THE PRESS AND FOREIGN POLICY: A STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BASED ON U.S.-CHINA RELATIONS 1935-1950

By

SUSAN (MacFARLAND) Fronterhouse

Bachelor of Arts

Iowa Wesleyan College

Mt. Pleasant, Iowa

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Thesis Approved:

Thesis Adviser

Dean of the Graduate College

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PREFACE

The American press has an obligation to provide the public with information about foreign policy decisions. Traditionally, journalists also offer editorial comment concerning policy developments. The purpose of this research has been to examine the significance of the press as an influence in foreign policy decisions. U.S. foreign policy regarding China during the 1930s and 1940s has been used as a case study because American journalists did try to influence policy during that period. The study has been enlightening in terms of providing an illustration of the impact of journalists on policy during an emotional political debate.

The Oklahoma State University Political Science Department has been most supportive of my work during the course of this study. I wish especially to thank Professor Harold V. Sare for the encouragement and advice I so needed, and for sharing his expertise on the Far East with me. Thanks also to Dr. William M. Randle, Jr., of Phillips University's Language and Communications Department, for starting me off in an exciting new direction in life.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Louis Wirth said in 1947, following the Hitler years, that "We live in an era when control over the media constitutes perhaps the most important source of power in the social universe."[1] A 1976 UNESCO press study analyzing the positive and negative political effects of cross-cultural broadcasting, states:

> At the heart of the debate is the realization that communication is power and that control over the mechanisms and content of a nation's communication system enables vested interests, be they public or private, to control certain aspects of a society's decision-making apparatus as well as the cultural and political symbols that bind a particular society together.[2]

Most twentieth century revolutionaries appear to agree that in order to control a population, it is necessary to control the media. A standard first step in a modern revolution is to take over the media. In ongoing authoritarian regimes, the media becomes a vital tool used in maintaining the status quo. In the Information Age, careful use of the media by any government is crucial throughout its stages of development. According to this view, to control information is to control society. If this is true, then theoretically modern totalitarianism might not have been possible without

the development of mass communications technology.

While most analysts agree that some sort of relationship exists between politics and the press, there is considerable disagreement concerning the significance of that relationship. Opinions range from those who agree that the impact is direct and crucial, to those who claim the impact is minimal. The varied and often contradictory opinions are based on massive research into how media effects society generally and politics specifically. So abundant is the research that one of the researchers, Joseph T. Klapper, wrote in 1960 that:

> The literature has reached that stage of profusion and disarray, characteristic of all proliferating disciplines, at which researchers and research administrators speak wistfully of establishing centers where the accumulating data might be sifted and stored. The field has grown to the point at which its practitioners are periodically asked by other researchers to attempt to assess, in short, "what we know about the effects of mass communication."[3]

Klapper views with sympathy the assessment of fellow media analyst Bernard Berelson, whose "moody conclusion" in 1948 was that:

> . . . some kinds of communication on some kinds of issues, brought to the attention of some kinds of people under some kinds of conditions, have some kinds of effects.[4]

Klapper himself is more optimistic, proposing that "we already know a good deal more about communication than we thought we did, and are on the verge of being able to proceed toward more abundant and more fruitful knowledge."[5]

Klapper's classic research based on more than 1,000 studies between 1930 and 1960 brought him to the conclusion that the sociological effects of the media are minimal. He does suggest that some generalizations can be made as a result of research analysis. He believes, for example, that media tends to reinforce, rather than to change opinions in a free market society (where media reflects mass tastes). Opinion leaders expose themselves to media more, and influence the masses more than media does directly. The media, he believes, does influence opinion development on new issues, where no opinion previously existed. Personal influence is often more crucial than media influence when both are present, in Klapper's view. One-sided presentations are most effective in persuading less educated audiences. Repetition is sometimes effective, he says, except when it is overdone and blatantly propagandistic.[6]

In the 1960s research into the political effects of modern communications technology continued apace, with major contributions emerging from such notable researchers as Daniel Lerner, Samuel Huntington, Karl Deutsch, Lucian Pye, Wilbur Schramm, Ithiel de Sola Pool and others. Their conclusions were by no means unanimous.

Karl Deutsch wrote in 1963 that "It might be profitable to look upon government somewhat less as a problem of power and somewhat more as a problem of steering . . . and steering (in the political world) is decisively a matter of communication."[7] Huntington and Lerner suggested that "the revolution of rising frustrations, can be attributed in many cases to modern

mass communications systems. A population, they implied, can have its human rights ignored or violated by a government and the people will not revolt unless they are made to perceive that their situation is not normal and that there are ways to change it. Perceptions of inadequacy in government in the twentieth century are linked, these analysts say, with the mass media.[8]

Schramm and Lerner refer to communications as:

> a kind of temperature-controlling agent that can raise the social temperature, for example, by raising expectations when the developing economy is not ready to satisfy them. It can also reduce temperature by providing explanation, holding out reward, speeding up development, promoting change . . . and above all by making the people as well as the leaders heard.[9]

Lerner suggests that "mass communications serves as 'the great multiplier' in development, the device that can spread the new ideas, attitudes and knowledge more rapidly than ever before."[10]

Frederick Frey points out, however, that while media can be a stimulant it can also be a sedative. It can arouse feelings of frustrated expectations, but it can also provide people with an escape from reality . . . a retreat into fantasyland.[11] This view implies that a government might effectively protect itself from mass political dissent by giving every citizen a color television set. Frey noted in 1966 that the evidence as he saw it in developing nations showed that the phenomenon of rising frustrations existed among the elites, not among the masses, and that the elites' frustrations could not be attributed exclusively to expanded communications.[12]

Walter Lippmann agrees that the media plays a role in development generally, but he, too, refuses to place the blame for socio-political problems or credit for solutions solely on the shoulders of the media. He describes the press as:

> . . . the beam of a searchlight that moves restlessly about, bringing one episode and then another out of darkness into vision. Men cannot do the work of the world by this light alone. They cannot govern society by episodes, incidents, and eruptions. It is only when they work by a steady light of their own, that the press, when it is turned upon them, reveals a situation intelligible enough for a popular decision.[13]

Lippmann concludes that it is because governments (as well as schools, churches and newspapers) must make decisions based on limited information that they fail to make wise decisions in problem solving. Lippmann agrees, too, with Frey, that "a preference for the curious trivial as against the dull important, and the hunger for sideshows and three-legged calves"[14] is a primary human defect that effects good government.

In Lippmann's view, "The trouble lies deeper than the press, and so does the remedy."[15] The problem lies in our society's whole system of gathering information and making decisions and delegating responsibility. All too often, Lippmann laments, the decision-making process looks like "the mere collisions of the blind."[16] In his opinion:

> The troubles of the press, like the troubles of representative government, be it territorial or functional, like the troubles of industry, be it capitalist, cooperative or communist, go back to a common source: to the failure of self-governing

> people to transcend their casual experience and their prejudice, by inventing, creating, and organizing a machinery of knowledge.[17]

One of the problems in today's world of complicated politics and complicated communications systems is the problem of transmitting accurate, unbiased information from the source to the public via the press. Harold Laski, in his introduction to Robert Desmond's 1937 book, The Press and World Affairs, discusses how hard it is for the public to learn the truth about foreign affairs from "free press" journalists. He outlines four points that need to be understood by the average newspaper reader:

> 1. That there is no government in the world not engaged in "weighting" the news in its own interest;
>
> 2. That there are many news-gathering organizations, some of which add their own bias to what they report;
>
> 3. That correspondents have what Mr. Justice Holmes called their "inarticulate major premises" which necessarily color the reports they send; and
>
> 4. That the editorial offices have also their own special values to contribute to the work of selection and presentation of news.[18]

Laski was positive in his assessment of efforts by post World War I journalists to keep the public honestly informed, but his judgment of "the immense machinery" controlling those journalists, i.e., the powerful news services (and the likes of W. R. Hearst) was damning: " . . . the problem of the foreign news service," he wrote, "lies at the heart of the major problems of the modern state." He concludes that:

> The press, in a sentence, is a fundamental weapon in the social conflict, national and international, in which we are all, despite ourselves, combatants. We shall have truthful news when untruthful news does not pay, but it will not pay only when the major causes of social conflict, national and international, have been removed.[19]

Until that happy day, the assumption is that although journalists may attempt to report the news honestly, their governments, publishers, or other powerful interest groups or individuals, will limit the public's access to straight, unbiased news. And then, of course, there is the problem of getting the public to care one way or another.

While apathy can be viewed as a problem, extremism is often a more critical one, and in the twentieth century extremism is a major concern in international relations. Many analysts agree that nationalism is perhaps one of the strongest forces affecting international relations today. It is an issue that can rouse otherwise apathetic people into action. The political, ethnic and religious forces that combine to create nationalistic ferver have contributed to revolutionary tendencies in many developing nations. While these forces might not be brand new forces in the world, we now see and hear about them more clearly and more often through the modern media. The impact is stronger; factions can attract more adherents and more enemies more readily than before. So while communications technology has the potential for aiding in unification, perceived fanaticism can lead to greater fragmentation, and to complications in the establishment of positive relations among and within nations.

When a new regime assumes leadership in a new country, one of its tasks is to win the allegiance of its own people and the respect of other nations. The press is usually used in that endeavor, especially in nations where the press in controlled by the state, but also in nations where the press is supposedly "free." A leader who understands the psychology of communication and motivation can reap valuable benefits from a well-managed mass media system when the nation is new and citizens are impressionable, and when observers are forming first-impression opinions of the country.

While modern communications technology may have made it easier for totalitarian governments to develop, then, the same technology has made it more difficult, according to some analysts, for democratic governments to function efficiently. This is said to be especially true in the case of military endeavors. Numerous problems between the military and the media are cited to substantiate this assessment. Korea and Vietnam were examples of the problem; U.S. involvement in Central America and in the Mid-East offer further evidence. A most recent example was Grenada, where the media had extremely limited access to information about what was going on there. The media's expectation of access to military information, then, can create real problems in a democratic system. From the media's viewpoint, the problem is knowing where the law draws the line between public access rights and national security needs; between the public's right to know (through the media) and the military's right to withhold information that would threaten national security.

In a world plagued by extreme right-wing authoritarian governments on one hand and left-wing totalitarians on the other, it is crucial that U.S. foreign policy decisions concerning those countries are based on information that is as accurate and unbiased as possible. Similarities between the two wings can make it hard to tell which is which, and then, which is worse. Distinguishing between them and deciding who to support is a major challenge for foreign policy decision makers in a free world. Furthermore, U.S. citizens get their information from a variety of news sources that have their own biases. This makes it difficult to know which policies they should encourage their representatives to support.

Western leaders must often wish that moderation were more common among new emerging nations and that revolutions in older cultures would more often be won by middle-of-the road regimes instead of by extremists. Unfortunately, new nations often emerge out of extreme oppression, and therefore tend toward extreme solutions to problems. When extremist tendencies combine with administrative inexperience, multiple problems can result in a young nation. If assistance in solving those problems is sought from outside sources, those "outsiders" must make foreign policy decisions concerning the pros and cons of giving aid of one sort or another to that particular nation at that particular time.

Keeping track of and comprehending the dramatic changes occurring during the first half of the twentieth century had to be a challenge for both politicians and journalists. As

communications technology was rapidly developing and the ability of the media to report on world events was improving, international relations were becoming more and more complex. While the old colonialism was coming to an end in India and Africa, and ancient empires were dying in the Orient and in East Europe, a new kind of imperialism was threatening both Eastern and Western hemispheres, and revolution was becoming commonplace in small and large nations in the northern and southern hemispheres.

Is there a connection between the two phenomena? Has modern communications technology contributed to the rise of revolution and other international problems? Does the media act as a stimulus to political activism, or does it function as a narcotic that keeps the public preoccupied and sedated in a fantasyland, while in the real world politicians go about their business? Do journalists influence political decision making, in effect sharing responsibility in the establishment of foreign policy? These are the questions to be explored in this research.

It is the thesis of this paper that the media can and often does play a crucial role in a nation's development both internally and externally. That is to say, it helps disseminate information to citizens and leaders inside the country as well as outside, and can help create either good will or ill will, again both internally and externally. The impact of the media is probably much greater when a nation is new, or is under new leadership. This is true

concerning both citizens within the nation and foreign observers. As a new nation matures, the media is likely to become less powerful as a generator of opinions. Or, in an established culture, the media will have an impact in establishing opinions on an issue when that issue is new. It will have a greater impact upon the less educated than on the better educated. In other words, the press does have power, but it is a limited power.

