

China, cont'd

Lecture No. 0032 (April 3, 1974)

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Preliminary remarks

... it's just as well that all this happened today, because I thought I had safely wintered without a cold, and haven't. And I have a pretty bad throat, and will go as long as I can — which may be pretty long [*laughter*]. Nonetheless, we'll do with time as I give out, and then will try to recoup a little bit. But it's not a good day all the way around.

Lecture

We're talking, then, about the climax of the Chinese Revolution. Specifically, about those four years, those very historic four years, between the end of the Second World War, between VJ Day — the end of the Japanese war in China — and that period in October of 1949 when the Popular Republic of China was installed. We're talking, if you please, what the Chinese Communist historians refer to as the third stage of that Chinese Civil War. That first stage being 1921 to '27, the second stage of the civil war being 1927 to '37, the third stage, obviously, being when the united front during the war against Japan was broken in 1945 until such time as there was a Communist victory.

Or let us put it more concretely: what we really are talking about is the conflict or the collision between American capitalism and Chinese communism. We are talking about that kind of confrontation between an American empire, or the desire for an American empire, and the imperatives of Chinese needs for development. We're talking about the bankruptcy, if you please, of a pseudo-nationalism, as it was expressed by the Kuomintang when it came face to face with the authenticity of a social revolution for which the roots were very deep. We're talking, if you please, about the incompetence of a ruling class in China, a traditional ruling class, when it came face to face with the mobilization of the Chinese masses. In essence, we are talking about something phenomenal and something historic. Because when we stop to think that there were three-quarters of a billion people who then enrolled under the flag of communism, we are talking about the most monumental political event in our particular lifetimes, certainly from the quantitative point of view, in many ways from the quality point of view. And there was nothing, really, inevitable about that victory in the short run.

And that's the point, it seems to me, worth making: that essentially, even if we have dug very

deeply in order to try to find what are the long and deep historic causes of this historic Chinese revolution, we are also perfectly aware that, in the period of those years right after the Second World War, there was society after society in which there was a combination of forces — the strategy of American policymakers combining, inadvertently, sometimes without any forethought at all, with the self-interest of Soviet policymakers to contain revolutions, and finally to snuff them out. That in society after society, there was this strange sort of coalition, this strange sort of bedfellow arrangement between American and Soviet policymakers, which meant that the revolutionary potential after the Second World War really was contained.

And so we ask a question. And the question we ask is: Why was that containment policy not successful in China, in the years right after the Second World War? We ask the question whether there was something unique, something exceptional about the Chinese case? And, of course, conceptually, we ask the question of whether the Chinese strategy, whether Maoism, makes a general and permanent contribution to revolutionary theory in the period of our contemporary world? All of those things on our mind.

And our starting point is the superiority, if you please, of Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang. When I talk about superiority, I mean a certain kind of physical superiority. We're talking about August of 1945, the end of the Second World War. And if you take the measure of manpower, or if you take the measure of military force, or if you take measure of finances, or certainly the measure of diplomatic support, that Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang had established a government which they were going to remove from Chungking to Nanking again. And, after all, had every opportunity, presumably, to rule on the mainland of China. That there seemed, in 1945, no doubt on paper that the Chinese Communists could not have contested and won any kind of contest with the Kuomintang. That Chiang Kai-shek should have been able to stabilize the economy, to stabilize the society, and either to isolate the Communists, and if it came to war, if it came to civil war, to be able to crush them. That you are dealing with the Kuomintang, which has an army of 3 million in 1945, as compared to an army of 900,000 that the Chinese Communists have at the end of that struggle against the Japanese.

You are dealing, in the second place, with an army of the Kuomintang that has the best American equipment and which the United States has supplied in terms of economic and military resources. You are dealing, in the third place, with a Kuomintang that has money — that had accumulated, by the end of the Second World War, about a billion dollars in dollar reserves or in gold with which it could do something very important, with which it could begin to reconstruct the economy of China — with which if it deployed that money correctly, it could even begin to make for some economic growth or some economic development. You see what I'm saying: if Chiang had been smart, could really and literally have boxed the Communists in in 1945. And in the short run, that Communist victory would not have been a fact of 1949.

