

China, cont'd

Lecture No. 0031 (April 1, 1974)

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Preliminary remarks

I'll just ask a couple minutes of your time for announcements...

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... I'm rather charmed with the idea of turning this group into a district *[laughter]*... I don't have much of a position on things that I don't think about very much, but I said the other night at somebody's house — I mean, I thought it was just a banal statement; you know, I come back from the washroom, and you always have to say something *[laughter]* — and I said, "I don't think I'm for the auditorium." Well, the whole room fell in, and apparently I was setting back culture at least two thousand years *[laughter]*, and I apologized for my *gaucherie*. But I don't know whether that's the best way of having a relationship to the arts, I'm not quite sure. At least the last place I ever want to be is Lincoln Center! *[laughter]*

Lecture

We're really at the doorstep of the monumental. We are really talking about those fourteen years, those rather incredible fourteen years, when the Chinese masses by the literally hundreds of millions finally came into history. We're talking about that very tiny sliver of time, if you please, from October of 1935: when the remnant of the Red Army, having broken out of its encirclement in Kiangsi, having escaped the chasing and the pursuing Kuomintang army, finally landed in the most arid, the most far-flung, the most remote corner of China, in the northwest in the province of Shensi, and there established another revolutionary base to begin its Communist movement once again. We're talking about those fourteen years that stretched from October of 1935 down to October of 1949: when the Communist movement, now having enrolled literally millions in China, having mobilized the masses, having resisted the Japanese, having, if you please, destroyed the Kuomintang armies, and finally destroyed the illusions of those American policymakers who were their allies — having done all that, proclaimed a new social order on the mainland of China, and began to chart a course of development that was unique and different in the Third World.

We're talking, then, about that extraordinary decade and a half. And the question is how, really,

to explain that great turn of events from something that was so small and so minuscule in 1935 to something that was so vast in 1949. How to explain it, how to wring the meaning out of the marrow of that great, historic bone?

And you begin, obviously, and the point of departure is survival. And that survival is crucial, of course. And it is not a condition but a precondition for the success of the Communists. We are talking about the Communist capacity to survive in the mid-1930s, when they had been encircled in their base in the southeast of China, in Kiangsi, when they had been subjected to four, and then five great campaigns by Chiang Kai-shek, when they had been pursued across ten great provinces of China until they had arrived at Shensi, and managed to survive.

But survival, you see, by itself, isn't very much. What finally landed in Shensi a mere handful, a few thousand Chinese Communists out of the Red Army that had been many thousands in Kiangsi — and, certainly, already subjected, right from the very time that they settled in there, to new attack by the Kuomintang, to new attacks by the armies of Chiang Kai-shek — could that little remnant, after all, make that success? Could anyone have believed it? And what is so curious to us is that there is an intimation of it in Mao. That Mao, on the 27th of December of 1935, once that remnant does establish itself in Shensi, once it establishes its Communist base around the city of Yen-an, it is Mao who writes a brochure. And that brochure is called here, in December of 1935, *The Tactics of Struggle against Japanese Imperialism*. And I want you to listen carefully to what he says, because he is summing up what he thinks the importance of that Long March is. And out of that importance, after all, survival means something more than just getting to Shensi. Listen to this:

"Has history ever known a Long March like ours? For twelve months, scores of planes have tracked us overhead, dropping bombs on us as we tried to move. And on the ground, a colossal army of hundreds of thousands has pursued us, and encircled us, and attacked us. And yet, using only our two feet, we crossed more than 20,000 leagues, passing through eleven immense provinces. What is the Long March? It is, first, a manifesto: that is, it has announced to the entire world that the Red Army is an army of heroes, that the imperialists and their coolies — Chiang Kai-shek and his ilk — are worthless. The Long March is, second, an instrument of propaganda. It has made us known to more than 200 million inhabitants of eleven provinces, that the way of the Red Army is the only way to liberation. Without the Long March, how would the great, popular masses ever have known the truth which the Red Army represents? And third, the Long March is a seeding machine. It has seeded across eleven provinces — it has scattered across eleven provinces — the seeds which will sprout and bloom and bear fruit, and that in the very near future."

And, you see, I think Mao came very close to something very important in that passage, because

he said three things that were crucial. First of all, that there was a mode of propaganda in the Long March that really did root the idea of a social revolution in places where it had not been crystallized in that way. What I'm talking about are the meetings and the assemblies that the troops of the Red Army, as they marched, held in village after village, in which they brought people together and they said, "Now, look, you can take political power in your hands: you can liberate the women in your village, you can begin to redistribute the land, you can lower the rents," and encouraged them to make those kinds of moves. And in doing that, you see, gave them an idea of what kind of a movement there could be in China besides the movement simply of unifying the country politically. And that, a terribly important factor.

And secondly, that what the Long March did was to nationalize communism: to take it out of a province, out of the province of Kiangsi — where it was known and where there were roots — and to carry it across the very heartland of China, through all of those provinces that go from southeast to northwest, and consequently cut through the very heartland of that country.