The case to be studied will be U.S.-China relations and development of U.S. foreign policy toward China during the 1930s and 1940s. The work of American journalists who actually lived and worked in China and who wrote both articles and books will be studied, and an evaluation made concerning what kind of impact their work had on foreign policy decisions concerning the U.S. and China. Journalists to be studied will include Agnes Smedley, Anna Louise Strong, Edgar and Helen Foster Snow, and Theodore White. In addition to examining the influence of these American journalists on American decisions concerning China, the way in which Chinese leaders responded to and used American journalists will also be investigated.

By studying the interaction between journalists and political leaders in China and the U.S., it is hoped that some contribution will be made toward an improved understanding of the impact of media on one aspect of political life, namely, foreign policy. The China-U.S. situation during the period in question provides an interesting case study, for some of the journalists, who saw first hand what was going on in China, did try very hard to influence U.S. policy toward China. Not only did they fail

to persuade key decision makers to follow their advice, they were later castigated for their views. Further, there is now some question concerning whether it might not have been wiser to follow their advice. The consensus among most analysts seems to be that U.S. foreign policy during this period concerning this part of the world is a good example of bad policy. It will be the purpose of this research to examine the extent to which the media contributed to that state of affairs.

FOOTNOTES

1. Richard Fagan, Politics and Communications (Boston, 1966), p. 74.

2. Eduardo Contreras, et al., Cross-Cultural Broadcasting (Paris, 1976), p. 36.

3. Doris Graber, Media Power in Politics (Washington, D.C., 1984), p. 23.

4. Ibid., p. 25.

5. Ibid.

6. Joseph T. Klapper, The Effects of Mass Communication (New York, 1960), p. 131.

7. Karl Deutsch, Nerves of Government... Models of Political Communication and Control (London, 1963), p. ix.

8. Ithiel de Sola Pool, Handbook of Communication (Chicago, 1973), p. 386.

9. Wilbur Schramm, Mass Media and Naitonal Development (Stanford, 1964), pp. 247-248.

10. Ibid., p. 37.

11. Pool, p. 386.

12. Ibid.

13. Graber, p. 79.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid., p. 80.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.

18. Robert W. Desmond, The Press and World Affairs (New York, 1937), p. xxiii.

19. Ibid., p. xxv.

CHAPTER II

U.S. PRINT JOURNALISTS IN CHINA

At the end of World War II, H. L. Mencken, himself a journalist, referred to journalists who had covered the war as "typewriter statesmen" who had all too willingly succumbed to the military establishment's request for voluntary media self-censorship of certain war news. Most journalists, he claimed, wrote either irrelevant, sentimental human interest war features, or they wrote biased war stories meant to be "acceptable" rather than factual. In Mencken's view, historians would find very little of value in the news reports of the war.[1]

Mencken's cynicism concerning coverage of the war was by no means unanimous. Other analysts considered that World War II was the most thoroughly and accurately reported war in history. Others, inspired by the McCarthy-led ruckus over the politics of wartime journalists, claimed many of them were Communists or Communist sympathizers. Some analysts think that the whole question concerning the attitude of the press had little significance since their impact on the political process was insignificant.

The crux of the matter does appear to be whether journalists wield enough power for the question to matter at all. Was the press influential enough in the development of U.S. foreign

policy toward China to warrant concern? McCarthy answered in the affirmative and clearly felt the question was of great concern. Others felt McCarthianism itself was the greater threat.

Edgar and Helen Foster Snow, Agnes Semdley, Anna Louise Strong and Theodore White were among the American journalists who cared a great deal about their country's foreign policy toward China. They made their concern evident in their books and articles, which were based on first-hand, on-site observations among the revolutionaries. Imperialist China had neglected the welfare, freedom and security of the population. These journalists perceived that the KMT were being unsuccessful in correcting those problems and that the Maoists appeared to be on the right track. The Snows, Smedley, Strong, White and others wrote about the corruption of the KMT and the good work of the CCP. They were considered by some of their contemporaries and by some historians to be either naive or knowing conspirators with the Communists.

In addition to writing stories home about their impressions, these journalists also attempted to sway political leaders as foreign policy decisions were made concerning China. Anna Louise Strong, for example, visited Harry Dexter White, then Assistant U.S. Treasurer, and Eleanor Roosevelt, to discuss a pending loan to Chiang Kai-shek in the early 1940s. The visit is reported to have been successful in reducing that loan and in limiting its usefulness as military money.[2]

Agnes Smedley was known as a passionate supporter of the Chinese Communist cause. Although she said she never joined

the Communist Party, because she disdained dogma, she was an overt supporter. Her books and articles urged U.S. support for Mao Tse-tung and documented the atrocities of the KMT.

Edgar Snow was the American journalist best known for his expertise on China. His classic Red Star Over China was the first significant American documentation of developments in China during the early years when the Communists were on the rise. Few among reviewers criticized that book negatively, but some did criticize his later books and articles as dangerously naive about the real purposes of the Chinese Communists. During the 1940s and 1950s Snow continued to write favorably about the CCP and unfavorably about the KMT.

On the other side were media moguls such as W. R. Hearst and Henry Luce who avidly supported Chiang Kai-shek and the KMT, and who wrote horror stories about the CCP. These men were not just journalists, however. They were extremely wealthy and influential businessmen heavily involved in the political economics of U.S.-China relationships.

In spite of U.S. support for the KMT, the CCP succeeded in pushing the KMT off the mainland into Taiwan. Americans who had sided with the KMT blamed the defeat on U.S. diplomats and journalists who had argued against a stronger U.S. commitment to the Nationalists. Many of those "sympathizers" were condemned and punished under Senator Joseph McCarthy's leadership in the 1950s.

While American journalists are no longer being brought to trial for political bias in their reporting, the question of

the power of the press is still a critical one. The public is often wary of press bias and political leaders are still suspicious about the intentions of journalists . . . especially "investigative" ones. Only journalists themselves seem to consider that they are the link between public officials and the public. For the rest, journalists still tend to become scapegoats when policies fail or when the news is negative. It happened concerning China during the first half of this century; it continues to happen on occasion today.

Hans Morgenthau wrote in his 1963 forward to Tang Tsou's America's Failure in China, 1941-1950, that "The communization of China has indeed been the greatest single defeat the foreign policy of the U.S. has suffered."[3] Ever since that defeat in 1949, much has been written about how the U.S. "lost" China. Morgenthau reminds us, however, that China never was ours to lose, and he points out that the tendency to be unrealistic and possessive in foreign policy thinking can be dangerous. It was our failure to realistically assess the situation in China during the 1930s and 1940s that led to our defeat there, in Morgenthau's view.

"Pernicious myths" and certain "national characteristics" were involved in our China failure, according to Morgenthau. He discusses the neurotic and psychotic symptoms that were evidence of our frantic effort to maintain the myth that China somehow belonged to America and was "lost" as a result of a Communist conspiracy. He praises Tang's work for revealing:

> . . . the strands of American policy which led to

> the communization of China and its emergence as a great power. What is revealed is something which is not peculiar to our China policy but has been characteristic of many of our other foreign policies as well: The simultaneous pursuit of contradictory policies and the commitment to ends which could not be achieved with the means employed. The defects of our China policy reveal a style of foreign policy whose roots are embedded in the character of the nation.[4]

Naivete is a major part of that American "character" that led to disaster in China, in Tang's view. In 1963 his assessment was that:

> One could hardly find a more sobering example of the tragic results produced by a policy of good intentions and high ideals which lacked the foundation of a correlative estimate of self-interest and which was not supported by military power equal to the noble tasks.[5]

Both American citizens and decision-makers, according to Tang, were extremely naive about both Communism and democracy during the years in question. He examines the problem as it is reflected in the work of writers such as Edgar Snow, Owen Lattimore, Freda Utley (before her conversion), Gunther Stein, Walter Judd and Lawrence Rosinger. While he concludes that these writers are not to be blamed for the China debacle, because they are simply reflections of the American national character, he does see a link between their books and articles and American foreign policy decisions. Some writers, he claims, "failed to discharge their function of providing intellectual leadership."[6] Although _Red Star Over China_ was exempted from Tang's criticism, he does cite Edgar Snow as one of those failing to provide that kind of leadership. Citing two Snow

articles in the Saturday Evening Post ("Sixty Million Lost Allies," June 10, 1944, and "Must China Go Red?", May 12, 1945), Tang describes Snow's view of the Chinese Communists as reflecting "the increasing confusion in the U.S. over the nature of Chinese Communism."[7] According to Tang's interpretation, Snow believed the Chinese Communists were not "really Communists," and finds Snow both confused and contradictory on the issue of Chinese-Russian ties.

Tang also uses the writing of Freda Utley in 1939 to illustrate the climate of opinion in the U.S. at the time, which influenced the perceptions of even those who later became the "staunchest advocates of the Nationalist cause."[8] Tang evaluates Utley as one of those who should have been least likely to succumb to naive thinking:

> If any Western observer in China could have detected the true nature of the Chinese Communist movement at the time, such a person would have been Freda Utley. She had been a member of the British Communist Party, married a Russian citizen, lived for six years in Moscow, worked in a research agency of the Soviet government, and had become completely disillusioned with Communism.[9]

Before her disillusionment, her 1939 book, China at War, reflected the wishful thinking of American "innocents abroad." She was one of the many journalists during the period who referred to the Chinese Communist Party as "a party of social reformers and patriots" and Chinese Communism as "a movement of peasant emancipation."[10]

It is interesting to note that Tang makes only one brief,

unanalyzed reference to the pro-Nationalist press exemplified by Henry Luce and his Time-Life-Fortune magazine. Luce is referred to as "a China-born son of a missionary whose influence on China policy was by no means negligible." No evaluation is made concerning Luce as a reflector of American attitudes or of Luce as an influence on American China policy.

Arch Steele, referred to by John Maxwell Hamilton in the January 1982 edition of The Quill as "generally regarded as one of the most objective reporters in China at the time (1930s),"[11] points out that very little was known about the struggle between the Chinese Nationalists and the Chinese Communists until Edgar Snow's Red Star Over China was published in 1938. Steele is quoted as saying:

> The propaganda was provided by the Nationalists on the one hand, who painted the Communists as bandits and murderers who ate their children for breakfast, and, on the other, by Communist apoligists (like Agnes Smedley and Anna Louise Strong) who painted them as saints.[12]

Not only did the book influence how Westerners viewed the Chinese Communists, the Chinese-language edition of Red Star helped shape how the Chinese viewed Mao and the Communists. Harvard Professor John K. Fairbank is quoted in the article as saying that "considered in its effect on world history, Red Star is the most important of all historical studies on modern China."[13]

A review of the literature on China during the 1930s and 1940s confirms the dearth of objective reporting. The KMT/CCP controversy became so heated that it was difficult for any

journalist to maintain objectivity. Developments in Yenan sounded too good; the situation in Nanking sounded too bad.

American reporter Jack Belden, who had been in China in the 1930s, then left to return in the late 1940s, went into the CCP headquarters in Yenan to observe developments there. When he returned to Nanking, convinced that the revolution being led from Yenan was "the decisive factor in the war,"[14] it was difficult to convince his fellow journalists or military or diplomatic personnel that anything of significance was happening there. No one at that time was ready to believe that the Communists were capable of carrying on any kind of military effort in North China. Belden finally concluded that the journalists were simply afraid to get involved in the issue. "Consciously and unconsciously, some of these men were afraid of becoming tainted with a politically pink tinge."[15] One reporter told Belden:

> You've been away so long, you don't know what it's like in the States. You either is (a Red) or you isn't. What you tell me may all be true, but I'm not going to report it.[16]

Belden was to find the warning to be sound. He sent two articles about the Communists to an American magazine and they were initially bought by the magazine with high praise for their quality. However the McCarthy "hysteria" then ensued, and the publisher cancelled the articles, criticizing Belden as identifying himself with "mob violence."[17]

Belden goes on to describe the connection between American partisan politics and the conflict between CCP and KMT

supporters. Belden's view is that the Republican party, under the influence of both the publishing group headed by Henry Luce, and the Scripps-Howard newspapers, used the situation to attack the democratic administration. These powerful men, Belden says, got together with Chiang Kai-shek to use the threat of Russian intervention in the Chinese revolution as a scapegoat technique. Their ploy was to tell the public that the problem in China was the result not of Chiang's corrupt or inefficient regime, but was caused by Russian interference. The method was an attempt not only to cover up Chiang's problems, but to convince the American Congress that American dollars were needed to help Chiang fight the Russian/Chinese Communist conspiracy.

