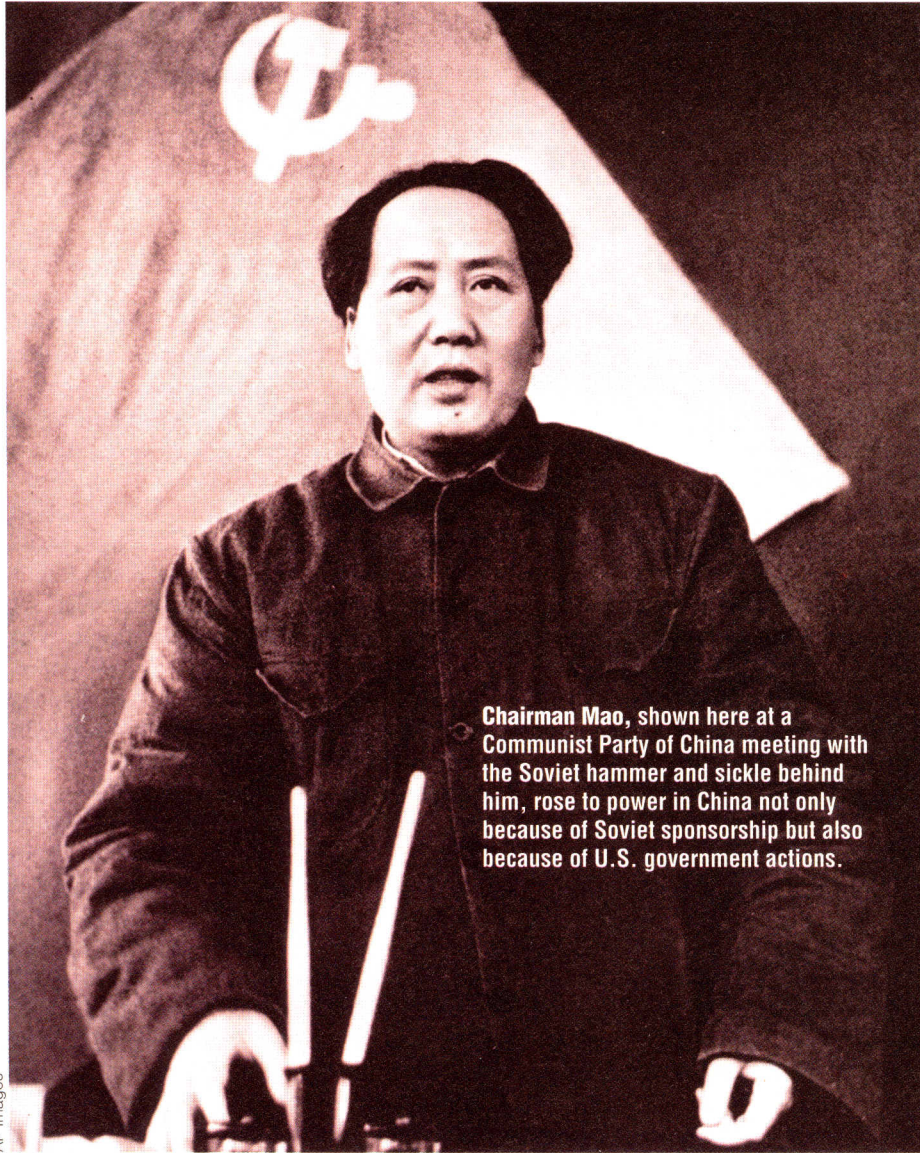


# How China Became Communist

To understand why Mao triumphed, it is necessary to look beyond the battlefields in China to the fateful decisions emanating from Yalta and Washington.



Chairman Mao, shown here at a Communist Party of China meeting with the Soviet hammer and sickle behind him, rose to power in China not only because of Soviet sponsorship but also because of U.S. government actions.

by John F. McManus

**T**he People's Republic of China has become a formidable player on the world stage. It threatens the United States both economically and militarily. Its economic clout, and how that clout was acquired despite the fact that it remains a communist country mired in central planning and socialism, is examined in two earlier articles in this issue (pages 10 and 16).