And that is all underscored by the diplomatic position of the Kuomintang because within the matrix of international affairs, within the matrix of both the United States and the Soviet Union, the Kuomintang and Chiang Kai-shek were the government of China and there was no other possibility or no other alternative.

Now, we can understand that with the Americans. American policymakers — let's give them all due credit — American policymakers throughout the Second World War had become increasingly contemptuous of the government of Chungking, the government of Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang. They had looked at them as a bunch of gangsters, as extortionists, as a government, after all, constantly extorting money from the United States in order to line their own pockets. That was perfectly well known to most American observers in Chungking. It certainly gets into the diplomatic record. And what the Americans wanted, and what would have been most desirable to them by 1945, was the same kind of a middle way in China. In other words, it would have been more desirable if they could support a government that was democratic, that was more broadly based, that certainly wasn't as corrupt, that would be the client of American economic interests, to be sure, that would let the United States into that China market. But that could not be so volatile, would not be so insecure as the Kuomintang almost inevitably would be, given the kind of structure, politically, it had built up.

But, you see, between those two emotions — between an anxiety, on the one hand, about Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang, and a passion, on the other hand, for the penetration of the China market; a passion to make of China, after all, a cornerstone of what the whole postwar American economic strategy is — between those two emotions there is not choice. Quite obviously the economic passion is far greater. And if the only alternative to Chiang Kai-shek is not some third way but the Communists, then you support him willy-nilly and no matter how bad he happens to be.

And so it was that on the 14th of August of 1945, in that famous General Order No. 1, which Truman was to issue at the end of the Japanese war, that it was provided that the surrender of the Japanese in China, their 2 million-man army and their puppet army which was considerable in numbers and all of the weaponry of that Japanese and puppet army, should go to the Kuomintang — that it should be Chiang and his government that should take the surrender. That was the American position, and it was buttressed and supported by both Great Britain and the Soviet Union.

What is so telling is that it is not only the United States, but it is also the Soviet Union that really supports Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang and said there is no alternative. Note it well, that the Russians didn't give a fig about the Chinese Revolution. They certainly didn't care about the activities or actions of Mao in trying to lead to some revolutionary result. They thought at all

points that the Chinese Communists ought to collaborate with and subordinate themselves to the activities of Chiang and his Kuomintang. And that for two very obvious reasons. One, because the Russians wanted a China that was independent and friendly. And what the auspices of that China were really didn't matter. They wanted a friendly regime on their common frontier with Soviet Asia. They wanted a government with which they could bargain in order to get back certain bases that they had lost to the Chinese. That was item number one. And item number two was that they wanted a government in China that would not upset a possible détente with the West. Because we have underscored and seen over again that Stalin had the idea that he might get a reconstruction loan from the West. And he had the idea that the West might recognize a world divided into spheres of influence if he did not upset that world — and a victory of the Communists in China would upset any opportunity to get such an accommodation with the Western powers.

And, consequently, Stalin muted any possibility for the Chinese Communists and struck his alliance with the Kuomintang. And that was obvious to the American ambassador, Patrick Hurley, who went to Moscow in March and April of 1945 to find out how Stalin felt about a potential civil war between the Kuomintang and the Communists. And Hurley wrote back to the State Department that the Russians really were very hostile to the Chinese Communists — that there was Molotov gibing at them and making jokes about them, and there was Stalin saying that the only really integral political figure in China was Chiang Kai-shek. And, consequently, Hurley writes back to the State Department, in short: Stalin agreed unqualifiedly with America's policy in China and said that he would support it. And so then Stalin saw Harry Hopkins, Roosevelt's personal emissary, some time later — this in May of 1945 — it was Truman who now sent Hopkins over to see Stalin. And to Hopkins, Stalin again said that he would do all he could in order to restrain the Chinese Communists. And the Russians took two very decisive moves.