The ploy was effective, according to Belden. The foreign correspondents in China "formed a very ineffective force in getting the facts about the Far East home to the American public," in his view.[18] Henry Luce's Time and Life magazines, "while often disregarding their own correspondents' dispatches, demanded aid to Chiang."[17] Former American Ambassador to Moscow William C. Bullitt, a foreign policy spokesman for the Republican party, was placed in China as Life magazine correspondent, but in reality led a formidable pro-Chiang propaganda war. The situation, Belden remarks, made it "difficult for any correspondent to point out the major reasons why Chiang Kai-shek was being defeated."[20]

In his 1979 book, The United States and China in the Twentieth Century, Michael Schaller discusses the "uninformed-

misinformed" issue as it affected American leadership. He pictures President Franklin D. Roosevelt as a man who, "like many men, desired reality to conform to his plan for it."[21] Following the failure of a coalition government to develop between the Communists and Nationalists, Roosevelt's plan was to win the war against Japan by supporting Chiang Kai-shek. Unfortunately, Schaller says, "FDR never fully realized that in his effort to forge a new order in China he had allied America to a decaying government . . . "[22] Schaller agrees with Belden that FDR's illusions were vividly illustrated and reinforced by the Henry Luce publishing empire which avidly supported Chiang, placing him and his wife on six Time and Life covers in 1945. At the same time, however, increasing numbers of Americans in China were reporting on the reality of what was going on in China. Schaller points out that while "literally thousands of reports from journalists, diplomats and military officers" tried to persuade Roosevelt to change his course, the president and his advisors had become "prisoners of their own ignorance and optimism." They had set their course and had become "unable or unwilling to alter that course."[23]

It is Schaller's view that only by disregarding the "inspired" news stories from the White House and the Time covers of Chiang and his wife could one discover "the tragedy of wartime China."[24] Schaller uses the work of Theodore White as an example of the kind of realistic reporting coming out of China that was basically ignored by the American public and

American decision makers. Our political leaders continued to believe in and support an image they had helped to create . . . an image of the KMT that Schaller claims had no basis in reality. The reality as pictured by on-site observers was a KMT "Lacking virtually all principles save for anticommunism and a dedication to greed."[25]

Schaller points out that when the U.S. joined the war against Japan in 1941, there had been little contact between American officials and the Chinese Communists. He refers to the handful of American journalists and adventurers such as Snow, T. A. Bisson, Agnew Smedley, Evans Carlson and Anna Louise Strong, who had journeyed to Communist territory and written favorable reports on what they saw. But such reports had little impact on mass opinion or government policy, in Schaller's view.

Schaller describes the 1944 Dixie Mission into Yenan and the glowing reports about the Communists in the North China headquarters. He discusses the positive response expressed by journalists, diplomats and military observers concerning the work of the Communists. Then he analyzes the story of Patrick Hurley, Roosevelt's Ambassador to China, who persuaded the President to follow his advice instead of everyone else's. Hurley's mission to help create a coalition government in China had failed, whereupon Hurley advised Roosevelt to support the KMT because the Communists, in his view, were simply not a significant entity. That kind of response to the China situation illustrates the kind of inaccurate

perception that Schaller, Tang, Morgenthau and others blame on American naivete and ignorance concerning China, Communism and democracy during the period.

Anthony Kubek refutes the view that American journalist had little impact on U.S. policy toward China. He claims in his 1963 book, How the Far East Was Lost: American Policy and the Creation of Communist China, 1941-1949, that those journalists who were sympathetic toward the Chinese Communists played a major role in the CCP's good reputation in the U.S.[24] Kubek, however, is unsympathetic in his response to these writers. He does not call them naive; he describes them as part of a conscious propaganda effort on the part of Russian, Chinese and American Communists or Communist sympathizers. He cites a report from the American Embassy in China dated January 23, 1941, concerning the positive relations between the Chinese Communists and the press:

> The Department will, of course, be aware that the Chinese Communists have hitherto had and still appear to have a good press abroad. They have exercised much subtlety and skill in their relations with foreign press correspondents, especially Americans.[27]

In his report to the State Department, the Ambassador (Johnson) points especially to Edgar Snow as:

> Perhaps the one American who has done more than any other to portray and to explain the Chinese Communists and their principles and objectives in a favorable light.[28]

Other journalists who, in Kubek's words, "colorfully

dramatized" the CCP and made them known in a positive way to millions of Americans and Europeans, included Randall Gould, Anna Louise Strong, Agnes Smedley, and Major E. F. Carlson, who "perseveringly and sympathetically explained the role that the Communists have played and continue to play in China":

> It seems not unlikely that the favorable foreign press which the Chinese Communists enjoy is ascribable to a variety of reasons: the Communists encourage contact; they utilize propaganda skillfully; they are adept in seeing that their versions of incidents and problems are promptly placed before correspondents and other third-power nationals of consequence. Moreover they are in a sense the "underdog;" as the chief opposition party they are often recipients of sympathy. They are poor, young, enthusiastic. More important, they have a definite program and they are adroit in describing it.[29]

Kubek also quotes John P. Davies, Jr., who disagreed with the Ambassador's assessment. It was Davies' opinion that the Nationalists lacked foreign advocates "because of such larger factors as the obvious failings of and corruption within the Central Government and the crusading appeal of the Communist movement."

Kubek labels the large number of pro-CCP books as a "campaign unequalled in history" sponsored by Kremlin agents to spread lies about Chiang Kai-shek. Not only did the campaign produce a "bumper crop of books on China and the Far East" that pictured the Reds in a favorable light, but they were also then reviewed by what Kubek labels "Communist sympathizers." Writer Owen Lattimore was one of those sympathetic reviewers named "architect of our Far Eastern policy" by

Senator Joseph McCarthy. Kubek disagrees with the "architect" label but does call him "at the very least its (the CCP's chief propagandist."[30]

Other journalists/writers blamed for "the loss of China" by Kubek include Gunther Stein, Harrison Forman, Theodore White, Annalee Jacoby, and John Fairbank. Says Kubek:

> The tally is alsmot endless . . . The record shows that numerous authors deluded the American people about China from 1937 to 1950. Books on the Far East became among the most effective avenues for insidious propaganda which affected our attitude toward the Nationalist Chinese in favor of the Reds. The book reviewer then played a significant role because he stood between the public and the publisher's products. . . . These books colored the news and opinions in the American press and in pulpits, classrooms, and political organizations all over the country. The general theme was that the Chinese Communists were not real Communists but mere "agrarian reformers" independent of Moscow.[31]

In his chapter on Communist sympathizers in the State Department, Kubek refers to Treasury Secretary Morgenthau's diaries which include reference to Anna Louise Strong. He tells about Strong's trip from Yenan to Washington for interviews with Eleanor Roosevelt and Assistant Treasury Department Secretary Harry Dexter White in an effort to break up a then-pending U.S. loan to Chiang. According to this story, as a result of the meeting White did cut the amount of the loan by 40 percent and surrounded the remaining 60 percent with conditions making it virtually useless.[32]

One of the strongest apologists for everything Communists, Kubek says, was Agnes Smedley, whose book Battle Hymn of China

compares the Nationalists with the Nazis, while the Communists are eulogized. Kubek reports that Smedley was accused by Major General Charles A. Willoughby, MacArthur's intelligence chief, as being a member of the celebrated Sorge spy ring. The Army later offered a retraction, saying it had no proof Smedley was a member of the spy ring. Kubek calls this "another puzzling chapter in our China policy." He also points out that Smedley left her estate to the Communist military leader, Chu Teh, and asked that her ashes be buried in Peiping. She was buried there, along with Anna Louise Strong, the only foreigners to be buried in the equivalent of America's Arlington Cemetery.[33]

Kubek concludes that:

> As one looks backwards at China now from the tragically clear perspective of hindsight, it is apparent that the battle of books was won by the anti-Nationalists through their power and influence. The American people had no real knowledge of China. The Communist sympathizers filled the vacuum with their own books, reviewed favorably by each other. They derided and denounced all others who had a kind word to say for the Nationalist government. These people were able to exercise an incredibly effective censorship over what the American people should read, know and think about Far Eastern affairs.[34]

Kubek does not draw a line between the power of that pro-CCP press and the decision of the Roosevelt Administration to ignore it. His position is that even though the U.S. gave no aid to the CCP and did aid the KMT, we would have given more help to the KMT had it not been for the good press the CCP had from its American sympathizers. Kubek, reflecting

post-war "China Lobby" thinking, would have voted for unlimited U.S. financial and military aid to the KMT. He also would have denied that corruption had anything to do with the KMT's need and desire for that aid.

While Edgar Snow has gone down in history as one of those writers who really did seem to influence to some extent what happened in China, his first wife, Helen Foster Snow, received little press attention. In her 1984 book, My China Years, she discusses what she clearly considers her own quite significant role in the successful development of Chinese Communism and in the development of rapport between the CCP and at least some American journalists, military observers and diplomats.[35] She and Edgar were the primary instigators of the student movement in China, she claims, a movement which was indeed crucial to the successful struggle by the Communists against the Chiang regime. Ms. Snow's story is that she and her husband were both extremely influential not just as journalists but as actual instigators of that student movement.

Ms. Snow, who wrote under the pseudonym Nym Wales, describes the development of the student movement as resulting from the KMT policy of repression, imprisonment, torture and slaughter of young people who sympathized with the Communists. A group of students drew up a petition, early in the movement, outlining their grievances. They bought the petition to the Snows to be translated and published in the foreign press. Ms. Snow took the manuscript to Reuters for publishing. She and Edgar considered the document crucial news about developing

antagonism between the children of Nanking officials, their parents and Chiang's government. The students were taking serious risks in putting their thoughts onto paper. To Ms. Snow's astonishment, Reuters refused to publish the material, considering it merely propaganda. United Press, however, was glad to accept the material as news, and from then on reported regularly on China's student movement as a significant development. As Ms. Snow put it, "That, symbolically, was the moment Americans took the torch from the British. Fighting the Fascist Axis was our way, too, and the U.P. vaguely cottoned to this." The year was 1935.[36]

A story about a student petition, however, was not enough of a story to create the kind of public awareness the Snows and the students wanted or needed. The Snows conceived of the idea for a student demonstration and helped carry out the December 9 and 16 student demonstrations in Peking in 1935. Some 800 students participated on the 6th, and over ten thousand took part on the 16th. It is Ms. Snow's view that the rest of China took its cue from this student movement, which had begun in her home, with her encouragement. She taught them how to take their news to the press . . . the foreign press especially, and both the domestic and foreign press did cover the demonstrations. Some articles speculated that the student movement was being led by Americans and by Chinese professors who had graduated from American universities. One Japanese article claimed the movement had been started by a young American woman and that she had no doubt

been financed by President Roosevelt.[37] Snow assumed the reference was to her activities.

The student movement continued to make the headlines until after the school year ended in 1936, when the focus of attention shifted to Sian. Young Marshal Chang Hsueh-liang was headquartered in Sian, and was considered "Number Two Fascist of China." The student movement, however, had converted him to active anti-fascism, and it was Chang who arrested his boss, Chiang Kai-shek, in an effort to end the Chinese civil war.

According to Ms. Snow "The anti-Fascist alliance that would win World War II was born in part at Yenching University" with the student movement which had been born in her home. Indeed, she states:

> The December 9th student movement marked a historical epoch, the fourth state of the six listed by Mao Tse-tung in the history of China from 1919, as published in his thesis "On the New Democracy." 38

That December 9th movement and the Sian Incident of 1936 were, according to Ms. Snow, part of the recipe by which Mao finally won the victory and established a new government in 1949. Never again, Ms. Snow says, were foreigners at the point of leverage in China that we were in 1935 to 1938. After the American intervention against the Communists from 1947 to 1949, it seemed impossible to many Americans that such progressive and happy Chinese-American cooperation had ever happened.

