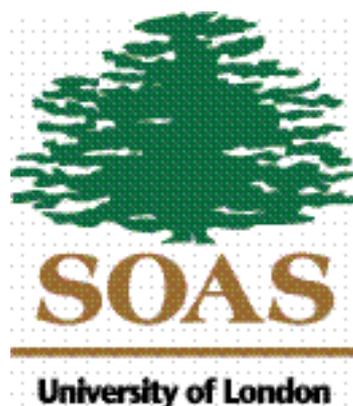


CAMBRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS



---

Who Lost China? Chiang Kai-shek Testifies

Author(s): Lloyd E. Eastman

Reviewed work(s):

Source: *The China Quarterly*, No. 88 (Dec., 1981), pp. 658-668

Published by: [Cambridge University Press](#) on behalf of the [School of Oriental and African Studies](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/653752>

Accessed: 20/04/2012 05:29

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



Cambridge University Press and School of Oriental and African Studies are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The China Quarterly*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

## Research Note

# Who Lost China? Chiang Kai-shek Testifies

Lloyd E. Eastman

“ To tell the truth, never, in China or abroad, has there been a revolutionary party as decrepit (*tuitang*) and degenerate (*fubai*) as we [the Guomindang] are today; nor one as lacking spirit, lacking discipline, and even more, lacking standards of right and wrong as we are today. This kind of party should long ago have been destroyed and swept away!”<sup>1</sup>

The time was January 1948; the speaker was Chiang Kai-shek. Frequently during 1947–50, the climactic years of struggle with the Communists for control of the Chinese mainland, Chiang addressed his military commanders and civilian cadres in similarly scathing, forthright language. His purpose, he asserted, was to identify the causes of Nationalist errors and weakness so that he could “ turn defeat into victory.” Chiang’s speeches from that period – readily available in published form for years, but until now ignored by all – shed light from an entirely new direction on the controversial question of why the Nationalists were defeated by the Communists.

During 1947 the Nationalist offensive against the Communists had reached a high tide. Government troops had pushed deeply into Manchuria, past Changchun on the road to Harbin; large areas of Shandong were retaken; and on 19 March in a loudly proclaimed victory, they also occupied Mao Zedong’s headquarters at Yan’an. Exultantly the Nationalist high command predicted that the communist bandits would be routed within six months.<sup>2</sup> But then, during 1947 and 1948, the strategic advantage passed rapidly to the Communists.

Chiang Kai-shek was surprised and humiliated by the accumulating series of defeats. “ Regardless of what aspect we discuss,” he declared in June 1947, “ we hold an absolute superiority; in terms of the troops’ equipment, battle techniques and experience, the Communists are not our equal. . . . And we are also ten times richer than the communist army in terms of military-supply replacements, such as food, fodder, and ammunition.”<sup>3</sup> Seven months later, in January 1948, Chiang still claimed

1. *Jiang Zongtong sixiang yanlunji (Collection of the Thoughts and Speeches of President Chiang)* (Taipei, 1966), Vol. 19, p. 291. The author gratefully acknowledges the comments and criticisms on an earlier draft of this article by Professors John K. Fairbank (Harvard University), Thomas Krueger (University of Illinois), and Steven I. Levine (The American University).

2. *United States Relations with China* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1949), p. 238.

3. *Jiang Zongtong*, Vol. 19, p. 241. See also *ibid.* p. 261.

that “with regard to material, we have very good equipment and excellent weapons; one could say that we possess all the conditions necessary for victory.”<sup>4</sup> “But why,” he continued, “does our communist-suppression [campaign] still suffer defeats and suffer losses?”<sup>5</sup> During 1947 and 1948 Chiang examined this question repeatedly and from different perspectives. With regard to the military, he observed that the chief weaknesses were:

*Lack of military knowledge and skill.* The officers, Chiang declared, were utterly lacking in professional ability. Most commanders, from the top to the bottom level, “fight muddle-headed battles” (*da hutu zhang*). “No one studies theory or the basic military manuals (*Dian fanling*); even less do they pay attention to reconnoitring the enemy’s situation or the lay of the land; they indifferently draw up plans and casually issue orders, and are unable to study carefully or make thorough preparations.”<sup>6</sup> Later, in January 1948, he complained that most of his officers “don’t use their brains and are unwilling to study. Regardless of what problem, they are invariably careless and do not seek a thorough understanding. In administration, they are even more perfunctory and superficial, and do not attempt to be thorough. . . . Now, the brains of most of our soldiers are actually asleep.”<sup>7</sup>