In the first place, they struck an alliance with the Kuomintang. It is the Sino-Soviet alliance of the 14th of August of 1945. And it is an alliance between Moscow and Chiang Kai-shek. And it says, effectively, three things: that the Chinese government will restore to the Russians certain bases in northern China that had been taken from tsarist Russia, after the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05. In return for which the Russians promised that they would mute any effort by the Chinese Communists to try to take power. And in the second place, that in Manchuria and in northern China — where the Russians had occupied in order to oust the Japanese at the end of the war — that in the areas that the Russians had occupied, that they would give over those territories, not to the Chinese Communists who had established bases on Manchuria, but they would give those territories directly over to Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang.

And the second thing that Moscow did was to call the Chinese Communists to Moscow and to tell them what they were supposed to do. And Stalin reveals much about that visit, in his famous

conversations with the Yugoslav [Milovan] Djilas. And in Djilas's excellent book *Conversations with Stalin*, we find the following citation from Stalin talking to the Chinese right after the Japanese war: "With the war ended, we invited the Chinese comrades to reach an agreement as to how a *modus vivendi* with Chiang Kai-shek might be found. They agreed with us in word, but indeed, of course, they went away and did as they pleased." And, consequently, this is Stalin saying, "Yes, the Chinese understood our message, but they didn't observe it when they finally got back to China and really made this particular war."

Well, what does all this mean? Well, you see, it's a great temptation for Chiang Kai-shek and that was his undoing. Temptation goeth before the fall. And so with all of that military support and all of that diplomatic support, Chiang did exactly what he shouldn't have done if he were to survive. He had most of China in hand. If he had tried really to govern it, if he had tried to improve the economy, he certainly could have isolated and boxed in the Communists. But he was anxious at that point, with all of that support, to launch a war. And the civil war really comes from Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang. They're the ones, really, that manifest that desire that launch into that.

Now, that began right after the war with Japan when Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang decided to oust not only the Japanese from northern China, but also the Chinese Communists who had established bases there. And they couldn't quite do that alone, they could do it only with American support. So that in the weeks after the war the Kuomintang armies did occupy the major cities of the north. It occupied Peking and Tientsin and Nanking and Shanghai. And that was easy. But then, you see, to go further, to go into the extreme north of China where the Communists really did have bases — to go to Manchuria, to go to Jehol, to go Chahar — that required, really, a kind of railroad line, a kind of transport that the Kuomintang needed help for.

And it's at that point that the United States, instead of retraining Chiang Kai-shek, supports him in his effort to oust the Communists from their bases. Because on the 30th of September 1945, the United States lands 53,000 Marines in China, and by the end of 1945, the United States had 115,000 Marines. And what those Marines did was to guard those very long railroad lines so that they couldn't be cut and sabotaged by the Chinese Communists. And during that fall and early winter of 1945 to 1946, it was the United States that put its transports at the disposal of Chiang so that he could up into these northern territories — airlifting and transporting by truck about a half million Kuomintang soldiers into Manchuria and into the other northern provinces to the west of that Manchurian base.

And all of that, you see, is supported by the Russians. Because the Russians, in Manchuria, waited until February of 1946 to evacuate. And they waited until then, because only then was the Kuomintang army there in order to take the surrender: that they did not give the surrender to the

Communists, that they gave the cities of Manchuria which they had occupied into the hands of the Kuomintang. And by the time that you came to the end of February, Chiang Kai-shek really thinks that he has the Communists on the run, and he is tempted into the largest design of civil war.

Now, the question is: Did American policymakers ever get smart? Did they ever realize that this was a bottomless pit? That Chiang Kai-shek could never conquer all of China? That he could never really defeat the Communists in a long-protracted struggle? Did they understand anything about that long social struggle?