Yet from 1935 on, according to Ms. Snow, it was these

students who were the liaison with the West for the left-wing and Communist elements in China, and they were the engineers of the rapprochement of 1972 . . . when it was Edgar Snow who got Mao Tse-tung's permission for President Nixon to come to Peking. Thus, says Ms. Snow, the "new China-American friendship was born in the December 9th movement of 1935 in Peking," a movement she helped start.[39]

It is interesting to note that two individuals who have been claimed as Oklahomans played significant roles in the story of developing U.S.-China relations in the 1930s and 1940s. Agnes Smedley, considered the first of the "daredevil journalists" to proactively support the Chinese Communist revolution was one. The other was Oklahoma's General Patrick J. Hurley, President Roosevelt's Ambassador to China in 1944, whose part in the unsuccessful effort to create a coalition government and subsequent recommendation to support Chiang Kai-shek's KMT resulted in what Hans Morgenthau refers to as one of this century's most crucial political decisions.

The two exemplified the two opposing forces that struggled against one another so intensely during the KMT-CCP civil war. They also exemplify the classic rift between journalist and politician that plagues any period of controversial development. Smedley wrote about the Communist movement with sympathy and passion. She was one of those who not only wrote about the revolution but who also participated in it. Hurley initially failed to see the Communists as significant, then later blamed them for most of China's problems.

In Battle Hymn of China Smedley refers to the impact on journalists of American naivete, and reflects on the kind of frustration Jack Belden felt about the problem journalists had in influencing the views of the people back home:

> The American public seemed so uninformed or misinformed, or so very soft, that it seemed incapable of facing a situation so serious. Because of this the foreign correspondents feared to send out the true facts. "The Truth?" one foreign correspondent said. "I simply don't know what the truth is!" So we all suffered from a kind of mental paralysis.[40]

Smedley was not one to be really paralyzed, however. She continued to write about and participate in China's revolution. Early in her career she won the admiration of some of those she undoubtedly considered "uninformed or misinformed." In 1940 the Tulsa World ran a two-part feature about her under the headlines: "Oklahoma Girl . . . War Nurse in China . . . Sees Murderous Japanese Ravage a Nation" and, "Under Fire in China . . . Adventures of an Oklahoma Girl." In the articles no mention at all is made of the CCP-KMT conflict. Smedley is pictured as a valiant war nurse helping Chinese soldiers in their fight against Japan. The newspaper tries hard to claim Smedley as an Oklahoman, in spite of her statement to them that she really was born in Missouri and spent very little if any time at all in Oklahoma. She also mentioned to them that most states would not be so eager to claim her as a native.[41]

In January, 1937, both the Kansas City Star[42] and the Enid Daily Eagle[43] had run Associated Press articles that

describe Smedley as an Oklahoma-born writer who "Represents Force of Million (Red) Soldiers," and as a "Former State Girl" who had become a "White Empress Over Yellow Millions." Those articles did admit that Smedley had begun to cause concern among American officials. The AP lead reads:

> Heralded as a power in forging a new communistic empire in North China, with perhaps a million fighting men ready to march, Agnes Smedley, Oklahoma-born writer and champion of "downtrodden masses," troubled United States authorities on both sides of the continent in the World War.

When Smedley's Battle Hymn of China was published in 1943, the New York Herald Tribune ran a full-page review of the book by then Lieutenant Colonel Evans Fordyce Carlson. Carlson, who had himself been impressed by the Communists in China, wrote:

> The story of China which Miss Smedley presents is not the story one sees in the public press or in magazine articles or in propaganda literature. It is the story of the real China.[44]

Carlson, while acting as a Marine intelligence Officer, had advised FDR (as had Snow) that for the U.S. to assist only the Nationalists might be "insufficient or counterproductive." Carlson's commitment to the Communists was resented by the Navy Department and of course by the KMT. Increasingly frustrated and isolated by his "dissident views," in 1938 Carlson resigned his commission and returned to the U.S. to work as a journalist lobbying for aid to China.[45] His career as a journalist was to be a temporary

one, however even after he returned to his military career he never changed his views about which China deserved American Support. However as Michael Schaller stated in <u>The U.S. Crusade in China, 1938-1945</u>,

> . . . the only demonstrable affect the Sino-Japanese War had so far upon influential Americans was seen in Henry Luce's decision to place Generalissimo and Madame Chiang on the cover of <u>Time</u> magazine as 1937 "Man and Wife of the Year."[46]

Patrick Hurley, on the other hand, had to be pleased that his president followed his advice and agreed to support the KMT. Hurley's task had not been easy. Having been unsuccessful in his attempt to create a coalition between Chiang and Mao, he had ignored or opposed the advice of virtually every member of his China Embassy staff, as well as all of the positive stories about the Communists and the negative ones about the KMT being written by American journalists. It took ignoring the "liberal" press and firing his entire staff, but Hurley did get his way. His frustration had to have come later, when the KMT, in spite of U.S. aid, fell to the Communists.

That fall was an embarrassing one for America, and it was an expensive one. It hurt and angered us. It became important to determine who or what had been responsible for our failure. As frequently happens following a fall, we indulged in some irrational behavior that most later regretted. In the 1950s, the victory of the Chinese Communists over the KMT was blamed on those diplomats and journalists who had failed to fully support the KMT. Generally, anyone who had

spoken well of the CCP or ill of the KMT was considered as having contributed to the American failure in China. The antics of this era, led by the China Lobby, reflected a nation reacting ungracefully to its own mistakes. If the conduct of our foreign policy during the 1940s was clumsy, our reaction in the 1950s to that policy's failure was a travesty. We demonstrated the classic propensity to make our messengers responsible for bad news.

Both Mao and Chiang had sought to lead the Chinese people out of the old oppressive social, economic and psychological commitments and into new democratic patterns. Mao's method was to develop a form of Communism geared toward the Chinese peasants that was destined to succeed. Chiang's method was development of a form of capitalism that held greater appeal to American decision-makers, but which was destined to fail on mainland China. Unfortunately for American journalists working in China during the 1930s and 1940s, the Chinese civil war led to a very damaging confrontation here in the U.S. between two passionately opposing factions.

FOOTNOTES

1. Robert W. Desmond, Tides of War: World News Reporting 1940-1945 (Iowa City, 1984), p. 462.

2. Anthony Kubek, How the Far East Was Lost: American Foreign Policy and the Creation of Communist China, 1941-1949 (Chicago, 1963), p. 181.

3. Tang Tsou, America's Failure in China 1941-1950 (Boston, 1963), p. vii.

4. Ibid., p. viii.

5. Ibid., p. 591.

6. Ibid., p. 230.

7. Ibid., p. 233.

8. Ibid., p. 234.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.

11. John Maxwell Hamilton, "10 Years After Death Edgar Snow's Shadow Still in the Picture." The Quill (Chicago, 1982), p. 15.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid., p. 16.

14. Jack Belden, China Shakes the World (NY, 1949), p. 366.

15. Ibid., p. 365.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid., p. 370.

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid.

21. Michael Schaller, The United States and China in the Twentieth Century (NY & Oxford, 1979), p. 73.

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid., p. 74.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid.

26. Anthony Kubek, How the Far East Was Lost: American Foreign Policy and the Creation of Communist China, 1941-1949 (Chicago, 1963), p. 365.

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid., p. 383.

32. Ibid., pp. 181-182.

33. Ibid., p. 375.

34. Ibid., p. 384.

35. Helen Foster Snow, My China Years (NY, 1984), pp. 160-161.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid., p. 172.

38. Ibid., p. 174.

39. Ibid.

40. Agnes Smedley, Battle Hymn of China (NY, 1943), p. 504.

41. The Tulsa World (September 29 and October 13, 1940).

42. Kansas City Star (January 8, 1937).

43. Enid Daily Eagle (January 8, 1937).

44. New York Herald Tribune (September 5, 1943).

45. Michael Schaller, The U.S. Crusade in China, 1938-1945 (NY, 1979), p. 21.

46. Ibid., p. 22.

CHAPTER III

THE REVOLUTIONARIES' RESPONSE TO AMERICAN JOURNALISTS

When the Chinese Communists first settled in Yenan in 1935 after their "Long March," they experienced a period of isolation that was partially imposed on them by Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang blockade, but which was also partly of their own design. During those early years, Mao Tse-tung and his leaders had little interest in public relations or in communicating with the rest of the world, according to Robert Desmond in his 1937 book, The Press and World Affairs.[1] This time was needed to recuperate from the Long March, to plan the future, to organize. Fighting the Japanese and coping with the KMT were also demanding preoccupations.

With a man like Mao Tse-tung as leader, however, isolation was to be neither total nor permanent. Lucien Pye describes Mao as uniquely a "man of action" as well as a "word man":

> Mao Tse-tung not only combined both skills, but also excelled in each. In the realm of words and ideas he was an ideologue and an orator whose style has been that of an agitator and spokesman, and also sloganeer. As a calculator of actions he has been both a military and political strategist . . . It is important to appreciate that this was a time when the Chinese people were at a point in their collective history in which their

> paramount needs were precisely a new vision based on the articulation of ideas and efficacious political actions.[2]

Pye describes Mao's tendency to use words as weapons in political battles, and to attribute to words "an almost innate power . . . in the sense of believing that everyone else can be reduced to impotence if one can confront them with the right word."[3] Mao's fascination with words began, Pye writes, when he first came upon newspapers during the 1911 revolution. For Mao, the media, unlike books, were very much related to action. He wrote his first article and posted it on a wall in Changsha in 1911, and from that time on he increasingly "linked the media to action and to the expectation that words could change the world."[4]

While the Communists had limited contact with American journalists during the early Yenan years, the contact they did have was significant. Agnes Smedley and Edgar Snow, the two earliest of the Americans to venture into Yenan, not only provided information about the Communists to the American public, they also gave the Communists an opportunity to understand Americans. It was the successful, friendly relations that developed between Mao and these journalists that made Mao realize how beneficial diplomacy with the American government might be.

According to James Reardon-Anderson, it was the positive experience with Snow that taught Yenan that "there were fair-minded and influential foreigners who could be convinced by what they saw and whose message would redound to the

Communists' favor. In later years in Chungking, Chou En-lai was to become expert at cultivating the good will of foreign journalists along with the diplomats from the countries the newspapers represented.[5]

Kenneth Shewmaker also evaluates the impact of Snow and Smedley on the Communists as crucial. The Chinese Communists, he states, "had no better foreign friend than the American woman (Smedley) who gave herself unstintingly in her efforts to further their cause."[6] Not only did Edgar Snow completely alter the American view of the Chinese Communists, he also gave the Chinese themselves their first authoritative perspective on the Communist movement.[7] Shewmaker cites Ernest Hemingway:

> By catering to journalists of the caliber of Edgar Snow . . . the Communists had gained an extravagant idea of the Eight Route Army's role in the struggle against the Japanese.[8]

In fact, that Army could, in the end, claim a very major role in the Communists' successful fight against the KMT and the Japanese.

Shewmaker makes the point that it was the skill of the Yenan Chinese Communists in presenting their case that helped to explain why Chiang Kai-shek imposed the blockade against travel into the Communist area. It was not just that Chiang wanted the Communists cut off from the outside world; he also wanted the outside world cut off from the Communists. It was hard enough for him to persuade Americans in China that his own regime was not as corrupt as it appeared to be, without

also having to persuade them that the Communists were not as good as they appeared to be.

Mao, recognizing the potential benefits of friendship with American journalists, did use those who were sympathetic with what the Communists were doing. He used Snow, Smedley and Anna Louise Strong not only as propagandists against the KMT, but also to bolster his efforts in 1937 to promote his version of a United Front against Japan. On March 10, 1937, for instance, Mao wrote a letter to Snow asking him to publicize a new CCP policy concerning the United Front. Along with the letter, Mao enclosed a copy of Smedley's interview with him about the Sian Incident and on Sino-Japanese relations.[9] Mao clearly was intent on keeping the American journalists (and the American public) up to date and well informed about his work. Snow, Smedley and Strong took Mao's message to the American public in the form of both articles and books that expressed a sympathetic view of the CCP.