Just how disgusted he was with his top officers’ lack of professional military skill is indicated by this scorching diatribe: “You should know that those of you who today serve as army commanders and division commanders, if you were in a foreign country and really had to rely just on your own knowledge and ability, you would not be qualified to serve as regimental commanders. It is only because everything in China is backward and there is a shortage of talent that you, with miniscule abilities, bear such heavy responsibilities.”<sup>8</sup>

*Poor conditions of the common soldiers.* Chiang scolded the officers for their indifference to the condition of their men. They so ignored such basic elements in their training as aiming, firing, reconnoitring and liaison that “the soldiers’ combat skills are so poor that they cannot fight.”<sup>9</sup> Nor did they provide the troops with adequate food, clothing or medical care, even embezzling supplies meant for the men. Chiang’s solution was that the officers should “eat what the troops eat, wear what the troops wear, and live in the troops’ barracks.” He added: “We can say that the Communists’ military cadres have already completely attained this. Between their officers and men there are only differences of function, but there is no gap in their living conditions.”<sup>10</sup> In the Nationalist army, by contrast, “since the officers treat the men in this

4. *Ibid.* pp. 304–305.

5. *Ibid.* p. 305.

6. *Ibid.* p. 243. See also *ibid.* p. 254.

7. *Ibid.* p. 305.

8. *Ibid.* p. 253.

9. *Ibid.* p. 243.

10. *Ibid.* p. 305

way it must be considered very good if the men do not mutiny or desert.”<sup>11</sup>

*Moral and spiritual shortcomings.* “It cannot be denied,” Chiang observed in June 1947, “that the spirit of most commanders is broken and their morality is base.” High-level officers had become complacent in their high posts, encumbered by family members, and acting like warlords. “As a consequence, their revolutionary spirit is almost completely dissipated, and they are concerned only with preserving their *shi li* (military strength and resources).”<sup>12</sup> Chiang was especially critical that his commanders failed to co-operate with each other.<sup>13</sup> “Everyone nourishes the evil habit of caring only for himself and is concerned only for the advantage of his own unit; towards the perils and difficulties of other troops, or the success or failure of the whole campaign, they give almost no thought. . . . With the discipline of our troops so lax and morale so low, there is absolutely no way that we can luckily avoid defeat when we do battle with the tough and tricky (*xiongwán Jiaohua*) communist army.”<sup>14</sup>

Foreshadowing John F. Kennedy’s remark after the Bay of Pigs fiasco – “victory has a hundred fathers and defeat is an orphan” – Chiang also complained of his commanders’ selfishness in grasping for honours and shunning of blame. “If we are defeated in battle, then they are mutually resentful and criticize each other, but they completely conceal their own errors, absolving themselves completely of responsibility for the defeat.” But “if victorious, they fight for honours.”<sup>15</sup>

The commanders, moreover, were corrupt, over-stating the number of men in their units, and embezzling the grain and money consigned to their troops.<sup>16</sup> And they did not carry out orders: “Now, at all levels of command, most feign obedience to their superiors’ orders, sometimes not implementing them at all, with the result that the value of the orders is completely lost.”<sup>17</sup>

Chiang felt that his commanders deceived him in their reports from the battlefield. One of their most serious deceptions, he said, was that “now, when many troops first arrive at the front and still have not actually established contact with the enemy, they say that such-and-such an enemy troop column has arrived at their front, such-and-such a column at their flanks, and it seems as though the situation is absolutely critical. But if you go and investigate the actual situation, there are only a few of the enemy, and perhaps no such unit at all at their front. And after establishing contact, they often exaggerate victory, saying that they have killed so many thousands or tens-of-thousands of the enemy. They

11. *Ibid.* p. 243.

12. *Ibid.* pp. 240, 242.

13. *Ibid.* p. 264.

14. *Ibid.* p. 240.

15. *Ibid.* p. 252.

16. *Ibid.* pp. 258, 306.

