

GENERAL ALBERT C. WEDEMAYER AND THE FALL OF CHINA

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PREFACE

There are many myths in American history. For example, there is the myth that the United States has pursued toward China an historically friendly policy, founded upon the Open Door and the preservation of the territorial and administrative integrity of China. And now, feeding upon the old, newer myths have arisen. There is the one about China during the Second World War. She is pictured as a Great Power, a democracy, a nation in arms, fighting the good fight against the Japanese invaders and the subversive Chinese Communists. While these assumptions are generally accepted, they are false, nonetheless, and the dangers of these fallacies are evident in this thesis.

General Albert C. Wedemeyer is one of the greatest myth-makers on record. His myths range from Pearl Harbor to Cairo to Yalta, and they have a new twist. Wedemeyer had the difficult task of formulating new myths based upon the old and then convincing himself and the American people that he acted in accordance with them. But at the time Wedemeyer was in China, he was not well versed in the traditions of Chinese-American relations. This knowledge came later when the child of failure was looking for a father. Then Wedemeyer, with the other participants in that tragic affair in China, went dashing to his old college history books and typewriter to point an accusing

finger at others and to claim for himself the child of success. But neither Wedemeyer nor the other participants emerge in final light with their reputations entirely intact.

The primary purpose of this thesis, then, is to shake up some old bones. Hopefully their new arrangement will be more logical than the old. The years Wedemeyer was in China cover chronologically only a small part of the relations between the United States and China, but they coincide with a critical period in the diplomatic history of these nations and of world politics. As such, they are a microcosm of the essential elements that conditioned American policy toward China both before and after Wedemeyer's mission.

The facts of Chinese-American relations are familiar, but there are a multiplicity of interpretations. The advocates hold their opinions strongly and debate them vigorously. Passionate partisanship is encountered everywhere, and a spate of polemical volumes has emerged. They range from the State Department White Paper, which is mostly documentary, to the crisp, colorful, and subjective testimonies of the participants before various House and Senate investigating committees. The interpretation of the White Paper on the China debacle ". . . that nothing this country did or could have done within the reasonable limits of its capabilities could have changed the result; nothing that was left undone by this country has contributed to it," is not

supported by the evidence.¹ The White Paper, therefore, was used with caution.

On occasion, it was necessary to skip freely between what Wedemeyer said at the time he was in China and what he said later. The two are seldom the same. But admittedly Wedemeyer's task was not easy. Simultaneously, he was fighting the Japanese, reforming the Kuomintang, wooing the Chinese Communists, and worrying about the Russians. Wedemeyer's mistakes were many, but his instincts were basically correct. His greatest blunder was in trying to free himself from suspicion that he, at one time, harbored sympathies for the Chinese Communists.

¹Department of State, United States Relations with China with Special Reference to the Period, 1944-1949 (Washington, D. C., 1949), p. xvi.

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CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND OF THE CHINA THEATER

Americans living in China in the mid-1940's said that one needed a crystal ball and a copy of Alice in Wonderland to understand what was going on. General Albert C. Wedemeyer made the attempt and failed. The role he and others played in that tragic drama is increasingly referred to as America's greatest defeat.¹

China was, and is, an enigma. The oldest of all nations, yet hardly a nation at all, the China of the 1940's had degenerated into a mass of contradictory ambitions and goals. The petty semi-independent war lords sought to align themselves with any power, mainly the Nationalists, that would allow them the maximum freedom and protection. The Chinese Communists, fighting sporadically in conjunction with the Nationalists under the control of the National Military Council, sought to maintain their large and enthusiastic army intact until after the war, when it could be used as a base for future control. The third Chinese force, the Nationalists, under the control of the corrupt and moribund

¹Theodore H. White and Annalee Jacoby, Thunder Out of China (New York, 1961), p. 145.

Kuomintang Party, sought desperately to play the wider role of world politics and emerge from the war the leader of a unified China that would rank as a world power.²

But the answer to the Chinese riddle seemed to lie outside of China. The Japanese Empire controlled Manchuria and was steadily expanding westward. Even during the dark days of the German invasion, the Russians maintained a large army on the northern border, and Russia's ambitions were more frightening to the Chinese Nationalists than were the Japanese. The third outside force was the Americans, on whom the Nationalists eventually came to pin all their hopes. When the Americans entered the war against the Japanese in 1941, both the Nationalists and the Chinese Communists took this as their cue to preserve their own strength for the struggle that was to come. "Barbarians were at last fighting barbarians."³

The first mention of a China Theater involving America occurred at the Arcadia Conference in December, 1941. Churchill and Roosevelt proposed to Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek that the United Nations open a China Theater with China's leader as the Supreme Commander. The Generalissimo

²Statement by Dean Acheson, Secretary of State, before a Joint Senate Committee composed of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, 82nd Congress, Department of State Publication 4225, Far Eastern Series 43 (Washington, 1951), p. 24; hereafter cited as Statement by Dean Acheson.

³Oliver Edmund Clubb, Twentieth Century China (New York, 1964), p. 233.

agreed and asked that a high-ranking U. S. Army officer be sent to China to serve as his Chief of Staff. At the time, the Generalissimo's request for an American Chief of Staff and the idea of a China Theater seemed reasonable. The naive Americans assumed that China's enthusiastic and co-operative attitude was evidence of a desire to defeat the Japanese. But Chiang Kai-shek was ahead of everyone when it came to long-range strategy. He had known since the late 1930's that Japan was building a war machine aimed at a much more formidable foe than China. By maneuvering the Americans into the position of supporting his regime against the Japanese, the Generalissimo could then turn his attention to what he considered the real enemy, the Chinese Communists. An American victory over Japan, he correctly reasoned, was inevitable.⁴

The choice of an American commander for the China Theater was unfortunate. The position went to the recently promoted, colorful, caustic, humorous, beloved and hated, single-minded Lieutenant General Joseph W. Stilwell.

Arriving in China in March of 1942, Stilwell had the primary mission of assisting and improving the combat efficiency of the Chinese Army, a difficult assignment by anyone's standards.⁵ Stilwell found, to his shock, an

⁴Ibid., pp. 225-233.

⁵Charles F. Romanus and Riley Sunderland, United States Army in World War II, China-Burma-India Theater, Stilwell's Command Problems (Washington, 1955), p. 3.

inactive, indifferent, and uncooperative Chinese Government. The army seemed to have made an undeclared truce with the Japanese at the front lines, and the only fighting was an occasional skirmish that was kicked up when the Japanese felt the need to train or give experience to raw recruits.⁶

Stilwell estimated that many of the 300 divisions on the Chinese order of battle had never been in combat, and of the 300 divisions, only about 30 were commanded by officers loyal to the Generalissimo. The others were loyal to local war lords or to provincial governors.⁷

By June of 1942, after only two and a half months in China, Stilwell began recording his disillusionment in his diary. He referred to the Generalissimo as a "stupid little ass" and to the Chinese Government as a "structure based on fear and favor in the hands of an ignorant, arbitrary, and stubborn man." He referred to the Chinese capital as the "manure pile" and to his own efforts as a "dreary type of maneuvering . . . trying to guide and influence a stubborn, ignorant, prejudiced, conceited despot." Three months later, Stilwell referred to the Nationalists' intelligence estimate that one third of their armies were needed in the north

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid., pp. 22-23.

to oppose the Communists as "pure crap"⁸

By May, 1942, the entire China Theater was in trouble. The Japanese occupied Burma and destroyed the last line of communications between China and her allies. In addition, Washington decided that America would make her primary effort in the Atlantic for Operation Overlord, and the navy was coming around to the view that it could best reach and conquer Japan by island-hopping across the islands of the Pacific. The China Theater was falling farther and farther down on the list of priorities, and there was talk of writing it off altogether.

In this critical situation, Stilwell and Major General Claire L. Chennault offered two plans to make the China Theater effective. Stilwell's plan involved forming an elite force of full-strength, well-fed, competently led and well-trained divisions in the Chinese army. American lend-lease aid would supply the needed equipment and materials. In order to bring artillery, small arms ammunition, shells, trucks, and spare parts into China, Stilwell proposed an all-out offensive to retake Burma and reopen the line of communications from Rangoon to Kunming. Accomplishing this objective,

⁸ Hearings before the Subcommittee to Investigate the Administration of the Internal Security Act and other Internal Security Laws of the Committee on the Judiciary, United States Senate, 82nd Congress, 1st Session on the Institute of Pacific Relations, Part 1, Government Printing Office (Washington, 1951), p. 782; hereafter cited as Institute of Pacific Relations, Hearings.

the elite corps could then expand into a powerful Chinese army for an offensive against the Japanese in the east and along the coast, thereby exposing the Japanese homeland to China-based air offensives. A Chinese-controlled coast would also give American combat forces a landing and staging area from which to invade Japan.⁹

The alternate plan, suggested by the Commander of the Fourteenth U. S. Air Force, Major General Chennault, put more emphasis on air power. Chennault believed that Stilwell, by concentrating on reform of the Chinese Army and reopening the ground line of communications to China, was compromising a great opportunity to deal heavy and immediate blows against the Japanese by air. The air force general reasoned that his famous "flying tigers," who had been successful against Japanese shipping, could eventually expand this successful experience to hit Japan itself when long range bombers became available. He also feared that while the cream of the Chinese army was fighting in Burma, the Japanese would launch an offensive in the east and endanger the U.S. air fields already in operation.

The Chinese maintained a cool apathy and indifference throughout. Stilwell's disgust with the Chinese government became even more pronounced. In January, 1943, he was writing in his diary of the "Chinese cesspool" and of the

⁹Romanus and Sunderland, p. 4.

"gang of thugs with the one idea of perpetuating themselves and their machine." In the same month, Stilwell bemoaned that "we are maneuvered into the position of having to support this rotten regime and glorify its figurehead, the all-wise great patriot and soldier-peanut. My God!" And by July, the flowering collection of unflattering adjectives for Chiang Kai-shek had almost reached its zenith. Now the Generalissimo was "obstinate, pigheaded, ignorant, intolerant, arbitrary, unreasonable, illogical, ungrateful, and grasping."¹⁰

The War Department was solidly behind the plans of Stilwell, but Roosevelt remained unconvinced. The Chinese began to come out against the Burma plans, for reasons that are not exactly clear. Certainly the Chinese wanted the blockade of their country removed as quickly as possible, but not at great cost to themselves. The shortage of supplies was increasing as lend-lease now had to be flown over "the hump" of Burma. The British had backed out of their agreement to stage a simultaneous amphibious landing in southern Burma, and the United States had only committed a few thousand troops. It is possible in this situation that Chiang was afraid of defeat. "The years of stalemate had made the Chinese army a pulp, a tired, dispirited, unorganized

¹⁰ Testimony of Joseph Alsop, Institute of Pacific Relations, Hearings, p. 1408.

mass, despised by the enemy, alien to its own people, neglected by its government, [and] ridiculed by its allies."¹¹ Chiang also had other plans for his army after the war ended.

By March, 1943, Roosevelt indicated that he supported Chennault rather than Stilwell.¹² But, by December, after consistent pleading by Stilwell and the War Department, and as "island hopping" was proving extremely costly, Stilwell's Burma campaign received approval.

The Burma campaign lasted ten months, and the Chinese not only learned that they could fight but learned to like it. Stilwell's objective was to use the Chinese forces, which he had helped to train in India, to clear a road into China before the spring rains began in late May. The key to success in Burma, Stilwell believed, was a simultaneous attack by his Chinese forces and the Yunnan force across the Salween River on the western border of China.¹³

Chiang Kai-shek, however, had other ideas. He refused to commit the Yunnan force and preferred to "wait and see how the action went," a wait that could very easily jeopardize the entire mission.¹⁴

¹¹White and Jacoby, p. 152.

¹²Romanus and Sunderland, p. 5.

¹³Theodore H. White, editor, The Stilwell Papers, p. 187, cited in Herbert Feis, The China Tangle (Princeton, 1960), pp. 126-127.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 127.

In early 1944, as Stilwell plunged deeper into Burma, Churchill came out flatly against the campaign. Churchill thought that the opening of the Burma Road could hardly justify such a campaign and doubted the feasibility of the road as a supply route even if opened. Roosevelt, however, had made a volte-face. Impressed by the enthusiasm of both the army and Stilwell, the President was now solidly committed to the campaign's success. Stilwell remained determined to prove in battle what he could not prove in words, i.e., that the Chinese could defeat the Japanese in Burma. "The War Department cheered him on."¹⁵

By March 17, 1944, Stilwell's forces, having fought bravely and successfully, were running out of steam. Fearing to push them any farther, he notified the War Department that he needed help desperately. He would lose the campaign, Stilwell warned, if Chiang Kai-shek would not release the Yunnan force immediately.