Anna Louise Strong was happy to be used by Mao to promote his strategies. She had first gone to China in 1925, eager to become involved in the revolution she saw developing there. During the 1930s and 1940s she wrote about revolution wherever she found it, including China, Spain and Russia. In 1946 she returned to China, where she lived in Yenan and continued her journalistic support for the Communist revolution. It was in 1946 that she obtained her famous interview with Mao (published in English in <u>Amerasia</u>, April 1947) in which he proclaimed that all reactionaries were paper tigers, that

those reactionaries were preparing for WW III, and that the danger of that war did really exist.[10]

According to biographical notes in Notable American Women . . . the Modern Period, Strong wanted to stay on in Yenan, but instead Mao "urged her to go and publicize the revolution abroad."[11] This she did, to the consternation of the Soviet Union, where she went to do her writing, and from which she was deported by the Russians as a spy. Strong went from Russia to the U.S., to return to Moscow after the Russians exonerated her in 1955. She only stayed there briefly, however, before returning to Peking, where she published the Letter from China, reporting on Sino-Soviet relations and giving readers in the West a glimpse of life in China. Strong was to continue her revolutionary writings until her death in 1970 at the age of 85. In 1965 on her eightieth birthday, Mao Tse-tung honored her by making her an honorary member of the Red Guard. She was buried in Peking's National Memorial Cemetery of Revolutionary Martyrs, near the grave of Agnes Smedley. The two women are the only foreigners ever given that honor.[12]

Snow, Smedley and Strong were three key journalists who risked going into Yenan during the blockade years, who worked hard to get their stories into the American press, and who were used by Mao to improve his standing with Americans. The stories these sympathetic journalists told about the Communists were often received with skepticism, however, and by 1944 American military and diplomatic personnel began to

demand the opportunity to go into Yenan to either confirm or discredit the stories. Chiang finally permitted first a team of journalists and then a group of diplomatic observers into Yenan.

The "Dixie Mission," so called because it was sent into rebel territory to answer the question, "Is it true what they say about Dixie?" went into Yenan during the summer of 1944.[13] Included in the mission were representatives of the U.S. Army, Air Corps, Navy, State Department, and Office of Strategic Services. Head of the Mission was Colonel David Barrett; Chief political reporter was John Service, a Foreign Service officer who had grown up in China as the son of a missionary family.[14]

Dixie Mission members were impressed with what they saw, and sent back positive reports to Washington about what looked like efforts to democratize an area formerly ruled by despotism. While waiting for Washington to make its decision, some of the OSS officers began offering the Communists instruction in the use of some American weapons; and relationships between the Chinese and Americans in Yenan improved to the point of mutual admiration. Speaking for the Dixie Mission, John Service reported that the observers' response was "extremely favorable . . . All of our party have had the same feeling--that we have come into a different country and are meeting a different people."[15]

The Communists' response to both the diplomats and the journalists was also positive; with the Dixie Mission

responding well and Stilwell on their side, they became optimistic about the possibility of receiving support from the Americans in the form of arms for the continuing fight against Japan. While Mao's foreign policy at that point was not well established, he made it clear that he was open to the possibility of friendly relations with Americans. He was also reported to be open to a balanced coalition with the KMT for purposes of a United Front against Japan. He was, in fact, reported to advocate friendly relations with the Russians or with any nation willing to fight Japanese Imperialism. This, at least, is the interpretation of Reardon-Anderson. Chinese foreign policy, he claims, was based not on ideology, but on circumstances. His thesis, expressed in Yenan and the Great Powers: the Origins of Chinese Communist Foreign Policy, 1944-1946, is that "in its formative years, Chinese Communist foreign policy followed no master plan; rather it was a series of adjustments to the circumstances that entwined and entangled Yenan."[16] Mao simply did not have the luxury of a grand ideological design during those first years in Yenan. His foreign policy decisions had to be made pragmatically.

Mao's response to the journalists who visited Yenan in 1944 was, therefore, pragmatic. He did, as Hemingway pointed out, catered to them. He also made it clear to them that it was his "burning desire" above all else to fight the Japanese and improve living conditions for the Chinese peasants.[17] Whether Mao was using a political tactic or not, he convinced virtually every member of the press and most other observers,

that his goals were both noble and practical. The journalists, as Mao had hoped, sent glowing reports back to their newspapers, and Yenan knew they were "scoring points" when they read those favorable news stories reprinted in Chinese newspapers, or when they listened to journalists like Harrison Forman virtually promise American aid to the Communists in speeches he made in the area. As Dixie Mission member John Davies, a Foreign Service officer, said: "The forthrightness, energy and efficiency of the Americans who compose the Observer Section has made an excellent impression on Yenan leaders."[18] The Communist press responded with equal enthusiasm as exemplified in a 1944 Chieh-fang Jih-pao Fourth of July editorial:

> Democratic America has already found a companion, and the cause of Sun Yat-sen a successor, 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.[19]

Theodore White agrees with Reardon-Anderson that Communist decisions vis-a-vis the Americans were pragmatically rather than ideologically based. That common sense approach continued even after negotiations toward a coalition with the KMT broke down under Hurley's leadership, and Roosevelt decided to give aid exclusively to the corrupt KMT regime. At that point, White says, in Thunder Out of China, the KMT and the Communists went their separate ways.[20] The KMT took

the road of propaganda and promises; having won the American Ambassador, they tried to consolidate their conquest with brilliant doubletalk. The Communists, according to White, did not give up on the Americans, but they did give up on diplomacy. Having lost at negotiating, they "took the rough, direct way of the battlefield," and waged a military offensive that would secure American recognition, and the arms and supplies that they hoped would follow recognition.[21]

In White's opinion, the Communists thought that American recognition of Chiang was a pragmatic one based on an inaccurate assessment of where the military strength was in China. The Americans thought Chiang had the superior military power; the Americans wanted to use that power against Japan, so they supported Chiang. The Communists perceived that the Americans knew that the Chiang regime was corrupt, but that expediency called for cooperation. The Communists' response was to prove to the Americans that they would be a more valuable ally than the Communists against the Japanese. In fact, American leaders had simply decided that "Chiang Kai-shek and China were exactly the same thing," that there were two armed parties in China, and that the Kuomintang "held the international franchise."[22] America refused to recognize the Chinese Communists as an official entity. "The Communists for their part refused to be nonrecognized out of existence."[23]

In 1945 the Communists worked hard on military campaigns against the Japanese in hopes of attracting American support, while continuing to fight with the KMT. The KMT, in the

meantime, worked hard at maintaining its good relationship with America. To that end, White says, Chiang began to "redocorate his government in a style to please the American taste."[24] White calls 1945 "the year of the great promise" during which tremendous changes were made by the KMT, on paper, toward making China a democracy. It was to be, the people were told, an era of great reform, with a huge national congress to be held, legislative resolutions written, pronouncements made about the end of one-party rule and the beginning of a new democracy. None of the promises were kept; the words had not been spoken, White claims, to bring about actual results. "The resolutions and promises had been read and noted with approval in America; that was the important thing."[25]

White describes how Chiang failed to attain his goals through "propaganda and promises" methods in 1945. Much earlier, Agnes Smedley had described the dismal, destructive condition of the Chinese and foreign press in Shanghai. During the early 1930s Chiang's government upheld a policy of press repression made effective through bribery, torture and murder. Smedley's July 3, 1935 article, "The Corrupt Press in China,"[26] published in The Nation reported that the suppression of both the local and foreign press was so effective that the authorities could do literally whatever they wanted and force journalists to print exactly what they wanted them to say. It was this total corruption and control over both the local and foreign press that Smedley intimates

created the worldwide confusion over what was going on in China between the KMT and the CCP during the 1930s. Smedley was to continue her attempts to expose KMT efforts to control or at least distort press coverage of its own regime and of the Communists throughout her career.

The Nationalists, however, were not alone in their attempts to "use" the foreign press to their advantage. Roxane Witke in her biography of Mao's wife, Comrade Chiang Ch'ing, makes the point that both man and wife:

> . . . were especially aware of and concerned with what was the greatest challenge of revolutionary leadership . . . to manipulate the human mind, to motivate the ignorant and the educated alike to turn their backs on centuries-old values in the new name of proletarian class interest.[27]

To that end, the Maoist form of mass media was used as a vital tool. Comrade Chiang assured Witke that "under Mao's rule, the freedoms of conscience, expression, and the press . . . were condemned as bourgeouis, reactionary, and counterrevolutionary."[28] Mao, she said, had no more qualms against manipulating foreign journalists than he had against manipulating the masses. Witke makes note of the way in which Anna Louise Strong, for example, ". . . in a sense earned her keep (in Yenan) through literary proof of her 'friendship.'"[29] Strong is referred to as one of the few Americans to make a home in Yenan during the tumultous revolutionary years, and there is little doubt how willing she was to be used as part of the Communist movement. Nor is there much doubt about Mao's willingness to use her or any other sympathetic journalist in

his efforts to gain American support.

While the Communists were using American journalists such as Strong, Smedley and Snow to attract recognition and support, the Nationalists were also manipulating the press, and so were the Americans. The Communists were fortunate in that they seemed to have a larger number of good stories to tell and plenty of journalists eager to write the stories. The Nationalists' tactic had to be a matter of concealing their problems and coming up with positive stories to tell. In 1943 Chiang Kai-shek wrote China's Destiny and Chinese Economic Theory. The two-volume book outlines China's development during the 1930s and describes Chiang's economic theories and plans. In Jaffe's notes to the American edition of the book which finally was published in 1947, he calls the book a whitewash. No mention at all is made of the entire civil war going on during the period. No mention is made of the Sian Incident or of the split within the KMT itself. Enough is said about Chiang's economic and political views, however, to urge American officials to try to keep the book out of the U.S. so the American public would not find out what kind of system their government was supporting.[30] By the time the book reached American readers, their leaders had become committed to Chiang and the Communists were on their way to victory.

China expert A. Doal Barnett is one of the many China experts who point out that Communists have always been good

at exploiting the weakness of an existing regime. He describes in his 1962 book, Communist China in Perspective, how Mao had from the beginning of his political career used China's primitive media as a means for rousing the masses against official corruption.[31] As Mao grew in political sophistication, he developed a most effective method of manipulating both the domestic and foreign media in his effort to lead the Communists into a position of leadership in China. His tactics were effective in gaining the support of the Chinese people, but they failed to attract the support of the U.S. government. America's inability to respond positively to the Chinese Communists during this period exemplifies our tendency to consider it in our best interest to support even a corrupt Capitalist regime over a Communist one, even if the Communist one is more popular with the people and is more effective in solving the country's problems.

FOOTNOTES

1. Robert W. Desmond, The Press and World Affairs (NY & London, 1937), pp. 340-349.

2. Lucian W. Pye, Mao Tse-tung, the Man in the Leader (NY, 1976), p. 229.

3. Ibid., p. 240.

4. Ibid., p. 243.

5. James Reardon-Anderson, Yenan and the Great Powers . . . the Origins of Chinese Foreign Policy, 1944-1946 (NY, 1980), p. 37.

6. Kenneth E. Shewmaker, Americans and Chinese Communists, 1927-1945: A Persuading Encounter (Ithaca, 1971), p. 35.

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12. Ibid.

13. Reardon-Anderson, p. 36.

14. Ibid., p. 38.

15. Joseph W. Esherick, ed., Lost Chance in China: The World War II Despatches of John S. Service (NY, 1979), p. 179.

16. Reardon-Anderson, p. 3.

17. Ibid., p. 39.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid., p. 38.

20. Theodore H. White and Annalee Jacoby, _Thunder Out of China_ (NY, 1946), p. 257.

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid., p. 256.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid., p. 263.

25. Ibid., p. 271.

26. Agnes Smedley, "The Corrupt Press in China," _The Nation_ (July 3, 1935), p. 8.

27. Roxane Witke, _Comrade Chiang Ch'ing_ (Boston, 1977), p. 10.

28. Ibid., p. 11.

29. Ibid., p. 506.

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31. A Doak Barnett, _Communist China in Perspective_ (NY, 1962), pp. 22-26.

CHAPTER IV

U.S. POLITICAL RESPONSE TO THE CHINESE REVOLUTION

It is Michael Schaller's opinion, expressed in his 1979 book, The United States and China in the Twentieth Century, that:

> American leaders never fully understood or accepted the reality of the Chinese revolution. Washington's policy toward the Chinese Communists, with few exceptions, oscillated between indifference and profound hostility.[1]

This failure to recognize the importance of the Chinese Communists or to see them as an arm of a Moscow-led international conspiracy had, in Schaller's view, a disastrous effect on relations between the U.S. and China.