17. *Ibid.* p. 262.

should know that the communist army's principles of combat stipulate that they avoid decisive battle with our main forces and that it is practically impossible for us to annihilate thousands or tens-of-thousands of them. One look at this kind of exaggerated report and you know it is inaccurate."<sup>18</sup>

"If," Chiang declared in June 1947, "we speak about the level of most officers' spirit and morality, knowledge and ability, and the level of understanding of ourselves and of the enemy, then we today should long ago have been defeated by the bandit army."<sup>19</sup>

The civilian branches of the regime fared no better than the army in Chiang's assessment. Both the Guomindang and the Youth Corps, he said in September 1947, lacked organization, training and discipline; they "can be said to be mere empty shells, without any real strength."<sup>20</sup> Four months later, he observed that "Our revolutionary work is conducted carelessly and perfunctorily so that there is absolutely no progress." And, because of the party's mistakes, "most people in society attack the party unsparingly, even regarding party members as offenders against the state and the nation."<sup>21</sup>

Amazingly, Chiang expressed unabashed admiration for the Communists. They represented everything he admired and everything the Nationalist regime lacked: organization, discipline and morality. The Communists, he noted, not only studied and discussed problems exhaustively, but they also implemented their plans completely. "They do not permit even the slightest muddle-headedness or vagueness of ideas, . . . and by no means can they be superficial, stopping halfway." By contrast, he asserted, "nowhere are our methods or actions the equal of theirs." "Most of our cadres do not use their brains and are unwilling to study, are neither careful nor reliable . . . and thus we sink in defeat."<sup>22</sup>

The difference, Chiang said, was that the Communists employed the "scientific method." This approach, he thought, had been inculcated largely through the *zhengfeng* (party reform) movement, and he urged his own followers to emulate that movement in order to strengthen the organization of the Guomindang and increase the fighting strength of the Nationalist army.<sup>23</sup>

Despite his pessimism about the condition of the Guomindang and his army in 1947–48, Chiang Kai-shek was not, of course, prepared to abandon the field to Mao Zedong. "Although [the communists' organization, training, propaganda techniques, etc.] are all superior to ours," said Chiang in September 1947, "our ideology, thought and [political] line are nevertheless definitely more correct than theirs and are, moreover, more suited to the needs of the nation. Therefore, if only

18. *Ibid.* p. 258.

19. *Ibid.* p. 253.

20. *Ibid.* p. 281.

21. *Ibid.* pp. 290–91.

22. *Ibid.* pp. 292, 303.

23. *Ibid.* pp. 283, 302–303.

we can study everything of theirs and comprehend everything of theirs, we can then have assurance of annihilating them.”<sup>24</sup>

The march of events did not, however, allow the Nationalists the needed time to “study everything of theirs and comprehend everything of theirs.” And on 21 January 1949 – with the economy nearing total collapse, with the army being pushed back to the Yangtze River, and with the people feeling disillusioned with, and even contempt for, the government in Nanjing – Chiang Kai-shek resigned the presidency. Retiring to his native village of Xikou in north-eastern Zhejiang, he kept one eye on political developments, but also toured the area’s many scenic spots and relaxed with his family in the country.<sup>25</sup> This might have been an idyllic life. For Chiang, however, it was – in the words of a chronicler, Cao Shengfen – “the most troubled and strenuous period of self-examination in his life.”<sup>26</sup> The movement that he had led for over 20 years now lay in shambles. He felt humiliated. What, he wondered, were the reasons for the defeat?

With a succession of visitors to Xikou – including Chen Lifu, Wang Shijie, Zhang Daofan, Tao Xisheng, Gu Zhenggang, Zhang Chun, Wu Liqing, and Zhang Qiyun – Chiang Kai-shek pondered this question. After three months, wrote Cao Shengfen, Chiang’s answer was that “the military and governmental branches both bore a responsibility for the past defeats. But the chief reason, which cannot be denied, arose from the paralysis of the party: the membership, organizational structure and method of leadership all created problems. Thus, the party became a lifeless shell; the government and military also lost their soul; with the result that the troops collapsed and society disintegrated.”<sup>27</sup>

During the summer of 1949 Chiang again plunged into the maelstrom of Chinese politics. Using his post as director-general of the Guomindang (which he had retained even though resigning as president) and control of the government’s gold reserve (which he had secreted out of Shanghai to Taipei) as his chief weapons, he engaged in a bitter power struggle with Acting-president Li Tsung-jen. Finally, as communist armies consolidated their control on the mainland, Li flew to the United States in December 1949, and Chiang Kai-shek, taking refuge in Taiwan, resumed the office of president of the National Government in March 1950.