And the third thing, which Mao himself does not mention, but which is terribly important: that the Long March gave the Chinese Communists distance. It gave them distance from Moscow. It gave them geographic distance, in the first place, because the lines of communication would be very, very long. But it gave them organizational distance. That is, in January of 1935, on the march, at Tsunyi, in the province of Kweichow, it is Mao Tse-tung that is elected the General Secretary of the Party. And he is the first General Secretary who has not been trained in Moscow; in other words, who will give something indigenous, and who will begin to hack out a strategy that will be based upon the needs of the Chinese movement itself and not something that the Comintern prescribes. All of those things give the Long March a fantastic importance.

But that's just survival. And survival, I say, is a precondition. And we are concerned with effective cause. Why is it that the Communists, then, were able to win? And that, a question than which there is no more important for us in terms of our thinking and imaginings about contemporary history. And I should say that the effective cause is, quite obviously, capacity. What I'm talking about is a certain kind of political and military capacity on the part of the Chinese Communists, a political capacity to find the mass and to reach that mass — something very fantastic when you realize how much the Communists were blocked in in the province of Shensi. And you had not only to find and reach the mass, but militarily to organize them, to organize them into a Red Army, or to organize them into partisans and militia: to organize them, in other words, into the great guerrilla struggle which would be first against the Japanese, and then against the American-inspired Kuomintang in the period after 1945.

And the context for that capacity is Japanese imperialism. It is Japanese imperialism and the war

that Japan imposed upon China which becomes the ultimate context out of which that capacity has its chance and can emerge. You see what we're talking about: that by the 1930s, Japanese imperialism in China had become positively frenetic. That the China market, lopping off China, had become the *sine qua non* for the Japanese ruling class, both the capitalist ruling class — which needed the market, which needed the place to invest — and also those military elements — those ultranationalist elements in Japan who were worried about the society falling asunder, who were worried about the disintegration of a society under very severe social pressures, and how to keep *kokutai*, how to keep that national essence, if not to bind everyone together in these imperialists ventures. And that Japanese capitalism is unique; it was unique, and it remains unique. Because, you see, it was a Japanese capitalism which grew in the earliest part of the twentieth century on the basis of a very narrow home market. That the Japanese populace, both peasants and workers, couldn't possibly absorb the productive capacity of that Japanese capitalism, couldn't possibly be a place where you could invest all the profit that you could make.

You see, between the Russo-Japanese War of 1904 and '05 and the First World War a decade later, Japanese capitalism passes decisively to the monopoly stage. And in that monopoly stage, the characteristic unit, the zaibatsu. And the zaibatsu, after all, something almost more than a cartel. A zaibatsu as represented, for example, by the Mitsui, which was one of the great combines, or the Mitsubishi, which was another of the great combines — those zaibatsu, after all, were simply powerhouses. Literally, *zaibatsu* means "financial clique." But in the concrete, what a zaibatsu is is what we call a conglomerate: a vast conglomerate, after all, organized by a specific banking house, which — on the basis of a whole network of familial and kinship relationships, or on the basis of holding companies or interlocking directorates — begins to establish control over a whole variety of enterprises, centering with that initial banking enterprise. And these zaibatsu, by the time you come down to the First World War, have a great deal of political clout. In other words, they are intermingled, through their family and through their kinship relationships, with those imperialist prime ministers and foreign ministers who will provide them with the markets.

Now, you see, you come to a turn in Japanese economic development in that First World War, because the First World War expanded the Japanese market and Japanese profits tremendously, because Europe began to buy munitions and armaments from Japan. And you get, in Asia and Africa, markets for Japanese capitalism that the European powers — now occupied in the war — simply had to give up. And you know the problem. The problem is all of that surplus capital: What to do with it? And it's in that framework that you must understand the Twenty-One Demands of 1915, of trying to open up, vastly, that China market. And, you see, it always was China.

And if you take the figures on Japanese investment in China, you see what that country begins to mean to that kind of aggressive, explosive Japanese zaibatsu capitalism. In 1914, 430 million yen invested in China; by 1930, 2.5 billion yen invested in China, and half of that invested in Manchuria: the railroads, the mines of Manchuria, so very important. And, you see, through the 1920s, between 1920 and '27, we talk about the "liberal interlude" in Japanese history, when the cabinet governments of that particular country really were closely connected to the zaibatsu, and thought about the peaceful penetration of China — thought not about imperialistic aggression, but peaceful penetration — a little afraid of the cost of military adventures, a little afraid of what the military people really might do if they started on a great imperialist campaign. And then comes a turning point around 1927. With General Tanaka [Giichi], the military began to come into control of the central government. And Tanaka, the author of that famous Tanaka Memorandum. Now, it is perfectly possible that the Tanaka Memorandum is apocryphal. The Chinese published it in 1929. But apocryphal or not, it surely sums up the view of Tanaka and of that military group in Japan. And, he writes in 1927, presumably, in this document: "Since the European war, the political and economic interests of Japan have been in an unstable state. And why? Because we haven't taken advantage of our special rights in Manchuria and Mongolia." He was talking about an area of 87,000 square miles, with 30 million people, and he was talking about Japan lopping it off.