The War Department pleaded Stilwell's case to Roosevelt, who in turn pleaded with Chiang. But Chiang was adamant. Roosevelt alternately threatened and cajoled. "The United States," he said, "had been equipping and training the Yunnan force for just such a chance as was at hand; and if it was not to be used, our effort would not have been justified. I do hope you can act."¹⁶

¹⁵Ibid., p. 129.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 131.

Chiang now understood. He dispatched two more divisions to support the Ledo force under Stilwell, bringing the total to five divisions, and promised that the Yunnan force would be in battle by the end of April.¹⁷ Nonetheless Stilwell's reports on the situation grew more somber.

On May 10 and 11, forty thousand troops from the Yunnan force began crossing the Salween River. When this news reached Stilwell, he "flung his troops forward with furious determination" and all troops aimed toward the capture of the air field at Myitkyina, the prime target.

Although the air field fell to Stilwell's forces on May 17, the campaign was far from over. Stilwell had assumed that once he captured the air field, he could quickly clean the area of Japanese troops. Unfortunately, the monsoon broke soon after the capture of the air field, making the battle area a dank, muddy morass. Merrill's Marauders, the only American combat unit fighting in the offensive, became sick and exhausted. The Yunnan force lagged until the Japanese gathered supporting forces. The entire offensive ground to a halt, and the fighting dragged on throughout the summer of 1944. "The effort to gain a great and decisive victory — which Roosevelt had persuasively portrayed to Chiang Kai-shek — failed."¹⁸ Stilwell marched out of the jungles a bitter and defeated man.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 132-133.

With the cream of the Chinese army, the Ledo and Yunnan forces, tied up in Burma, the Japanese began their offensive in central China where the objectives were the Kuomintang capital, Chungking, and the bases used by the American air force.

As the military situation in China deteriorated, American policy was indecisive. Stilwell blamed the Nationalists for his failures and recommended support for the Chinese Communists. The political advisors attached to Stilwell's staff, John Davies, John Service, and Raymond Ludden, all experts on China, consistently sent in reports warning of dire consequences of continued aid to the Kuomintang. Even Chennault, previously an all-out supporter of the Nationalists, was beginning to lose faith in Chiang Kai-shek, especially after the Japanese overran the American air fields in late 1944. The growing chorus of anti-Kuomintang reports stressed the growing strength and popularity of the Chinese Communists and the increasing danger of opposing Asian nationalism. The Kuomintang must offer political and economic reform, Davies reported, or the United States should abandon that government. With the hearty approval of the American embassy staff at Chungking, Davies and Service recommended that "close working relations be established with the [Chinese] Communists" and that the Generalissimo be pressured into forming a coalition government to head off a civil war. The reports acknowledged Russian

influence in the Chinese Communist movement, but emphasized that the Chinese Communists "were strongly nationalistic and would probably chart their destiny unless forced into the arms of Russia." Davies warned flatly in November of 1944 that "power in China is on the verge of shifting from Chiang to the Communists."¹⁹

Yet the established policy of supporting the Nationalists had many adherents. The State Department feared Soviet ambitions in China and believed that the United States had little prospect of influencing the Chinese Communists. The safest policy, as far as immediate United States' interests were concerned, was to support Chiang Kai-shek. Even the anti-Kuomintang reports of Davies and Service were cautious. In November, 1944, Davies reported that "we should not now abandon Chiang Kai-shek. To do so at this juncture would be to lose more than we could gain. We must for the time being continue recognition of Chiang's government."²⁰

With the Chinese political and military situation in chaos, Roosevelt approached Vice President Henry A. Wallace in early March of 1944 and asked if he would go to China to

¹⁹ Report by Davies, November 15, 1944, Department of State, United States Relations with China, White Paper, with Special Reference to the Period 1944-1949 (Washington, 1949), p. 574; hereafter cited as China White Paper. Complete texts of the reports can be found in Hearings on the Institute of Pacific Relations, Part III, and State Department Loyalty Investigations, Vol. II.

²⁰ Report by Davies, November 15, 1944, Institute of Pacific Relations, Hearings, pp. 806-807.

see what he could do to straighten out the situation there. Fearing that in such a complex situation more harm than good might come from it, Secretary of State Cordell Hull opposed the mission. Hull believed that no person outside the State Department and the White House could break into Chinese affairs without serious risk of running astray. Joseph W. Ballantine, one of the Department's Far Eastern experts, went to Wallace personally to try to dissuade him from making the trip.²¹ In the meantime, however, Hull's misgivings about the mission were alleviated somewhat when John Carter Vincent, Chief of the Division of Chinese Affairs, was selected to accompany Wallace on the trip. Vincent was well qualified, for he had served in Chungking as a Foreign Service officer and spoke the language. Hull finally gave the mission his blessings.²²

On the first day of the talks with Chiang, Wallace blundered into the sensitive subject of the Chinese Communists. Wallace felt that the solution to the Chinese problem was a coalition government between the Nationalists and the Chinese Communists. With this in mind, Wallace suggested to Chiang with incredible logic that since the Communists and the Kuomintang were all Chinese facing a common

²¹Cordell Hull, Volume II of The Memoirs of Cordell Hull, 3 vols. (New York, 1948), p. 1586.

²²Testimony of Henry A. Wallace before the Internal Security Committee of the Senate, October 17, 1951. China White Paper, p. 145.

enemy, they must therefore basically be friends. It followed then that "nothing should be final between friends." Chiang listened patiently and allowed Wallace to finish his statement; and, on the whole, the conversations on the first day remained cordial.

On the following day, the atmosphere of the talks changed abruptly. Chiang began by launching into a lengthy complaint against the Chinese Communists:

The United States did not understand the question; some Americans . . . were being swayed badly by Communist propaganda. It was not merely a matter of his own opinion of the Chinese Communists; the Chinese people did not regard the Communists as Chinese, but as internationalists, subject to the orders of the Third International. The Communists [were to blame for] much of the suffering and present difficulties in China; their subversive activities were harming morale among the people and the army. The Communists actually wished Chinese resistance against Japan to break. [Not that] the Communists did not wish Japan to be defeated; but they were sure it was going to be defeated even though China fell apart. [They seek the] collapse of the Kuomintang before the end of the year. They knew they would lose their chance if the Kuomintang were still in control when peace came. The Communists, with clever purpose, were seeking to spread the impression that they were not true revolutionaries, nothing more than agrarian democrats; and that they were not tied to the Soviet Union. All this . . . was untrue; on the contrary, the Chinese Communists²³ were more communistic than the Russian Communists.

Wallace understandably did not wish to pursue the subject so early in his visit, but did manage to get the Generalissimo's approval of an American military mission to go into the Communist areas of the northwest as observers. Why Chiang gave his approval is a matter for conjecture. He had just advised that the "United States maintain an

²³China White Paper, pp. 146-147.

attitude of 'aloofness' toward the Communists which would encourage them to show a greater willingness to reach a settlement with the Kuomintang." Perhaps Chiang was trying to believe his own crude propaganda in anticipating what the American observers would find.²⁴

The talks then turned to the American army in China and the military situation as a whole, especially Stilwell and Burma. Stilwell was still in Burma fighting to keep control of the recently captured air field at Myitkyina. Chiang had tried previously to have Stilwell removed, but now he flatly told Wallace that he "lacked confidence in General Stilwell's judgment." Not daring to ask for Stilwell's recall directly, Chiang instead suggested to Wallace that Roosevelt "send out to China some top emissary who could presumably control and correct Stilwell." Chiang also insisted that it was necessary to have a ". . . connection with the White House that did not run through the War and State Departments."²⁵

At this same meeting, Chiang chastised Stilwell (and Roosevelt, indirectly) for insisting on the Burma Campaign.

The offensive was not a knockout one, and the Burma Road still was not open. If there had been the type of campaign he wanted, the Chinese armies would not have suffered their current defeats [in Honan and in defending the American air fields]. Recent developments had proved him correct in his estimate. . . . Remind President Roosevelt that

²⁴Ibid., p. 57.

²⁵Ibid., pp. 152-153.

the prediction which he, Chiang Kai-shek, had made . . . was sound."²⁶

The recall of Stilwell was inevitable if the United States planned to continue its influence in China. Wallace's report to the President included the Generalissimo's suggestions about a personal representative. The Vice President also advised that the desperate situation in China needed "an American general officer in whom political and military authority would be temporarily united. General Stilwell could not do the job; . . . he did not have the confidence of the Generalissimo."²⁷

In addition, the British, with whom Stilwell had been working in Burma, suggested Stilwell's recall. General Sir Alan Brooke, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, suggested to Marshall in June, 1944, ". . . that Stilwell ought to be transferred since he did not get along with his colleagues in SEAC."²⁸

Stilwell in the meantime made his position completely unacceptable. Against the advice of Patrick J. Hurley, who had recently replaced Clarence Gauss as U. S. Ambassador, Stilwell insisted on personally delivering a blunt message from Roosevelt, written in first person, in which Chiang was told, with the "or else" specifically implied, to

²⁶Ibid., p. 152.

²⁷Ibid., p. 165.

²⁸Ibid., p. 169.

reinforce the Chinese armies in the Salween area, have them press their offensive, and place Stilwell "in unrestricted command" of all forces. As Chiang read the Presidential message, Hurley's impression was that "he looked like he had been hit in the solar plexus."

. . . showing no emotion, the Generalissimo said merely, "I understand." Silence followed. Chiang Kai-shek reached over to his teacup and put the cover on upside down. Stilwell, in Chinese, said, "That gesture still means, I presume, that the party is over." Someone in the audience said "Yes." Stilwell and Hurley walked out.²⁹

Stilwell's attitude toward the Generalissimo did not change during his short-lived victory. One of Stilwell's first statements as Commander in Chief of the Chinese armies was, "What they ought to do is shoot the G-mo."³⁰ This time, however, Stilwell had gone too far.

Chiang was in a rage. He fired off a ringing aide-memoire demanding that Stilwell be immediately replaced.³¹ The Generalissimo centered on that hated officer the blazing stream of blame for the infamous Burma campaign, illogical and dangerous strategic policies, and the present difficulties facing China.³²

²⁹The Stilwell Papers, entry, September 19, 1944, cited in China White Paper, p. 191.

³⁰Emily Hahn, China Only Yesterday (Garden City, 1963), p. 392.

³¹Romanus and Sunderland, p. 460.

³²Feis, p. 200.

The President must have wondered as he read the message at whom the Generalissimo's shafts were aimed, Stilwell or himself? Roosevelt had clearly supported Stilwell's policies. But the air was now cleared. The choice was between Stilwell and Chiang Kai-shek. Roosevelt inevitably chose the latter, even while denying its justice.³³

To be sure, Chinese apathy and resistance were the primary cause of Stilwell's frustration. But Stilwell's setback also stemmed from the prevailing attitude that the goal of war was exclusively military defeat of the enemy, the inability to grasp firmly the political objective of war in terms of a postwar balance of power, and the failure to coordinate military activities with political policy. . . . the real significance of . . . Stilwell's program is to provide one of the clearest demonstrations of the American preoccupation with the immediate military aspect of the war to the neglect of making China a great power. Unaccustomed to thinking in terms of the primacy of politics, the United States let the desire to win a quick victory dominate all activities during the war. The result was that it won the war and lost the peace. For one cannot harvest an unsown field.³⁴

Stilwell left for the United States on October 27, 1944. In the final report which Stilwell submitted to the War Department, he made the following suggestion:

In handling such an uncertain situation as existed in that theater of war, the Americans would have done well to avoid committing themselves unalterably to Chiang, and adopted a more realistic attitude toward China itself. We could gain little by supporting the attitude of the Chiang regime. We could have gained much by exerting pressure on Chiang

³³Ibid.

³⁴Tang Tsou, America's Failure in China, 1941-1950 (Chicago, 1963), p. 87.

to cooperate and achieve national unity, and if he proved unable to do this, then in supporting those elements in China which gave promise of such development.³⁵

War Department orders not to discuss Chinese affairs with the press, an incomplete personal account, and finally Stilwell's death in 1946 prevented his views from being completely known.³⁶

Into this uncertain and critical situation came Wedemeyer, Stilwell's successor. His plan was "to kill as many Japs as possible."³⁷

³⁵China White Paper, p. 70.

³⁶Stilwell Diary 3, November 4, 1944, cited in Romanus and Sunderland, p. 470.

³⁷Institute of Pacific Relations, Hearings, p. 831.

