The Nationalist Army (1941-1945)

The situation of the Nationalist army during the period of stalemate had been very
difficult. The China theater was at the complete end of the allies' lines of
communication. Supplies were scarce; inflation weakened the economy; graft,
hoarding, and speculation were unwelcome offspring. Despite the valiant selfless
determination of Chiang Kai-shek, his administration was unable to make good use of
the remaining industrial capacity of the nation and unable to mobilize and train the
manpower resources available to him. The prime military campaign of this period
centered in Burma where U.S. General Stillwell, (assisted by Merrill's Marauders),
and British General Slim's Fourteenth Army were trying to reopen land
communications with Kumming. If land routes could be established, it would have
been possible to further train and equip the Chinese army into a potent offensive
weapon. Without them, the Chinese army at the beginning of 1944 was a "huge,
shambling, inert" force of 5.7 million men. 57 When the end of the war came quickly
in August 1945, it would be difficult for Chiang to move this force back into Central
China and reestablish his political authority.

Japanese Occupation Techniques

In areas that were relatively secure, Japanese measures for controlling the
population were basically sound and have been used successfully in other counter-
revolutionary experiences. First, there was complete registration of the population
and the issuance of identification cards. (In the Peiping area these cards even
included photographs. 58) An additional control measure was the institution of a
block warden system whereby the residential population was organized into cells of
ten families (called a pao.) Five of these groups constituted a tai-pao. The Japanese
then appointed a responsible, respected Chinese in charge of the tai-pao. He in turn
appointed subordinates and was responsible to the Japanese authorities for the actions
of the families under him. 59

In areas where control was marginal, or non-existent, such as the Red base areas, the methods generally centered around the fort and barrier plan and, in North China, the "Three All" plan.

In the spring of 1944 there was one massive Japanese offensive that interrupted the stalemate condition. The Japanese code name was Operation Ichi-go. This operation involved 620,000 first-line Jap troops and was undertaken because the reverses in the Pacific had endangered the Japanese positions on the mainland and exposed them to possible B-29 raids from airfields under Chiang's control. Objectives of the plan were basically to "destroy the backbone of the Chinese army and force increased pressure on the political regime in Chingking" and "to forestall the bombing of the Japanese homeland by American B-29's from (the Chinese) base of Kweilin and Liu-chow" in Kwangsi Chuang Autonomous Region. Despite a gallant defense of Hengyang wherein 16,000 Chinese troops fought off six Japanese divisions for 47 days, Ichi-go was successful in siezing the air bases and in severely punishing Chiang's armies. 60 In Honan province, as Japanese troops overran thirty Chinese divisions led by the able General Tang En-po, the peasants, racked by famine and burdened with taxes, refused to assist the government troops and in some cases rose to help the invading Japanese. 61

End of the War

By June 1945, Japanese forces were withdrawing from China. They had not been defeated by a people's war; they had been defeated by the overwhelming power of the Allies, spearheaded by the attack aircraft carrier forces of the U.S. Navy and the land power of the U.S. Marines and Army. In August, Russia declared war on Japan and marched into Manchuria. On 14 August 1945, nine days after the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, the eight year Sino-Japanese war came to an end.
Post-war Developments

Both Chiang Kai-shek and Mao Tse-tung had been farsighted in planning their "joint" struggle against the Japanese. Each had realized that the Japanese would ultimately be defeated by the Allies and that the crucial struggle for control of China would be between themselves.

In the post-war situation, Mao reacted quickly by ordering 100,000 unarmed forces under Lin Piao into Japanese occupied Manchuria. Concurrently, the Chinese Communists opposed Chiang Kai-shek's directives prohibiting their accepting the surrender of any Japanese field forces. Chu Teh announced that his forces had "full power" to carry out administrative matters concerning surrender and occupation of Japanese held territory. Further he warned that any resistance to prevent him from doing so would be considered "sabotage and treason." 62

Chiang's actions in this post-World War II period seemed to be based on the following. First, and perhaps foremost, Chiang was suspicious of all the non-central armies and, in general, relied solely on his clique of generals who had graduated from the Whampoa military academy. Second, in his rebuilding program for China, he felt it imperative that China reorganize its military forces to (1) trim the large army down to a loyal nucleus of 35 U.S. equipped divisions and (2) emphasize control over the military by the executive "yuan" (bureau) of the government. These policies led to the following actions:

Chiang's concern over the loyalty of the forces led him to counteract Mao's push into Manchuria by calling for his best troops—who were not in a position to react fast enough. Some of the forces that Chiang committed to Manchuria had to be flown in from Burma and Indochina. His reliance on a clique of officers alienated a sizeable group of talented generals. His reduction of forces created 1.5 million unemployed soldiers, many of whom then sought service in the open arms of the Communist camp.
The reorganization of the armed forces also caused catastrophic results. The proposed organization never worked because the military "clique" had an open door to Chiang's office and undermined the established system of control through the office of the Defense Minister. Also the administrative confusion was so great that some units went without administrative or logistical support for a period of several months. Chiang's bumbling bureaucracy was no match for the disciplined and dedicated communist organization. And his once powerful armies, cut in size, and racked with dissention were losing their superiority over the growing communist forces.

In Manchuria, the Chinese Communists, by one account, accumulated 300,000 rifles, 138,000 machine guns, and 2,700 pieces of artillery from Japanese troops who had surrendered to the Russians. The Russians had been quite interested in the economic exploitation of Manchuria, but apparently left the arms behind--fortunately for the Chinese Reds.

Defectors and "unemployed" from the Nationalist armies helped to swell the Communist ranks. Chinese soldiers who had earlier fought for the Manchurians, fled from Nationalist reprisals into the "forgiving" arms of the Reds.