Well, there are historians that insist that the year 1946 was a year of great anxiety in the minds of Americans policymakers. That that was the year of mediation: that that was the year that General [George C.] Marshall was sent to China in September of 1945, and was there the better part of 1946 to try to negotiate an agreement between the Kuomintang and the Communists, in order to negotiate a ceasefire and to end the fighting. And, essentially, the idea behind that, say the historians, is that, essentially, American policymakers had a glimmer of what this whole Chinese Revolution was about. And yet it seems to me that the record does not speak that way. The Marshall mission, the whole idea of mediation in 1946, was not predicated on any different goal of the United States than it had ever had: that it wanted a government in China that should be wholly receptive to the American economic position, but that it was frightened in 1946 that somehow, if Chiang pursued this civil war, that his political base would disintegrate, that the economy would disintegrate, that the social fabric would tear apart — in other words, that he couldn't sustain a war.

In fact, the Marshall mission was doomed from the beginning. And it was doomed from the beginning because, when Marshall went out from China in December of 1945, he went out with the statement of Truman ringing in his ear. And it was a public statement that, no matter what, the United States would send aid to Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang. And so it is the American commitment to that government which accompanies the Marshall mission. And that means, point two, that Chiang won't negotiate. He knows the Americans will support him. What concessions will he make to the Communists? And, number three, because the Communists don't believe in these negotiations. And the only reason that they pursued them was to try to indicate to the Americans that they were better, that they were strong, that it would be money down a rat hole to try to support Chiang Kai-shek. In other words, to try to neutralize American policy which was the greatest barrier that the Communists would have to face in their road to victory.

And so Marshall's mission, well, so he made a ceasefire on the 10th of January 1946. And they all sat down together and they made the ceasefire. And then he got the Reds and the Kuomintang together, and they had a political meeting. And they made a resolution with five points. It was all

piety! About broadening the base of the government, about making a constitution, about bringing the Communists into the government. But you see the point. The point is that Marshall went back to Washington in the middle of March of 1946, and he had no sooner done that than Chiang Kai-shek broke the ceasefire and began attacking Communist bases in Manchuria and north China to such a point that, finally, the Communists struck back in force — which they did on the 15 of April of 1946, when they took the city of Harbin in Manchuria and several other cities. And then they said, three days later, on the 18th of April, to the Kuomintang, they said, "Alright, we can hit back, but now let's really have a ceasefire. Let's really have a truce." And Chiang wouldn't talk.

Because by that time, he had lots in the pocket — \$600,000 in Lend-Lease help between VJ Day and February of 1946. And then, when you get down, after all, to the other end, when you get to the 30th of August of 1946, it is the United States passing \$1 billion worth of surplus military equipment in the Far East, into the army of the Kuomintang. Why should Chiang negotiate? Why should he stop? He runs on two fixed points: that he can conquer all of China, and that if he fails at any point, the Americans will come in in volume. And they will pour not only the money in, but the men.

So, the question is — as the Kuomintang moves in 1946, it's one year of victory, as it moves and won space after space and province after province, as it pushed the Chinese Communists back — the question is: How did the Communists survive? How did they win? What is Maoism in the last stage of this struggle?

And here we come to something a little bit original. And it is, of course, a military strategy. It's a military strategy because it's a war. And at the heart of that military strategy is tactical retreat. It is Mao and the Chinese Communists saying that they will not engage, at that point, in big frontal battles with the Kuomintang. They cannot fight for those cities out of which they are being ousted. They cannot make for pitched battles. What they do is retreat. And they disappear into the villages. They disappear into the countryside, and it is there that they try to build their infrastructure of support. And as they retreat, they do two very important things and both of them are crucial. They force the Kuomintang to overextend its lines, to cut itself off from its supply bases, to diffuse its manpower — literally hundreds, even thousands of kilometers, after all, from those northern positions of the Kuomintang and those central Chinese bases of supply. And all of those, you see, fit into the second thing that they do, which is guerrilla warfare: mobilize the villages, live interwoven with the villages, and cut the rail ties, break the supply lines. That guerrilla warfare is something that Chiang can't understand, that he can't cope with, that isolates his army all over China. And there is a corollary to that. And the corollary is that, with strategic retreat, you fight and play for time. And time is on the side of the revolution.