Schaller points out that prior to WW II there had been little contact between U.S. officials and the Chinese Communists, and what little there was led to confusion. The "experts" had a hard time understanding how communism could appeal to peasants. The conclusion was that the whole movement was part of Moscow's effort to export its revolution, or that it was merely an insignificant agrarian reform movement, not to be taken too seriously.

President Roosevelt was faced, in the 1940s, with having to choose from among a variety of sources of information upon

which to base his decision concerning what to do in China. While some American journalists who had been in China advocated support for the Communists, others, including influencial ones like Henry Luce, urged support for the KMT. FDR's diplomatic advisors were also divided in their recommendations, with a majority advising support for Chiang, but with some persuasive voices speaking in favor of the CCP. In an effort to clarify the situation, in 1941 Roosevelt appointed Dr. Lauchlin Currie as his personal envoy to Chungking to analyze the situation there and return with a recommendation for action. Currie was to be the first among several such personal representatives of President Roosevelt in China, and he was one of several who advised U.S. support for the KMT. Currie's plan included a recommendation to appoint a team of American experts to act as advisors to Chiang's government. In order to bolster support for the KMT among American liberals, Currie also suggested that "The White House could use the press in this sales campaign by leaking "inspired stories from Washington extolling Chiang's virtue."[2]

Currie advised Roosevelt that the KMT-CCP rift was a serious matter needing attention. His recommendation was to urge Chiang to "promote liberal economic reforms" to ease the problem, a recommendation which seemed to inspire little enthusiastic response from Chiang. An additional suggestion from Currie was for Roosevelt to send a personal representative to Chungking who would act as a presidential envoy and

political advisor to Chiang's government. The president accepted the advice, and selected Owen Lattimore, a liberal Asia scholar, for the job of somehow transforming the KMT into something more closely resembling a democracy. That unrealistic goal was never attained. What did develop by the end of 1941 was an American foreign policy in East Asia which was dedicated to the preservation and support of Nationalist China in the growing tension over Japan. The Chinese Communist issue became a relatively minor one compared with the other world events demanding U.S. response during those months.[3]

After Pearl Harbor and the U.S. entry into WW II, Roosevelt continued to look to Nationalist China as at least potentially a powerful ally in Asia. In his view the KMT just needed some reform. He did not realize that it was, in reality, a "crumbling regime" whose popular support and political and military power were growing weaker and weaker. Further, he did not see that as this occurred:

> . . . the forces of social revolution grew consistently stronger, accelerating the internal crisis and unraveling the web of American policy. The demise of the United Front and Nationalist power removed the buffer between the Chinese Communists and the United States, placing these two powerful forces on a collision course.[4]

Political analysts appear to agree that Roosevelt suffered from a tendency to set contradictory goals, or to make decisions based on unrealistic assessments of situations. Michael Schaller points out that:

> From the beginning of the war, Roosevelt groped for a China policy which would do several, sometimes contradictory, things at once.[5]

The President wanted China as a strong ally against Japan, but he failed to see that a U.S.-KMT alliance would not help toward attaining that goal. This tendency was exacerbated in China by Roosevelt's tendency to rely on personal representatives he sent into the area whose views often conflicted with those of experienced on-site experts.

James MacGregor Burns in his 1970 book, Roosevelt: the Soldier of Freedom, echoes Schaller's views about Roosevelt's tendency toward setting contradictory goals. Burn's thesis is that Roosevelt was:

> . . . a man divided by his dual ambition to be on one hand a man with lofty ideals crusading for an ideal goal, and on the other hand he was an ambitious authoritarian intent on protecting his own power and on attaining personal goals.[6]

This dualism led to problems in the conduct of WW II, in Burns' opinion, and contributed to the Cold War and to subsequent transformation in the nature of the presidency itself. It was his contradictory decisions that flawed Roosevelt's war strategy and then led to poisoned post-WW II relations with Russia and Asia.

In Burns' chapter on Roosevelt's "Strategy of Freedom," he discusses the "stupendous social and economic forces on the rise" throughout the world:

> Reports were trickling in from intelligence agencies, from newspaper correspondents, including the

> brilliant Theodore White of the Time bureau in Chungking, from famous writers, including Pearl Buck and Agnes Smedley, of the dedication and tenacity of the Chinese Communists, as contrasted with the increasing corruption and lethargy of the Kuomintang.[7]

Burns emphasizes that Roosevelt's gift for political communication gave "a marvelous lift and verve to the propaganda effort," but that there was a serious gap between the lofty principles and the day-to-day situations and opportunities.[8]

Burns indicates that while Roosevelt was good at expressing ideals, he was less adept at making realistic decisions based on a clear assessment of the real world. He claims, further, that Roosevelt had "a double handicap in the propaganda battle."[9] The President's war aims and post-war plans were too broadly stated to be converted into "bread and butter policies" meaningful to those in foreign countries. When he succeeded in transforming his idealistic goals into proposals and policies, he was "frustrated by congressional conservativism, entrenched lobbies, and organized wealth . . ."[10]

In 1937 Frederick Field, writing in Amerasia, had warned that "The opinion Americans form regarding China is probably today a more important factor in determining the course of world events than it has ever been before."[11] Field tried to persuade Americans to become involved in the foreign policy decision-making process. The general policy he wanted the public to push for was positive involvement in the Far East as opposed to the isolationist tendencies prevalent at the

time. In 1937 the Far Eastern question was just beginning to be discussed in academia and in the media, and Field was optimistic that "for the first time in our history it has been possible in part to base government policy on the expression of public desire."[12] Field, chairman of the editorial board of Amerasia, and Phillip Jaffe, managing editor, devoted themselves to helping to keep the public informed about Far East-American relations, and for their efforts were later to become among those accused of complicity in the success of the Chinese Communists and the failure of American foreign policy concerning China. In 1944 Patrick Hurley tried his best to limit the kinds of information that came out of the American Embassy in China in an effort to sway American political response to what was going on there. With Hurley and Henry Luce speaking and working in behalf of the Nationalists, and other observers speaking ardently in favor of the Communists, it is not surprising that American political response to the China situation was somewhat uncertain.

Tang Tsou prefaces his analysis of America's failure in China with the acknowledgment that:

> More than any other single person, Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek was responsible for what happened in China; for responsibility goes with power and Chiang was the most powerful figure in China.[13]

However, Tang feels that the "loss of China" was also a failure of American foreign policy, for in the war against Japan, Nationalist China was our ally, and that ally lost. (And later in the battles in North Korea and in Vietnam, Communist China

was a strong power involved in defeating American armies.)

Tang's thesis is that the one element in our China policy that was most responsible for our failure was the imbalance between ends and means. Agreeing with Schaller and Burns, Tang points out that the imbalance took two forms. First, the U.S. was unwilling and at times unable to use military power to achieve political objectives. Second, the imbalance "appears as an unwillingness and inability to abandon unattainable goals in order to avoid entanglement in a hopeless cause."[14] The result of this imbalance was an illusion about the nature and power of the CCP vs. the KMT, and about the potential for a U.S. role in dealing with the two factions.

Walter Lippmann also agrees with those who blame the American problem with China on the failure to balance commitments and power. In 1943 in U.S. Foreign Policy: Shield of the Republic he expressed the view that while the U.S. maintained a viable foreign policy during the nineteenth century, that policy became "dangerously inadequate after 1900."[15] He argues that because of our failure to create a national foreign policy at the turn of the century, the nation was unprepared to either wage war or to make peace, and that it has remained divided within itself concerning the conduct of American foreign relations.

Lippmann describes the world situation in 1937-39 and includes especially decisions made by the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations concerning our abrogation of our Commercial Treaty with Japan and our refusal to lift the arms embargo

which prevented Britain and France from buying U.S. arms to resist Germany--"the Germany which had been allied with Japan since 1936." Lippmann remarks that "It would be hard to find a more perfect example of total incompetence in guiding the foreign relations of a people."[16] We invited war on the one hand and refused to take steps to fortify our defenses on the other hand. It was this failure to balance commitments and power that led to disastrous foreign policy decisions, in Lippmann's view. Lippmann, along with Burns, Tang, Schaller, Morgenthau and others, appears to agree that American foreign policy toward China during the first half of the twentieth century is an example of the democratic process not functioning at optimum pitch.

The Dixie Mission did not help, with experienced "China Hands" like Colonel Barrett, who headed the Mission, so impressed with the Communists that he enthusiastically recommended that U.S. arms should go to the CCP. Barrett was convinced that the primary drive of the Communists was to "fight the Japanese and help the people."[17] He agreed with Stilwell that U.S. aid would be better spent on the Communists. At the same time, however, Major General Patrick Hurley, at the insistence of Chiang Kai-shek, was in the process of recommending that Roosevelt fire Stilwell and send aid only to the KMT. Hurley's effort to create a coalition between the KMT and the CCP had by this time failed. Hurley stressed that the Kuomintang was the official voice of China, and that the Communists were not really a viable entity. His tactic was

to try to talk the Communists into accepting a minor role in the Chinese political system. That suggestion was quickly, and predictably, rejected by the Communists, who then tried to bypass Hurley and deal directly with Washington. In the meantime, the Embassy staff had similarly tried to "go over Hurley's head" and express their views directly to Roosevelt about the KMT-CCP aid issue.

Needless to say, when Hurley discovered these efforts at "subterfuge," his attitude toward the Communists and his staff took a radical turn. He blamed all of China's problems on the Communists and charged any Americans with sympathetic views toward the CCP with conspiracy. The good relations that had begun to develop in Yenan among Dixie Mission members and the Communists dissolved. Roosevelt agreed to aid the KMT exclusively, and sought support for that decision from the Russians.[18]

Roosevelt's decision to seek cooperation from Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin came early in 1945, when FDR began to realize that full-scale civil war between the KMT and CCP was imminent. As Schaller put it, the American president's dream of a "powerful, united and pro-American China" was fast becoming a nightmare."[19] An escalating civil war in China would prolong unrest in the Far East, tempting the Russians to step in to provide a Moscow version of stability. Roosevelt's response was the Yalta policy, giving the Russians important concessions in Manchuria in exchange for support for the KMT and help in the war against Japan, it did nothing to weaken the CCP in its

power struggle against the KMT.

American political response to China at this point was divided between the "old hand" China experts who had an understanding of the country based on study and first-hand experience, and those who had to make their assessments from a distance, without the benefit of direct observation. Hurley had gone into China with little background on Chinese culture or history and with a limited understanding of what was going on in Yenan. According to Tang Tsou, neither Hurley nor anyone in Washington was interested in fighting the Chinese Communists along with the Japanese. American officials wanted to believe the journalists and other observers who claimed the Communists would be a strong ally against Japan, but they could not be convinced that the Communists in China were a viable enough force to warrant support. Washington therefore went along with Hurley's mistaken assessment that the CCP "lacked real strength and genuine popular support."[20]

Tang agrees with Schaller and Reardon-Anderson concerning Hurley's work in China. In addition to not viewing the Communists as a real threat, Tang says, Hurley also did not see them as being true Communists. Hurley thought that the difference between the CCP and the KMT could be easily patched up, that Stalin could be coerced into a deal that would neutralize the Russian-China Communist coalition threat, and that controlling the CCP need not be a major concern of the U.S. As Tang says, Hurley was wrong on every count. By

November of 1945, his entire program had collapsed. In spite of U.S. support, the KMT grew weaker, the CCP grew stronger, and the Yalta policy proved to be not only unnecessary for minimizing Russian involvement, it helped create CCP antagonism against the U.S.