After returning to the political stage in late April 1949, Chiang had immediately begun acting upon the insight derived during his brief retirement, that the “paralysis” of the Guomindang had been the ultimate source of the deterioration and collapse of Nationalist power. At a Central Executive Committee meeting of the Guomindang in Canton in July, he presented a proposal for party reform. Because of the

24. *Ibid.* p. 283.

25. Cao Shengfen, “Cong Xikou dao Chengdu” (“From Xikou to Chengdu”), *Zhongwai zazhi (Kaleidoscope)*, Vol. II, No. 5 (November 1967), pp. 9–10; Chiang Ching-kuo, *Calm in the Eye of a Storm* (Taipei, 1978), pp. 154–208.

26. Cao Shengfen “Cong Xikou dao Chengdu,” p. 10.

27. *Ibid.* p. 10.

rush of events caused by the military deluge on the mainland, no action was taken on the proposal until a year later. Then, as president in Taiwan, Chiang formed a top-level Central Reform Commission, headed by Chen Cheng, to plan and oversee a fundamental overhaul of the party, including a purge of members who had compromised with the Communists or had fled for safety abroad.<sup>28</sup> At the same time, he attempted to revitalize his hapless remnant army through intensified military training and political education.

During this period of rebuilding Chiang frequently spoke with his chief officers about the reasons for the recent defeats. “ Today I must painfully point out,” he asserted, “ from the latter part of the war against Japan to the present, the corruption and degeneracy (*tanwu fubai*) manifested within our revolutionary army has been truly fantastic, truly unimaginable! ” The army had been “ soul-less,” without fighting spirit or discipline, and plagued with incompetent, uncooperative commanders. Such an army, “ could not but take the road to defeat.”<sup>29</sup>

Thus, during late 1949 and 1950, Chiang’s complaints against the army, the government, and the party were essentially similar to his criticisms in 1947 and 1948. More than previously, however, he now emphasized that weak and faulty organization of the regime and of society as a whole had contributed importantly to the collapse. A major organizational defect, he declared, was the absence of the system of political commissars in all army units. That system had been abolished after the Northern Expedition in order to unify military command. Because there were no political commissars, Chiang declared, there was inadequate surveillance of, or checking upon, the military commanders. As a result, there were “ even fewer means of judging the accuracy of [reports on] combat achievements; all kinds of administrative, hygenic, corrupt, and degenerate phenomena developed.”<sup>30</sup> Without political commissars, too, the political education of the troops had been neglected, so that “ the will to fight the enemy was weak, and fighting spirit was entirely lost. And, especially, [the troops] were ignorant of the need to protect and unite with the people, even unrestrainedly harassing them, so that military discipline was completely non-existent.”<sup>31</sup>

Also as a result of lax organization, communist spies and agents had infiltrated everywhere – “ There is no hole they do not enter ” (*wukong buru*). They infiltrated particularly into the leading organizations of the government and the army, performing espionage and creating rumours. As a result, said Chiang, the collapse of the mainland was wrought not so much by enemy military actions as by the confusion, fear and trouble created within the Nationalist ranks by these communist agents (“ even to the extent that our several million troops, without even experiencing

28. Li Shoukong, *Zhongguo xiandai shi (Chinese Contemporary History)* (Taipei, 4th edit. 1967), pp. 282–83.

29. *Jiang Zhongtong*, Vol. 19, pp. 379, 397; *ibid.* Vol. 20, p. 102

30. *Ibid.* Vol. 19, p. 378. On poor organization of the army, see also *ibid.* p. 397.