And then, you see, comes the special pressure of the Depression. And the Depression clobbers Japan, because Japan depends so heavily upon that export market. Consider what silk meant in the whole Japanese economy: that it comprised 37% of all Japanese exports, and 97% of that silk went to the United States. And when there was Depression in America and the silk purchases declined, it raised hell in Japanese industry and in the rural areas where young Japanese girls were engaged in the rural sector of that enterprise. What Japan needed were substitutes for that silk industry; what they needed were places to which Japanese could go to live or to fight. And, consequently, in that context, the idea of lopping off Manchuria and making it a Japanese province takes root in the minds of the Japanese military.

And on the 18th of September of 1931 comes the Mukden Incident. And the Mukden Incident, it is claimed by the Japanese, was simply the fact that the Chinese were beginning to sabotage the South Manchurian Railway. And this was all in the context of a certain Japanese paranoia: that since Chiang Kai-shek had renewed the central government of China, and since he had stopped the warlords, that he would try to take back Manchuria as an integral Chinese province. And, consequently, they had to move. The Mukden Incident of the 18th of September was their go-ahead. They simply seized that city, and the Japanese army moved swiftly, so that by the beginning of 1932, Manchuria is Manchukuo and has become a Japanese province.

And from there it is swift. In February of 1933, it is Jehol, to the west of Manchuria and to the north of Peking, which is now proclaimed to be a Japanese protectorate. And then you come to 1935, February of '35, it is Inner Mongolia which is declared autonomous, or basically a Japanese protectorate. Then comes May of 1935, and the Japanese say that the eastern part of Hopeh — and note that well, because that is the province, after all, in which Peking and Tientsin are — that the eastern part of Hopeh shall now be demilitarized. And then, yes, in November of 1935, the Japanese move into that demilitarized zone and make a so-called autonomous region out of it. Yes, yes.

By the beginning of 1936, with the [Kōki] Hiroda ministry, with the military in control in Japan in 1936, the design is clear. The design is, really, to take north China as an integral part of Japan: in other words, to take not only Manchukuo and Jehol and Inner Mongolia, but to take also Chahar, and to take Shantung, and to take Shansi, and to take Hopeh, and to make them into a Japanese province. Then to strike in the Yangtze valley, and to bring into a protectorate status the whole central part of China, to use all that as a base to strike against the Soviet Union, if necessary. And then, to use that as a power base to get rid of the Western imperialist powers in Southeast Asia, and make for that Greater Co-prosperity Sphere controlled by Japan.

And all of that, ominous. And that is the context. Because the Chinese Communists are in the vanguard of that struggle against the Japanese. And in the greatest part of their travail, in the greatest part of their anguish when they are on that Long March, the Central Committee of Chinese Communist Party stops on the 1st of August of 1935 and issues an appeal against Japanese imperialism, which is a violent tract — which denounces the Japanese and their arms in the country, which calls upon a struggle against Japanese imperialism, which denounces Chiang Kai-shek and the government for letting these things happen — but at the very end of that tract, calls for a united front against that imperialism.

Oh, oh. And that is not so stupid. Because it is already the Chinese Communists thinking of their way out of isolation. The Kuomintang is at Nanking. It is the government, and it is surrounding the Communists. And how else to get out of that isolation except with a united front, even against the Chiang who has been your mortal enemy? And comes December of 1935, and the Communists see in greater fashion what the possibilities are. Comes the 9th of December, the beginning of the so-called 9th of December Movement. And what it was was a student protest in the city of Peking against the taking over of eastern Hopeh. And it is like a mini May 4th. And the students, 10,000 strong, demonstrate in Peking, and it spreads to Shanghai. It spreads down to Chungsha, it spreads into the inner part of China, the students making contact with the workers, trying to make contact with the peasants.

And the Chinese Communists see something. They see that it is possible to make a great mass movement, to make a great mass mobilization against what is really the mortal fear and the mortal threat: namely, that the whole country will go down the drain. And so Mao produces, then, that tract, *The Tactics of Struggle against Japanese Imperialism*, which is dated the 27th of December of 1935. And in that tract, we read this — and it is terribly important as an explanation of why these tactics of the united front — "The road to the revolution, like the course of all human activities," writes Mao, "is serpentine and not linear." Write that down in your heads [laughter]: "The road to Revolution, like the course of all human activities, is serpentine, not linear. We reject the closed-door policy of the sectarians, who would cut themselves off from the millions in the Kuomintang camp. We want a national, united, revolutionary front, which will strike a mortal blow at Japanese imperialists as well as our own collaborationists and traitors."

And, you see, that is different than the united front in Europe. It's different than the *Front populaire*, for example, in the Spanish war. Because when the Chinese Communists were proposing this, they had in mind their own revolution. And they had in mind that they were breaking out of isolation to reach the mass and never underplaying their own revolution, or at least changing only the terminology and not the goal of it. It's very much different, let us say, than Algerian nationalism, which is nationalism for its own sake and without a social program. This is to rally the nation, but to an end, just as Tito would rally the partisans in Yugoslavia toward the end of revolution.

And so, in the wake of that, the Chinese Communists through 1936, on a number of occasions, offered to Chiang Kai-shek a proposition that they would join an expanded democratic government at Nanking. That they wanted a united front against Japanese imperialism; they wanted him to broaden the base of the struggle; in fact, they wanted him to struggle.