To add to the confusion, General George C. Marshall brought appeals, one could almost say demands, from the American President for the formation of a coalition government between Chiang and Mao. Chiang was threatened with a cessation of U.S. aid if he did not reach some "modus vivandi" with the Communists. Marshall strove to be impartial and to represent the best interests of the United States. To improve his "mediating" position, the U.S. declared a ten month embargo on military aid to Chiang. By the end of 1946, the Nationalist forces still outnumbered the Communists by approximately 3 million to 1.5 million, but the Communists were growing stronger. Mao Tse-tung, having organized the masses in North China and Manchuria, and having gained necessary arms and equipment from the surrendered Japanese and puppet armies, was ready to begin the final contest.
NOTES

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4 "Communism in China", Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee, No. 5,

5 Congressional Record, 79th Congress, 2nd Session, Vol. 92, Part 12,

6 Louis Budenz, "The Menace of Red China", Colliers, March 19, 1949, p. 23,
as quoted in South, op. cit., p. 48.

7 Reported by Lionel Max Chassin in The Communist Conquest of China (Cambridge:
Harvard University Press, 1965), in a footnote at the bottom of p. 14. For the
Japanese side of the story refer to U. S. Army Forces in the Far East, Chinese Area
Operations Record, July 1937 - November 1941 (Tokyo: Military History Section;

8 Most of the discussion of the strengths of the opposing forces was taken from
T. Dodson Stamps and Vincent J. Esposito, editors, A Military History of World War II
(West Point: United States Military Academy, 1956), Appendix 5, pp. 525-528. For the
strengths of the Red forces I have used Griffith, The Chinese People's Liberation Army,

9 The German influence of the Chinese and their material support during this
period was significant. Refer to F. F. Liu, A Military History of Modern China,

10 General discussion concerning main attack and secondary attack is based
on Stamps and Esposito, op. cit., pp. 529-534.

11 Griffith, op. cit., p. 62.

12 Ibid.

13 Evans Fordeyce Carlson, Twin Stars of China (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Co.,
1940), pp. 70-71.
14 O'Ballance, op. cit., p. 125.

15 Griffith, op. cit., p. 63.

16 This discussion is based on Michael Lindsay, "China (1937-1945)" (unpublished paper written for the Center of Research in Social Systems under contract to the Department of Army), p. 7; and Griffith, op. cit., pp. 65-68.

17 Liu, op. cit., pp. 104-5.

18 O'Ballance, op. cit., p. 128.

19 "Japanese Monograph, No. 70", p. 29.

20 O'Ballance, op. cit., p. 130.

21 Lindsay, op. cit., p. 14.

22 O'Ballance, op. cit., p. 133.

23 Discussion of this example is based almost entirely on Lindsay, op. cit., pp. 21-27.

24 Ibid., p. 21.

25 Griffith, op. cit., p. 68.

26 Lindsay, op. cit., p. 23.

27 Ibid., p. 22.

28 Griffith, op. cit., p. 68.

29 Ibid.

30 Lindsay, op. cit., p. 15.

31 Ibid., p. 25.

32 Ibid.
33 Griffith, op. cit., p. 68.

34 Lindsay, op. cit., p. 25.


36 Ibid.

37 Taken from O'Ballance, op. cit., in a footnote at the bottom of p. 131, refers to an interview with Mao, quoted in Time magazine, 1 Dec 1958.

38 Lindsay, op. cit., p. 17.

39 Ibid., p. 25.

40 Griffith, op. cit., p. 69.


44 Ibid., p. 320.

45 Griffith, op. cit., pp. 70-1.

46 Lindsay, op. cit., pp. 30-1.


48 Griffith, op. cit., p. 75.
49. Conversation between General Okamura Yasuji and B. G. Samuel R. Griffith II, Office of War History, Tokyo, November 1963, as quoted in Griffith, op. cit., p. 75.

50. O'Ballance, op. cit., p. 139.

51. Ibid., p. 140.

52. Ibid., p. 141.

53. Lindsay, op. cit., p. 36.

54. Ibid., p. 51.

55. Ibid., p. 40.


57. Ibid., p. 142.

58. Lindsay, op. cit., p. 51.

59. Ibid., p. 53.


61. Liu, op. cit., p. 220.

62. Ibid., p. 227.

63. Ibid., pp. 226-42.

64. O'Ballance, op. cit., p. 146.
Chapter Five

THE COMMUNIST TRIUMPH ON THE MAINLAND

by Dr. F. F. Liu

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THE COMMUNIST TRIUMPH ON THE MAINLAND

by Dr. F.F. Liu

"A family must first destroy itself before others can destroy it. A kingdom must first smite itself before others can smite it."

- - - Confucius

The Seeds of Defeat

The nationalists, more from fear of losing American support than as a reflection of Chinese national sentiment, went along with the United States attempt to negotiate a Kuomintang-Communist coalition. The communists had no intention of incorporating their armies in the national forces and in July 1946 boldly announced from Yenan the creation of a "people's liberation army," formed from the amalgamation of the Eighth Route Army, the New Fourth Army, and the newly formed Red forces in Manchuria. They were to prove a far more difficult foe than the Japanese had been. The nationalists had long feared that such would be the case.1

The communists in Manchuria clashed with the Kuomintang forces at Szepingkai and, facing a capable strategist like General Pai Chung-hsi, who flew to Manchuria to direct the over-all operation, saved themselves from destruction only by a rapid retreat across the Sungari River into Harbin, a city under the shadow of Soviet military power across the
border. The government forces were the crack American-trained armies under the command of Generals Sun Li-jen and Ch'en Ming-jen, but the field command in the area was unfortunately entrusted to the incompetent hands of General Tu Yu-ming, who failed to press his advantage at Szepingkai and permitted the communists to flee to refuge in Harbin. Then, on the sixth of June 1946, the Americans imposed a truce in Manchuria, and this intervention permitted the communists a breathing spell in which to recover and consolidate.

While the "truce" lasted the communists prepared for future tests of Mao Tse-tung's policy, which stressed the concentration of overwhelmingly superior forces designed to meet fractions of the enemy's hosts and to dispose of them one by one. The political strategy which accompanied this plan featured movements toward greater unity between the officers and men within the communist ranks, the improvement and extension of public relations with the masses of the people, techniques to demoralize the enemy, and elaborate programs for the indoctrination and conversion of prisoners of war.

The government forces initially envisioned a large-scale, all-out campaign against the Reds, but soon modified their plans to stress concentrated offensives in Shangtung and northern Shensi, the two spearheads of the communist front. The sheer inertia of a war-weary populace and the rapid deterioration of military morale contributed to the ever-decreasing momentum of the nationalist effort. Meanwhile, behind the scenes, competent generals like Li Tsung-jen, Pai Chung-hsi, and Hsueh Yueh were being given a fast shuffle by the Whampoa clique, which, considering that it had won the war, was engaged in dividing the spoils. The much-needed unity of command waned and there was an increasing reluctance on the part of various commanders to render that unswerving loyalty which the leaders could no longer compel.