31. *Ibid.* p. 379.

fierce battle, were shattered by the enemy, and innumerable excellent weapons were presented to the Communists and used to massacre us ").<sup>32</sup>

In his post-mortem analysis, Chiang indicated repeatedly that the army held a technological superiority over the Communists; never did he complain of shortages of weapons or ammunition which might have been caused by inadequate or dilatory American aid. He did, however, occasionally voice grievances against the United States. He claimed, for example, that "our government mistakenly believed in Marshall's mediation." As a result, the Nationalist army committed a strategic error in sending crack troops to Manchuria, thereby leaving China-proper vulnerable to communist attack.<sup>33</sup> (This complaint overlooked the fact that General Albert Wedemeyer in November 1945 had advised Chiang *against* sending large military forces into Manchuria, so that the Nationalists could first consolidate control of China south of the Great Wall.<sup>34</sup>)

Chiang also regretted the psychological effects upon his followers of the alliance with the United States. The army, he declared, acquired numerous dissolute tendencies from contact with United States troops, becoming soft and luxury-loving.<sup>35</sup> In society as a whole, the people abandoned their traditional sense of self-reliance and became dependent upon United States aid. As a consequence, said Chiang, when the State Department's *White Paper* appeared in August 1949, indicating that the United States would send no more aid, "everyone felt that the hope of victory against the Communists had already been practically lost."<sup>36</sup>

Clearly, then, Chiang in 1949 and 1950 was not entirely happy with his one-time ally. Yet little space in his collected speeches is devoted to recriminations against the United States. And the weight of his remarks, taken as a whole, clearly indicates that he believed the collapse on the mainland had resulted from weaknesses and mistakes of the Nationalists themselves, rather than from foreign influences.

Other Nationalist leaders than Chiang Kai-shek likewise attributed the defeat on the mainland to internal weaknesses of the Nationalist regime. One of these was Tao Xisheng, who in the late 1940s and early 1950s was virtually Chiang's *alter ego*, at least in intellectual matters. Tao had helped Chiang write the book *China's Destiny* (some say he was the "ghost-writer" of the book); he had served as Chiang's personal secretary; he was a frequent visitor in Xikou during Chiang's "retirement"; and he was editor of the party daily, the *Zhongyang ribao* (*Central Daily News*). Tao in September 1950 was a member of the Reform Commission, which President Chiang had recently instituted to

32. *Ibid.* Vol. 20, p. 7. See also *ibid.* Vol. 19, pp. 282, 380–81; *ibid.* Vol. 26, p. 35.

33. *Ibid.* Vol. 19, p. 398.

34. *United States Relations with China*, p. 131; Tang Tsou, *America's Failure in China, 1941–50* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), pp. 341–42.

35. *Jiang Zhongtong*, Vol. 19, p. 388.

36. *Ibid.* p. 400.

reorganize and revitalize the Guomindang. In his report, Tao identified five fundamental errors in the work-style of Guomindang members. “These five points,” he asserted, “are the reasons the war against the Communists on the mainland was lost.”<sup>37</sup>

1. Party members disregarded party organization and policy, and acted instead largely on the basis of personal connections. “On the surface, everyone was a member of the same party and accepted the direction of a single leader. In fact, however, everyone belonged to a clique, and what they stood for was determined by their personal advantage. These cliques held absolutely no differences of political views, but were entirely personal associations struggling for power and profit, aiding and recommending each other for the purpose of becoming rich by means of holding official positions. . . . As a result, one only sees the disruption of factions and does not see the Guomindang organization.”

2. Party organization and decision-making were not systematized, but were decided largely on the basis of an individual’s whim or personal favouritism. For example, “many who were diligent in their work would long remain in obscurity if they were unable to ingratiate themselves with others, while those who muddled along perfunctorily could advance without difficulty if only they courted and flattered their superiors. Such being the situation . . . how could one get people to work hard and respect party discipline?”

3. The party emphasized form rather than substance: subjectivism and doctrinarism reigned, so that the party dealt in illusions and failed to relate to reality or to get to the heart of problems.

4. Party work concerned only the top levels of the party and persons in positions of authority; it had no relationship with the common people or with ordinary party members. “The defeat of this party thus resulted from ignoring the demands of the masses and none of the programmes and policies could be put into effect among the people. Party work also stopped at the *xian* level and did not reach the party members.”

5. Party policy was not firmly established upon principle. “As a consequence, bureaucrats and warlords flourished and the Three People’s Principles could not be realized.”