CHAPTER II

WEDEMEYER ASSUMES COMMAND

Henry Wallace, after recommending Stilwell's removal from command, felt obligated to suggest a replacement. The first man to be considered was Claire Chennault, Commander of the Fourteenth Air Force. Chiang had spoken highly of Chennault, and it appeared that they could work well together. Chennault was very outspoken in his opposition to the Chinese Communists; this was a point which also appeared to be in his favor. Ironically, John Carter Vincent, Wallace's State Department advisor and head of the Far Eastern Division, raised no objection to the idea of recommending Chennault.¹ Vincent, later charged with being a Communist Party member commissioned to guide Wallace along Communist lines, actually concurred in recommending a decision that would have been the ". . . most anti-communist act that was done in China . . . until General Wedemeyer took command."²

It remained for Joseph Alsop, who had served as an advisor to Chennault since before Pearl Harbor, to oppose his nomination as commander in chief in China. Alsop testified

¹Testimony of Henry A. Wallace, Institute of Pacific Relations, Hearings, p. 1366.

²Testimony of Joseph Alsop, Institute of Pacific Relations, Hearings, p. 1452.

later that he had two reasons for doing so:

First, only General Chennault knew how to run an air force on a shoestring. Our shoestring was getting very thin. In those days the Fourteenth Air Force was the sole force in being to prevent thorough military disintegration in China.

Second, and more important, General Stilwell had gone to very great lengths to blacken General Chennault's name at the Pentagon. Even if President Roosevelt decided to act on Wallace's recommendation, there was no hope at all that the President could ever persuade the Army and Air Staff to put General Chennault in Stilwell's place.³

All Henry Wallace recalled of the suggestion to recommend Chennault was that someone said it "would raise hell in Washington."⁴

Most of the hearings in the early 1950's concerning the loss of China to the Communists played with the idea that the rejection of Chennault was a Communist act. The only problem with this suggestion was that Wallace finally recommended Wedemeyer, who was supposedly anti-Communist also.

The right-wingers, left with a seemingly self-defeating argument, then turned to the novel idea that Wedemeyer was acceptable to the Communists because he had "never expressed his views on Communism, never expressed his views on China, [and] . . . would go along with the Communists because, with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, he thought we should not invade the Balkans or interfere with the Russian campaign in eastern

³Ibid., p. 1448.

⁴Testimony of Henry A. Wallace, Institute of Pacific Relations, Hearings, p. 1365.

Europe."⁵ On the other hand, "General Chennault's opposition to the Communists was violent and emphatic. At that time there was an open mind as to where General Wedemeyer stood. He never committed himself and never made a formal position. . . . General Chennault was more anti-Communist."⁶

This left the question of Communist influence in the naming of Wedemeyer wide open. The question of exactly who suggested Wedemeyer to Wallace was never answered. When Wallace was asked how Wedemeyer's name was suggested, he answered,

I don't think it was made by me. I found out from someone that he was agreeable to Chiang Kai-shek. As I have previously testified--I don't know whether it was Chiang Kai-shek himself, whether it was T. V. Soong, whether it was Joe Alsop--but all I remember is that somebody told me, and I think it appears in the cable, that he [Wedemeyer] was persona grata to Chiang Kai-shek. From whom I obtained the information I can't say. That recommendation was made [i.e., to remove Stilwell] almost wholly on the basis of a complaint by General Chiang Kai-shek. . . . If my recommendation for the removal of General Stilwell, made as a result of the Generalissimo's request, was following the Communist line, then the Generalissimo was himself following the Communist line in making that request. This illustrates the utter absurdity of the testimony which Budenz has given. Budenz has testified that "The Communists were very much opposed to General Chennault and didn't want him in the picture at all." However, as I have shown, I initially proposed to recommend the appointment of General Chennault as General Stilwell's assistant and this proposal was concurred in by John Carter Vincent who, Budenz implied, was influencing me to follow a

⁵ Testimony of William Montgomery McGovern, Professor of Political Science at Northwestern University, Institute of Pacific Relations, Hearings, pp. 1024-1025.

⁶ Ibid., p. 1025.

Communist line. It was only after the considered advice of a member of General Chennault's own staff,⁷ Mr. Alsop, that I eliminated the Chennault proposal.

Alsop's noble defense of Wallace and Vincent before the Congressional hearings of the Institute of Pacific Relations, however, was marred somewhat by the introduction of an article Alsop had written for the Saturday Evening Post in 1950. The article, in part, stated,

Throughout the fateful years in China, the American representatives there actively favored the Chinese Communists. They also contributed to the weakness, both political and military, of the National Government. And in the end they came close to offering China up to the Communists, like a trussed bird on a platter, over⁸ four years before the eventual Communist triumph.

When the investigating committee asked Alsop what American representatives he was referring to, Alsop replied that the article concerned General Stilwell almost exclusively and that the others he referred to were "passionately loyal but mistaken Americans" and that "the source of their error was General Stilwell's error."⁹

No one seems to know exactly who suggested Wedemeyer as Stilwell's successor. Even Wedemeyer himself testified that he did not know who, or what, brought about the introduction

⁷Testimony of Henry A. Wallace, Institute of Pacific Relations, Hearings, pp. 1365-1366.

⁸Joseph Alsop, "China," Saturday Evening Post, CCXXII (January 7, 1950), 17.

⁹Testimony of Joseph Alsop, Institute of Pacific Relations, Hearings, pp. 1434-1436.

of his name, and that he assumed he was being eased upstairs into a rather insignificant theater because of his outspoken criticisms of war aims.¹⁰ Once suggested, however, the name of Wedemeyer seemed to please everyone. Even Roosevelt, who had never fully approved of Stilwell, enthusiastically approved Wedemeyer.

Roosevelt insisted upon treating the change of command in Asia as merely a conflict of personalities between Stilwell and Chiang Kai-shek, but the American press reacted with indignant criticism. The press had made Stilwell their hero, and they correctly sensed that Chiang Kai-shek was the villain of the affair.¹¹

With no detailed explanation, the Joint Chiefs of Staff issued the orders which withdrew Stilwell from China. The China-India-Burma Theater was then divided into two parts under separate commands: (a) the China Theater, which included the mainland of China, Indo-China, and the Chinese

¹⁰ Albert C. Wedemeyer, Wedemeyer Reports! (New York, 1958), pp. 248-249. Wedemeyer felt that United States' objectives should have been the restoration of a balance of power in Europe and the Far East. He further felt that Germany refused to make war on the United States in spite of extreme provocation. Roosevelt then exerted diplomatic and economic pressures on Japan that compelled the Japanese to declare war on the United States. Most of these opinions expressed by Wedemeyer were written in the 1950's. It seems doubtful that Roosevelt or the Chiefs of Staff thought about Wedemeyer's political views one way or the other.

¹¹ New York Times, October 31, 1944, cited in Herbert Feis, The China Tangle (Princeton, 1960), p. 200.

islands immediately adjacent, including Hong Kong, Formosa and Hainan; and (b) the India-Burma Theater.¹²

Wedemeyer, of whom Chiang Kai-shek personally approved, became Commanding General of the United States forces in the China Theater. For Chiang, this Pyrrhic victory was in reality his greatest defeat. Marshall, with Roosevelt's blessing, refused to ". . . allow another American general to be placed in the position of Chief of Staff and Commander of the Chinese armies for it was evident that no American would be loyally supported."¹³ Thus, miraculously, the United States freed itself of responsibility for the eventual Nationalist defeat.¹⁴ Simultaneously, Washington appointed General Daniel Sultan as Commanding General of United States forces in the India-Burma Theater.

Wedemeyer arrived in China determined to stay out of political entanglements. Unfortunately, however, the nature of the conflict called for political entanglements.

For him [Wedemeyer] the past was a closed book. All the documents, cables, and memoranda on the Stilwell crises were sealed in a folder . . . this folder Wedemeyer refused to open. He wanted to forget the heartaches, bitternesses, and smoldering aggravations of Stilwell's regime, to be friends with all men, to please everyone, in order to have his way clear for

¹²Ibid., p. 201.

¹³Extracts from a memo which Stimson prepared for talking with the President on October 3, 1944, cited in Henry L. Stimson and McGeorge Bundy, On Active Service in Peace and War (New York, 1947), pp. 536-539.

¹⁴F. F. Liu, A Military History of Modern China, 1924-1949 (Princeton, 1956), p. 221.

a single technical job. His orders were specific-- to create, train, and implement a first class fighting Chinese machine. What the machine was to be used for, who was to drive it, where it was to go, was not Wedemeyer's business. . . . Politics were Ambassador Hurley's domain, and if Hurley was embroiling America in a Chinese civil war, Wedemeyer considered himself bound to follow.¹⁵

Immediately after arriving in Chungking, the capital of China since the fall of Hankow to the Japanese in 1938, Wedemeyer's first major task was to improve relations with Chiang Kai-shek. Stilwell's comment that the Chinese regarded the Americans with the jaundiced look of suspicion impressed Wedemeyer. The ousted general felt that Americans were "generally regarded as interlopers of cunning demeanor distributing largesse, most of which failed to materialize."¹⁶ Wedemeyer therefore felt the situation called for "honed diplomacy" coupled with decisiveness and strength.¹⁷

The morning of the second day in China, Hurley and Wedemeyer made a formal call on the Generalissimo. In previous meetings, the Generalissimo had been dressed in a plain black jacket with no decorations of any kind.¹⁸ On this

¹⁵White and Jacoby, pp. 260-261.

¹⁶China White Paper, p. 69.

¹⁷Liu, p. 196.

¹⁸Wedemeyer had served a tour of duty in Tientsin, China, in the early 1930's as a lieutenant. It was during this period that the Kuomintang was coming to power in the South under youthful Chiang Kai-shek. It was also the period in which Wedemeyer learned to speak Mandarin. Wedemeyer's last visit to China was several months earlier, when Mountbatten had sent him to discuss the disputed China-Burma boundary line while on duty as Chief of Staff of the SEAC.

particular morning, however, with Wedemeyer arriving for the first time as U. S. Commander in the China Theater, Chiang wore a dark greenish-brown uniform with the insignia of a five-star general and the Kuomintang blue button with a white sun in the middle. The insignia indicated that Chiang Kai-shek was Commander in Chief of the Chinese forces as well as President of the Republic of China. Chiang was making a point, and Wedemeyer never forgot it.¹⁹

But the Generalissimo warmly welcomed the Americans. From the beginning Chiang believed that Wedemeyer differed from Stilwell in temperament, training, and behavior. From this personal standpoint alone, so important to the Chinese, Wedemeyer was infinitely more acceptable than Stilwell could ever have been.²⁰

Another important point in Wedemeyer's favor was that Chiang now realized more than ever before that he was completely dependent upon American aid. China's political and military situation was now critical, and Chiang needed an army. Wedemeyer was there to train an army. "This was probably the largest reason for Wedemeyer's success. Wedemeyer got cooperation where Stilwell had met stony refusal; when he expressed a desire, the Kuomintang jumped to obey."²¹

¹⁹Feis, p. 202.

²⁰Ibid., p. 201.

²¹White and Jacoby, pp. 262-263.

Wedemeyer regarded the new Chinese army as ". . . simply a tool against Japan. Chiang Kai-shek knew them for far more than that; after the war this army would have unchallenged might with which to enforce the will of his government."²²

The third factor influencing the relationship between Wedemeyer and Chiang was Wedemeyer's ability as a diplomat. ". . . if it came to it he could push the Generalissimo pretty hard, as the Generalissimo knew better than to try to get a second American general recalled if he wish[ed] to retain American friendship."²³ And on occasion, Wedemeyer did push the Generalissimo pretty hard. Wedemeyer recalled that he was shocked to find that Chinese officials frequently gave banquets of over twenty courses. In view of the starved and emaciated condition of the Chinese people, Wedemeyer recommended that officials should discontinue such banquets for the duration of the war and that Chiang should set a personal example for temperance. Slightly amused, the Generalissimo agreed.²⁴

²²Ibid., p. 262.

²³Sol Adler to Harry Dexter White, January 16, 1945; Subcommittee to Investigate the Administration of the Internal Security Act and other Internal Security Laws of the Committee of the Judiciary, United States Senate, 89th Congress, 1st Session (Washington, 1965), cited in Anthony Kubek, editor, Morgenthau Diary (China), p. 1412; hereafter cited as Morgenthau Diary.

²⁴Wedemeyer, p. 322.

To guide Wedemeyer, the Joint Chiefs of Staff issued orders on October 24, 1944. These specified

1. That in regard to the United States combat forces under his command his primary mission was to carry out air operations from China.
2. He was also to continue to assist the Chinese air and ground forces in operation, training, and logistical support.
3. He was to control the allocation of lend-lease supplies delivered into China, within priorities set by the Joint Chiefs of Staff.
4. In regard to the Chinese forces he was authorized to advise and to assist the Generalissimo in the conduct of military operations against Japan.
5. He was not to use United States resources to suppress civil strife except insofar as necessary to protect United States lives and property.²⁵

Wedemeyer soon had trouble finding in these orders full answers to the question of what he was supposed ultimately to accomplish. Within three months, Wedemeyer was asking Washington whether his mission was only to contain Japanese forces, to move toward rearming China so that she could be a strong Asiatic power, or to unify China under Chiang Kai-shek.²⁶ Washington was never able to answer these questions even when serious contradictions in policy became increasingly apparent. Until the end of the war, the orders given to Wedemeyer continued to be the governing order for American military activity in China. Both Washington and Wedemeyer apparently ignored the most critical issue, what to do with the Chinese Communists. Lacking specific

²⁵White and Jacoby, p. 202.