And you play for time, and you wait for the inflation to go. And so that was Mao's point: that the longer that Chiang Kai-shek went in this overextended war, the more the economy in the country would deteriorate, the more the social fabric would tear apart, the more his political base would decompose. And in that, Mao and the Chinese Communists were right on the mark. It was a political perception of the first order. Because, you see, that supply that had been coming into China, all of that Lend-Lease help, what was happening with that supply? It was not being used as the basis for an economic reconstruction of China — it was going into private black-marketeering, it was going into the pockets of Chiang's family and of his friends. And it was useful for black-marketeering fortunes, but it wasn't at all useful for stabilizing the economy. But you still have that war to run. And if you are not utilizing that supply in order to run the war, how do you pay for this war? You crank out, and you have the most phenomenal inflation in Kuomintang China that you have anywhere over an extended period of time in the twentieth century. What you do is decompose the economy completely. You do not use what the Americans are giving you in order to stabilize your economy. You use that for private fortune, and then you destroy the economy with inflationary money.

And that has four very important consequences. It means, in the first place, that that sector of Chinese society which had traditionally supported the nationalism of the Kuomintang — I'm talking about the schoolteachers, I'm talking about the lower government bureaucrats, the ones who gave some rank-and-file support to the Kuomintang — they were desperate, and they fell away. For teachers and for lesser bureaucrats, they had a purchasing power in 1947, 10% of what they had had in the prewar. And, consequently, the support for the Kuomintang certain to disintegrate. In the second place, you get widespread defeatism — the kind of defeatism that has now moved recruits for the Communists and breaks down the walls of resistance to the Communists. You get student strikes, hunger riots, defeatism from top to bottom. You get a corruption of people who aren't corrupt simply in order to live. And then, two things that are crucial. You get a deterioration of Chiang's army. They can't live, they can't eat, and they begin to go over to the Communists — so that by the end of 1947, Mao Tse-tung indicated that there were a million Kuomintang soldiers who had gone over to the Communists, either being captured or going over voluntarily, whole divisions moving over to the Communists. And then, finally — and underscore it, because this is the genius of that tactic of Maoism — that what that playing for time did, what the disintegration of the social and economic structure meant was that it discouraged American policymakers from going all out in China.

And they began to think that they couldn't do that. And they couldn't do that for a variety of reasons. One, because the regime was so damnably corrupt that there was no way out of it. It was like a stable, you see. And so, you get that from the American counsel at Mukden in 1947, talking about the way in which the Kuomintang comports itself in Manchuria: "Nationalist military forces and civilian administration conduct themselves in Manchuria as conquerors, not

as fellow countrymen. And, having imposed a 'carpetbag' regime of unbridled exploitation on the area under their control." The result is that Truman sent General [Albert Coady] Wedemeyer to China in August of 1947, really, to look over the scene. What could be done with this Chiang administration? What could be done to beef it up? How much aid and would the aid help? And Wedemeyer went, and he was certainly anti-Communist. But he writes in his *Wedemeyer Reports*, a book he published in 1958, that he was horrified by what he saw, and he told Chiang to his face that his regime was nepotistic and corrupt. And what he proposed to Truman and to Washington was that there be large-scale American aid, but that it be administered wholly by American advisors, and that the United States literally take over the government of China in order to guarantee its stability, and also to guarantee its place within the American economic empire. Chiang wouldn't agree to that.