By 1947 the government's military leadership was in incredible confusion, and the rate of turnover in the important field commands soared to a new high. Famous fighting generals like Sun Lien-chung, Hsueh Yueh, and Wu Chi-wei were relieved of their commands. The
capable military strategist General Pai Chung-hsi was pigeonholed in an office without power, while the chief of the supreme staff was removed to Mukden and the commanding general of the new First Army relegated to a post of secondary importance. The ministry of defense and the supreme staff were disrupted, there was no continuity in the field commands, and everywhere there was uncertainty, confusion, and stalemate. Many of the generals who were not from the Central Army took the reshuffling as evidence of distrust and discrimination and were even further alienated from the Whampoa group.

With no sure hand on the helm, the entire Nationalist Army was rendered incapable of aggressive and coordinated offensives against the communists. Dissatisfaction at the top filtered down to the lowest levels of the troops. Those commanders who were not sure of themselves kept their troops behind city walls or, if compelled to venture forth, dug in elaborately at every halt on the march, tiring the men unnecessarily and giving rise to a hesitant, indecisive defensive psychology highly harmful to their fighting morale. Foremost among the many causes of indecisiveness was Generalissimo Chiang's policy of conserving the strength of his direct units rather than employing them in aggressive operations against the communists.

In wartime an army not constantly put under the test of battle is bound to lose its offensive spirit, and with it, the war. Prolonged garrison duties and the absence of a rotation plan caused the average soldier to despair of ever being discharged. Meanwhile, life in the army went on in a country where inflation had so devalued the soldier's low pay that his salary would hardly permit him to feed himself adequately. In the less disciplined units the soldiers wrung an occasional decent meal out of the farmers by force, by such action losing popular support for their government which, although constantly claiming to be winning battles, had in effect begun to lose the war.

The communists, on the other hand, were assiduous in their efforts to maintain good relations with the populace. They avoided some of the problems of inflation by issuing food and small luxuries directly to the troops rather than paying them in cash. At the same
time the communists were able to aggravate the government's economic plight by cutting lines of communication and preventing foodstuffs from reaching urban areas, thus sending city prices higher and forcing the government to pay ruinous prices to maintain troops in the cities.

Continuity in command structure was another strength of the Reds. Battle-tested generals were placed at the highest levels without favoritism, and merit won promotions for deserving junior officers. From top to bottom, the communist forces were well indoctrinated with the party's political and military objectives and unified by party loyalties.

The Chinese nationalists had built their fighting power around a core of 31 divisions equipped with American assistance during the latter part of the war, though not all of them were trained to combat readiness by V-J Day. Perhaps the fittest troops were those who had fought under Stilwell in Burma, and these were the core of the forces sent to Manchuria to face the communists. Other fine units, though they lacked American training and equipment, were the crack Kwangsi Armies, the efficient northern troops under Generals Fu Tso-yi and Sun Lien-chung, and the hard-fighting Moslem cavalry and other northwestern armies.

Early in 1948, forced by the exigency of the situation, the government set up several military commands: the north China command was put under the direction of General Fu Tso-yi; the central China command, under General Pai-Chung-hsi; the northwest command, under the Moslem general, Ma Pu-fang. Although these tested soldiers were honored with the commission of major commands, none of them was entrusted with important authority in the central military establishment.

Against the government forces, the communists launched their divide-and-conquer tactics in the north, dispersing them and then devastating them through successive offensives against Kuomintang troops weakened and demoralized by mismanaged allotment of supplies and material. Such generals as Pai Chung-hsi and Fu Tso-yi were given a low priority in obtaining supplies and virtually left to fend for themselves. About two years later China's acting president, Li Tsung-jen, wrote to President Truman on May 5, 1949
decrying the ill effects that this policy engendered: "It is regrettable that, owing to the failure of our Government to make judicious use of this aid [American supplies in the campaigns mentioned above] and to bring about appropriate political, economic, and military reforms, your assistance has not produced the desired effect. To this failure is attributable the present predicament in which our country finds itself."

One cannot, however, lay the entire blame of the material situation to injudicious distribution. The government often did not have enough to distribute, for instance, even to supply its direct army units in Manchuria. Failure to maintain marked material superiority to the Reds in the north was evidenced by the fifty-day summer offensive in May 1947 in which the communists made extensive use of heavy artillery power against the best-equipped government units and claimed 89,000 government losses.

Meanwhile government supplies dwindled--in mid-1947 they had 16,000 motor vehicles inoperative because of lack of parts--as the Kuomintang hoarded material for the Central Army and as the communist forces grew.

The Widening Gulf

Amid the recurring crises, China's first constitutional assembly met in Nanking in March 1948 to elect a president and vice-president of the nation. Generalissimo Chiang announced that he would not accept a nomination for the presidency, though he expressed his willingness to serve his country in any other capacity. The powerful Whampoa group refused to cooperate with the government under any president other than Chiang, and the generalissimo was drafted for the job--evidence not only of his popularity but also of the overwhelming influence of the solid Whampoa machine.

Of the leading candidates for the vice-presidency, two were military men: Generals Li Tsung-jen and Cheng Ch'ien. Li was one of the greatest nationalist generals and was regarded as both the champion of a popular movement for reform and as the foremost spokesman of the non-Central Army group, but Chiang opposed his candidacy and advised
both Li and Cheng not to run. It was reported that the Generalissimo summoned General Pai Chung-hsi, then minister of defense and a close friend of Li, and under threat of dire punitive action, directed him to withdraw his support of Li. Chiang advocated a civilian as vice-president and suggested Dr. Sun Fo. In spite of intimidation from the extremists, Li managed to rally around him most of the liberal elements of the assembly who were seeking reform in the government and to carry both the vice-presidential nomination and election. His victory angered Chiang's group, widened the gulf between the Central Army and the Kwangsi Army party, and led to Chiang's dismissal of Defense Minister Pai.

For more effective prosecution of the civil war, Li and Pai had long proposed a unified command for the government forces in the five provinces between the Yellow and Yangtze Rivers. Subsequently Pai was tendered command of troops in the central China area, with headquarters at Hankow, only to learn that another headquarters was to be established at Hsuchow—a development which he considered as a dismemberment of the unity of command—and that he would not be permitted to organize local militia in his proposed areas. Thereupon he withdrew his acceptance and left for Shanghai in disgust. Later, as President Chiang's request, he was reappointed the commander-in-chief of the Central China command. The aggressive operations he conducted against the communists during the early part of 1948 once more confirmed his reputation as a celebrated strategist. Had he been offered a unified command with unhindered authority, the outcome of the later Huai-Hai campaign, which eventually led to the destruction of the main force of the Central Army, could have been drastically different.