And Chiang wouldn't have it. And he turned them down persistently, or he didn't answer at all. And in fact, by the fall of 1936, the thing that was uppermost in the mind of Chiang Kai-shek was to crush the Communists. And so he asked a collaborator of his, who had been the warlord of Manchuria and who had been ousted, who was Chang Hsueh-liang, and he asks Chang Hsueh-liang if he would help him in destroying the Communists now in their own base, in their revolutionary base in Shensi. And he went to Chang and he said, in the fall of 1936, "You have been ousted from Manchuria by the Japanese. You still have your army intact. Take it to the frontiers of Shensi. Go to the city of Sian, which is the capital of that province, and begin really to put pressure on the Communists."

And Chang Hsueh-liang went to that area. And in the weeks that followed, something peculiar happened which is crucial in this whole story. And that is that as Chiang was up there, putting

pressure on the Chinese Communists, he began to think that what he wanted was to fight against the Japanese, to get back to Manchuria which had been taken from him. And his army, after all, were Manchurians. And they kept saying, "We want to go home." And the *mot d'ordre*, or the slogan, began to spread around in Chang Hsueh-liang's army that "Chinese don't fight against Chinese." And then they did that extraordinary thing at Sian, at the capital of Shensi: they begin to invite Chou En-lai to talk to them.

And down in Nanking, as we say, Chiang was having vibrations [*laughter*]: that something was wrong up in the frontier zone, and that the person he had sent, after all, to attack the Communists was beginning to collaborate. And so he paid his famous visit by plane, on the 7th of December of 1936, to the city of Sian. And that is the context for what is really the most peculiar and most dramatic episode in this whole story, the famous incident of Sian of the 12th of December of 1936.

Chiang Kai-shek got up there. He went to a little village outside of Sian to overlook the situation. And by the 12th of December of '36, suddenly he was visited by his presumed ally and subordinate, Chang Hsueh-liang, with several troops. And he was put under arrest, and served with an ultimatum. And the ultimatum really came right out of the Communist book. And the ultimatum said, "We will not liberate you. In fact, we may just kill you. We will not liberate you unless you agree to an expanded united front against the Japanese; unless you agree to make, now, the release of political prisoners; greater freedom of assembly and speech; unless you really bring in the popular masses in the struggle against Japanese imperialism." And Chiang refused.

And it was touch and go because Chang Hsueh-liang would certainly have killed Chiang Kai-shek. After all, he was a warlord, and consequently did that sort of thing in the course of your business [*laughter*]. And, consequently, it's at that point on the 13th of December that Chou En-lai arrives. And they are, by the strange of irony, the Chinese Communists who save Chiang Kai-shek. And the Communists, presumably — and we don't know very much about this; to put together the documents is very difficult for this murky period — but presumably, right at the very beginning, the Chinese Communists thought that they really ought to get rid of Chiang Kai-shek, that he was their mortal enemy. Then they did a kind of change, and they thought that to do that was to run the risk of a disintegration at Nanking. In other words, that there would be no government, that Chiang was really a kind of unity symbol, and consequently it was best to use this as pressure in order to impose terms. The result was that Chiang Kai-shek was a prisoner for some thirteen days, finally released with the proviso that he would engage in serious negotiations, now, with the Chinese Communists.

And those negotiations dragged throughout 1937. What the turning point is is the stepping up of

the Japanese war. Because, you know, in July of '37, the Japanese really open their blitzkrieg in China, and not only swept across the northern part, but really swept through Yangtze valley. It was a veritable decimation of China. And, consequently, the Kuomintang agree, and together the Communists and Kuomintang publish, on the 22nd of September of 1937, this agreement, this joint declaration: "The ends of the national struggle are the following: 1) National independence and integrity, the liberation of the lost territories, the return of China to full sovereignty." In other words, really, the struggle against Japan. "2) The creation of a democratic regime founded on the rights of the people, a task to be undertaken by a national assembly charged with drawing up a constitution. 3) Improvement in the living conditions of the masses, development of the economy, strengthening of the national..."

[audio cuts out]

... the Three Principles of the People enunciated by Dr. Sun Yat-sen." In other words, not a Communist revolution, but the *san-min chu-i*, or the Three Principles of the People of Sun Yat-sen, which was a reformist program. "2) The Communist Party renounces the overthrow of the Kuomintang by force." It will not seek to replace the Kuomintang. "3) The Party will dissolve its present soviet government in Shensi and participate in a national democratic regime." There will be no separate organization, in other words, up in Shensi. "4) The Party will dissolve the Red Army and insert it into the national revolutionary army."

You see, on balance, that really should have been a great victory for Chiang Kai-shek. On balance, it meant that he was the man of unity; on balance, the Chinese Communists said that they would not try to make their own independent revolution. But, you see, all of that is nonsense. And thank heavens.