The Americans underwent a final reappraisal. And the final reappraisal came by November of 1947. And there are high-level meetings of the Truman administration, of the Truman cabinet, and two facts became very important. One, that the United States cannot undermine its position in Europe — that it cannot spend so much in the Far East that it will undermine its great and important objective of inserting European capitalism into the American schema. And secondly, that if China is a lost cause, if it is going to cost that much, the better thing in the Far East is to reappraise the possibility of Japan as an anchor of American policy in the Far East: a Japan which was the defeated power but which could be built up, in which the Americans could invest, would become the great policeman against communism in the Far East. You see the point. And the Americans continue to send enough help to Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang to keep it in the civil war, but never nearly enough so that it even came close to winning.

But all of that is negative and all of that is defensive. And the other part of the Maoist strategy is positive and creative because it is the factor of an offensive war, and that is guerrilla war. Now, guerrilla war, you know — and it's such an important part of the world in which you live — guerrilla war is not just a chapter in the history of war. Guerrilla war is not just an aspect of war. It is a very specific projection of a kind of political movement. When we say guerrilla war, we mean the military part of a certain political revolution. We mean what Mao meant, after all, when he said, "Alright, the Americans and the Kuomintang, they want to find out about our guerrilla war. They want to make counterinsurgency schemes. They want to be able to win the hearts of our people." And so Mao says, "The Nationalists and their American advisors can study our technique of struggle all they want. We give them any text that they want, but they'll never be able to apply them successfully because they require the support of the people, and this they can never achieve." And that's the point of guerrilla war. That guerrilla war means that you live with and by and through the villages. It means that you live with a people that is both in your army and that understands what your army is doing.

And, you know, I tell you something parenthetical. It's really a pitiful thing when people who are so far from any conception of what organized people can do start to sit in rather verified offices, and chart schema for counter-insurgency, and how you win the hearts and the minds of the struggling peasantry, and so forth. And in one of my curious journeys — something that I can hardly explain, as a matter of fact — I ended up in what in those days was being called the "outpost of the free world," which was the island of Quemoy. Quemoy is a rock in the Pescadores, and it is right off the city of Amoy. And for a period of time, the United States was going to throw everything into the whole world's sink in order to defend this rock outside of Amoy. And, you know, Eisenhower went in January of 1955 and got from the Congress the so-called "Formosa doctrine," which meant that he could throw any military force into the support for Quemoy and Matsu, of these two rocks that, presumably, the Chinese Communists wanted. So I got to Taiwan, and I said to the Kuomintang people there, "Well, I want to reach the 'outpost of the free world': can you fly me to Quemoy?" Well, they finally said, "Okay." We picked a non-shell day, of course, because the Chinese Communists shelled every other day. We went on a day when they weren't shelling [laughter], and consequently went over there in a plane — literally designed, I'm sure, by Orville Wright [laughter]; I'd never been on such a flight in all my life — and I finally got to the island of Quemoy, a little queasy, and got out. And because it was a non-shell day, and also because I happened to be the only VIP visiting that day — and which really shows you how benighted the rock had become by that time [laughter] — I was then greeted by the entire establishment.

There were twenty-one Chinese generals on this particular rock. And we had this sort of fantastic luncheon underneath the rock with lots of booze, lots of Chinese booze, which I couldn't take very well. And so by the time the lunch was over, and I got out on top of the rock again — I really needed the air, and was rather really tilted — and then this general said, "And now, now you will do psychological warfare." Of course. And I said, "Well, what do you have in mind?" He said, "Well," he said, "we have this program to win over, you see, the enslaved masses on the Chinese mainland." And I said, "Alright, I'm happy to help in that endeavor." And I said, "How do you do it from here, from this rock?" [laughter]. And he said, "Well," he said, "the major has gone for the equipment." And the major came back and he had this handful of balloons. And the balloons had these long strings on them, and then you tied things on the end of the balloons; you tied little cakes of soap or combs or little pink pens [laughter], and you floated these balloons over to the mainland. And when, you see, the symbols of civilization — what the Chinese Communists were missing, how they were suffering from slavery [laughter] — when the Chinese Communists got this, immediately upon grabbing one of these balloons, you immediately liberated a Chinese [laughter]. I thought, "Well, that's a very useful bit of psychological warfare." I said, "How many of these do you float over a day?" They said, "About 600." So I did these calculations, and I said, "Well, you know, even if every one were immediately grabbed and liberated a Chinese, you know, it would take you 17,000 years"

[laughter]. And he said, "Well," he said, "it's really a symbol, because, you see, the wind currents are the other way" [laughter]. So none of them got there anyway.

