109-126.

³² Tuchman, "If Mao Had Come to Washington," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 51, No. 1 (Oct., 1972), pp. 45-46, 55-63.

such circumstances, the Chinese might not have intervened in the Korean War, Washington might not have felt compelled to fight in Vietnam . . . and the entire course of the postwar world might have been different." But the CCP was rebuffed again by President Truman and Acheson for three reasons. One was their fear in irritating the powerful pro-Nationalist China lobby in Congress which opposed the recognition of the Communist regime; the second was the fact that Mao did not openly break with Stalin; and the third was American officials' failure to perceive the deep rift between Mao and Stalin. The refusal of the United States forced Peking into Moscow's embrace.³³

Following the lead provided by these pioneer researches, Nancy Bernkopf Tucker saw in the Communist official attitude of restraint and tolerance toward American missionaries from 1948 to early 1950, and Warren W. Tozer in the liberal treatment by the Communist of the American-owned Shanghai Power Company from May 1949 to December 1950, signs of desire and willingness of the Chinese Communists to establish some kind of relationship with the United States. But President Truman's order to the Seventh Fleet to move to the Taiwan Strait on June 27, 1950, ended the toleration of the Chinese Communists for American missionaries.³⁴ The refusal of Washington to break its ties with the Nationalist government and its unwillingness to deal with the Chinese Communists except on its own terms destroyed the last bridge provided by the Shanghai Power Company for improving relations between the United States and the Communist regime in China. Because of this American intransigence, "the United States, not the CCP," according to Tozer, "was primarily responsible for

³³ Zagoria, "Choices in the Postwar World (2): Containment and China," Gati, ed., *Caging the Bear*, pp. 109, 125-126.

³⁴ Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, "An Unlikely Peace: American Missionaries and the Chinese Communists, 1948-1950," *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. XLV, No. 1, (February, 1976), pp. 97-116; Warren W. Tozer, "Last Bridge to China: The Shanghai Power Company, the Truman Administration and the Chinese Communists," *Diplomatic History*, Vol. I, No. 1, (Winter, 1977), pp. 64-78.

closing the door in China.”³⁵

However, by far the most comprehensive study of the accommodation between the United States and the CCP is by Michael H. Hunt. In what Levine called the “situational interpretation,”³⁶ Hunt said that in spite of his acceptance of communism and his overriding nationalism, Mao was not an ideologue. His “essential principles were broad enough and his sense of China’s and the CCP’s immediate needs was strong enough that he retained a degree of flexibility and adaptability to changing circumstances.” Thus, in order to strengthen the CCP’s postwar domestic position with American support, Mao tried in 1944-1946 to establish some kind of collaboration with the United States. In 1949 he again made overtures for accommodation to the United States for the purpose of balancing CCP’s complete dependency on the Soviet Union and getting from the United States technological and financial aid for the modernization of China. But the United States failed to respond positively to the CCP’s overtures. The United States would not end its support to the Nationalists and let the Chinese civil war run its own course. “Having thus been forced to rule out the possibility of accommodation with the United States” in the summer of 1949, there was only one alternative left for Mao—leaning toward the Soviet Union.³⁷

For Tuchman, Zagoria, Tozer, Tucker and Hunt, it was the United States that forced the CCP to close the door of China. However, their argument failed to convince at least Levine and Steven M. Goldstein. Levine pointed out that the basic reason for the failure to establish relations between the United States and the CCP at that time was the clash between the policy goals of the United States and those of the CCP. While the

³⁵ Tozer, “Last Bridge to China,” *Diplomatic History*, Vol. I, No. 1 (Winter, 1977), p. 64.

³⁶ Steven I. Levine, “Introduction” to Part IV, “Chinese Communist Policy,” Borg and Heinrichs, eds., *Uncertain Years*, p. 182.

³⁷ Michael H. Hunt, “Mao Tse-tung and the Issue of Accommodation with the United States, 1948-1950,” in Borg and Heinrichs, eds., *Uncertain Years*, pp. 185-233. The quotations are on pp. 196, 231.