Because the reality is the Japanese war. And the reality of the Japanese war you have to understand. You see, the Japanese war goes in two parts. It goes in the period from July '37 to October '38, which is the period of vast aggression. And in the second part, it goes from October '38 down to the spring of 1944. Now, in the first period, the Japanese were an absolute kind of German blitzkrieg. And they went through the north of China, and they got down into the Yangtze valley. And ultimately, you see, they established a line that went, basically, from Peking in the north all the way to Canton in the south, but that stretched out into the west to the very frontier of Szechwan province. In other words, they had a line behind which in eastern and east-central China were all of the port cities, all of the major commercial and industrial centers of China that they had managed to lop off and that they had gotten by October of 1938. But from that point until the spring of 1944, when they resumed their offensive, you see what the Japanese suffered in China. They suffered exactly the same thing that Napoleon suffered in Russia: they

got lost. How the hell do you get through that country? And, consequently, they simply got bogged down in those more rural, backward provinces. They couldn't move. And basically, you have for those years a kind of fixed line, a line behind which it is possible to operate.

And that is the point: that the only way you can fight the Japanese, once you come to that point of stasis, is by guerrilla warfare behind the Japanese lines — a kind of warfare that the Kuomintang, which was now centered in the western city of Chungking, could not really launch. Chiang and his army, if they did anything — and they did damnably little during the war — but if they did anything, it was in classic, frontal battle, which they couldn't possibly win against the Japanese. What had to be done was to go behind the lines, to organize popular armies, to make a guerrilla army, to sabotage: to do, if you please, what the Chinese Communists did magnificently.

They went in 1937 from Shensi, from their base, and by 1945, they occupied the five northern provinces of China. By 1945, they were operating in all of the central Chinese provinces, all of that through their guerrilla warfare. Consider the data, if you please: that in 1937, the Chinese Communists controlled an area in which 1.5 million Chinese lived in Shensi province; in 1945, they controlled an area of China in which 90 million Chinese peasants lived. In 1937, they had a handful of members; in 1945, they had 1.25 million inscribed members in the Chinese Communist Party. In 1937, they had 80,000 troops in their Red Army; in 1945, they had 950,000 troops in the Red Army, with about 2.5 million enrolled in militia. You see, that that's how they did it.

But it raises a fantastic question. And it takes us, really, to the point. And it takes us to the lesson that American policymakers really didn't learn in China, and never applied in Vietnam or Laos or Cambodia. And that is that the Kuomintang — no matter how much it had in its army, and it had, after all, 290 divisions in an army of 2,700,000 in the course of that war in the early 1940s — the Kuomintang was incapable of mobilizing the mass. And that it was incapable of resolving the contradictions of Chinese society because it couldn't confront those contradictions. You see what I'm saying conceptually: I'm saying that development without social revolution is a fantasy. And it is exactly that wild goose chase on which American policymakers have been embarked for a very long time.

Look, that there is a time, between 1928 and '37, that is called in Chinese history the Nanking period. It's the period when everything was on the side of the Kuomintang, when it really should have been able to do anything to resolve some of the problems of China. It had a capital at Nanking that was stable, it had ousted the warlords or made agreements with the warlords, and there was internal pacification. It had an army; it had weaponry from the Western countries; it

could have done anything in that so-called Nanking Decade between '28 and '37. But what did it do? And here, of course, is the test of the matter. In that period of time, there is nothing by way of agricultural revolution. What the Chinese government at Nanking calls rural reconstruction has to be properly understood: that rural reconstruction to Chiang and his government had nothing to do with social relationships. It didn't have to do with redistribution of the land, with reduction of the land rent, with reduction of the land tax, with reduction of interest rates by usurers. What rural reconstruction had to do with was what we call development in our aid program all the time: it had to do with technology. In other words, it had to do with raising productivity.

But even if you take that standard, you are dealing with an incredibly inefficient and corrupt government of Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang. Even within the framework of its own definition, there is no real increase in productivity. The amount in the budget that is spent on rural reconstruction is less than one-half of 1% between 1931 and 1934. Then it never rises more than 3% in that Nanking period. But the data that is so overpowering is that during those six years between 1931 and 1936, in that six year period, the total productivity increased 1% in total for those six years. And the population was increasing one-half of 1% each year. Or take the criterion of industrial production: there is no development in the Nanking period. We have now the studies that indicate that the only sector of the Chinese economy that increased in that decade of the Nanking regime was in the so-called modern sector. And the modern sector of industry was only 3% of the gross national product, and what increased by about 7% per annum was foreign-owned. In other words, the minerals being taken out of the Chinese mines are not being utilized in China, but they're being sent into the circuit of international trade by those who control the mines.

And at bottom, you see, there is no capacity for the Kuomintang to bring the masses into participation. And that is crucial: that is [Ngô Đình] Diệm, that is [Nguyễn Văn] Thiệu, that is every fantasy, after all, with which we have lived. There is no capacity to bring the mass in. Sun Yat-sen had said that one of the Three Principles of the People was people's democracy. But what was the Nanking political regime? It was a dictatorship. Now, I could make a defense of a dictatorship of a party, or even of a small group within that party, if you could say it was the only way you could develop the infrastructure of the economy. If you were taking Cuba or you were taking the Soviet Union, you could make, at least, a case for it. But with the Kuomintang, this dictatorship of monopoly of power simply was to detain power in the hands of those who then held it, and to create a police state — the famous Blue Shirts of Chiang Kai-shek — in order to reduce the Communists, the pro-Communists, the liberals, anybody who threatened their regime.