Now, what we're talking about is, if you are going to have Americans subsidizing things like that, and the Kuomintang engaged in activity of that kind — or if you want to have university professors at Michigan State, or wherever, sitting around and deciding how you win the hearts of Tai peasants — then you are going to come up with bullshit of that kind. And, consequently, what Mao says in that particular passage is positively right. Because you see what you get in that kind of guerrilla struggle: you get, first of all, what Jack Belden so very, very cogently, in that marvelous book *China Shakes the World* — what Jack Belden said that that 8th Route Army was about. He said that that 8th Route Army, after all, wasn't just an army: it was a school, it was a university, it was a theater, it was a political club, it was a festival, it was a way in which soldiers, who had been in the fields and who had been peasants, understood that they had weapons in their hands for some kind of revolutionary objective. And the same was true with the villagers. There is an old Shansi proverb that is centuries and centuries old, which says that a poor man has no voice. And, you see, this is the whole essence of what Bill Hinton has tried to do for you in *Fanshen*. It is the piercing of dike: that suddenly in the villages, when the army begins to organize its liberated zones, it pierces the dike, and people came out to the central square and they begin to talk. And they have these *cahiers de doléances* and they tell their grievances. And once they began to do that, well, you can't stop them.

And add to that something very important: that you should never underestimate in regard to this Chinese Communist victory. And that is that behind it all is the party. That the party, after all, would not permit spontaneity to get out of hand. And that is fantastically interesting in the liberated zones that are being, really, captured from the Kuomintang in 1947, 1948, and the beginning of 1949. Which means that the agrarian policy, for example, becomes very, very much more radical than it had been in the Shansi period. In the Shansi period, it had been only lowering the rents or lowering interest rates. Now it becomes expropriation of land, redistribution of land — but with a limit, because the function of the party was not to make the *élan* of the peasants that really they had already made. The function of the party was to catalyze this *élan* and to make sure that they didn't break down production and, fundamentally, that they didn't create counter-revolution behind the line. You see, you have to understand that Mao and the Communists never knew how quickly they were going to win this victory. By the end of 1948, Mao still thinks it's going to take three more years. And he's amazed when everything breaks so quickly in 1949.

So he wants to keep productivity; he wants to prevent, after all, any kind of internal counter-revolution. And, consequently, Mao said in June of 1949 about this: "We must unite firmly with the middle peasants, and it is absolutely impermissible to encroach on their interest." You can

take over the land of the landlords, you can take over the land of the rich peasants, but the middle peasants — those that have a little more land than you — you must have collaboration. They comprise, after all, a fifth of the population. The same is true with the technicians, the experts, even the industrialists who are willing to collaborate. Mao's point is that, if you are to make a road to socialism, you cannot break down the productive system all at once. It's very, very important to note that, by the beginning of 1952, the Chinese Communists had already gone beyond the industrial production levels of 1937 in China. And they did this by a collaborationist scheme that Mao defines this way: "To counter imperialist oppression and to raise her backward economy, China must utilize all the factors of urban and rural capitalism that are beneficial and not harmful to the national economy and the people's livelihood. Whenever it is possible and beneficial, we must unite even with sectors of the national bourgeoisie." What you get, then, is a party very careful in the liberated zones to make capital out of the *élan* of the people — but not to let it get to such a point that the revolution then degenerates.