But how did China fall to the communists in the first place, setting the stage not only for the subjugation of Mainland China but also the Korean and Vietnam Wars? The liberal view is that Chinese communist leader Mao Tse-tung (now known as Mao Zedong) was able to triumph over Nationalist (anti-communist) leader Chiang Kai-shek because of the former's agrarian reforms and perseverance and the latter's oppression and corruption.

In truth, Mao was a mass murderer, and Chiang was a man who helped lead China away from domination by warlords and brought China's millions a measure of freedom that was previously unknown in that vast land.

So how was Mao able to defeat Chiang on Mainland China? As we shall see, the answer, simply stated, is that U.S. government policies made it possible for him to succeed and Chiang to fail.

## Chiang Kai-shek Fights for Unity

In 1911, long before Chiang became China's leader, he was a 24-year-old studying at a military school in Japan. Dr. Sun Yat-sen had just launched a revolution to wrest control of China from dictatorial war lords. The future Chinese leader hurried home and immediately became a trusted lieutenant in the fledgling revolutionary government.

Sun Yat-sen, the founder of the Kuomintang (National People's Party), was always a Chinese patriot. His favorable view of socialism, however, caused him to trust the agents of Soviet leaders Stalin and Trotsky, who were busily working in China to establish communist control. Sun Yat-sen became enamored of those he believed to be China's "friends" but who were really Soviet Russia's infiltrators. In 1923, he sent one of his government's most able lieutenants, Chiang Kai-shek, to Moscow for training. Chiang returned after only four months with a decidedly unfavorable view of what he learned about communist-style tyranny.

While the struggle against the warlords was underway, and with China still far from unified under a single government, Sun Yat-sen passed away in 1925. Chiang emerged above several possible candidates as the leader of the Kuomintang, and he continued the struggle to unite his country. He even faced a communist coup d'état in 1927 led by Russian communist Michael Borodin, American communist Earl Browder, and Mao, a skirmish he quickly

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suppressed. He then expelled Borodin and other Russians from the country, tossed Mao out of the Kuomintang, and saw Browder flee to the United States.

It wasn't until 1931 that Chiang succeeded in unifying most of his country, but his problems were far from over. In 1933, he succeeded in driving Mao's forces out of an enclave they had seized. It was then that Mao and Chou En-lai staged their "long march" of about a thousand miles to the northwest where they regrouped and built a new force through terror and intimidation of the local Chinese population. From then on, Chiang not only suf-

ferred constant attempts at undermining from Chinese communists, he soon faced Japanese invaders who succeeded in taking control of Manchuria. Full-scale war with Japan began in mid-1937, four and a half years before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

The Japanese threat to China became so severe that, as early as 1937, Chiang agreed in desperation to allow forces controlled by Mao to become part of the Chinese Nationalist Army. By 1940, when it became obvious that Mao's forces weren't cooperating, and were claiming autonomy and seizing portions of the nation for themselves, Chiang broke the relationship. Despite fighting the Japanese, by 1940 Chiang also found it necessary to divert a sizeable portion of his military forces to counter the Chinese communists.

Prior to Pearl Harbor, Japanese leaders had hoped to conclude a peace treaty with Chiang, but the Chinese leader would have nothing to do with that kind of capitula-

tion. He cast his lot with the United States one day after the Pearl Harbor attack and sent the following message to President Roosevelt: "To our new common battle, we offer all we are and all we have, to stand with you until the Pacific and the world are freed from the curse of brute force and endless perfidy." Our nation had a determined and able Asian ally in Chiang.

### **Soviets Support Chinese Communists**

Our Soviet "ally," on the other hand, was not only reaffirming its neutrality with Japan via the Molotov-Matsuoka Pact but also doing all it could to help Chinese communist forces fighting against Chiang, our only real ally in the Pacific. Strange as it may seem to a novice looking back on that period, World War II found our nation allied with and saving one tyrannical regime, the Soviet Union, from another tyrannical regime, Nazi Germany, while the Soviet regime was undermining our ally in China.

During the early portion of WWII, most of America's effort was directed toward Europe where massive aid to Soviet Russia saved that communist tyranny from Hitler's forces. Meanwhile, Russia was stepping up its aid to the Communist Chinese in hopes of toppling Chiang's government. During the war, Chiang's continuous effort against the Japanese invaders actually kept three million Japanese (soldiers and civilian workers) bottled up. This huge force was never committed to all the other campaigns throughout the vast Pacific where the U.S. military was fighting to oust Japan from its many island conquests. Had Chiang taken advantage of many opportunities to make peace with Japan — something the Japanese eagerly sought — the war in the Pacific might have seen Japanese land forces attack Australia, Hawaii, and possibly even the west coast of the United States.