²⁶Ibid., p. 203.

instructions, Wedemeyer interpreted his orders as liberally as possible and set to work on four major objectives:

1. Stay out of Chinese politics
2. Hold American supply bases at all costs
3. Improve fighting effectiveness of Chinese army
4. See that all Americans in China act like Americans.²⁷

The question of American policy regarding the Chinese Communists was largely ignored at the time. Nonetheless, after the turn of events in China in the 1950's, nearly everyone involved, especially Wedemeyer, claimed to have been aware of the danger from the Communists. Wedemeyer testified in September of 1951 before a Subcommittee of the Committee on the Judiciary that he had formulated a clear policy with regards to the Chinese Nationalists.

. . . the American policy, as I interpreted it, was to support the Chinese Nationalist Government. So everything that I did militarily or otherwise was in consonance with that interpretation of American policy in China. If I had followed the advice of [my] advisors [Davies, Ludden, Service, and Emmerson] . . . I would not²⁸ have been following the policy of my country. . . .

But numerous other sources indicate that Wedemeyer was guilty of wishful thinking. It is painfully obvious that in 1944 and 1945 Wedemeyer had no well defined anti-Communist attitude at all. An article in the Daily Worker of November 26, 1944, stated, in extra heavy print,

²⁷Liu, p. 235.

²⁸Testimony of General Albert C. Wedemeyer, Institute of Pacific Relations, Hearings, p. 776.

It is clear that the recall of General Stilwell did not mark the end of one phase and the beginning of a contrary phase in American policy. If anything, the unity policy is being urged more energetically than in the past. In his first interview in Chungking General Wedemeyer made it clear that his policy was the same as that of his predecessor, General Stilwell. He [Wedemeyer] emphasized the serious threat of the Japanese armies in the south, called for unity of all the Chinese fighting forces and their concentration upon fighting the Japanese and urged Kuo-mintang-Communist unity.²⁹

There was also the matter of the reports which came out of Wedemeyer's office and which had strongly pro-Chinese Communist overtones. Foreign service officers Jack Service, John Davies, Raymond Ludden, and John Emmerson wrote the reports in late 1944 and 1945, immediately after Wedemeyer assumed command. Although Wedemeyer himself had no part in writing the reports, he admittedly read them and forwarded them through his office. This would seem to indicate that Wedemeyer was as unsure of correct policy toward the Communists as everyone else. A report by Davies, dated November 7, 1944, several weeks after Wedemeyer had assumed command, stated,

The Communists have survived not only more sustained enemy pressure than the Chinese Central Government forces have been subjected to, but also a severe blockade imposed by Chiang. They have survived and they have grown. Communist growth since 1937 has been almost geometric in progression. From control of some 100,000 square kilometers with a population of one million and a half they have expanded to about 850,000 square kilometers with a population of approximately 90 million. And they will continue to

²⁹James S. Allen, "United States Policy," The Daily Worker, November 26, 1944, p. 3.

grow. The reason for this phenomenal vitality and strength is simple and fundamental. It is mass support, mass participation. The Communist governments and armies are the first governments and armies in modern Chinese history to have positive and widespread popular support. They have this support because the governments and armies are genuinely of the people.³⁰

Other reports continued along the same line, and all the reports came from Wedemeyer's political advisors. In October of 1944, Service reported,

Reports of two American officers, several correspondents, and twenty-odd foreign travelers regarding conditions in the areas of North China under Communist control are in striking agreement. This unanimity, based on actual observation, is significant. It forces us to accept certain facts, and to draw from those facts an important conclusion. This total [Communist] mobilization is based upon and has been made possible by what amounts to an economic, political, and social revolution. This revolution has been moderate and democratic. It has improved the economic condition of the peasants by rent and interest reduction, tax reform and good government. It has given them democratic self-government, political consciousness and a sense of their rights. It has freed them from feudalistic bonds and given them self-respect, self-reliance and a strong feeling of cooperative group interest. The common people, for the first time, have been given something to fight for. The Japanese are being fought because they deny this revolution. The people will continue to fight any government which limits or deprives them of these newly won gains.³¹

In hearings before a subcommittee of the Committee on the Judiciary in 1951, General Wedemeyer was asked rather bluntly if he did not have any personal feelings against

³⁰ Report by Davies, November 7, 1944, Institute of Pacific Relations, Hearings, pp. 795-796.

³¹ Report by Service, October 9, 1944, Institute of Pacific Relations, Hearings, p. 808.

men in his command making such reports and giving advice of a similar nature on policy. Wedemeyer responded, "Oh, yes; I did, Senator, but I was too busy with the military job. I did not analyze them [the reports] carefully."³²

Wedemeyer's major concern, rightly or wrongly, was with the rapidly deteriorating Nationalist military situation. It can be safely stated that, in the military arena, Wedemeyer excelled.

Chungking had been extremely tense since the appointment of Wedemeyer. After the open break between Stilwell and Chiang, Japan tried every propaganda device at its disposal to widen the break between the United States and China. At one point, Japan even offered peace terms to China, an offer Chiang frequently used with Roosevelt to get his way. Failing on the propaganda and political fronts, Japan began intensifying her military offensive toward the heart of Nationalist China. She sent in fresh troops from Japan, and in only one of the massive offensives, she used sixteen divisions in a single drive westward along the Hunan-Kiangsi railway. Finally massing over 400,000 men, the largest concentration of troops in China since 1938, the Japanese captured Kweilin on November 10 and Tuyun and Kweiyang on December 1; then, facing hardly any resistance, they began pressing toward Chungking. The best of the Nationalist

³²Testimony of General Albert C. Wedemeyer, Institute of Pacific Relations, Hearings, p. 831.

troops remained tied up in Burma and Salween campaigns and in blockading the Communists.³³

Wedemeyer used American air power to fly 23,000 fresh troops from the northwest to reinforce the Chinese units facing the Japanese outside Kweilin. Other troops from the northwest received orders for a forced march to help defend Kweilin, while Wedemeyer simultaneously ordered the hard-fighting General Fu Tso-yi to begin an all-out offensive against the Japanese in northern China to prevent enemy reinforcement in Kweilin. In addition, American victories in the Pacific caused the Japanese high command to slow down, anticipating the use of Japanese troops to defend the home islands. The Japanese failed to hold Kweilin, and Wedemeyer, in his first major test, had won the admiration and respect of both the Generalissimo and the Chinese high command.³⁴

Wedemeyer then turned to other matters urgently needing attention during his first few months in command. In quick succession, he issued orders to withdraw 500,000 unfit Chinese soldiers from the front lines and send them to the rear for medical attention, to dig in and strengthen vital defensive positions, to direct all available Chinese and American air power at Japanese supply lines, and to give

³³Tsao Chu-jen and Shu Tsung-sciao, Kan-ghan hua-shis, (Shanghai, 1946), cited in Liu, p. 221.

³⁴Ibid.

Donald Nelson and a group of American experts complete control of the Chinese war production board.³⁵

Six months later, in March of 1945, the military situation began to look brighter. With heavy Japanese casualties, Wedemeyer had stopped the Japanese offensive in the Honan-Hupeh area and had recaptured all the American air bases taken in the Japanese assault.³⁶

With the military situation greatly improved, Wedemeyer began long range military reform and reorganization.

The [Nationalist's] army rank and file were maltreated, ill-fed conscripts . . . often seen in Chinese wartime towns roped together to prevent escape. A large proportion died even before reaching their assigned units. Thousands of others, deprived of basic medical care and even their rations by grafting superiors, died of neglect later.³⁷

With the enthusiastic approval of the Chinese military administration, Wedemeyer proposed to reorganize the Chinese army by reducing its size from 327 divisions to 84 effective combat divisions. Of these 84 divisions, Wedemeyer committed the United States to training and equipping 39. China was to train the rest. This allowed Wedemeyer to cull the Chinese high command and draw the remaining commanders together.³⁸

³⁵Ibid., pp. 221-222.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Clubb, pp. 233-234.

³⁸Liu, p. 193.

Wedemeyer's most popular move concerned the improvement of the Chinese soldier's diet. Americans, with Chinese approval, purchased army food supplies locally. This eliminated waste of American lend-lease and removed from the hands of corrupt and inefficient Chinese officials their lucrative black market business. It also stimulated local business and distributed American funds on a wider base. It also, unfortunately, contributed significantly to China's spiraling inflation.³⁹

Wedemeyer was particularly concerned with the unhappy relations between the American and Chinese military personnel.⁴⁰ The one abiding sentiment that almost all American enlisted personnel and most of the officers shared was contempt and dislike for China.⁴¹ By the summer of 1945, approximately 500 American officers and 500 enlisted men were serving in China in the air corps, the service of supply, or the training units. Most of these Americans had never seen the Chinese soldier in the field ". . . march helplessly against enemy positions and die on their feet."⁴² The Americans saw only the Chinese government, the corrupt officials, and the black marketeers. They believed that all Chinese

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Institute of Pacific Relations, Hearings, p. 779.

⁴¹White and Jacoby, p. 164.

⁴²Ibid.

were corrupt, inefficient, and unreliable. They saw the squalor, filth, and ignorance of the Chinese peasant and peasant soldier; the sight inspired them not with compassion or pity but with loathing and revulsion. They ascribed all their misery to the Chinese among whom they dwelt.⁴³ To improve this situation and increase the effectiveness of the military capabilities, Wedemeyer instituted joint U. S.-Chinese staffs at all the major echelons. He placed American officers in all branches of services and in combat commands. Policies were arrived at and executed by the Chinese and the Americans as allies and equals, and so completely had Wedemeyer been able to win back Chiang's confidence that the Generalissimo himself directed that, in the event of disagreement at the highest level, the American view should prevail.⁴⁴ According to Wedemeyer, the reorganization and the combined staff's worked beautifully.

Wedemeyer was influential in improving the training and instruction in the Chinese Army Staff College and the National Defense Institute. Under his direction, instruction was now offered in infantry, heavy mortars, engineering, signals, motor corps, ordnance, medical and veterinary sciences, and the services of supply. While flying across China to check on the success of his efforts and to observe

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Liu, p. 194.

the Chinese units in combat, Wedemeyer stressed the importance of establishing good relationships between the officers and the enlisted men "while maintaining strict discipline and fighting efficiency."⁴⁵

Initially, then, Wedemeyer was extremely successful. A new thrill of confidence and enthusiasm permeated the Kuomintang Party, but Wedemeyer soon found that his oft-repeated goal of killing as many Japs as possible was missing the mark. The fight for China involved four fronts and one front could not be fought effectively without affecting the other three. Wedemeyer had dealt, up to this point, with the Japanese, but there remained the other three--the Chinese Communists, the Russians, and the Kuomintang Party itself.

⁴⁵China White Paper, p. 759.

CHAPTER III

WEDEMEYER AND THE CHINESE COMMUNISTS

The Communists first began their activities in China shortly after World War I. Sun Yat-sen wanted to westernize his newly established republic and realized that this would require western help in the way of men, money, and materials. He first sought help unsuccessfully in the United States and Western Europe. Russian agents, in China at the time, suggested a Russian mission. The Russians were extremely anxious for a strong China as a buffer state against a growing and ambitious Japan. That was the beginning of Communism in China. The Russians were in China from 1923 to 1927. They sought to enter and work with the Kuomintang under whatever terms they could arrange with Chiang. In 1927, Chiang Kai-shek, sensing trouble, evicted the Russians and liquidated many of the known Chinese Communists. Those who escaped fled to Kwangsi Province in south China. The celebrated trek from Kwangsi to Shensi Province in north China saved them from annihilation, for now they could get Russian help and guidance, and the Kuomintang was helpless because of the Japanese attack in 1937.¹ The Communists continued to grow in the North until, by 1944, Chiang Kai-shek

¹Institute of Pacific Relations, Hearings, p. 1524.

recognized them as a more serious threat to his government than the Japanese. The Nationalists had a premonition of the Communist threat throughout the war against Japan. "The people were saying: The Japanese are only lice on the body of China, but Communism is a disease of the heart."²

Wedemeyer encountered the Chinese Communists soon after his arrival in China when they offered him command of their entire army. Slightly shocked and uncertain, Wedemeyer wrote later that he politely refused. The truth is that Wedemeyer notified the Joint Chiefs of Staff and President Roosevelt, who instructed him to refuse. This was the first of many slight distortions involving Wedemeyer's true attitude toward the Chinese Communists at the time he was in China. Wedemeyer stated in 1951 that he refused the Chinese Communist command because "I recognized the implications of Communism in the Far East . . . and did not want to support people whom I knew were operating under the aegis of the Kremlin."³

Wedemeyer continued to use the phrase "aegis of the Kremlin" in his writings, speeches, and in testimony before Senate and House investigating committees until, unexpectedly, the conduct of the Chinese Communists in their relations with the Soviet Union raised serious doubts as to its

²Liu, p. 243.