And why, and why, and why? The Kuomintang, after all, between '26 and '28, had mobilized a

lot of mass support. That's the way it had gotten rid of the warlords. And then it broke its ties with the lower classes, it broke its ties with the Communists. And, consequently, the ones who really were the responsables in that party were the gentry, and the merchant bankers, and the high bureaucrats, and dammit, they were going to keep it all for themselves. Well, how in the world could they do anything?

But with the Communists, it was different. And the Communists got behind those lines, and they established nineteen bases in that so-called occupied zone that the Japanese took over. And they operated politically and militarily. And in all of those bases they established councils, and those councils were attempts to bring all kinds of people into the function of government. You see, the principle was united front; you were not making a proletarian or poor peasant revolution. But this is the way Mao in March of 1940, in *The Tactics of the Party and the United Front*, described what these administrative councils that were created in these bases really were about: "The composition of power should be the following: the members of the Communist Party occupies a third of the places and they represent the poor peasants and the proletariat; the progressive left-wing elements occupy a third of the places, and they represent the petty bourgeoisie; the last third are representatives of intermediary elements, like the progressive sector of the national bourgeoisie."

Well, you see what the point is. In the first place, through the Communists, those who are the poorest elements of society really are now brought into some kind of effective political play or political notice. Secondly, that you have the opportunity to go to that petty bourgeoisie and really to begin to magnetize it within the framework, really, of a Communist program, and then you really isolate all of those other elements that will not ultimately go to the next step of a revolutionary program. This politics, after all, is a way not of maintaining a united front, but of utilizing a united front within the process, after all, of what the revolutionary movement was about. But what was so terrific was the agrarian program and the military program.

Alright. With the agrarian program, you didn't redivide the land because that would have split the united front. But what you did do was to make it very clear to the peasants that things had to change, that's what they were fighting for. And you get the decree of January 1942 of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party: that everywhere rents should be reduced by 25%, that everywhere there should be a maximum of 1% interest on loans per month, that everywhere the land tax should be reduced.

And finally you have that military operation. And the military operation is terrific. And the Chinese, yes, they give up their separate Communist army. It's integrated into the national army — baloney! What you have, really, are two great Communist armies: you get the 8th Route

Army operating up in the north, you get the New 4th Army operating down in the south. Those are on the bases of the remnants of the Kiangsi Communists who form that particular army. And those armies really are something. Because there are three sectors to it. There is the regular army that moves and is deployed with a certain kind of mobility. There is the local army, in other words, the partisans or the militia who operate on the ground. And then there is that infrastructure of support by saboteurs, by peasants, by villages, after all, that are in alliance with this particular movement. On the political work of the army, Mao writes this: "The 8th Route Army has an important and evident political task. The basic principles of the political work of the 8th Route Army are three in number: First, the principle of the unity of officers and men; second, the principle of the unity of the army and the people; third, the principle of the disintegration of enemy armies and the generous treatment of war prisoners." So that the politics mean that you politicize inside the army, then the army becomes its own instrument of politization. It goes into the villages, it helps the peasants, it explains to them: it becomes, really, a mode of propaganda. You see, it's very, very strong.

And it raises, really, a kind of interesting conceptual question. There is a book that made a certain stir. It was written by a very good American scholar named Chalmers Johnson, and it's a book called *Peasant Nationalism and Communist Power*. And Johnson argues that, essentially, the Chinese Communist won, or won over the peasantry, not because they were leading a social revolution, not because of peasant misery, that in those terms they had failed and would have failed — that they won over the peasantry because of the war, in other words, because there was peasant nationalism. There was this very deep strand of nationalism. And, consequently, since the Communists were putting themselves against the Japanese, they managed to win over that peasantry.

Now, obviously, there is a certain evident truth in that observation. But it strikes me as an extraordinarily superficial analysis of that problem, and something that really only a rather detached American scholar could write. Because it seems to me that if you want to analyze what the superficiality of Chalmers Johnson's thesis is, it is to ask the other question: What about the Chinese peasants? They're the same peasants. What about the Chinese peasants in the Chungking zone, in the zone that was not occupied by the Japanese — what about those peasants, after all, that were conscripted into Chiang Kai-shek's Chungking army? Or that, ultimately, were villagers that had to supply those particular armies? And the whole story is different: that they fought like hell against getting conscripted into that army.

That conscription was like a plague, that suddenly their nationalism disappeared. Albert Wedemeyer, who was the head of the American military operation in China after the recall of [General Joseph] Stillwell in October of '44, Wedemeyer reported to the War Department in the

beginning of '45 the following about conscription — and Wedemeyer, you know, is a very conservative guy, and really very hostile to the Reds — and this Wedemeyer writing in the beginning of '45:

"Conscription comes to the Chinese peasant like famine or flood, only more regularly every year, twice. And it claims more victims. Famine, flood and drought compare with conscription by the Kuomintang like chicken pox with the plague. As a system of direct and indirect physical liquidation, only the Nazi terror surpasses the Kuomintang's conscription. Press gangs drag peasants out of fields, tie them, and transport them away. And once in the army, they're too weak to run away. Those who are caught are cruelly beaten; they will be carried along with broken limbs and with wounds in their main flesh. As they march, they turn into skeletons. They develop signs of beriberi: their legs swell, and their bodies protrude. Yet their bodies have great value. A Chinese conscript's pay can be pocketed, and his rations can be sold. If somebody dies, his body is left behind, but his name remains on the list. As long as his death is not reported, he continues to be a source of income increased by the fact that he has ceased to consume."