All during the war, Chinese communists devoted as little as 30 percent of their effort against the Japanese and the remaining 70 percent against the Nationalist Chinese. Instead of assisting Chiang, who had been officially



**Betrayal at Yalta:** At the wartime Yalta summit attended by the "Big Three" — Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin — Roosevelt's agreement to give the Soviet Union control of post-war Manchuria proved to be a tremendous boost to Mao and an equally tremendous blow to Chiang.

AP Images

named by U.S. leaders as the Supreme Commander of all the forces in the China Theater, General Joseph Stilwell, the commander of American forces in China, made plain his antipathy toward Chiang and made sure that the meager supplies supposed to reach the Chinese leader were dribbled out or never turned over at all. In their *Strange Bedfellows: Chiang and Stilwell*, Jennifer Wilding and Ralph Zuljan wrote: “[Stilwell received] assurances from the Soviets that the Chinese supporting Mao were not true communists, they were merely agrarian reformers.... Stilwell constantly pressed for a reconciliation between Mao and Chiang.”

In February 1945, when the Japanese were trying to surrender,\* President Roosevelt met with Stalin and Churchill at the Black Sea resort of Yalta. Accompanying the already terminally ill U.S. president (who died on April 12) were top advisers Harry Hopkins and Alger Hiss. Hopkins, an admitted supporter of Soviet Russia, had already arranged for the shipment of the plans and the parts for the atomic bomb to Russia. And numerous warnings about Hiss’s communist affiliation had been ignored by the Roosevelt administration. At Yalta it was agreed that the Soviet Union — still “neutral” in the war against Japan — would be given control of Manchuria and Mongolia, several strategic Chinese ports, and rights to the Japanese-held Kurile Islands and Sakhalin Island. All of this amounted to a huge betrayal of Chiang Kai-shek who wasn’t consulted about these decisions.

During the Yalta conference, Roosevelt reportedly begged Stalin to enter the war against Japan. Russia did finally enter the war — six days before its end and three days after the atomic bomb devastated Hiroshima. Huge stores of Japanese arms in Manchuria were immediately turned over to Mao’s forces. When the war against



Chiang Kai-shek and his Nationalist forces fought not only the Japanese invaders but also the communists during World War II.

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Japan finally ended in August 1945, others relaxed but Chiang now faced a formidable civil war against the Communist Chinese army.

### Communist Sympathizers Within U.S.

Where Mao had been a relatively isolated commander of a guerrilla force in the far northwestern provinces of China in 1937, he had become by the end of World War II the leader of a force of half a million men under arms and a civilian party membership of an additional half million. All during the war, propaganda painting Chiang as a corrupt dictator and lauding Mao as the noble leader of an agrarian reform movement flooded America’s press — conditioning the American public against Chiang. Most, though not all, of these totally wrong perspectives, emanated from the Institute of Pacific Relations (IPR), a pro-Soviet group that held a virtual monopoly on what Americans would be told about what was happening in China.

Though it began as a branch of the YMCA for the purpose of assisting Christian missionaries in the Far East in 1925, the IPR soon became a haven for communists and fellow travelers who used it very effectively to help the Chinese communists and blacken Chiang’s image. Louis Budenz, once the managing editor of the openly communist *Daily Worker*, who later became an ardent anti-communist, would tell congressional investigators that the

IPR was a “little red schoolhouse” using its respectability to “teach Americans what they need to know about China.” IPR pamphlets erroneously touted the upstanding character of the Soviet Union and the admirable merits of the Chinese Communists. A 1946 IPR publication held that “the Chinese Communists ... maintain the right of private property ... have a system of popular elections ... not unlike our New England town meeting.” At the same time, harshly negative views of Chiang were the IPR’s regular fare.