Pai's experience was but one more instance of the lack of trust that the government had in leaders who were not from the Central Army. Two of China's best senior field commanders, Hsueh Yueh and Sun Lien-chung, had learned the difficulties of being awarded positions of responsibility without being permitted either sufficient troops or authority to perform the tasks allotted to them. Fu Tso-yi, the able northern commander, had been unable to conduct an all-out campaign against the communists in the north because of lack of whole-
hearted cooperation from Nanking, and the government refused to arm the 100,000-man local militia that Fu had raised and partially trained in north China. Their attempt to enlist popular support for the government cause met with no cooperation on the part of the party leaders, although the communists were doing all in their power to win popular support for their forces. Of that propaganda campaign, arch-communist Mao Tse-tung declared:

"These methods have been worked out by the People's Liberation Army in the cause of a prolonged war with the internal and external enemies, and they are entirely compatible with the situation now facing us... The Chiang Kai-shek group and the military personnel of American imperialism in China are well acquainted with these military methods of ours. On several occasions Chiang Kai-shek summoned his generals and other high-ranking officers to special lectures at which copies of our military textbooks and other documents seized in the war were distributed for discussion and study with a view toward devising counter-measures. American military personnel suggested that Chiang Kai-shek adopt this or that sort of strategy and tactics designed to wipe out the People's Liberation Army. In addition, Americans personally took part in training troops for Chiang Kai-shek and furnished them with military supplies. But all this failed to save the Chiang Kai-shek group from defeat. This is because our strategy and tactics are built upon the basis of the people's war and no anti-popular army can hope to employ our strategy and tactics...."  

Mao's point was simply this: although the nationalists had studied the communist modus operandi, they did not learn the essential fact that all communist successes, military and political, were due to significant part to the support of the people, a support they constantly strove to ensure. Neither the nationalists nor the communists would have been able to enlist enthusiastic support from the people, for the people were tired of war and, of course, less inclined to fight fellow-Chinese than they had been to repel the Japanese invader, but the communists saw the necessity of winning whatever support could be achieved and they expended much more energy on the effort than did the nationalists. The communists
unified their forces with the "party line," which gave them a common goal. They called for solidarity between officers and men in what they termed the "military democracy" of the army and stressed their political equality. Finally, the communists established the doctrine that "the people is the sea, and the soldiers are fish; without the water the fish can never survive," stressing the necessity for army discipline to guarantee cordial relations between the soldiery and the populace.

The Communist Strategy

The civil war in China, spreading over thousands of square miles and involving millions of men on both sides, was in many respects an aggregation of small battles. The inefficiency of the government leadership led to many weaknesses on the nationalist side, and throughout the civil strife the communists held the initiative, seizing every opportunity to capitalize on these weaknesses and subjecting the government forces to a continuous series of ambushes, skirmishes, and attacks on isolated garrisons. This accumulation of minor successes inflated Red morale, demoralized the nationalists, and contributed to the success of the communist plan: the achievement of local tactical successes rather than any grand strategy. In this manner the communists harassed the nationalists and avoided all government attempts to involve them in a major offensive or engage a large part of their forces in a decisive battle.

The nationalists, defending a large area and holding many critical lines of communication, were particularly susceptible to these hit-and-run tactics. Large portions of the nationalist force were rendered relatively immobile as defenders of this or that strategic point and vulnerable to the free-ranging Reds. Of course the communist tactics required a well-defined over-all plan and constant, speedy, high-level decisions, but the Reds were fortunate in enjoying a shrewd military leadership and relative freedom from that confusion which predominated at top nationalist levels. The strategic principles in the prosecution of
the civil war were laid down by the astute Mao Tse-tung. These were the ten commandments of the communists:

"1. First strike scattered and isolated groups of the enemy, and later strike concentrated, powerful groups.

"2. First take small and middle-sized towns and cities and the broad countryside, and later take big cities.

"3. The major objective is the annihilation of the enemy fighting strength, and not the holding or taking of cities and places. The holding or taking of cities and places is the result of the annihilation of the enemy's fighting strength, which often has to be repeated many times before they can be finally held or taken.

"4. In every battle, concentrate absolutely superior forces--double, triple, quadruple, and sometimes even five or six times those of the enemy--to encircle the enemy on all sides, and strive for his annihilation, with none escaping from the net. Under specific conditions, adopt the method of dealing the enemy smashing blows, that is, the concentration of all forces to strike the enemy's center and one or both of the enemy's flanks, aiming at the destruction of a part of the enemy and the routing of another part so that our troops can swiftly transfer forces to smash another enemy group. Avoid battle of attrition in which gains are not sufficient to make up for the losses, or in which the gains merely balance the losses. Thus we are inferior taken as a whole--numerically speaking--but our absolute superiority in every section and in every specific campaign guarantees the victory of each campaign. As time goes by we will become superior, taken as a whole, until the enemy is totally destroyed.

"5. Fight no unprepared engagements; fight no engagements in which there is no assurance of victory. Strive for victory in every engagement; be sure of the relative conditions of our forces and those of the enemy.
6. Promote and exemplify valor in combat; fear no sacrifice or fatigue nor continuous action—that is, fighting several engagements in succession within a short period without respite.

7. Strive to destroy the enemy while in movement. At the same time emphasize the tactics of attacking positions, wresting strong points and bases from the enemy.

8. With regard to assaults on cities, resolutely wrest from the enemy all strong points and cities which are weakly defended. At favorable opportunities, wrest all enemy strong points and cities which are defended to a medium degree and where the circumstances permit. Wait until the conditions mature, and then wrest all enemy strong points and cities which are powerfully defended.

9. Replenish ourselves by the capture of all enemy arms and most of his personnel. The source of men and material for our army is mainly at the front.

10. Skillfully utilize the intervals between two campaigns for resting, regrouping and training troops. The period of rest and regrouping should be in general not too long. As far as possible do not let the enemy have breathing space.