Now, we compare that, after all, to the observation that's made by American military intelligence out of China on the 5th of June of 1945 in a report to the War Department about those Red Armies — and compare another American observation: "The general view of experienced American observers is that the Chinese Red Army is made up overwhelmingly of volunteers, young, reasonably well fed but in excellent physical condition, and of an amazing moral level. Their great weakness is their lack of equipment." What you're talking about are two very different ways. Now, you see, when that Kuomintang army — which wasn't fighting the Japanese anyway, which was basically a great machine to extort from the villages — when it came to the villages, you need only read, for example, such a massive and magnificent book as Graham Peck's *Two Kinds of Time* to find out what those villagers did: that very frequently, if rice was demanded, they put sand in the rice or they hid their children in order not to have them conscripted; and, when necessary, they ran off into the Japanese occupied zones and worked, simply, as coolie labor.

Now, the question is: Are those Chinese peasants any less patriotic than the ones in the Red zone? And you have to be realistic. You know, people get so goddamned stupid about this sort of thing. I mean peasants, for example, and people, are not idiots. And they know, after all, when something is good for them and when it isn't. And consequently, if, after all, they fight for the North Vietnamese, it's not because the North Vietnamese have propagandized them. Quite obviously, it's because something looks different than it looks under Diệm or under Thiệu. And the same thing happened, quite obviously, in China to a very, very broad extent. What happened

was that villagers understood that what had always been a plague — authority, the army coming in — that it was different, that those eastern people were crazy: they paid for what they took! And then they talked to the peasants, and then sometimes they worked in the fields with them. It was a whole different thing. And you could not, could not, stop that Communist movement.

Or could you? Well, there was American power. And since it's April Fool's Day, let's talk about that [*laughter, applause*]. And so, at least, you can say about the Americans in China and about American policymakers vis-à-vis China that they were not really so illusioned. You can say several things. First of all, experienced American observers in the late '30s, and especially the early '40s, knew that the regime at Chungking was inefficient, was extortionate, was absolutely corrupt, was a gangster regime. And you get that in one report after another. They knew, in the second place, that Chiang had a big army: that he had an army on paper of 2.7 million, and they wanted to mobilize that army into the fight against the Japanese. And they knew, in the third place, that the only alternative to Chiang fighting was to depend upon the Chinese Communists, and everything that was in American strategy precluded that particular position.

The problem was to attract Chiang into fighting. Now, you know, you would think that if Chiang Kai-shek were a great nationalist and he really had the Japanese all over his country, that he would want to fight. But the last thing in the world Chiang Kai-shek wanted to do was to throw those armies against the Japanese. Eventually, he threw his armies against the Communists, to be sure, when he broke with the 4th Army in January of 1941 and began an internal civil war at that point. But the Japanese? No, the idea was to keep this kind of stable line. The American ploy was to bribe him, to give him lots and lots of loans, to make it worthwhile — in other words, to bribe Chiang into being a nationalist.

Well, the money began to flow. And by the end of 1943, the Treasury in the United States estimated that in the Kuomintang treasury was already \$500 million in American currency or gold, but that in private hands of the Kuomintang, there was already \$500 million; by the end of 1944, it was estimated to be \$1.5 billion that was simply in private pockets that had been sent across. Alright, lots of bribery — for Americans, you know, that's piddling sums anyway. But the point is that with that bribery Chiang wasn't fighting.

He wasn't doing what he was supposed to do. And the Americans sent a military man to Chiang. And they said, "You go and straighten him out." And they sent a terrific guy: they sent General Joseph Stillwell. And Joseph Stillwell was the head of the China-Burma-India Theater, the CBI Theater. And Joseph Stillwell is one of the very few people who could have gone to China and understood anything. He had been, after all, in China for some twenty years. He had been in China in 1937 as the military attaché in the American embassy at the time that the Sino-Japanese

War began, proper. But more than that, Joe Stillwell was a man, and he was somebody who had a tremendous human instinct. He liked Chinese culture: he could read Chinese, he liked Chinese civilization. But more than that, he had no racism, and he believed that Chinese could fight: that given the right equipment and the right motive, that they would fight, that there was nothing about these yellow people that was at all inferior or at all different. And if Joe Stillwell liked the ordinary foot soldier, it was all that he could do to restrain himself when he got in the presence of Chiang. Because he detested Chiang and the leadership of the Kuomintang with a passion.