Robert Sutter's views of the 1944-45 events in China are similar to the other analysis; he agrees that Washington's decision to follow Hurley's advice was based on a failure to understand that the Chinese Communists were either worthy of aid, or worthy of concern if they did not get aid. American policy was focused on sustaining a stable internal Chinese situation that would not complicate U.S. negotiations with the USSR over East Asia, therefore Washington was reluctant to begin support for what it considered a fairly insignificant dissident group. In Hurley's assessment, Sutter says, the CCP "was of little consequence," was "too weak and ineffective to become the dominant ruling group in China." Thus, Sutter concludes, "this initial encounter in CCP-U.S. relations ended with an opportunity lost and with old feelings of animosity and suspicion once again rising to the surface."[21]

Many analysts appear to agree then, that Patrick Hurley was largely responsible for the U.S.-China debacle, and that the U.S. would probably have been wiser to either support both the KMT and the CCP or neither. Don Lohbeck, Hurley's biographer, however, agrees with those who, back in the 1950s, blamed the problem on a biased press. In his view, it was American journalists who made it impossible for the American

public and their leaders to deal rationally with China. Hurley was not to blame. Lohbeck implies that Hurley was one of the few who valiantly resisted the propaganda that put forth the Communists as a force for democracy. It was Hurley who had the story right, the journalists who had become mere propagandists for the CCP.[22]

A few analysts have written with derision about Hurley as something of a buffoon who represented America in China in a most undignified manner. He was known to do Indian war dances at Embassy parties and to give "blood-curdling Choctaw Yahoos" at wholely inappropriate moments. He pronounced Mao Tse-tung's name "Moose Dung" and called Chiang Kai-shek "Mr. Shek." In turn, some Americans called Hurley "the Paper Tiger," others called him _Ti Erh Ta Feng_, or "the Second Big Wind."[23] Theodore White, however, takes a more objective view, stating that "his personality was neither interesting nor significant in itself; but as ambassador of the world's greatest power his personality was endowed with transcedent ex-officio importance." White wrote in his 1946 _Thunder Out of China_ that:

> All men acknowledged that Hurley had arrived in Chungking in great sincerity to labor as hard as he could at the directives given him. Most men who knew him well enough saw in him the tragedy of a mind groping desperately at problems beyond its scope.[24]

White goes on to describe how Hurley disregarded the State Department tradition of sending strictly factual reports to Washington from embassies. It was taboo to tamper with facts in order to please a superior. Hurley, however, disapproved of

reports critical of the Chiang government. When his staff issued such reports, they were denounced. "For months," White says, "When Washington should have been completely informed, it got little unprejudiced information from the American Embassy in Chungking."[25] White points out that Chiang's goverenment was naturally very fond of Hurley, and made every effort to protect him from the American press. The Chinese chief censor, in fact, officially informed an American newspaper correspondent that:

> The censorship of the China government does not permit anything to go out which will disturb the cordial relationship between the two governments (America and China). Ambassador Hurley represents the president and the American government; any attack by an American upon him on Chinese soil is therefore not permitted to go out.[26]

Even General Wedemeyer, then commander in chief of the U.S. Army, felt it best "to protect the ambassador from the public criticism of war correspondents, although he privately admitted the truth of many charges." The corps of foreign correspondents, White states, "could only fume in silence and frustration at a situation which they knew must some day erupt in disaster."[27]

Washington, then, had to deal with both the incomplete or biased reports from its embassy in Chungking, as well as with the problems with reports coming out of Yenan. Foreign Service Officer John Service had reviewed reports from Harrison Forman (London _Times_ and _Reader's Digest_), Maurice Votaw (_Baltimore Sun_), and I. Epstein (_New York Times_ and _Time-Life_), giving

their impressions of the CCP in the NorthWest Communist-held areas. The gist of their impressions, according to Service's reports, was that the successful resistance of the Japanese by the Eighth Route Army was based on the solidarity between the peasants and the Communist Army.[28] Service acknowledged the complaints from some that these reports from journalists were open to criticism because they were not military experts. However, they were experienced China reporters with an understanding of the culture and language of China. Service made the point that the chief significance of the reports was the political point that the Communists had the complete support of the local population, and that political fact was the basis for military strength.[29]

U.S.-China relations were not destined to improve with the beginning of the Truman Administration following Roosevelt's death in 1945. As Schaller wrote:

> Whatever slim possibility existed for a modification of American policy in China died in mid-April with Franklin Roosevelt. His death removed a leader to whom the CCP had turned--without notable success--for understanding. The little that was known about Harry Truman added to the rapid deterioration of Soviet-American relations over the issues of Eastern Europe and Germany and boded ill for American policy toward the Communist movement in China.[30]

Truman, inexperienced in foreign affairs and keenly suspicious of the Russians, was easily convinced by anti-Communist advisors to assume a tough stance against the Chinese Communists. Ambassador to Moscow Averell Harriman, Assistant Secretary of State Joseph Grew, Navy Secretary James Forrestal and Admiral

Leahy easily convinced Truman (more easily than Roosevelt) that USSR ambitions were global in nature and included seizing a foothold in Asia by establishment of puppet revolutionary governments there. By the summer of 1945 the previously pro-CCP U.S. personnel in Yenan had been replaced by people with strong anti-Moscow views. Deteriorating U.S. relations with the CCP and growing suspicion concerning Soviet designs in Europe and Asia characterized the Truman Administration China policy in 1945.

In mid-1945 President Truman sent General George Marshall to solve post-WW II problems in China. Specifically, Marshall's mission was first, to bring peace to China under conditions that would permit stable government and progress along democratic lines, and second, to assist the National government to establish its authority over as wide an area of China as possible.[31] As Secretary of State Dean Acheson later reported in his letter of transmittal accompanying the <u>Report on U.S. Relations in China in 1949</u>, (<u>The China White Paper</u>), both objectives were at that point unrealizable. Acheson wrote that the Chinese Communists were intent on communizing the whole nation and that the Nationalists were just as intent on destroying Communism. Marshall's efforts to negotiate agreements resulted in no political settlement, and by spring of 1946 he became convinced that "both parties were merely sparring for time, jockeying for military position, and catering temporarily to what they believed to be American desires."[32]

Marshall left China in January of 1947 to become Truman's

Secretary of State. He knew, as did most observers, that disaster was imminent in China. In July of 1947, with signs that disaster multiplying, Marshall recommended that Lieutenant General Albert C. Wedemeyer go into China to survey the situation and make recommendations. By September of that year Wedemeyer submitted his report, recommending that the U.S. continue and expand its aid to Nationalist China, with three conditions:

> 1. That China inform the United Nations of her request for aid.
>
> 2. That China request the United Nations to bring about a truce in Manchuria and request that Manchuria be placed under a five-power guardianship or a trusteeship.
>
> 3. That China utilize her own resources, reform her finances, her government, and her armies, and accept American advisers in the military and economic fields.[33]

Wedemeyer's report included expressions of sympathy for the Nationalists regarding their struggle against the Communists, however it also included recommendations for a large number of drastic reforms he considered essential to survival of the KMT.

Reform did not occur within the KMT; the Communists continued to push the Nationalists toward the sea, and the U.S. government finally admitted that:

> The unfortunate but inescapable fact is that the ominous result of the Civil War in China was beyond the control of the government of the United States. Nothing 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 product of

> internal Chinese forces, forces which this country tried to influence but could not. A decision was arrived at within China, if only a decision by default.[34]

The China White Paper, with its covering letter by Acheson, was in reality a highly negative commentary on both the CCP and the KMT. It was also a final admission that the U.S. could not effectively solve the China problem without an expenditure of human and material resources beyond its capacity to give. As Hans Morgenthau and others were to point out much later, China was a tragic example of our tendency to establish goals inconsistent with our political or economic ability to attain them.

FOOTNOTES

1. Michael Schaller, The United States and China in the Twentieth Century (NY, 1979), p. 95.

2. Schaller, p. 49.

3. Ibid., pp. 48-53.

4. Ibid., p. 92.

5. Ibid., p. 99.

6. James MacGregor Burns, Roosevelt: the Soldier of Freedom (NY, 1980), p. 382.

7. Ibid., p. 381.

8. Ibid., p. 385.

9. Ibid., p. 387.

10. Ibid., p. 388.

11. Frederick Field, Amerasia (NY, March, 1937), p. 9.

12. Ibid.

13. Tang Tsou. America's Failure in China 1941-1950 (Chicago, 1963), p. xi.

14. Ibid.

15. Walter Lippmann, U.S. Foreign Policy: Shield of the Republic (Boston, 1943), p. ix.

16. Ibid., p. 43.

17. James Reardon-Anderson, Yenan and the Great Powers . . . the Origins of Chinese Communist Foreign Policy, 1944-1946 (NY, 1980), p. 39.

18. Schaller, p. 187.

19. Ibid., p. 101.

20. Tang Tsou, p. 180.

21. Robert G. Sutter, China-Watch: Toward Sino-American Reconciliation (Baltimore, 1978), pp. 28-30.

22. Don Lohbeck, Patrick J. Hurley (Chicago, 1956), p. 270.

23. Theodore White and Anna Lee Jacoby. *Thunder Out of China* (NY, 1946), p. 246.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid., p. 248.

26. Ibid., p. 249.

27. Ibid.

28. Joseph W. Esherick, ed., *Lost Chance in China: The World War II Despatches of John S. Service* (NY, 1974), p. 235.

29. Ibid.

30. Michael Schaller, *The U.S. Crusade in China, 1938-1945* (NY, 1979), p. 224.

31. Franz Schurmann and Orville Schell, *Republican China: Nationalism, War, and the Rise of Communism, 1911-1949* (NY, 1967), p. 364.

32. Ibid., p. 366.

33. Ibid., p. 367.

34. Ibid., p. 370.

CHAPTER V

REFLECTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

While the debate has subsided concerning who has been to blame for troubled U.S.-China relationships throughout this century, the debate over the relationship between the press and foreign policy continues. Journalists themselves seem to agree with Klapper that they reflect the diversity of public attitudes, rather than having a significant impact on it or on policy making. Public officials generally are still suspicious of the press as being intrusive. Concerning the U.S., China, and the press in the 1930s and 1940s, the view seems to be that the press was not much help in handling what was one of our worst foreign policy failures.

Hans Morgenthau and Tang Tsou view America's foreign policy during this period as a reflection of national naivete and a lack of realism in goal setting. Tang faults journalists for failing to provide intellectual leadership. Journalists themselves talk about the difficulty of getting straight stories printed by editors. Editors were under pressure to print what they thought the public wanted to hear, or what their publishers wanted printed, and those publishers occasionally had their own biases. Clearly, confusion, ignorance and bias about China were problems, and

those problems were reflected in the American press.

Unbiased news reporting is generally viewed as a worthy goal, but it is an idealistic one that is attained only rarely in the real world. Bias in the "free world" press is seen as an acceptable part of reality first because it is inevitable, and second because the system allows a diversity of biases to be presented to the public. However, when one view becomes prominent, that bias can then begin to have a significant impact on political issues. As Ralph Townsend wrote in Asia Answers in 1936:

> As soon as any single trend gains predominance in publicity favor, it immediately diminishes its competitors. The reason is simple. Editors of magazines promptly select articles with views in accord with the predominant trend. The average unanalytic reader seeing these, says to himself, "All the authorities now writing on the subject have such and such a conclusion."[1]

There was never unanimity in the press about how the U.S. should respond to China. As Frederick Field said in 1937, modern technology and transportation were making it possible for the first time for an American policy to be based on public opinion.[2] But the China story was an extremely complex one for journalists to cover and for the public and public officials to comprehend. Further, by the end of World War II, biases had become evident and editors did begin to be selective in terms of printing stories that reflected predominant attitude trends. After the failure of efforts in the forties to create a coalition between the CCP and the KMT, and the

U.S. decision to support the KMT exclusively, it became difficult and risky to write favorably about the Communists.