But Mao Tse-tung's most vicious and most successful strategy was an unwritten one: the "divisive" strategy, aiming at dividing the strength of the government armies by exploiting rivalry and difference between the government's Central and non-Central armies, and even between different units of the same Central Army. Thus, the communist forces concentrated their strength and fought specifically those well-equipped units of the Central Army, ignoring such forces as those from Kwangtung, Szechuan, and Yunnan provinces. They purposely avoided, until the very last stage, major clashes with the hard-fighting and well-led armies from Kwangsi, or with the northern troops under General Fu Tso-yi.

Throughout 1946 and 1947 communist policy was one of avoiding decisive battles and of building up fighting strength with troops and equipment captured from small segments of the nationalist armies. During this stage guerrilla warfare was pursued on all fronts, and gradually the Reds were enabled to merge into a war of maneuver involving larger bodies of
troops. In March 1947 the communist forces under Chen Yi, after suffering a serious defeat in the hands of a Kwangsite army column (consisting of the Seventh and Forty-Eighth Corps), seized the opportunity to destroy one of the best U.S.-equipped army corps, (the Seventy-Fourth) of the Central Army at Meng-liang-k'an in southern Shantung, killing its commander, General Chang Ninh-fu, and capturing considerable heavy equipment. By then the downward trend of nationalist strength had become apparent, while the military power of the communists climbed steadily upward. In December 1947 Mao Tse-tung could declare with confidence that the Red Army's war against the government had taken a decided turn—"the nationalists were on the run."

The communists, who had hitherto specialized in hit-and-run tactics, could now afford another aspect of the "short attack" in a protracted war—"the annihilating "human sea strategy"" as they called it. In essence it meant nothing more than the concentration of vastly superior masses for a succession of resolute attacks aiming, without respite, at a breakthrough or complete destruction of the enemy. The communist strategy was a downright denial of the characteristic nationalist tactic of permitting an avenue of escape for defeated enemy forces in order to avoid the losses due to the desperate resistance of a cornered enemy after a victory.

This tactic needed not only large reserves of manpower but also heavy backing in equipment. By 1948 the Red forces were trained to the degree that they could employ the heavier ex-Japanese weapons acquired in Manchuria, and they were constantly adding to their supplies and firepower by victories over government units. As their firepower increased, the acquisition of new strength became easier.

The chief source of communist manpower was, as their commander Chu Teh had announced more than once, at the front. The skillful indoctrination of prisoners of war and the shrewd management of former nationalists who defected to the Red forces—and brought their arms with them—swelled the communist ranks. The losses of the nationalists were doubly advantageous to the Reds, for each man the government lost as a result of
communist propaganda was not only one less enemy but also one more comrade.

The numerical strength of the Red armies continued to increase. According to their official account, at the end of the war against Japan, the communists had a regular army of 930,000 men and an organized militia of some 2,200,000. By the end of 1945, an American military source estimated, the Red army numbered 1,150,000 men. A year later, the figure had reached 1,622,000, and it was reported that the Reds had 5,000 guns of all kinds.

Much of the rapid growth of the communist forces after V-J day may be attributed to the success of their plan to take over in Manchuria after the Japanese surrender. Generalissimo Chiang asserted, on March 18, 1946: "During the Japanese occupation, there were no Communist troops in the Northeast [Manchuria]. They appeared only after the Japanese surrender. Communist troops entered the Northeast by land through Jehol and they carried only a handful of arms with them in their trek into the Northeast. Other Communist troops crossed the Yellow Sea from Chefoo, carrying no arms with them. They now formed the so-called 'United Democratic Army.' They only work to obstruct the Government's taking over work and demanded special political rights in the Northeast."

Having the political sympathy of the occupying Soviet forces, the sanctuary of North Korea and Dairen, and the protection of a "truce," the communists were able to build up a tremendous stock of arms upon which Mao could found his plan to conquer China.

In mid-1946 the government troops, some 3,000,000 men, outnumbered the communists almost three to one. Demobilization cut government forces to 2,500,000 by the end of the same year, while the communist forces grew. There was considerable evidence that substantial portions of the demobilized nationalists, as well as the disbanded Manchukuo and other puppet armies, were absorbed by the communist forces. As civil war became inevitable, the government resorted to conscription and, by late 1947, had built its strength back up to 2,700,000 men. The hope to train 200,000 of these men by the end of 1948 in American-aided military training centers, however, was not fulfilled. Throughout 1948 the...

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*Victory over Japan--the date that Japan capitulated, 14 August 1945.
nationalists maintained an estimated strength of 2,730,000 men, but by February of the
next year heavy losses had reduced their strength to 1,500,000 -- a reduction of 45 per-
cent of the government's total troop strength in a mere four and a half months. The
National Government's official estimate of the relative strengths was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>September 1945</th>
<th>June 1948</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Government Forces</strong></td>
<td><strong>Communist Forces</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>3,700,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rifles</td>
<td>1,600,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artillery</td>
<td>6,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The communist statistics on the same account are:

| July 1946 | 4,300,000 | 1,200,000 | 3.58:1 |
| June 1947 | 3,730,000 | 1,950,000 | 1.9:1 |
| June 1948 | 3,650,000 | 2,800,000 | 1.3:1 |
| June 1949 | 1,490,000 | 4,000,000 | 0.3:1 |

With the strength of the communist armies steadily on the increase, the government
was now committed more and more to positional warfare, and it became overextended and,
for reasons of prestige, debarred from withdrawal or consolidation. Viewing these facts,
and the government's losses in men and equipment, the communists became more
aggressive. By late 1947 the Red general Liu Po-ch'eng was harassing central China so
effectively, and moving so elusively, that only a major offensive -- which the nationalists
could not afford -- would have dislodged him. The communist Fourth Field Army, under
General Lin Piao, was growing in strength in Manchuria while there was little prospect
of the reinforcement of government troops in that area. In the east, Red general Ch'en Yi's
Third Field Army in Shantung not only eluded a nationalist plan to encircle it but was able
to destroy an entire U.S.-equipped corps of the Nationalist Army and to reinforce itself with
trained men and material sent across the gulf of the Yellow Sea from the Russian-occupied
Liaotung peninsula. In the northwest the Red First Field Army, under General Peng Teh-
huai, and the forces under the direct command of the commander-in-chief, General Chu Teh, avoided battle with the nationalists and permitted the occupation of their capital, Yenan, but the forces of Ch'en Yi and Liu Po-ch'eng were driving relentlessly southward across the vital east-west Lunghai railway and toward the Yangtze.