He went there in 1942. He looked over the scene. He said, "This man will not fight. He is a traitor. He will make a deal with the Japanese; he will sell out; he hates his own people. He is," as he wrote over and over again in the *Stillwell Diaries*, "He is a peanut" [*laughter*]. So by the time you come to the end of 1943, by the time you come to October of '43, Joe Stillwell is writing back to Roosevelt and to the State Department and he's saying, "There's really nothing that can be done with him. You'd better pull out; you'd better stop all kinds of loans." By the beginning of 1944, Roosevelt thought that he would use a little clout with Chiang Kai-shek, and he said, "Look, unless you get into the fight, unless you make some of the reforms that Stillwell is talking about, and get that army into the fight," — because already the Japanese were making signs of resuming the war there — "unless you do that, we'll cut off all Lend-Lease aid," which was then coming over the Himalayas; it was the famous "over the hump" trip, you see, going over that terrible, terrible route. And that supply coming into China, then going into the black market and in fact ending up in Japanese hands — which led to the common phrase at that time that all of those trips were "Uncle Chump from over the hump" [*laughter*], that the United States was sending this stuff in and it simply was getting into enemy hands. Roosevelt said, "Now, look, you really have to fight."

By July of 1944, the Joint Chiefs of Staff said, "Look, we've got to impose an ultimatum on Chiang," which is that he appoints Stillwell as Chief of Staff with complete authority, really, over this Chinese army, and he'll do something with it. And Chiang, of course, could hack that at all. And so what he said to Roosevelt was, "Well, I can't accept that, but give me time to think. There are a lot of difficulties with Stillwell." Whereupon Roosevelt — who was, if anything, mercurial — Roosevelt decided that he would send somebody that could smooth things over between Chiang Kai-shek and Joe Stillwell. And he sent his personal emissary, a man named Patrick J. Hurley. Now, Patrick J. Hurley had been the Secretary of War under Herbert Hoover. He was an Oklahoman, rather gauche, rather crude, oil millionaire. And Hurley had had a famous stint as the War Secretary of Herbert Hoover. In fact, he had given General MacArthur his most famous command in 1931, which was shooting down the "Bonus Marchers" in Washington. Well, at any rate, Hurley got off into China. Really, it was a scene. I mean, this man was absolutely a crude one, with the Oklahoma hat. And he got there and at various diplomatic

parties and so forth, he would do these little Indian war dances, and he would shriek Indian calls, and so forth. But, worst of all, he had no sense of what China was about. He referred to Chiang Kai-Shek as "Mr. Shek" [*laughter*]. He had no background whatsoever even in the most obvious parts of Chinese political history, referred always to Sun Yat-sen as "Sunset Sam" [*laughter*] — and worst of all, of course, within the context of the Chinese Civil War, referred to Mao Tse-tung as "Moose Dung" [*laughter*]. He spoke that way, and there's a lot of documentation.

Well, with Hurley on the scene, quite obviously, Chiang Kai-Shek had his man. And he decided that he could get to Hurley, and tell Hurley that there was no way in which he could deal at all with Stillwell. Consequently, Hurley wrote that rather famous statement to Roosevelt in October 1944, and he said, "If you sustain Stillwell in this controversy, you will lose Chiang and China with him." In other words, that it's the nitty-gritty: you have no other way to go but the Kuomintang, given your purposes. And so Stillwell was called from China in October of 1944, replaced by Wedemeyer; and Hurley, who knew nothing about China, then replaced Clarence Gauss, who was a career diplomat and who had been the American ambassador in China.

Now, from that point on, you see, the story is very evident. Because behind it are certain props. And the prop is, first of all, that "Open Door," the Open Door that's as old as the Open Door Notes. That is why we supported Yüan Shih-k'ai against Sun Yat-sen; why, finally, after 1928, when Chiang was establishing a weak regime in Nanking, the United States was always friendly to him. The idea was to have a cat's paw for potential American investment in China, which was described very clearly by Harry Dexter White, who was [Secretary Henry] Morgenthau's assistant to the Treasury Department, in a statement of May of 1939, which appears in the *Morgenthau Diaries*, in which he's talking about a potential loan that's up for conversation with Chiang Kai-Shek's government. And he says, "I approve of the loan so that we can get a firmer foothold on future Chinese business. The China market is our great future hope." Along with that, of course, the idea of making China a so-called major power — not really a major power, but a major ally of the United States. It's the idea, after all, of getting another vote in the showdown with the Soviet Union.

So FDR says to [British envoy] Anthony Eden in December of 1942, "In any serious conflict of policy with Russia, China will undoubtedly line up on our side." At the Cairo Conference of November of '43, Chiang says, "Yes, I will be one of the Big Four; I feel like one of the Big Four" [*laughter*]. And then, in June of 1944, it is [Secretary of State] Cordell Hull saying that China has to be a member of the Security Council of the UN. So that there are global strategic reasons why Chiang Kai-Shek and the Kuomintang, no matter how idiotic they seem within the context of the Japanese war for China, become very much the ally of American policy.

But, you see, nobody told Mao. And consequently, the idea of what it is that makes for a revolution is something that American policymakers ultimately would have to learn in China. Well, they learned it for a little while in China. But, my my — as [German sociologist] Georg Simmel once said, "In mass societies, collective memory is twenty minutes long," and in the State Department it's two [*laughter*]. And, consequently, what was learned in China would be lost everywhere else. [*applause*]