³Testimony of General Albert C. Wedemeyer, Institute of Pacific Relations, Hearings, p. 782.

validity. However, one may forgive Wedemeyer for his little white lies of the 1950's. He was on the defensive. Ironically, Wedemeyer's true attitude toward the Chinese Communists, one of cautious, wait-and-see optimism, seems to have been more logical than even Wedemeyer himself cares to admit. Despite his statements to the contrary, Wedemeyer attempted on numerous occasions to cooperate both militarily and politically with the Chinese Communists. This policy was probably correct, or at least the best policy available at the time. What if the Chinese Communists had made the offer to give Wedemeyer command of their armies in good faith? Would it have been possible for the United States to capture the Chinese Communists politically before they became convinced that the United States was hostile toward their interests? Wedemeyer was wise in making no major decisions that precluded this possibility. The anti-Communist decisions, to Wedemeyer's profound mortification, were made by others.

The liaison and advisory staff assigned to Wedemeyer by the Department of State--John Davies, Raymond Paul Ludden, John K. Emmerson, and John Steward Service--recommended without exception that eventual support for the Chinese Communists was America's only reasonable alternative. These career Foreign Service officers who spoke Chinese fluently and had lived most of their lives in China were accused in the 1950's of helping to bring about the collapse of the

Nationalist Government.⁴ Wedemeyer deserted these men. Indirectly, by silence, he even helped to implicate them. But the record indicates clearly that Wedemeyer was not so far from the position of his advisors as he has led the American public to believe.

Wedemeyer despised the role of policy-maker. But when he could get no clear answers to his questions from Washington, he turned reluctantly to the unavoidable task of taking actions which would, in effect, make policy. He had three alternatives open to him in dealing with the Chinese Communists:

1. He could ignore the Communists and support Chiang Kai-shek's government in their war against Japan;
2. He could gradually withdraw lend-lease from Chiang since the Nationalist position was deteriorating so rapidly and increase aid to the Communists proportionately since the Communists seemed to be the better choice to fight Japan effectively and also to emerge from the war in a good position to gain control of China; or
3. He could go all out for a coalition government involving representation from both the Communists and the Nationalists, get on with the war against Japan, and let the Chinese work it out for themselves when the war ended.

⁴Anthony Kubek, How the Far East was Lost, American Policy and the Creation of Communist China, 1941-1949 (Chicago, 1963), p. 212.

There were several occasions when Wedemeyer seemed to pursue all three courses simultaneously.

Wedemeyer liked to think, and liked for others to think, that he followed the first alternative exclusively; that is, he ignored the Communists. In 1951, Wedemeyer stated before a Senate Investigating Committee,

I didn't consider them a government and there wasn't much cooperation requested. The little I asked them to do was not done, namely, conducting military operations coordinated with my over-all operations. On the other hand, the Nationalist Government with which I dealt was improving steadily, [and] cooperated with me to the best of its ability. I received no cooperation from the Communists.⁵

Once more, the facts indicate otherwise. In January, 1945, Wedemeyer's staff worked out a plan approved by Wedemeyer for 4,000 to 5,000 American paratroops and technicians under American officers to operate in Communist territories.⁶ These Americans were to lead Communist bands in guerilla warfare against the Japanese. Wedemeyer must have been aware that Communist guerillas were necessary because the Nationalist guerillas, once sent into occupied territory, defected to the enemy with lamentable regularity.⁷ This plan also involved an incredible scheme for Mao Tse-tung and Chou En-lai to go to Washington for personal talks with

⁵Testimony of General Albert C. Wedemeyer, Institute of Pacific Relations, Hearings, p. 790.

⁶Tang Tsou, p. 178.

⁷Clubb, pp. 236-237.

Roosevelt. Wedemeyer was to keep the proposed visit secret from the American Ambassador Patrick J. Hurley and from the Nationalist Government.⁸ Hurley and the Nationalists had made it clear that they were violently opposed to any plan involving aid to the Communists. Wedemeyer did as his staff suggested, and the plan was kept secret.

Ambassador Hurley finally discovered the plan when Wedemeyer's staff tried to arrange passage to Washington for the Communist leaders. Hurley immediately fired off an indignant protest to President Roosevelt, stating that his understanding of American policy was to "prevent the collapse of the Nationalist Government, sustain the leadership of Chiang Kai-shek, and unify the military forces of China."⁹ Hurley could always make up his mind quickly about events. Many of his associates felt he could do this because he never quite understood the situation. Hurley's statement of objectives, however, was accepted as sound by Secretary of State Edward Stettinius and sustained by both Roosevelt and Truman so long as the policy did not involve the United States in civil conflict.¹⁰ As subsequent events demonstrated, however, American association with and aid to the National

⁸ Ambassador Hurley to President Roosevelt, January 14, 1945, Hurley Papers, File 308, Document No. 87, MSS., Santa Fe, cited in Kubak, p. 223.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Tang Tsou, p. 177.

Government in military affairs inevitably meant involvement in the Chinese civil war.¹¹

The War Department reacted quickly to the news from Hurley. General Marshall requested Wedemeyer to explain the plan to aid the Communists and asked for recommendations about appropriate future action.¹² Wedemeyer replied that he knew there had been several plans discussed, but insisted that he had not known that the Communists had been notified of the plan. Wedemeyer implied that the plans had been told to the Communists without his approval by ultra-liberal Nationalist leaders General Chen and Dr. Soong. Wedemeyer's staff had discussed the plan with Chen and Soong because they felt that these men would be sympathetic to the plan. Wedemeyer concluded his message to Marshall by recommending that no future action be taken and stating that "General Hurley has read this message and concurs in my recommendation but does not agree to my statements of facts."¹³ Marshall was not satisfied. He told Wedemeyer in his second message that he wanted to know if American officers in Wedemeyer's theater headquarters actually prepared a plan that meant bypassing the Generalissimo regarding the employment

¹¹Clubb, p. 255.

¹²General Marshall to General Wedemeyer, January 15, 1945, Hurley Papers, File 308, Document No. 88, MSS., Santa Fe, cited in Kubek, p. 223.

¹³General Wedemeyer to General Marshall, cited in Kubek, p. 223.

of Communist troops. Marshall concluded by asking, "If such a plan was formulated, by whom was it done and by whom was it made known to Mao Tse-tung?"¹⁴

The blame for the so-called leak was eventually placed on three American officers--Major General Robert McClure, Colonel David Barrett, and Lieutenant Colonel Willis Bird. Wedemeyer's insistence throughout the 1950's that he fought the anti-Communist struggle in China almost single-handed is absurd, since he acknowledged in his messages to Marshall that he was involved in formulating plans to use Communist troops. Also, Sol Adler wrote a letter to Larry Dexter White from the American Embassy in Chungking five months after Wedemeyer assumed command stating that

Wedemeyer is beginning to have doubts about the extent to which the Kuomintang forces we are training will really participate in the offensive against the Japanese; many people believe that if they are not convinced they will only participate to the minimum extent necessary to save Chinese face and to insure the supplies brought in by American forces landing on the China coast reach Chiang's troops.

Wedemeyer already feels that it is worthwhile approaching the question of supplying the Communists with small arms with Marshall and the President. . . .¹⁵

It is true that many observers, notably Joseph Alsop and Chiang Kai-shek himself, pointed out that Wedemeyer was acutely aware of the potential danger of the Chinese

¹⁴General Marshall to General Wedemeyer, cited in Kubek, p. 223.

¹⁵Morgenthau Diary (China), p. 1422.

Communists. This was especially obvious when these observers compared Wedemeyer to his predecessor Stilwell. But these testimonials do not preclude the fact that Wedemeyer's main concern was defeating the Japanese.

Wedemeyer's attitude toward the Communists, therefore, was flexible, while Ambassador Hurley's was not. Hurley turned more and more in the direction of wholesale aid to the Nationalists.

Foreign Service officers Davies, Service, and Ludden, and John Carter Vincent of the Far Eastern Affairs Division of the State Department continued their warnings about the eventual outcome of Hurley's policy, and the Pentagon, the State Department, and the President had second thoughts. Thus, while a steady stream of messages from American Foreign Service officers flowed into Washington indicating the growing strength of the Communists, the future of the Nationalist Government was increasingly uncertain.

Seven years later, in 1951, Wedemeyer testified at length before the Hearings on the Institute of Pacific Relations about these reports transmitted through his office by Foreign Service personnel attached to his staff. The committee had the reports read to Wedemeyer, one by one, and requested that he comment on them. Wedemeyer maintained the position throughout the hearings that he did not agree with the reports and that he was too busy fighting the war against the Japanese to pay careful attention to them. He clung to

this position even while the committee charged many of those with whom he had been associated in China with deliberately working against the best interests of the United States. Wedemeyer also made it clear during the hearings that he understood the interpretations and implications being made of the reports and of the loyalty of the men who wrote the reports. Wedemeyer had not questioned the loyalty of his advisors when he was in China.¹⁶

Moreover, there is convincing evidence that Wedemeyer had read the reports when they were sent and had apparently read them carefully. Wedemeyer stated in his book, Wedemeyer Reports!, that as soon as he arrived in China he studied all the reports sent in by the Foreign Service officers prior to his assumption of command. Wedemeyer wrote that he was struck by the anti-Kuomintang overtones of the reports. The implication was clear that he realized at the time the reports were sent that they were factually incorrect and misleading. Wedemeyer testified concerning the Davies' report of November, 1944, cited earlier in Chapter II of this study,

I think the writer is incorrect in the military capabilities of the Communists, and the statement there, the correctness of which I question namely, they had withstood the heavy attacks of the Japanese is not correct for the period I commanded the theater.

¹⁶ Testimony of General Albert C. Wedemeyer, Institute of Pacific Relations, Hearings, p. 800.

Wedemeyer, of course, was in command of the theater when the Davies' report he is referring to was sent. Wedemeyer continued his testimony by saying,

I read the history of the operations that had taken place from the beginning of the war, 1937. At no time were large numbers of Communist forces involved with Japanese forces, and at no time did the Chinese Communist military forces make a real contribution to the over-all China war effort. . . .

He [Davies] goes on to say the reason for the success . . . of the Chinese Communists is simple and fundamental. He says it is mass support, mass participation. I would change that: It is Soviet support and police participation, secret-police participation and propaganda participation. Those are the things that took over China.¹⁷

Wedemeyer, however, did not have such convictions at the time the reports were written. The plan to send Americans to work with and command the Chinese Communist guerillas and even to supply them with arms came after these controversial reports were sent through Wedemeyer's office. One must remember also that Wedemeyer's headquarters, with his approval, prepared the plans to aid the Communists. Wedemeyer later admitted that he had read all the reports sent in by his Foreign Service officers and that his office forwarded these reports to Washington. In Washington, Harry Dexter White invariably placed the reports, which were extremely critical of Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang, on the desk of Secretary Morgenthau of the Treasury Department with an attached note, "You may want to read this." These

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 795-796.

reports adversely affected consideration of new loans to China and made the distribution of funds already allocated to China painfully slow. Even as late as 1947, at the close of Wedemeyer's special mission to China, he continued blasting the corruption and inefficiency of the Kuomintang Party. Wedemeyer said later that this final report was a mistake.

Attorney J. G. Sourwine, Counsel for the Committee on the Judiciary during the 1951 Hearings on the Institute of Pacific Relations, asked Wedemeyer bluntly if there was some advantage to be gained through military and political cooperation with the Chinese Communists. Wedemeyer replied: "No. . . . We are being naive if we consider for a moment that we could generate a friendly spirit among the Chinese as long as the Communists are influencing them with their sinister propaganda. We just cannot do it."¹⁸ Sourwine then asked Wedemeyer if we could capture the Chinese Communists politically, as his Foreign Service officers implied. Wedemeyer replied, "Definitely not."¹⁹

Another alternative open to Wedemeyer in his relations with the Chinese Communists involved the idea of forming a coalition government, with both the Nationalists and the Communists participating, and with the armies of both parties unified under a National Military Council. Oddly enough,

¹⁸Ibid., p. 804.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 800.

the first American to pursue this policy vigorously was the extremely anti-Communist Ambassador Patrick J. Hurley. Hurley's plan had to fit within the framework of a larger policy formulated in Washington to the effect that the United States was to take no action designed to involve the United States in civil conflict. To Hurley, the American policy was

- 1) To prevent the collapse of the Nationalist Government
- 2) To sustain Chiang Kai-shek as President of the Republic and Generalissimo of the Armies
- 3) To harmonize relations between the Generalissimo and the American commander
- 4) To promote production of war supplies in China and prevent economic collapse
- 5) To unify all the military forces²⁰ of China for the purpose of defeating Japan.