By October 1948 the Reds reported that the Kuomintang was confined to four points in Manchuria: Changchun, Mukden, Chengteh, and Chinchow. In addition the government held the railway between Tientsin and Chinchow. In north China they controlled the Tientsin-Peiping-Kalgan-Kweisui line and a few isolated strongholds, such as Tatung, Taiyuan, Paoting, and Tsingtao. Between the Yangtze and the Lunghai railway the Kuomintang regarded Hsuchow as their offensive base, Hankow as their offensive base, and Sian as a flanking position.

The Loss of Manchuria: The Beginning of the End

Of all the critical decisions of the postwar period, none seem to be of greater historical significance than the National Government's resolve to reoccupy Manchuria. Although such overextension of its forces was perilous militarily, politically the government had no alternative but to commit itself to the arduous task of reasserting its sovereignty over an area for which China had fought her long war against Japan. She could not long remain passive while the communists seized that territory, despite the rights granted to the Soviet Union in the Yalta Agreement and despite the fact that the Russians were firmly entrenched in Manchuria. Soviet sympathy for the Chinese Reds prompted them to deny to the nationalists the use of port facilities, thereby making expeditious entry into Manchuria impossible and giving the communists time to organize in the area, to consolidate their local control, and to equip a military force with former Japanese weapons.

China was determined to reoccupy Manchuria even though General Vedemeyer hastened to point out the dangers of such an occupation in view of the logistical difficulties of supporting operations there while at the same time controlling China proper. In

*Shown on maps as Suchow. (editor)
Washington, General Eisenhower viewed the nationalist effort as a gross overextension of forces. But Chinese political considerations outweighed military logic.

The communists in Manchuria had grown into no mean force. Early in 1947, employing their strategy of "offensive defense," they were strong enough to present a considerable threat. For the first time in the history of Chinese communist warfare, the Reds had graduated from guerrilla tactics to the use of tanks and artillery. Their first offensive was deftly turned back by government forces under General Sun Li-jen, but soon afterwards Sun was relieved of his command and assigned to direct a training program at Nanking. His departure gave freer reign to the incompetence of his superior, General Tu Yu-ming, one of the most influential of Whampoa's generals and field commander of northeast China. There was little cooperation between him and his superior, General Hsiung Shih-hui, director of the generalissimo's headquarters in Manchuria. It was common knowledge that the Whampoa I-ch'i (the graduates of that military academy's first class) were so arrogant that they considered themselves obliged to deal independently with the generalissimo himself and not answerable for cooperation to their fellow generals. Two such were Tu and Hsiung, and the lines of responsibility in the command structure became unclear and the leadership confused.

Following their unsuccessful first offensive, which Sun had stopped, the communists unleashed three successive drives, wearing down the government defenders of the key cities. The communist strategy was aimed at forcing the government troops to disperse their forces and then decimating them through successive counter-blows. By the autumn of 1947 the situation had become so urgent that the government recalled Hsiung Shih-hui and replaced him as Manchurian commander with the capable Ch'en Ch'eng. Ch'en's immediate purge of the army not only disposed of a number of corrupt officers but unfortunately, in the disbanding of large numbers of ex-Manchukuo troops, also sent over to the communist side many disgruntled men whom the government could ill afford to lose. The consequent indignation of the Manchurian representatives at Nanking was one of the contributing factors.
causing the recall of General Ch'en.

The fifth communist offensive, in May 1947, which covered most of Manchuria, began to show the communist superiority in artillery power as well as in the number and technical proficiency of their troops: an indication that the communist training program had reaped results. The communist forces surrounded the government forces in Kirin, Changchun, and Szepingkai. Almost an entire government army was cut off from the rest of China, and the problems of maintaining some 700,000 government personnel (of which only about 250,000 men were effective combat troops) became almost insurmountable. The lines of communication from China proper were long and tenuous, and the communists effectively eradicated them. It became a question of fight or starve. Despite this situation, and repeated demands from the generalissimo for aggressive action, the new commander in Manchuria, General Wei Li-huang, persisted in sitting tight, awaiting a further clarification of communist intentions.

Meanwhile, a communist offensive launched late in the autumn of 1947 severed all railway connections into Mukden and isolated all the major nationalist garrisons in Manchuria. The winter brought a communist offensive in 40° sub-zero weather which resulted in the capture of a number of the government's fortified strongholds. The defeats forced the replacement of Ch'en Ch'eng by General Wei Li-huang as commander in Manchuria. To supply the 150,000 to 200,000 troops in the immediate Mukden sector, the government resorted to a costly airlift, but the combined capacity of civilian and military air transports could barely deliver a third of the enormous tonnage requirements. In terms of financial drain, in September 1948, General Ho Ying-ch'ing, then defense minister, reported to a secret session of the Legislative Yuan that the whole allotment of the military budget for the latter half of 1948 had been completely spent on air-supplying a single city, Changchun, for two months and four days.

At the height of the crisis two of the most vital military posts--chief of the supreme staff and commander of the ground forces--were conferred upon men of no conspicuous
abilities. The new appointees, Generals Ku Chu-t'ung and Yu Han-mou, were staunch supporters of the generalissimo. That is about all that could be said for them.

In central and eastern China, the key cities of Kaifeng and Tsinan fell in July and September 1948, respectively. The generalissimo ordered his forces to fight to the last to hold the two walled fortresses, but defeatism was growing among the troops and many defected to the communist attackers. The loss of these two points convinced the generalissimo at last that the old strategy of holding key points or strongholds at all costs would have to go, and that a reexamination of nationalist errors in strategy, tactics, training, and organization of field units would have to be made. By then, however, it was too late.