American policy aimed at "minimizing the influence and power of the CCP," the CCP attempted to expand and finally to seize national power.³⁸ On the other hand, given the Soviet Union's small but crucial aid to the CCP, the prevailing desire among communists all over the world for a close tie with the Soviet Union, and the natural suspicion of the CCP, growing out of its ideology, of any American move to lure it away from the Soviet Union, he seriously doubted the validity of the basic assumption of those who deplored the loss of a chance for establishing some kind of relation between the United States and the CCP either in 1945 or in 1949 that the CCP disliked an alliance with the Soviet Union.³⁹ He believed, therefore, that even if the United States had pursued a more flexible policy in 1945-1946, Mao would not have adopted a different path in 1949.⁴⁰

While Levine discovered from the Cold War perspective the impossibility of an early accommodation between the United States and the CCP, Steven M. Goldstein stressed that the ideological preference of the CCP made a period of American-Chinese Communist confrontation almost unavoidable. In approaching international affairs, he said, the CCP followed the Leninist view of the world: revolutionary forces confronted reactionary and imperialist forces on a global scale. Goldstein argued that the adherence to the dichotomy of the world made it unlikely for the CCP to consider an alternative course to an alliance with the Soviet Union. However, within its primary relationship with the Soviet Union, the Communist regime in China might have sought temporary expedient cooperation with some imperialist powers against others. Thus, the CCP tried several times after 1944 to reach accommoda-

³⁸ Steven I. Levine, "Soviet-American Rivalry in Manchuria and the Cold War," Chün-tu Hsüeh, ed., *Dimensions of China's Foreign Relations* (New York, 1977), p. 37.

³⁹ Steven I. Levine, "Notes on Soviet Policy in China and Chinese Communist Perceptions, 1945-1950," Borg and Heinrichs eds., *Uncertain Years*, pp. 293-303.

⁴⁰ Levine, "Soviet-American Rivalry in Manchuria and the Cold War," in Chün-tu Hsüeh, ed., *Dimensions of China's Foreign Relations*, p. 38.

tions with the United States. But because the weight of past policies and perceptions, the pressures of domestic public opinion and international commitments of the CCP, all these feelers came to nothing.⁴¹ For both Levine and Goldstein, the CCP's split with the Soviet Union in the 1940's was not likely, and the United States, therefore, did not drive the CCP into the Soviet embrace.

Thus, as far as the relations of the United States with the Chinese Communists is concerned, the general view of American historians is now clear. Although there is no consensus on who was responsible for the closing of the door in China, and although opinions are diversified on details, the historians whose studies appeared during the last decade sympathetically described the Chinese Communists as patriotic, energetic, optimistic, democratic and nationalistic revolutionaries who attempted to remake Chinese society. In order to balance dependence on the Soviet Union and to get technological and economic help to modernize China, the CCP had tried several times in 1945-1949 to establish some kind of relationship with the United States. But each time they were rebuffed by the United States because of its blind anti-communism and commitment to the Nationalist government. Thus, according to most historians, it was the United States that drove the CCP into the Soviet camp.

IV

When the China mainland was taken over by the CCP, the State Department of the United States put forward an official explanation of what had happened in China during the 1940's to remove the possible charge that it was responsible for the loss of China. Since then, many events have taken place both within and without the United States — the split between the Soviet Union and the Communist regime in China, the disillu-

⁴¹ Steven M. Goldstein, "Chinese Communist Policy toward the United States: Opportunities and Constraints, 1944-1950," in Borg and Heinrichs eds., *Uncertain Years*, pp. 235-278.