Like Tao Xisheng, the Nationalists’ military high command also attributed the defeat to internal failings. Classified “Top Secret,” a February 1950 report from the General Political Bureau of the Ministry of National Defence declared, “we have never heard it said that our military defeat in recent years was due to the lack of ammunition or the

37. *Zhongguo guomindang xianjieduan zhuzhang: zhuan ti yan jiu ji (The Current Political Programme of the Chinese Guomindang: Collection of Special Studies)* (printed by the Fourth Section of the Central Reform Commission; n.p., 1950), section A-7, pp. 1-4. I am grateful to Dr Jerome Cavanaugh, who brought this work to my attention and loaned me the copy from his large personal collection.

insufficiency of other supplies. Rather, we inadequately understood bandit-suppression and anti-communism; we had insufficient morale; and our government, economy, and programmes completely failed to provide close support for the bandit-suppression military effort. This was an important factor in our defeat.’<sup>38</sup>

How accurately does the testimony cited in this article reflect actual conditions in the Nationalist movement? The assessments of Tao Xisheng and the Ministry of National Defence can probably be taken at close to face value. Both of those 1950 reports were internal documents in the Nationalists’ post-defeat reassessment, designed solely to identify past failings in order to strengthen the regime in the future. Chiang Kai-shek’s analyses might be more problematic. It could perhaps be argued that his speeches, which were delivered in the heat of combat before various gatherings of military commanders and high-level meetings of the Guomindang, were not intended as historical analyses, but were simply pep talks to his lieutenants. Certainly it is true that Chiang was a habitual moralizer, given to scolding his subordinates. The speeches may therefore have placed an inordinate stress on the moral and psychological failings of his followers – in contrast to other factors, such as diplomatic or economic, that may also have contributed to the deterioration of this regime. Yet his criticisms were strikingly similar to those of Tao and the Ministry of National Defence, as well as to assessments by various foreign observers, like Generals Albert C. Wedemeyer and David Barr. Barr, for example, who was head of the United States Military Advisory Group, reported to Washington in November 1948 that “No battle has been lost since my arrival due to lack of ammunition or equipment. [The Nationalist] military debacles in my opinion can all be attributed to the world’s worst leadership and many other morale destroying factors that lead to a complete loss of will to fight. [There is] complete ineptness of high military leaders and . . . widespread corruption and dishonesty throughout the Armed Forces. . . .”<sup>39</sup> In an earlier day, such a disparaging judgment by a foreigner was inevitably suspect. Now, however, Barr’s and Chiang’s assessments are mutually corroborating.

That Chiang’s speeches had not been intended merely as pep talks, but represented his considered valuation of the Nationalist movement during those years of defeat, is further borne out by his book, *Soviet Russia in China*, published in 1956. There he devoted more attention to economic factors and the duplicity of Communists in explaining the defeat on the mainland than he had done in his 1947–50 speeches. Even in that work, however, his concluding analysis was wholly compatible with his earlier assessment. “Admittedly,” he asserted, “many factors have

38. *Guojun zhengzhi gongzuo zhidao yaodian (Important Points in the Direction of Political Work in the Army)* (printed by the General Political Bureau of the Ministry of National Defence, n.p., 1950), p. 6. This work is located in the Bureau of Investigation Archives, Taiwan, No. 596.72/741.

39. *United States Relations with China*, p. 358. On Wedemeyer, see summary of his remarks made to the National Government in August 1947, in *ibid.* pp. 758–62.

contributed towards our defeat. The mortal blows to our anti-communist struggle when we were still on the mainland, however, did not come from administrative shortcomings alone. As a matter of fact, similar political and social shortcomings, unavoidable during and after a long war, occurred in other countries, too. *The mortal blows sprang from serious defects in organization and technique, from serious errors in policy and strategy, and, above all, from the weakening of our national willpower at the time when it most needed to be strengthened (emphasis added).*<sup>40</sup>

Chiang's testimony regarding the causes of the Nationalists' defeat should dampen one of the more heated and politically consequential historical debates of recent times. Since the late 1940s, many of the Nationalists' more emotional and politically motivated supporters have claimed that the National Government fell to the Communists primarily as a result of American betrayal and inadequate material support, rather than as a result of internal Chinese factors. In the United States, this "betrayal thesis," which was hideously manifested in the McCarthyist hysteria of the early 1950s, has in recent years been undermined by research revealing that communist influence on American China policy had been virtually if not completely non-existent. Men whose names once evoked frightening images of betrayal and communist conspiracy – such as John S. Service, John Carter Vincent and John Paton Davies – have not only been vindicated by a large corpus of careful and objective scholarship, but have been the recipients of honours and apologies from the American Congress and the State Department.<sup>41</sup> To the extent that there were persons in, for example, the Institute of Pacific Relations, who may indeed have been communists or communist "fellow-travellers" – such as Chi Ch'ao-ting and Frederick Vanderbilt Field – their influence was, at most, marginal. As Earl Latham wrote in 1966, "the only hard evidence about Communist activity in Washington from 1948 to 1954 – provided by recusant Communists – concerned espionage, not policy influence."<sup>42</sup>