Hurley presented his plan for peaceful unification to the Communists by outlining a program in which the Nationalist Government would obtain control over the Communist forces in exchange for Communist participation in a coalition government and the recognition of the Chinese Communists as a legal party, "entitled to enjoy all political and civic freedoms under a democratic system of government."²¹ The Communists accepted Hurley's plan, but Chiang rejected it. After two more serious attempts to reach agreement with Chiang, each time pointing out the advantages of having the

²⁰ Cable from Hurley to Secretary Stettinius, December 23, 1944. Senate Committee on Armed Services and Committee on Foreign Relations, Hearings on the Military Situation in the Far East, 81st Congress, 2nd sess. (1951), pp. 2908-09, cited in Tang Tsou, pp. 176-177.

²¹ Ibid., p. 179.

Nationalist Government control the Communist armies, Hurley gave up and moved steadily toward support for the Generalissimo's plan for solving the Communist question.²² The United States lost at this point its last chance to unify China peacefully, for Hurley refused to press Chiang.

Chiang's plan of unification was grotesque to the Communists.

Stripped of all verbiage, the Generalissimo's scheme aimed at the actual incorporation of Communist forces in return for the establishment of a "constitutional" rule which would not really alter the power position of the Kuomintang or change political life under the Nationalist regime.²³

When Hurley resigned in late 1945, he publicly released his letter of resignation, which revealed the extent of rift between him and the Foreign Service officers in China. The Administration countered by issuing a statement that American policy toward China had remained consistent and that no changes were anticipated.²⁴

Wedemeyer's attitude toward the policies of Ambassador Hurley was contradictory. It makes sense only in terms of the year in which he stated it. Wedemeyer said on one occasion that he did not believe it was possible to form a coalition government with the Generalissimo determined to retain

²²Ibid., p. 179.

²³Ibid., p. 179.

²⁴State Department Bulletin, XIII (Washington, D.C., December 9, 1945), pp. 930-935.

all the power. This implied that Wedemeyer felt the Generalissimo was being unreasonable. But later, during the same testimony, Wedemeyer said that the idea of a coalition government to the Communists was "just a step toward acquisition of all power. When the time came they would seize all the power and . . . the Kuomintang would be liquidated."²⁵

During hearings conducted by the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations in 1951, Chairman Richard Russell pointedly asked Wedemeyer: "Did we not, as a matter of national policy, try to unite the two conflicting elements [i.e., the Communists and the Nationalists], reconcile their differences insofar as possible, in order that both of them might employ their whole forces against Japan? Was that not our policy?" Wedemeyer answered,

That is correct, sir. As the theater commander, I did read over all papers pertaining to our policy. My mission out there was to bring about coordinated and effective employment of Allied means. . . . Every effort that I made was directed along that line. . . . the Communists did not respond to my personal effort. . . .²⁶

Wedemeyer responded to a similar question the same year before the Hearings on the Institute of Pacific Relations:

I received no cooperation from the Communists. I didn't consider them a government, of course, and

²⁵Testimony of General Albert C. Wedemeyer, Institute of Pacific Relations, Hearings, p. 803.

²⁶Senate Committee on Armed Services and Committee on Foreign Relations, Hearings on the Military Situation in the Far East, United States' Senate, 81st Congress, 2nd Session, (Washington, 1951), p. 2297; hereafter cited as Military Situation in the Far East, Hearings.

there wasn't much cooperation requested. The little I asked them to do was not done, namely, conducting military operations coordinated with my over-all operations.²⁷

Wedemeyer refused to acknowledge that his attitudes and opinions were contradictory. Shortly before leaving China, Wedemeyer conferred at length with General Douglas MacArthur. The following is an official radiogram dated December 7, 1945, signed by both Wedemeyer and MacArthur, and sent from MacArthur's headquarters in Tokyo:

It is suggested that the United States assistance to China be made available as a basis for negotiation by the American Ambassador to bring together and to effect a compromise between the major opposing groups in order to promote a unified democratic China.²⁸

Secretary of State Dean Acheson testified before the Senate Hearings on the Military Situation in the Far East that the policy advocated in that Wedemeyer-MacArthur radiogram "was the very policy Marshall was sent to China to put into practice." Wedemeyer testified, incredibly, concerning the remarks by Dean Acheson:

I should like to repeat, gentlemen, there was not, in my mind, at least, any idea that the message quoted out of context by Acheson--there was no idea that the message conveyed my approval of any suggestion that a coalition should or could be accomplished in China.²⁹

²⁷Testimony of General Albert C. Wedemeyer, Institute of Pacific Relations, Hearings, p. 790.

²⁸Military Situation in the Far East, Hearings, pp. 2298-2299.

²⁹Testimony of General Albert C. Wedemeyer, Military Situation in the Far East, Hearings, pp. 2298-2299.

The true attitude of Wedemeyer toward a coalition government in China is further clouded by a statement Roosevelt made to Stalin at Yalta. Roosevelt told Stalin that Wedemeyer and Hurley were having much more success than their predecessors in bringing the Communists in the North together with the Chungking government. The main obstacle to coalition, Roosevelt continued, was the Kuomintang and the Chungking government and not the so-called Communists.³⁰

Numerous authorities indicate that after 1945 the Chinese Communists did genuinely desire a coalition government. The Communists felt that coalition would not only end the political and military conflict, but most importantly would further their own cause.³¹

The typical reasons for this Communist attitude, however, do not seem very plausible, at least from the point of view of 1967.

The Communists had experienced no change of heart or theory. The rationale for their proposal was entirely practical. China's articulate middle group, whose shift of allegiance to one side or the other could prove of critical importance in the period immediately ahead, was weary of war and would oppose any political party that even gave the appearance of being warlike. The Democratic League, a combination of middle-of-the-road parties, strongly supported the Communist proposal for a coalition government. [Mao Tse-tung had made the proposal for a coalition government in April, 1945.] The Communists consequently had nothing to lose by opening with this gambit. They

³⁰William D. Leahy, I Was There (New York, 1950), p. 771.

³¹Clubb, p. 253.

could exploit a double advantage in standing for a peaceful settlement of China's domestic dispute. If such settlement were attained, they would have gone a long way toward their goal by political means; if their proposal was rejected, they still stood to gain valuable popular support by playing the role of supporters of the peace arrayed against a war party.³²

Many historians do not believe the Chinese Communists were sincere in wanting a coalition government. Critics maintained that President Truman and George C. Marshall were asking the Communists to cease being what they were.³³ Edgar Mowrer pointed out that the Marshall Mission was in fact an ultimatum to Chiang Kai-shek: "cease fighting the Communists or the United States will wash its hands of you."³⁴ This had the effect of making Truman's directive to General Marshall self-defeating.

To Mao it [the Truman directive to Marshall] said that to prevent American aid to Chiang, he need only raise his terms high enough to make them unacceptable. . . . This is exactly what Mao did. Chiang squandered roughly all of 1946 during Marshall's mission negotiating when a supreme military effort might have defeated his enemies.³⁵

Wedemeyer said on several occasions that he met Marshall at the airport when he first arrived and told him that his mission was futile. Wedemeyer's attitude toward the possibility of a coalition government continued to fluctuate

³²Ibid.

³³Edgar A. Mowrer, An End to Make Believe (New York, 1961), pp. 83-84.

³⁴Ibid., p. 84.

³⁵Ibid., pp. 84-85.

depending upon when and to whom he was talking. Wedemeyer testified in 1949 before the Senate Appropriations Committee concerning aid that Marshall had requested for China: "It does not matter whether Chiang is a benevolent despot . . . or a republican or a democrat. The fact is, the man has fought Communism all his life."³⁶

While the Marshall Mission was in progress, Ambassador Hurley angrily resigned his post. Hurley charged at a news conference that "lack of support for Chiang's government and pro-Mao disloyalty from his subordinates" were the reasons for his resignation. Meanwhile, Marshall continued urging Truman "to clear our hands out here as quickly as possible in order to avoid the inevitable Soviet recriminations."³⁷

The United States continued to give support to the Nationalists, even while Marshall was in the most critical negotiating period. Not only were several thousand Americans still stationed in China working with the Nationalists, but the American Air Force had agreed to transport the Nationalist armies into previously Communist- and Japanese-occupied territories.

The negotiations were already in serious trouble when Marshall learned that the State Department was planning to

³⁶Pauline Tompkins, American-Russian Relations in the Far East, (New York, 1949), p. 315.

³⁷Mowrer, p. 88.

replace Hurley with Wedemeyer as United States' Ambassador to China. Marshall notified Truman immediately "to cancel the appointment as Ambassador to China of General Wedemeyer lest the appearance of the pro-Chinese Wedemeyer upset his current 'delicate negotiations' with the Chinese Communists."³⁸ Upon hearing of the cancellation of his appointment, Wedemeyer's main complaint was that Communists were now dictating American policy and that he had already purchased several hundred dollars in new clothing to go with his post. He demanded that he be reimbursed. He was. His chance to play diplomat would come later.

By the end of 1946, the United States was unalterably committed to Chiang Kai-shek's government. There was no further need, from the point of view of the Chinese Communists, for any mediation.³⁹ The Communists announced from Yen-an the creation of a people's liberation army. Four years later the Kuomintang's power was limited to islands off the mainland where they enjoyed the protection of American naval power.

A Gallup Poll conducted in July, 1946, is perhaps significant. It asked a cross section of Americans what they thought the United States should do about the situation in China. Fifty per cent answered "Nothing," "Stay out,"

³⁸Ibid., p. 85.

³⁹Carsun Chang (Chin-sen), The Third Force in China (New York, 1952), pp. 246-247.

"Leave them alone," or words to that effect. Only thirteen per cent favored giving aid to Chiang in his struggle against the Communists.⁴⁰

This was the great dichotomy in American policy. The United States refused to gain political ends through military means. The United States had become disenchanted with Chiang Kai-shek in mid-1944, when he demanded the removal of Stilwell. It was clear to many at that time that the Chinese nation in general and Chiang Kai-shek in particular could not live up to the demands of Great Power status that the United States had envisioned for them. The great tragedy was the failure of the United States to formulate an alternative policy. Even recognition and open support of the Chinese Communists in 1944 would have been preferable to the slow-death, wait-and-see, pro-Chiang policy that was followed. The United States was riding a dying horse, and knew it.

In 1944, after the removal of Stilwell, clear and forthright policy was called for. The reality of Chiang's incompetence and the growing strength of the Chinese Communists was clear. These realities should have formed the basis of a new American policy. In the absence of a new policy, the administration hit upon the solution of salvaging the old policy. Wedemeyer was selected for the job, and he made

⁴⁰A. T. Steele, The American People and China (New York, 1966), p. 31.

the sincere but futile attempt. Militarily, Wedemeyer almost succeeded. But the overwhelming odds against him made the result a foregone conclusion. Wedemeyer went into battle believing, with the majority of Americans perhaps, that the Japanese were the enemies, and the Nationalists the friends. The problem of the Chinese Communists and the Russians did not fit the American concept of what the war was all about. A complicating third force and a civil war raging within the camp of an ally were considered more or less as a nuisance. Wedemeyer, like so many Americans before him, could conceive of only one enemy at a time.

This confusion on the part of the Americans is best summed up by a statement George C. Marshall made after returning from his unsuccessful mission in China: "I wash my hands of the problem which has passed altogether beyond my comprehension and my power to make judgements."⁴¹ That is perhaps the richest and most sincere remark uttered by the entire American delegation.

⁴¹Robert Payne, The Marshall Story (New York, 1951), p. 311.