Considering the confusion at planning levels it was surprising that even greater errors in strategy had not been committed. There was no efficient leadership to integrate plans, to implement them, and to direct their execution. The supreme general staff—the nerve center of the armed forces—had been hastily patched up after the 1946 reorganization and had failed to become a strategic directorate. It was simply a tactical command organ. The armed forces operated on a "six months' plan"! The confusion prompted the generalissimo himself to take over certain phases of the direction of military operations, which merely added to the chaos by having certain operational orders issued directly without the knowledge of the supreme staff and the minister of defense. He personally conducted regular operational briefings in the map room of his residence, issuing directives for field operations which were often transmitted directly to the combat units in the forms of shou-ch'i (personal instruction) or shih-ts'an (directives from the president's personal military staff). Usually only a few persons participated, including his personal chief of staff, the deputy chief of supreme staff, and the director of G-3. The defense minister was not always invited for the conference. If the briefing was held at 9 P.M., Chiang's personal directive would perhaps reach the front-line unit concerned by the next morning—already impractical for execution (although it had to be obeyed under threat of punishment) since the fast-moving communist force would be many miles away after a night of forced marching.
In one such case three conflicting orders (from the generalissimo, the chief of the supreme staff, and his immediate superior) were given to the commander of an army group who was just about to administer the *coup de grace* to an encircled enemy. Under threat of severe punitive action he was forced to abandon his attack and to relieve some other government forces of no importance to the entire military outcome and, worse still, the besieging communist force had already left the scene by the time his force rushed to the designated spot!

In October 1948, during the crucial stage of the Manchurian campaign, Generalissimo Chiang himself went to Peiping, whence he directed the entire operation alone without reference to the minister of defense or to the supreme staff to which he had previously promised to delegate all power of military command and administration. But Chiang's earlier interference had muddled the command structure and now, despite the basic soundness of his order for simultaneous attacks from Mukden and Changchun in order to effectuate the breakout of government force from Changchun, his commands were not obeyed in full. General Wei Li-huang's force did not lash out from Mukden in full strength. In despair, one of the garrison units, the 60th Army (Yunnanese), revolted and turned its guns on the loyal New Seventh Army. The latter, a partly American-trained force, was the backbone of the city's defense forces. On the twentieth of the month Changchun and its starving defenders fell into communist hands.

In war, defeat engenders defeat. Within a few days Chinchow, a city between Mukden and Peiping, was surrounded. Chinchow, supply base for government forces in Manchuria, held some 70,000 nationalist troops, including crack units of the recently arrived Eighth Army under General Fan Han-chieh, reputedly one of Whampoa's ablest commanders. Wei Li-huang, 120 miles distant in Mukden, was ordered to bring his 150,000-man force (composed of 12 divisions and 3 cavalry brigades) to the relief of the Chinchow siege, but he delayed and then moved out hesitantly with only a fraction of his strength. To the south of Chinchow, meanwhile, strong government reinforcements (9 divisions) were landed at
the port of Hulutao, but only a portion of them moved to the aid of besieged Chinchow.

The whole situation was a tangle of discoordinated effort. Under the communists' incessant and terrifying artillery bombardment, certain government units within the city deserted to the communists and Chinchow fell.

News of the loss of Chinchow reached the headquarters of General Wei Li-huang.

Wei's army had been largely recruited from South China, and there was among them a strong feeling in favor of a southward march toward the Great Wall, a march which would recapture Chinchow and take the army away from the bleak northern bastion of Mukden, where they had long been virtually exiled.

Wei instantly saw the opportunity. (He saw another opportunity in 1955—and went over to the communists.) He prepared to transmute his army's homesickness into an indomitable fighting spirit that would sweep all before it and regain Chinchow. Before his plan could be translated into action, however, curt orders arrived from the highest echelon ordering Wei's forces back to the Mukden they had learned to hate. Morale dropped to a new low, and the entire disgruntled army seethed with rebellion. Thus one of the government's finest units, one which might have been inspired with that fierce dedication which arises solely out of the happy coincidence of lofty principles and personal interests, lost the will to fight.

Lin Piao, himself a shrewd opportunist, cleverly timed his attack on the government forces precisely when the disruptive and demoralizing influence of these unpopular orders was at its height. There was also some conflict in the command picture. The generalissimo placed Tu Yu-ming in charge of field operations, but Tu fought the battle from Mukden and placed the burden of actual command in the field on Liao Yao-hsiang, one of the Chinese heroes of the northern Burma campaign. Considering Tu's incompetence, this action might have produced a better result than the generalissimo's plan, but Liao was reported captured early in the action. In the confusion that followed, the communists, yelling that "Chinese should not fight Chinese," charged resolutely in human waves under
terrific fire support from their artillery division. The attackers were finally able to divide the nationalist forces and to destroy them piecemeal.

Not only was there bungling in the command in Manchuria, but the general strategy was also all wrong. The government ought to have capitalized upon its indisputable advantages: greater mobility along the seacoast and control of the air. As it was, the Chinese air force played but a small part even during the most critical of the battles in Manchuria. It came into prominence only after the humiliating fall of Mukden--bomining the communists who had occupied the city from such altitude that the operation was considered a complete waste. It is incredible that inter-service cooperation could have been so slight, especially since the air forces at the time were being commanded by an army general.

The Decisive Huai-Hai Campaign: The Fall of Hsu-chow

The loss of Manchuria and some 300,000 of its best troops spelled the beginning of the end for the nationalists. Nearly 360,000 communist troops from Manchuria were now free to move against China proper.

In well-coordinated actions, 550,000 men of the communist Third and Second Field Armies, commanded by Ch'en Yi and Liu Po-ch'eng, immediately marched on Hsuchow, where the government had initially maintained 20-odd divisions, later increased to 7 army groups.

Hsuchow, an important strategic point and the chief railway link between east and central China, was exposed to enemy assaults on three sides, having long lines of supply in its rear area highly vulnerable to communist hit-and-run attacks. Two of the government's most experienced generals, Li Tsung-jen, who won the victory of Tai-erh-chuang against the Japanese in that area, and Pai Chung-hsi, the celebrated Chinese strategist, had repeatedly cautioned Chiang against making a stand in that city. They suggested that the government forces should move southward, concentrating for the offensive defense of
Huai Hai Campaign
5 November 1948 - 10 January 1949

NATIONALIST LOSSES

- SEVENTH = 10 divisions
- TWELFTH = 11 divisions
- Twellth = 200,000

Total = about 400,000
Major Campaigns in the Winter of 1948-49

Nationalist losses = about 140,000

Communist controlled areas 5 Nov '48

CIVIL WAR
Pengpu and the Huai River, and, with a system of shortened inner lines of defense and communication, seize an opportunity to destroy the communist forces. Their suggestions, however, were not adopted. The government intended to defend Hsuchow with 66 divisions.