The problem was not exclusive to American journalists. Robert Desmond quotes a Canadian correspondent who worked for Reuters during the war as saying:

> . . . it was humilating to look back at what we wrote during the war . . . We were a propaganda arm of our governments. At the start the censors enforced that, but by the end we were our own censors. We were cheerleaders. I suppose there wasn't an alternative at the time. It was total war. But for God's sake, let's not glorify our role. It wasn't good journalism. It wasn't journalism at all.[3]

In his epilogue to his book on John Service, Joseph Esherick analyzes the reasons for the failure of the U.S. government to "forge a policy of friendship and cooperation with the Chinese Communists," and instead to tie ourselves to the corrupt KMT. Esherick focsues on the point where Roosevelt had capitulated to Chiang's demand to get Stilwell out of China, and on Patrick Hurley's emergence as a major influence on America's China policy. Service and the other members of the American Embassy in Peking had sent Roosevelt a telegram urging him to support the CCP, instead of the KMT as Hurley had recommended. Before making his decision, Roosevelt called in Edgar Snow for an interview. The President asked Snow if it would be possible for the U.S. to support two governments in China. Snow's response was that he himself was working as a journalist with both the KMT and the CCP. Roosevelt's response, according to Snow, was to say that

he, too, intended to go on working with both governments until a coalition government was achieved.[4]

Roosevelt's subsequent decision to support Chiang Kai-shek exclusively was based on purely military considerations, according to Esherick. Unfortunately, even from the military view, the decision was wrong. The problem as expressed by Esherick was that no one in Washington could appreciate the strength of the Communist guerrilla forces. Further, the Roosevelt administration was convinced that a KMT-CPP coalition was possible with the CCP a junior partner. Neither Embassy personnel nor China journalists could convince Washington that full-scale civil war would result from either a bogus coalition or a policy of exclusive support for the KMT. Nor could they convince Washington that inevitably the CCP would win that civil war.[5]

Esherick concludes that with hindsight we now know that social and national revolutions are not easily suppressed and that the Chinese Communists' ties to Moscow were not unbreakable. However it took Korea and Vietnam for that lesson to be learned. In the meantime those statesmen and journalists who had advocated support for the CCP went through some severe repercussions, even though their recommendations had not been adopted. Esherick points out that if their recommendations had been adopted, and the U.S. had helped bring about a China controlled by the Communists, this would have been unacceptable, too. So although we can now say that it might have been better to follow the Foreign Service staff and of the "pro-CCP

journalists," we only know that now as a result of Korea and Vietnam, neither of which may have happened had we followed their advice. As Esherick pointed out, only by rejecting their advice could there be vindication.[6]

Franklin Roosevelt was neither the first nor the last president who had to struggle with the press as a persistent source of both information and opinions concerning public policy. Lyndon Johnson's attitude toward the press was predominantly negative, and is typical of the way many public officials view the press. After a long career in politics, he was "gun shy" about journalists; he had seen too many of his policies distorted (in his opinion) in the press and had seen too much bad news reported while good news was neglected. It was Johnson's opinion that journalists generally had inadequate backgrounds in history, economics, politics and foreign affairs, making it difficult for them to cover complicated news stories well. William Rivers sympathizes with Johnson's views as reflections of those held by most public officials concerning the press. According to River's definition, the function of the press is to act as:

> . . . a broker of official information, gathering it from halls of government and disseminating it among the people--then carrying their reaction and hopes back to government.[7]

Rivers implies that while "no function of the press is more important," it is one that has built-in problems. It is also not the only function. Another, Rivers says, is "to help watch the horizon, much as the ancient messenger once did."[8]

Watching the horizon, however, has grown from the rather simple occupation it was in ancient times to an extremely complicated one involving much more than telling one's superiors that someone was coming. American journalists in China had the difficult task of observing a very unfamiliar landscape full of unfamiliar people under an unusual set of circumstances. Their job grew to involve more than straight reporting; they sometimes became interpreters as well, and some did come to consider themselves as political advisers to their governments back home. Because their newsbeat covered territory unfamiliar to most readers and to many public officials, these journalists tended to consider themselves China experts, and many wrote books on the subject as well as articles. Some became obvious advocates for one side or the other. Many did try to influence foreign policy decisions affecting relations between the U.S. and China. While Joseph McCarthy and the China Lobby tried to blame the "loss of China" on journalists and diplomats who spoke well of the Communists, that irrational assessment is no longer given a great deal of credit.

The whole question of the role of media in politics has taken on new dimensions in the 1970s and 1980s as wars have been brought into American homes by television cameras. But in the 1930s and 1940s there is little evidence to indicate that the American press was able to have a significant impact on foreign policy decisions concerning China. Some analysts, in fact, agree that foreign policy decisions regarding China were made without consideration of advice from military,

political or journalistic observers. As Mark Mancall says in his 1984 book, China at the Center . . . 300 Years of Foreign Policy:

> The American errors in China must be, in retrospect, an object of wonder. The U.S. had specialists, both in and out of government, who were profoundly experienced in China affairs, and it was often well served by its diplomatic and consular personnel in China, but the policy-makers would not heed their advice or accept their often correct analysis of the relative strengths and weaknesses of one or another party.[9]

Mancall's description of U.S.-China relations during the months surrounding the 1945 Yalta conference support the view that U.S. policy toward China was in serious trouble. The State Department had reached a point of "frustration and resentment" over its relations with Chiang. Vice-President Henry Wallace had rejected the role of middleman between China and Russia, and Patrick Hurley's naivete in Moscow "was equalled only by his naivete in China."[10] At the very time the State Department was refusing to play the role of adviser to China in its relations with the Soviet Union, Mancall says, the American president in Yalta was agreeing to act as intermediary between the signatory powers and Chiang Kai-shek. "Clearly, the U.S. lacked a well-defined policy in China," Mancall concludes.[11]

Henry Luce involved himself and his publications (Time, Life, and Fortune) in the effort to define what form U.S. policy should take. A strong advocate of support for Chiang Kai-shek, Luce was one journalist who had the political clout to influence

politicians. Other journalists such as Snow, Smedley, Strong, Belden and others, wrote about KMT corruption and about the strengths of the CCP, but their views were not incorporated into policy. They were considered by some to be politically naive and by others to be radical pro-Communist conspirators.

Concerning the power of the press among the Chinese revolutionaries and the impact of American journalists on them, the literature shows Mao Tse-tung as eager to use friendly American writers to his advantage whenever possible. His response to Snow, Smedley and Strong was positive and pragmatic. Analysts such as Pye, Reardon-Anderson, Shewmaker and Barnett describe Mao's recognition of the importance of the media in developing foreign friendships. Their analysis indicates that while Mao was successful in befriending many journalists, the journalists were unable to convince either FDR or Truman that an alliance with Mao would be valuable. While the relationship between Mao and American journalists was good, then, it had no positive payoff (at least not until 20 years later). More important for Mao and his revolution, however, was his success in attracting the support of the Chinese people. That support was adequate to carry the revolution to a successful conclusion without external support.

Many political analysts, including Michael Schaller, Theodore White, James Burns and Walter Lippmann, agree that the American political response to the Chinese revolution was calamitous. Burns sees FDR's dream of friendship with

China become a nightmare, and White describes foreign correspondents and Embassy personnel as totally frustrated with the political mismanagement. Walter Lippmann blames the situation on the failure of the U.S. to develop a sound foreign policy stance at any time since the turn of the century, and Tang Tsou emphasizes that ultimate responsibility for the disaster in China belongs to Chiang Kai-shek. It was his corruption and inability to attract support from among his own people that led to the fall of the KMT and the success of the CCP, as well as to the inability of U.S. foreign policy (such as it was) to have any impact at all . . . with or without the help of the American press.

In 1979 a group of noted American journalists and political commentators participated in a symposium on the press and public policy held in Washington, D.C. George Will and Eric Sevareid were among the participants, and one of the issues discussed was the significance of the press-policy relationship. Sevareid expressed the opinion that the press does not often start wars or elect presidents, but it does have an effect on policy agendas and political events. From time to time, he says, the press functions as an early warning system. In the early 1930s, he pointed out, the American government was not warning this country about the real meaning of Adolph Hitler, but a lot of very good foreign correspondents were. The same was true, in Sevareid's opinion, during World War II and just before that war began, when:

> . . . the press informed us about the immense

> potential of the Chinese Communists and the probabilities of what would happen there. There have been many early warnings from the people of the press; very few that I remember from government.[12]

Panel member and syndicated columnist George Will pointed out that the impact of the media on foreign policy has changed significantly since the 1930s simply by virtue of the tremendous growth in American government. The press corps is described by Will as a relatively small collection of generalists covering an increasingly large army of specialists. "The economics of the print medium guarantee that the government cannot be terribly well covered by the 1800 or so daily newspapers in the country," Will states. "It may be that a large, centralized, regulated welfare state must, of necessity, be essentially unreported."[13]

In discussing the potential power of the press, Mr. Will quoted Bertrand Russell's definition of power as "the ability to achieve <u>intended</u> effects." When asked if the press generally has <u>intentions</u> of manipulating the public, Mr. Will says, "Rarely. It's too busy keeping up with the flow of events."[14]

Many of the American journalists covering China during the 1935-50 period wrote with conviction about what was going on there. They did seem to have intentions of persuading their readers to pay attention to what was going on in China, and some clearly wanted to influence American political response. However the journalists were divided on the

politics of the issue just as policy makers were, and consequently appear to have had little influence on the establishment of policy. Whatever potential for influence existed was overshadowed by other factors and actors in the complicated situation. Chinese officials, Mao and Chiang, dominated Chinese political decisions. American officials, (FDR, Truman, Hurley and Marshall) dominated American policy decisions. The press undoubtedly was involved in the process, but it was only one element in a quite complex process. As Frederick Field said in 1937, modern media technology has made it possible for public policy to be based on public opinion as expressed through the media, but as George Will points out, that potential relationship is tempered by the extraordinary complexities of today's world.

In view of that growing complexity, and considering the ever more urgent need to make wise political decisions based on accurate information, there is a real need to develop and perfect Walter Lippmann's "Machinery of Knowledge." Hopefully that machinery will be built cooperatively by those who gather information, including journalists, and those who make decisions based on it, including politicians, so that the system will function efficiently. Perhaps in our high-tech Information Age a wise and wonderful Knowledge Machine will be developed to lower the risk of disastrous decisions.

Joseph Klapper concluded after two decades of study between 1940 and 1960 that the impact of the media on the public's opinions and attitudes was minimal. Developments

between the U.S. and China during the 1930s and 1940s indicate that the media also has only a minimal impact on the attitudes, opinions and decisions of political leaders. Where governments control media, as in China, they do appear to demonstrate Karl Deutsch's "steering power" through media manipulation. However even in those circumstances that power appears limited. Such governments can use the media as one tool for gaining allegiance, but must use others as well. Promises of economic benefits, or threats of negative repercussions are two common reinforcing techniques. It does appear that in both free and controlled societies, personal influences are stronger than the media where both are present.

The major factors concerning developments in China during the period in question had to do with leadership. Mao Tse-tung was fighting unscrupulous landlords, reducing rents, redistributing land and fighting the Japanese. Chiang Kai-shek in the meantime was leading a corrupt and inefficient government that failed to cope with either critical problems at home or the problem of the Japanese. These are the issues and events that influenced how the Chinese people responded to leadership. U.S. officials responded to issues and events also, with a view to doing what would be the most prudent in terms of politics, economics and military considerations. Politicians appear to have been as divided in their opinions about the China question as the press was, proving Klapper's

assessment that media reflects, rather than influences political issues.

FOOTNOTES

1. Ralph Townsend, Asia Answers (New York, 1936), p. 142.

2. Frederick Field, "China and American Far Eastern Policy." Amerasia (New York, 1937), p. 9.

3. Robert W. Desmond, Tides of War . . . World News Reporting, 1931-1945 (Iowa, 1984), p. 330.

4. Joseph W. Esherick, ed. Lost Chance in China: The World War II Despatches of John S. Service (New York, 1974), pp. 392-393.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

7. Ithiel de Sola Pool, ed. Handbook of Communication (Chicago, 1973), p. 522.

8. Ibid.

9. Mark Mancall. China at the Center . . . 300 Years of Foreign Policy (New York, 1984), p. 331.

10. Ibid., p. 298.

11. Ibid.

12. John Charles Daly, moderator, The Press and Public Policy (Washington, D.C., 1979).

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.

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VITA 2

Susan (MacFarland) Fronterhouse

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Arts

Thesis: THE PRESS AND FOREIGN POLICY: A STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BASED ON U.S.-CHINA RELATIONS 1935-1950

Major Field: Political Science

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Long Beach, California, July 23, 1941; daughter of Lloyd D. and Gertrude MacFarland.

Education: Graduated from A.B. Davis High School, Mt. Vernon, New York, in May, 1959; received Bachelor of Arts Degree in English from Iowa Wesleyan College in 1964; completed requirements for Master of Arts degree at Oklahoma State University in July, 1985.

Professional Experience: Research Associate, Department of Language and Communications, Phillips University, August-December, 1984; Radio Broadcaster, KGWA Radio, Enid, Oklahoma, 1982 to 1985; Program Director, YWCA, Enid, Oklahoma, 1975-1982; Writer/Researcher, Journal of Environmental Health, Denver, Colorado, 1970-1973; Secretary, United Nations, New York, NY, 1959-1960.