Many of the communists spewing out these damaging falsehoods were later shown to be communist agents through the efforts of Senator Joseph McCarthy (R-Wis.) during the early 1950s, as well as through the corresponding work of the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee led during 1951 by Senator Pat McCarran (D-Nev.), and (decades later) the eventual treasure trove of information contained in the Venona intercepts. These messages to and from Moscow to its U.S. agents during and after the war years became available after the Soviet Union’s dissolution in 1991. They proved beyond doubt that McCarthy and others had been correct in targeting the likes of John Stewart Service, John Paton Davies, John Carter Vincent, Owen Lattimore, Lauchlin Currie, and many others as tireless workers for Soviet gains, not only within the IPR, but in the several extremely sensitive government

\* Japan’s attempts to surrender prior to the dropping of the atomic bomb are documented in John F. McManus’ article “Dropping the Bomb” (*THE NEW AMERICAN*, August 21, 1995), available online at [www.jbs.org/node/723](http://www.jbs.org/node/723).

**When Chinese communist forces were occupied fighting the U.S. military in Korea, American naval vessels patrolled the waters between Taiwan and the Mainland, not to protect Taiwan from the Communist Chinese forces, but to protect the communists from Chiang's forces.**

posts where they and others like them eventually were given further license to influence our nation's foreign policy.

U.S. Ambassador to China Patrick Hurley found so much communist propaganda coming from the State Department's Foreign Service Officers (all IPR veterans) that he demanded the recall of Service and Davies and, getting no satisfaction, resigned in late 1945. He was replaced by General George Marshall, the patron of General Stilwell. Stilwell's deputy, Frank Dorn, later testified that he had been ordered by Stilwell in 1944 to "prepare a plan for the assassination of Chiang Kai-shek." Once Marshall arrived in China, he demanded that Chiang — who at the time was winning the battle against Mao — enter into a truce with Mao's forces. Because he was relying on help from the United States, Chiang had no choice but to act on such demands.

Soon, Marshall was elevated to secretary of state where he surrounded himself with IPR veterans and other pro-communists, demanded that Chiang form a coalition government with Mao, and eventually boasted that "with a stroke of the pen" he had disarmed 39 of Chiang's anti-communist divisions. The Nationalist Chinese were even prevented from receiving weapons and ammunition they had already purchased. The tide began to turn toward the Communist Chinese

By the summer of 1949, Dean Acheson had succeeded Marshall as Secretary of State. He commissioned Philip Jessup, another IPR veteran later shown to be a communist, to head a committee given

the task of publishing U.S. policy regarding China. Released in August, Jessup's famous "White Paper" announced that the United States was finished with Chiang, declared that the communists had triumphed, and exonerated the State Department for any responsibility regarding these developments. Mao proclaimed his People's Republic in October, and Chiang took his forces to

Formosa (Taiwan) in December. The best ally America had during all of World War II had been completely betrayed. It would not be the last betrayal by a nation he had a right to expect would be his friend.

In February 1950, Mao went to Moscow and negotiated a 30-year pact with the USSR. A few months later, North Korea, tremendously aided by Chinese communists, invaded South Korea and the Korean War was on. Soon, huge numbers of Chinese communist forces stormed into North Korea from communist-held Manchuria and started killing Americans. By now, Joseph McCarthy, the junior senator from Wisconsin, had begun his investigation

of the communist penetration of our government. His work proceeded for several years and chief among the contributions he made was a thorough exposure of the Institute of Pacific Relations and the swarm of communists and pro-communists who had played such an important role in the sellout of China.

Under Chiang's leadership, Taiwan became a thriving island of free enterprise. When Chinese communist forces were occupied fighting the U.S. military in Korea, not only was Chiang's offer to provide troops denied, but American naval vessels patrolled the waters between Taiwan and the Mainland, not to protect Taiwan from the Communist Chinese forces, but to protect the communists from Chiang's forces. General Douglas MacArthur, the commander of our forces in Korea, noted years later in his autobiography *Reminiscences*, "I was specifically directed to prevent any Nationalist attacks on the mainland." The pattern of betrayal continued.

Chiang died in 1975 still contending that he, not the bloody-handed communists whom pro-communist American diplomats had ushered into power, was China's true leader. ■



**Sampans filled with refugees** fleeing the advancing communist troops squeeze together near the mouth of the Yangtze river in 1948. The following year, Chiang Kai-shek's army and as many refugees as could make the journey evacuated to the island of Formosa (now Taiwan), where the Republic of Free China flourished.