So you see the point. You get the suicide of Chiang and the Kuomintang, that self-immolation, as it were. You get the peculiar lack of a solid commitment by the Americans, and yet a partial commitment that keeps the civil war going. You get the guerrilla warfare of the Communists, and you get that magnificent structure in the liberated zones of a controlled revolution which keeps both production and the *élan* of the revolution going, and then you understand what happens between September of 1948 and October of 1949.

The big battles, the final push in the civil war, between September of 1948 and the end of January in 1949. In September of 1948, it is Lin Piao who leads the Chinese Communist victory in Manchuria. In November of 1948, it is Chiang risking everything on his Waterloo. It is the Huaihai campaign, November to January. It is north of the city of Nanking, on the plain, central plain of China — a tremendous battle. And January of 1949, the Communists have surrounded that Nationalist army, and simply disarmed and dismantled 400,000 Kuomintang troops. From that point on, it is the Communists that have the superiority of numbers; they have the superiority of weapons. By the 23rd of January, they take Peking and Tientsin. April 21st, they pierce the Yangtze River and take the capital of Nanking, and then, of course, the government flees to Canton and then flees to Taiwan in October. In October — thirty-eight years after, almost to the day, thirty-eight years after the historic monarchy topples in China — the Popular Republic is installed. Thirty-two years, almost to the day, that Bolshevism triumphed in Russia, communism comes to China.

A monumental event in the life of the Third World in every way. Because it is the peasantry over the landlords; it is development over inertia and misery; it is, if you please, the mobilized mass against imperialism; it is the party over spontaneity; and it is a functional and an operational Marxism over dogma. And that is so incredible. And it is Mao on Marxism: "We must assimilate

Marxist theory and know how to apply it. We must assimilate it only to apply it." That what it is is a method; it is a way of understanding; it is a mode of acting; it is not a dogma.

And did we learn? And that's so crucial. And what of American policymakers? Well, you see, by the middle of 1949, it was a little bit difficult not to say that China wasn't lost. And so Acheson, Dean Acheson who was the Secretary of State in 1949, appoints a committee in July under the command of Philip Jessup — the Jessup Committee, which has George Kennan on it — to look into the question of what the loss of China means to the American strategy and how the United States should comport itself from that point on. But what is so interesting is that, in his instructions to Jessup, Acheson already confined the work of that committee, because he said, "You will please take as your assumption that it is a fundamental decision of American policy that the United States does not intend to permit further extension of Communist domination on the continent of Asia or in Southeast Asia." From that assumption, you see, flow two very important principles.

One is the principle of the "rimland": in other words, that if Communist China has gone, the rimland of Asia cannot go. And that means Southeast Asia, it means Korea, it means all of those territories where you may have to engage in action against these revolutions, against modernizing attempts and the like. And the second assumption, that you must have a reason for that. And that reason is inscribed in the very long *White Paper on China* which the State Department publishes on the 15th of August of 1949. It says that the Chinese Communists have managed to fare so well because they are a pawn of the Russians. Totally false! Beyond question a lie! And yet, of course, an operative assumption because what enables you, then, to keep the rest of Asia non-Communist is the idea that you are dealing with a global Russian threat. And all of that goes to Vietnam, and it goes to Korea, and it goes to that fantasy of the Formosa doctrine of January 1955, that you can throw anything into the fray in order to save Matsu and Quemoy. Oh, yes, a Gallup poll taken at that time said that 97% of the people had never heard of Matsu and Quemoy, but the fate of the world was going to turn on whether those rocks remain free or not.

Well, I tell you, friends, that we really live in a funny world. And it is terribly important for us to go through life saying that the emperor has no clothes; yes, it's better for us to go through life with no emperors, but if they're around to say that they have no clothes. Otherwise, you're really gonna go stark raving mad. You read the China story in the 1950s, it's enough to drive you up the wall. Because that whole story is based upon the "we lost China theme" as though that revolution didn't have roots that were as ancient, after all, as the class struggle of China and the desire of those tremendous Chinese masses to get out of that imperialistic bath. [applause]