In Taiwan, however, the betrayal thesis is alive and well. In 1968, for example, Zhou Zhiming published a book purporting to demonstrate

40. Chiang Kai-shek, *Soviet Russia in China: A Summing-Up at Seventy* (Taipei, 1969), p. 256. In the "Reform Programme of the Guomindang," prepared by Chiang and adopted by the Central Standing Committee of the Guomindang in July 1950, Chiang placed what was for him a unique stress on the economic causes of defeat: "the failure of the anti-communist war in the past four years was due to the fact that we have not put into effect the Principle of the People's Livelihood." See Milton J. T. Shieh (Comp.), *The Kuomintang: Selected Historical Documents, 1894–1969* (New York: St. John's University Press, 1970), p. 215.

41. Readers interested in further examining this question might well start with the following: Earl Latham, *The Communist Controversy in Washington from the New Deal to McCarthy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966); Gary May, *China Scapegoat: The Diplomatic Ordeal of John Carter Vincent* (Washington, D.C.: New Republic Books, 1979); John N. Thomas, *The Institute of Pacific Relations: Asian Scholars and American Politics* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1974); E. J. Kahn, Jr, *The China Hands: America's Foreign Service Officers and What Befell Them* (New York: Penguin Books, 1976).

42. Latham, *The Communist Controversy*, p. 361.

that “ the basic factor [causing the loss of the mainland] was that the Institute of Pacific Relations sold out China.”<sup>43</sup> A number of years later, in 1972, Chen Guangdi similarly rejected assertions that the Nationalists’ own corruption and ineffectual administration (*tanwu wuneng*) had paved the way to the communist victory. This view, Chen declared, was “ the poisonous propaganda of the Communists.” He admitted that there had been some corruption in the Nationalist government – that was inevitable, he said, in any society – but “ over 99·9 per cent of the public servants were incorrupt and self-respecting.” With equal facility and absence of historical evidence, he likewise rejected the argument that the defeat resulted from Nationalist ineptitude: “ Please consider – how could an ineffectual government lead the people to victory in the war against Japan?” For Chen, the logic was inexorable. And his explanation for the Nationalist defeat, like that of Zhou Zhiming, was that communist agents “ stirred up waves [and] changed American policy in order to overturn the Chinese National Government.”<sup>44</sup>

Not all historians in Taiwan have offered such simplistic explanations. Even the more sophisticated of them, however, either state directly (as does Chen Xiaowei) or imply (as do Guo Rongzhao and Zhang Yufa) that American betrayal was the chief among several causes of the Nationalist collapse on the mainland.<sup>45</sup>

Chiang Kai-shek is now seen to have testified, however, that the Nationalist regime during the civil-war period was not only corrupt and inefficient, but virtually moribund. Realization of the fact that Chiang himself was capable of viewing the Nationalist movement with cold-eyed objectivity will hopefully encourage historians in Taiwan to assume a new attitude towards the history of the Nationalist period. Perhaps now they can shed the pretence that the Guomindang and its leaders were infallible and above criticism, and instead adopt a spirit of free, unbiased historical enquiry. Chiang Kai-shek, in a sense, showed the way.

43. Zhou Zhiming, *Taipingyang xue hui zeyang chumai Zhongguo (How the IPR Sold-out China)* (Taipei, 1968), author’s preface, p. 9.

44. Chen Guangdi, *Zhonghua minguo fendou liushinian (The Chinese Republic’s Sixty Years of Struggle)* (Taipei, [1972?]), introduction pp. 1–4.

45. Chen Xiaowei, *Weishema shiqu da lu (Why we Lost the Mainland)* (Taipei, 1964); Guo Rongzhao, *Meiguo Yaerda miyue yu Zhongguo (A Critical Study of the Yalta Agreement and Sino-American Relations)* (Taipei, 1967); Zhang Yufa, *Zhongguo xiandai shi (Chinese Contemporary History)* (Taipei, 1977).