CHAPTER IV

FINAL MISSION AND FAILURE

The Truman Administration, to get Republican support and to appease critics of the China policy, decided to make three significant concessions:

- 1) On May 26, 1947, the arms embargo against China was lifted after having been in effect for ten months. In June, 1947, 130 million rounds of surplus 7.92 rifle ammunition were sold to the Nationalists at 10 per cent of procurement cost.
- 2) On July 11, 1947, Truman issued a presidential directive at the suggestion of Marshall to send Wedemeyer, by now a known partisan of Chiang, back to China to report on the situation.
- 3) On September 15, 1947, John Carter Vincent was removed as director of the Office of Far Eastern Affairs.¹

The most important of these concessions was the decision to send the Wedemeyer Mission to China. The mission was unquestionably politically motivated. Marshall, who had returned from China in the summer of 1947 to become Secretary of State, did not even appear to take the mission seriously. Preoccupied with providing massive aid to Europe, Marshall said, in May of 1951,

I thought I would just send him [Wedemeyer] out to look over the ground for me and come back and tell me what he thought: but his idea . . . was he needed

¹Tang Tsou, pp. 453-454.

a Presidential directive. . . .²

But Wedemeyer envisaged his mission as the beginning of an entirely new policy toward China. With this in mind, Wedemeyer insisted that he needed as much prestige as possible. Marshall finally agreed, and the mission took on the appearance of a full-blown, carefully-thought-out administration maneuver to take drastic action in China. This was, as events proved, not the case.³

Once the decision to send the mission was made, there were no strings attached to Wedemeyer. He was even allowed to write his own directive for the President to sign.

When Wedemeyer was first asked to undertake the mission, he, too, was somewhat confused. He asked Marshall bluntly what he was expected to find during this mission and just exactly why he was being asked to go to China at that particular time. Marshall answered just as bluntly. "Pressures in Congress," Marshall said, "from Congressman Walter Judd, Senator Styles Bridges and others accusing the Administration of pursuing a negative policy were compelling a reappraisal of U. S. policy."⁴ It did not occur to Wedemeyer at the time that what Marshall was actually saying was that the Administration was satisfied with its China policy.

²Testimony of General George Marshall, Military Situation in the Far East, Hearings, p. 2295.

³Ibid.

⁴Wedemeyer, p. 382.

Wedemeyer's failure to understand the administration's motivation for his mission led him to a serious diplomatic blunder, as will be shown.

After the failure of the mission and the suppression of the report, Wedemeyer bitterly condemned Marshall. He implied on several occasions that the primary responsibility for the loss of China rested squarely on Marshall's shoulders. Most of Wedemeyer's criticisms about Marshall are petty and even silly. A few are shocking. But in Wedemeyer's right-wing arguments rest some rather convincing points. Wedemeyer wrote, in 1958,

My confidence in his [Marshall's] integrity, his loyalty to principles and friends had been shaken, but not destroyed by the testimony he gave before the Army Board Investigating Pearl Harbor, and by his angry reaction in Shanghai in December, 1945, to my warning that a coalition government in China was neither possible nor desirable. . . . I was all too ready to believe that he had at last realized . . . the U. S. policy in the Far East was unsound and was now seeking to rectify the situation. Why also, I ask myself, would he have chosen me for this mission unless a radical change of policy was envisaged, in line with my formerly rejected recommendations? Perhaps we would now deal realistically and firmly with the Commies!⁵

Perhaps a new China policy was called for, but it is not clear what Wedemeyer meant when he referred to rejected recommendations. Wedemeyer's conduct in China in 1947 and the generally demoralized condition of the Nationalist Government when he left are accurate testimony to Wedemeyer's understanding of the Chinese situation.

⁵Ibid., pp. 382-383.

Wedemeyer arrived in Nanking in July, 1947, accompanied by political, fiscal, economic, and engineering officials. Mark Watson of the Baltimore Sun, a Pulitzer Prize winner, was Wedemeyer's public relations advisor. Regrettably, Wedemeyer chose to ignore most of Watson's advice, especially the warning against delivering a farewell speech. It was an honest speech, but one that contributed significantly to Wedemeyer's undoing, as will be shown.

The Soviet Union considered the Wedemeyer mission a turning point in United States' policy in the Far East. The Russians considered Wedemeyer reactionary and anti-Soviet. It is debatable whether or not Wedemeyer was reactionary, but there is no doubt he was anti-Soviet. With incredible logic, Wedemeyer wrote in 1958 concerning the Soviet attitude toward his mission:

This attitude of the Soviets confirmed my belief in 1945 that the Kremlin never expected the United States to let them get away with their plots, first, to take over Manchuria and, finally, to communize China. Otherwise they would not have removed or destroyed Manchuria's industrial equipment immediately after V-J Day.⁶

The Chinese Communists were also hostile toward the Wedemeyer Mission. The Communists felt Wedemeyer was in China, with the approval of General Douglas MacArthur, to prepare for a new war and to ascertain what form American aid to China should take. A Chinese Communist broadcast on July

⁶Ibid., p. 385.

16, 1947, was vitriolic in condemning Wedemeyer:

By sending the infamous General Wedemeyer back to China, American imperialists hope to carry out aggression in China with a free hand and to prop up Chiang Kai-shek's moribund rule. The Chinese people are all too familiar with Wedemeyer, American imperialist educated in Prussian militarism.⁷

Foreign officials in China conjectured that events in China in the next six months would develop into a struggle between the United States and Russia for control of China and might possibly lead to an open conflict between the two world giants.

While in China, Wedemeyer traveled extensively, visiting Mukden, Peiping, Tientsin, Formosa, Shanghai, and Canton. Wedemeyer wrote, in 1958,

Everywhere I discussed the situation and ascertained the views of a multitude of Chinese and foreigners, including Americans. I consulted Chinese of various political persuasions as well as government officials and military leaders.⁸

The fact that the Nationalist Government permitted this strange intrusion is an indication of their desperation. Most of the Kuomintang, however, viewed the mission at first with a degree of equanimity. They expected, of course, Wedemeyer's report to be highly favorable and to result in massive American aid. In this they were mistaken, and when the real nature of the mission began to be suspected, their

⁷Chinese Communist Broadcast from North Shensi Province, July 16, 1947, cited in Wedemeyer, p. 386.

⁸Ibid., p. 387.

equanimity turned to hostility and then to dread. Wedemeyer was after the truth, and the Kuomintang realized too late that he was finding it.

After several weeks of travel throughout China, Wedemeyer returned to Nanking to prepare his now famous report. Chiang Kai-shek, sensing Wedemeyer's mood and the finality of the report he was preparing, turned to sweet reasonableness. Hoping to soften the inevitable criticisms of his regime, Chiang asked Wedemeyer to deliver a farewell address to leading civilian and military officials of the Nationalist Government stating frankly his observations and impressions during his mission in China. Chiang reasoned that Wedemeyer could not be too critical before the massed Nationalist Government for fear of wounding Chinese sensibilities. It also seemed logical to Chiang that Wedemeyer's softened mood before the Nationalist Government would follow through to his written report to the President. Chiang was mistaken.

Wedemeyer wrote in 1958 that he had grave misgivings about the farewell address. After the fiasco took place, he attempted in typical fashion to pass the blame for his failure to someone else. This time it was Ambassador Stuart. "I had grave misgivings as to the wisdom of acceding to Chiang's request," Wedemeyer wrote in 1958, "but Ambassador Stuart insisted that I accept."⁹ So Wedemeyer made his

⁹Ibid., pp. 387-388.

speech. He spoke to Chiang Kai-shek and the Nationalists "with a candor that had no regard for face, and made recommendations . . . which were plainly impossible to implement."¹⁰ The Nationalists sat in unbelieving silence. One official wept. Concerning the tax system in China, Wedemeyer told the Nationalists,

Corrupt officials in many instances take more than the peasants are able to give and this results finally in the peasants leaving the land and forming bandit groups.

In contrast to the taxation of peasants, Chinese businessmen and rich Chinese resort to devious and dishonest methods to avoid payment of proper taxes to their government. It is commonly known that Chinese business firms maintain two sets of books, one showing the true picture of business transactions and the other showing a distorted picture so that they do not pay as much tax as they should.¹¹

Wedemeyer continued with an attack on the political and military structure:

For the first year of the war, in my opinion, it was possible to stamp out or at least to minimize the effect of Chinese Communists. This capability was predicated upon the assumption that the Central Government disposed its military forces in such a manner as to insure control of all industrial areas, food producing areas, important cities and lines of communication. It was also assumed that the Central Government appointed highly efficient and scrupulously honest officials as provincial governors, district magistrates, mayors, and throughout the political and

¹⁰Kenneth S. Latourette, China (Englewood Cliffs, 1964), p. 143.

¹¹Remarks made by Lieutenant General Albert C. Wedemeyer before a Joint Meeting of State Council and all Ministers of the National Government of China, August 22, 1947, cited in China White Paper, p. 758.

economic structure. If these assumptions had been accomplished, political and economic stability would have resulted, and the people would have been receptive, in fact, would have strongly opposed the infiltration or penetration of communistic ideas.

The ultimate contradiction in Wedemeyer's philosophy came when he said,

I believe that the Chinese Communist movement cannot be defeated by the employment of force. Today China is being invaded by an idea instead of strong military forces from the outside. The only way in my opinion to combat this idea successfully is to do so with another idea that will have stronger appeal and win the support of the people. This means that politically and economically the Central Government will have to remove corruption and incompetence. . . .¹²

This eloquent and somewhat surprising address by Wedemeyer, especially the remarks relating to the futility of using force, is impossible to correlate with his statements made during the 1950's concerning the fall of China. He alternately accused Marshall and the arms embargo, Russian infiltration and propaganda, and occasionally the corruption of the Kuomintang Party. On less frequent occasions, Wedemeyer placed the blame on the State Department's negative policies, subversive elements at all levels of government, and the failure of the American people to understand the nature of the Communist movement.

Not content with the farewell speech, which the Nationalist leaders unanimously received with coldness and hostility, Wedemeyer released a statement to the press even

¹²Ibid., pp. 758-759.

more critical of the Chinese government and people. The press release was issued by Wedemeyer against the advice of Mark Watson, his press relations assistant. Watson urged Wedemeyer to simply issue a statement thanking the Nationalist government and the Chinese people for their hospitality. But Wedemeyer disagreed.

Wedemeyer's final remarks and press release received broad publicity in the United States and throughout the world. This publicity helped further to convince many Americans that any substantial help to Chiang would be wasted.¹³

The report which Wedemeyer submitted to the President recommended economic and military assistance for a five year period, plus the placing of Manchuria under a U. N. Trusteeship. The suggestion that Manchuria be placed under the control of the United Nations would have been so offensive to the Chinese that Secretary Marshall refused to allow Wedemeyer's report to be made public. The report was suppressed by the State Department for two years.¹⁴

It is significant that Wedemeyer's report warned against direct United States' involvement in the civil war in China: ". . . technical military advice . . . should be carried on outside operational areas to prevent the criticism that

¹³Mowrer, p. 87.

¹⁴Department of State, Statement by Dean Acheson, (Washington, 1951), pp. 38-39.

American personnel are actively engaged in fratricidal warfare."¹⁵ This was exactly the attitude at all levels of government concerning the use of American military forces in China. It is now generally accepted that United States military forces would have been required to save China. Wedemeyer not only did not disagree with the policy that lost China, but actively participated in formulating that policy. His statements during the 1950's that his policies would have saved China are not based upon facts.

The first official reaction from the Nationalist Government to the Wedemeyer mission came on September 2, 1947. Premier Chang Ch'un, in a United Press interview, charged that General Wedemeyer had failed to understand the Chinese situation and had not sought impartial information. The Chinese official flatly declared that "there would be no change in either the domestic or foreign policy of the Chinese government as a result of the Wedemeyer mission."¹⁶ Ambassador Leighton Stuart had already notified the State Department that Wedemeyer had wounded Chinese sensibilities, especially those of Chiang Kai-shek, and had thoroughly undermined the confidence of the Chinese people and government officials in the ability of the Generalissimo to govern

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Department of State, United States Relations With China (Washington, D. C., 1949), pp. 34-36, 513-517; cited in Tang Tsou, p. 455.

effectively.¹⁷ Thus, not being trained as a diplomat, and not realizing the importance of the use of words, Wedemeyer, instead of helping China, unintentionally damaged China at a most inopportune time.¹⁸ It was the final blow to an already demoralized government. The Nationalists never recovered.

There were, however, some points in Wedemeyer's favor. He did sense the urgency of the situation, and his estimate of the need of reform was basically accurate. Just before leaving China for the United States, Wedemeyer said,

To regain and maintain the confidence of the people, the Central Government will have to effect immediately drastic and far-reaching political reforms. Promises will no longer suffice. Performance is absolutely necessary. It should be accepted that military force in itself will not eliminate Communism.¹⁹

This final appeal was received once again by the Nationalists with coldness. Wedemeyer had not mentioned in his final remarks and press releases that his report to the President contained a recommendation for massive financial assistance. He hoped that his suggestions would be taken more seriously if the Nationalists did not know that financial aid was in the offing. Financial assistance, Wedemeyer felt, should be used as a wedge to move the Nationalists off dead center.

¹⁷Wedemeyer, p. 389.

¹⁸Mowrer, p. 87.

¹⁹Statement by Dean Acheson, pp. 38-39.