sionment with the war in Vietnam, the rise of New Left, Nixon's doctrine of detente, Nixon's visit to Peiping, the normalization of relations between the United States and the Chinese Communist regime, and many others. All these events gradually helped soften the rigid Cold War mentality and change the general outlook of the Americans which in turn permitted historians to approach Sino-American relations of the late 1940's from a new perspective. At the same time, new source material including government documents and personal papers and memoirs became available for public use. These throw new light on old problems. As a result, a reinterpretation occurred in the study of the history of Sino-American relations in the late 1940's. However, judged against the official interpretation of 1949, this revisionist view which appeared during the last decade actually constitutes only a partial revision of old views. Nothing is altered so far as the relations between the Nationalist China and the United States is concerned. Historians still support the official position that the Nationalists brought about their own downfall by moral degradation and political ineptitude and that although the United States tried its best to help, saving China from communist rule was beyond its capabilities. What is new is the view of the relation between the Chinese Communist regime and the United States. In the first place, those historians who dealt with the history of Sino-American relations of the whole decade of the 1940's shifted their attention from the relations between the Nationalist government and the United States to those between the Chinese Communists and the United States. In the second place, the official stance concerning the role and image of the Chinese Communists was abandoned. Instead of vicious enemies, the Communists were described as indigenous sincere revolutionaries who aimed at establishing a just, democratic and prosperous new China. Instead of being the puppets of the Soviet Union, the Chinese Communists, to balance their dependence on the Soviet Union, had tried to accommodate with the United States. But each time their proposals were refused. So, instead of the CCP, the United States was responsi-

ble for forcing the CCP to shut the door of China. Putting together, the emerging pattern in recent interpretations of the Sino-American relations of the late 1940's involves two components. One is traditional, the other new. The beneficiaries of this revisionism are obviously the Chinese Communists.

It is needless to say that just like any prevailing historical interpretation in any period of time, the current interpretation of Sino-American relations of the late 1940's is one-sided. Different opinions on certain problems may be a matter of judgment. But impartiality in the use of source material is supposed to be a professional obligation. An examination of the material consulted by the historians shows that most of them fell short of this standard. All the historians consulted in this paper felt no restraint in consulting and quoting Mao's works freely or some works published in Hong Kong under pseudonyms,⁴² or personal papers, memoirs and oral histories of men like Li Tsung-Jen. But, perhaps with the exception of Levine, no one deemed it necessary to consult the documents of the Nationalist government and Kuomintang or the works of the late President Chiang Kai-shek. No one mentioned his *Russia in China* and only Cohen alluded to his *China's Destiny*.⁴³ Few historians referred to histories written by pro-Nationalist writers. Their reluctance to use this kind of material is obvious. The historian, we are taught, just like the judge, is bound by his professional standard to hear the pleas of both sides; otherwise he is biased.

⁴² For example, Tucker, "Nationalist China's Decline and Its Impact on Sino-American Relations, 1949-1950," in Borg and Heinrichs, eds., *Uncertain Years*, note 25 on p. 144; note 27 on p. 145.

⁴³ Cohen, *America's Response to China*, p. 162.

近年來美國學者對一九四〇年代後期 中美關係的新解釋

孫 同 勳

摘 要

在本文中作者檢討了自一九七〇年以來若干美國學者對一九四〇年代後期中美關係的解釋。他發現由於世事的演變與新資料的公開，美國學者對此一時期中美交涉的看法與當時美國的官方立場已有所不同。一九四九年美國政府在對華外交白皮書中指責國民政府貪污無能，應為大陸的赤化負完全責任。中共則被斥為蘇俄的走狗，為擴張共產主義，而奪權叛國。阻止大陸淪陷非美國力所能及，因此美國不應為中國大陸的赤化負任何責任。這一官方解釋大致為戰後十餘年間的美國學者所接受。但最近十餘年來的美國學者漸有不同的看法。他們雖然仍採白皮書之說，認為國民政府應為其在大陸的失敗負責，不應怨別人；但在討論美國與中共的關係時，他們却一反白皮書的責難態度，而否認中共是蘇俄的傀儡。他們甚至強調直到一九四九年七月以前，中共曾數度企圖與美國建立關係，但皆為美國所拒。所以中共最後終於採取親蘇反美的「一面倒」政策是美國的頑固與威脅所迫。綜合而論，中共顯然是這一解釋上新轉變的受惠者。但作者指出，無論就取材與立場而言，這些美國學者都表現極強的偏見。他們的看法並非公正持平之論。