But Wedemeyer failed to consider that the Nationalists' primary consideration was to maintain themselves in power. Reforms of the magnitude Wedemeyer envisioned would have swept the stage clean, perhaps even eliminating Chiang Kai-shek. The Nationalists, therefore, clung to the old position that reforms should come after there was no longer a military threat from the Communists.

Wedemeyer's urgent message was also unheeded in the United States. As late as February, 1949, the Dallas Morning News, the foremost apostle of the "get tough with the Commies" philosophy, printed articles from the wire services stating that

. . . observers in Nanking and elsewhere believe that a long period of stalemate was ahead; that the Reds probably would take Nanking and Shanghai almost without a struggle, but still must face the prospect of a long war for South China.²⁰

Also, the Dallas Morning News stated in an editorial during the same month that even if China fell to the Communists, it would be more of a liability to them than an asset.

Red victories in China call for a revamping of our policy toward Asia.

.
 Except perhaps for Manchuria, the conquest of China brings more liabilities than assets. The Communist conquerers will find little wealth and few factories that can be carted away. Instead, they will have uncounted millions demanding food.

.
 Our policy should be to give what help we can to those Asiatic countries that remain free.

²⁰ The Dallas Morning News, February 5, 1949, Section 1, p. 2.

A Marshall Plan for the free parts of Asia is now in the making in Washington. This plan will need to avoid putting too heavy a burden on the already bent American taxpayer.²¹

The United States, if time had permitted, most likely would have supported the Nationalists with generous loans and advice. But there was a notable absence of spokesmen advocating the only policy that would have saved China--- direct military intervention by the United States' Armed Forces.

Wedemeyer returned to Washington from China in September, 1947. He said that the hostile reaction to his final speech and press release astounded him. He acknowledged later, in the 1950's, that his mission had been in grave error. He wrote in 1958, after his report to the President had been suppressed by the State Department, that he may have been chosen for the mission "to allay doubts in Congress and in the country and to provide justification for continuance of the old disastrous China policy."²² Ironically, Marshall had told him as much before the mission was undertaken. It is also ironic that Wedemeyer's suggestions would not have saved China in any case. He simply reaffirmed the State Department's convictions that China could never be relied upon to protect America's post-war plans in Asia.

²¹Ibid., February 8, 1949, Section 4, p. 3.

²²Wedemeyer, p. 248.

After several weeks in Washington, Wedemeyer showed concern that no one in the State Department mentioned his report. After it was clear that the report was suppressed, Wedemeyer asked Marshall for an explanation. Marshall replied that he would agree to releasing the report to Congress and to the press if Wedemeyer would agree to delete certain portions pertaining to Manchuria. Wedemeyer refused, and the report was not made public for two years. No one in the State Department discussed the merits or demerits of the report with Wedemeyer, and no one asked him to explain the report. Marshall most likely viewed the entire mission as a bad dream.

Wedemeyer gradually faded out of the diplomatic scene. He wrote in 1958 that he was left to sit and twiddle his thumbs in a spacious office at the State Department. Finally, Wedemeyer asked General Eisenhower if he could be returned to duty with the Second Army. Eisenhower agreed.

Wedemeyer's brief career as a diplomat was short-lived, and he was never consulted again concerning the situation in China. It could have been an enviable career had it not been marred by Wedemeyer's later pronouncements. He was too quick to jump into the anti-Communist witch-hunting parade and too unsure of his past conduct to stand pat on an otherwise distinguished career.

CHAPTER V

WEDEMEYER IN RETROSPECT

A dual theme runs through Chinese-American relations in the twentieth century. It begins with the Open Door policy, which was framed upon a belief in the importance of China to the United States. At the same time, there was a reluctance, if not an inability, to use military means to achieve this political objective. The events of December 7, 1941, and other events subsequently forced a reappraisal of this policy, but the result was a restatement of the Open Door policy in contemporary terms, with the continued dualism. The United States demonstrated again its reluctance or inability to gain political ends through the use of military means. The chief American consideration in World War II was to win the war in the shortest way and with the least cost.

The American objective in World War II was unconditional surrender of Germany and Japan. Within this context only the vaguest notions of the post-war world were considered, with the possible exceptions of the United Nations Organization and the Atlantic Charter. As for Asia, the United States had a rather fuzzy, undeveloped idea that China should be the stabilizing factor to replace Japan. China

would protect American interests and the Open Door would become a reality. The Stilwell-Wedemeyer missions to China would lay the foundations on which to build the American objectives in Asia. The United States formulated these plans, however, without regard for the interests of the Soviet Union in Asia or for the intentions of the Chinese Communists. When the American objectives began to experience difficulty, the old dualism reappeared. The United States would go all the way diplomatically toward making China a great power, but the United States remained unwilling to commit military force.

The military role of China during World War II evolved through three stages, each subordinate to the idea of a quick victory over Japan. The first stage envisioned the use of Chinese manpower to defeat Japan. The second stage saw China as a vast air base from which to bomb Japan. During the third stage, China became simply a holding action while the main blow against the Japanese came from another direction—across the Pacific. Each stage was progressively less ambitious. They had been based upon incorrect assumptions and events outside American control. Americans should have realized most of these factors from the beginning. For example, they should have considered the poor fighting quality of the Chinese Army, the notorious weakness and corruption of the Nationalist Government, and the enormity of the task of making China a great power. In short, the

China which Americans envisioned did not exist.

The policy of attempting to make China a great power may have been impossible from the beginning. Nevertheless, the central fault of the American approach to China was the use of military means for strictly military ends. Political ends always ran a poor second. General Wedemeyer, in spite of his pronouncements during the 1950's to the contrary, did nothing to eliminate the old dichotomy of American policy. If anything, he contributed to it by basing all judgments on a quick victory over Japan. What was to become of China after the war received little or no consideration.

There were other obstacles to plans to make China a great power. Wedemeyer's plans for reforming and reorganizing the Chinese Army conflicted with the policy of winning the war in the shortest possible time. Wedemeyer was successful in getting the American and Chinese army officials to cooperate, but this was basically a reaction to a crisis caused by the Japanese offensive of 1944. The reorganizing plan was on too small a scale and directed toward an immediate end of "killing as many Japs as possible." The reform program also conflicted with the policies of Chiang Kai-shek. The Generalissimo feared that reorganization would upset the delicate balance of power by which he ruled in China. Lend-lease was viewed as a means to reward Chinese officials loyal to the Nationalist Government and to punish those opposed to it. All ends were directed toward sustaining the rule of

Chiang Kai-shek. As the Nationalist regime became weaker, Chiang relied more and more on his control of the army to rule. If reform on the basis of ability and merit had been introduced along with better training and equipment, as Wedemeyer wanted, the Generalissimo might not have been able to maintain his leadership. Both Wedemeyer and the United States Government failed to consider the possibility that someone else might have ruled China more effectively than Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang Party. The army reform program was never considered a method of opposing Communism in China also because the United States assumed that peaceful settlement was possible between the Nationalists and the Communists. Chiang Kai-shek was the only leading official who actively considered the army as a means of gaining political ends.

The American method of giving unconditional aid to Nationalist China was also a mistake. It meant first of all that the aid would not be used for the purposes for which it was intended. The indirect effects were even more important. The aid tended to stiffen Chiang's attitude against the Communists and at the same time allowed conditions to exist which facilitated the Communist rise to power. Military aid was given on the false assumption that aid was all that was necessary to make China's contribution to the war effort effective. Wedemeyer's program of allowing local Chinese commanders to procure food and medical

supplies in the area where the units were located resulted in more adequate supplies for the Chinese Army, but the program also added to China's inflationary spiral. In fact, the entire American loan program tended to weaken the Chinese economy by causing inflation. The loans granted by the United States were not necessary economically because the supplies had to be flown over the hump, and this was accomplished and paid for by the United States through lend-lease. Wedemeyer eventually turned the entire supply program over to American specialists. The aim was to improve Chinese morale and fighting efficiency, but too often the result was inflation.

Chiang Kai-shek played his position of weakness masterfully against America's hopes for China's future. He was determined to get every possible bit of American aid, and to maintain his leadership in spite of all circumstances. A number of factors aided him. The American policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of China, which incidentally is shown by the Wedemeyer Mission of 1947 to have been contrary to the facts, created a barrier to attaching conditions to our aid. American preoccupation with Chinese sensibilities, Nationalist weakness, and our overly generous promises, which usually fell short of performance, were added advantages to Chiang's clever manipulation.

The American procession of special envoys also ill-served American policy. These strange and periodic processions

disrupted any semblance of coordinated policy. The recommendations that were made by the envoys were superficial and often impossible to implement, based as they were on a lack of first hand knowledge. Chiang Kai-shek usually sold these envoys a bill of goods. His constant refrain about Chinese conditions as justification for his policies and lack of effort found welcome listeners. Most officials accepted Chiang's evaluation of conditions in spite of advice suggested by Foreign Service officers that the Nationalists were losing the confidence of the Chinese people. Wedemeyer's final mission to China in 1947 was an exception. Wedemeyer, ignoring all advice and warnings, presented Chiang Kai-shek and the Nationalists with the truth. It was the truth, even though Wedemeyer later renounced it. But even if followed, Wedemeyer's suggestions in 1947 came too late. China was too far gone, and any reform program fell into the nostalgic Chinese world of what might have been.

It is easy to argue today that the Chinese Communists would have inevitably received support from the Soviet Union. It is also easy to argue that the United States should have formulated its China policy on that premise from the beginning. In 1945, however, many loyal and intelligent men thought that an armed conflict between the followers of Chiang Kai-shek and Mao Tse-tung could be avoided. The brief period of military co-operation during the war and the original optimism from both sides during the first weeks of the Marshall

Mission was tangible cause for hope that Civil War in China could be avoided. Americans who hoped that the Kuomintang could broaden its base to include the Communists were not trying to promote communism. Very few of these Americans in 1945 called the Communists agrarian reformers or discounted Russia's ambitions in Asia. But they can hardly be blamed for not predicting on V-J Day that Stalin would shift his support from Chiang Kai-shek to Mao Tse-tung. As late as December 6, 1945, Ambassador Hurley, one of the most bitter critics of the State Department's China policy, told the Foreign Relations Committee that the Chinese Communists were not getting help from Moscow.¹

There was little disagreement among the policy makers in 1945 as to how the United States should proceed in China. The only policy feasible, given the military situation in Asia and the climate of opinion in America at the time Japan surrendered, was mediation to avert civil war. Immediate withdrawal of American forces to satisfy the demand to "bring the boys home" would cause Chiang Kai-shek to fail in his race to occupy North China before the Communists did so. But full-scale backing of the Nationalists was also impossible because of the magnitude of the commitment. "No president could use troops for such a purpose when confronted with pressure for speedy demobilization."²

¹Richard W. Leopold, The Growth of American Foreign Policy (New York, 1962), pp. 667-668.

²Ibid., p. 667.

Today it is widely believed that the task of making China a great power by forming a coalition government including the Communists and the Nationalists was hopeless and should never have been attempted. In 1945, however, the contemporary appraisal was the opposite. The democratic nature of the Chinese Communists was weighed carefully against the reactionary character of the Kuomintang, but there was no thought in Washington of substituting Mao for Chiang. Hull, Stettinius, and Byrnes all hoped to form a coalition, and even Stilwell, Hurley, and Wedemeyer occasionally sought that goal.³

With such unanimous agreement, why did Wedemeyer in the 1950's renounce this policy and forsake associates who helped formulate it? Why the barrage of accusations and insinuations ranging from treason to sympathy with the Communist cause and aimed at officials from the President to the lowest official in the State Department?

The answer is elusive. Wedemeyer was trained during the mid-1930's in the German Military Academy, where defeat was frequently explained in terms of a scapegoat. Looking back at his role in China from the vantage point of the 1950's, Wedemeyer could find an easy and convincing scapegoat. The Cold War had been growing hotter since 1948 and the bi-polar division of the world between Communist and democratic nations

³Ibid., p. 667.

appeared permanent. The answer became singular and clear—International Communism led by the Soviet Union caused the fall of China.

As the years after 1947 slipped by, it became possible to push haunting thoughts of military cooperation and political coalition with the Communists, who were now clearly the enemy, further into the background. Perhaps Wedemeyer actually came to believe the myths he propagated, including the one that he had fought the Communists in China from the date of his arrival in October, 1944.

The China question was settled by China and in China. The Americans and the Russians played their roles from their respective positions of self-interest. Wedemeyer served the American cause with distinction, but events outside of American control and influence made those efforts futile. China was not lost because of Communist sympathizers in the State Department, but because there was no acceptable alternative to the enthusiastic and revolutionary Chinese Communist Government. With the grandeur of leadership goes the responsibility of failure. The failure in China rests squarely on the shoulders of Chiang Kai-shek.

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