The struggle for Hsuchow, generally referred to as the Huai-hai (Huai River-Haichow) campaign, was clearly going to be a battle of great moment, one in which the nationalists would need a strategist of great and proven ability. The generalissimo did not choose General Pai Chung-hsi, the best of the nationalist strategists, for the job in an earlier appointment. Pai was thoroughly familiar with the terrain around Hsuchow and was a logical choice. Instead the generalissimo appointed General Liu Chih, a man of no particular ability, to the command. He was to be assisted by General Tu Yu-ming, fresh from defeats in Manchuria and famous, like Gilbert and Sullivan's Duke of Plaza-Torro, for "leading his regiment from behind" at Mukden. From the start the nationalists were in a bad way.

The two communist field armies which they had to face were supported by hundreds of thousands of farmers conscripted in the rear, and had been preparing for this gigantic operation for months. By night and day the communists harassed government troops, taking full advantage of their mobility. The inept nationalist command could not decide where and when to concentrate its technically superior forces for a decisive engagement. Without any major tactical victory, and plagued with continuous communist harassment, the morale of the government forces rapidly deteriorated, bringing a considerable number of turncoats over to the Reds. The nationalist air force, unopposed in the air, could have become a decisive factor in the entire outcome, but was hoarded by its incompetent air commanders instead of being employed effectively to support land operations. The government, unable to maneuver an attack for some time, became increasingly incapable of stabilizing its defense. On top of all this, the nationalist field commanders--Generals Li Mi, Chiu Ching-chuan, and Huang Po-Tao--hesitated to render each other full cooperation. Even this all-Whampoa team was not free from personal rivalries.
The communist gambit was a fierce "human-sea" attack on the weaker section of the government forces in the Hsuchow-Pengpu area and, circling Hsuchow, General Ch'en Yi succeeded both in threatening Hsuchow and in destroying ten nationalist divisions at Nienchuang, east of Hsuchow, in the sector commanded by General Huang Po-Tao. Ch'en's forces then evaded the strong government forces under Chiu Ching-Chuan and joined with Red General Liu Po-ch'eng's group south of Hsuchow. This action ended what amounted to the first stage of the campaign. The communists claimed about 178,000 nationalist casualties during this phase.25

The second phase of the campaign began on November 23, 1948. In a pincer movement the joint communist forces converged on Pengpu, while a group of Liu Po-ch'eng's Reds impeded General Huang Wei's Twelfth Army Group marching eastward from southern Honan and northern Hupeh. The government position in and around Hsuchow was now untenable. Huang Po-tao's army group on the eastern flank was destroyed. At the last moment, Generalissimo Chiang decided to withdraw his troops from Hsuchow, then hesitated: four of the nine nationalist armies at Hsuchow were not being employed in the attack to the south.26 Under the command of Tu Yu-ming, three army groups moved westward in a desperate effort both to rescue Huang Wei's army group and to retreat to a more defensible position. Huang's army, ordered by Generalissimo Chiang to converge upon Hsuchow and consisting of five army corps, one division and a mechanized column, was taken away from Pai Chung-hsi's Central China Command.27 With its marching order ill-coordinated with the general strategic situation around Hsuchow, and with snow and mud hampering the rapid movement of this heavily equipped force, it soon ran into communist encirclement southwest of Suhsien. The supreme command at Nanking ordered Huang to stay there and fight defensively, waiting for the arrival of a rescuing force. Stripped of his initiative to fight as he saw fit, Huang obeyed the order only to find that the communist troops had surrounded his army with several rings of trenches, defense works, and minefields. The desperate efforts of Tu Yu-ming's three army groups to relieve the besieged army of Huang Wei were repulsed and these forces fled in a south-
westerly direction. They were trapped by the communists at Yung-cheng in the province of Honan. The communist armies, moving with incredible speed, again surrounded this large nationalist force which was again being ordered to Chien-shou tai-yuan (tighten up defense and wait for rescuing forces). The Sixth and Eighth Armies (under Generals Li Yen-nien and Liu Ju-ming) also attempted to relieve Huang Wei from Pengpu, but were driven back. All attempts to relieve them having failed, Huang Wei's beleaguered forces were at last completely annihilated, with the exception of one division, which went over to the Reds. Under Tu Yu-ming's incompetent generalship, four army groups were destroyed and General Huang Po-tao, one of his army group commanders, was killed in action. The Hsuchow forces and the intended reinforcements both met with the same fate. From November to December 1948, the nationalists lost about 400,000 men, including most of Chiang's mechanized forces in the Huai-Hai campaign. By now the only remaining forces of the once powerful Central Army were those commanded by General Hu Tsung-nan in the northwest and by General T'ang En-po in the southeast.

The Peiping-Tientsin Campaign

The communists poured into north China from Manchuria. The nationalist commander of north China, General Fu Tso-yi, concentrated his main force in the Peiping-Tientsin area for a decisive battle, counting upon a communist regrouping period of at least one and a half months before Red General Lin Piao could move his army into the Great Wall. To his surprise, Lin Piao's force appeared in his area barely twenty days after the fall of Mukden and, unfortunately, Fu's war plans and his troop dispositions became known to the communists through internal treachery. Lin Piao's force and the Red Army commanded by General Nieh Jung-cheng now converged upon Fu's left flank, knocking out two nationalist army corps at Hsin-pao-an and Hualai along the strategic Peiping-Suiyuan railway. Striking northward, the Red force captured Kalgan and decimated 40,000 of Fu's forces around that strategic base. In the south, Tientsin fell on January 15, 1949, and the strategic gateway of Chu-yung-kwan was also taken by the communists. Peiping was
surrounded by Red forces. One week later, General Fu Tso-yei, only recently appointed commander of the northern forces designated to defend Tientsin and Peiping, surrendered the city of Peiping and his 100,000 men to Red General Yeh Chien-ying, chief of staff of the People's Liberation Army. All of China north of the Yangtze River was in the hands of the communists.

The Crossing of the Yangtze and Exile to Formosa

With the nation in turmoil and all China north of the Yangtze in communist control, the Generalissimo yielded to pressures from within and without the government and announced his decision to retire. He left Nanking for Fenghua, his birthplace and a beautiful coastal town in the province of Chekiang, on January 22, 1949. In accordance with Article 49 of the Chinese constitution, Vice-president Li Tsung-jen assumed the acting presidency.

Li's first steps in office included an investigation seeking any reasonable grounds for peace with the communists and the issuance of a platform of governmental reforms. In the meantime, measures were formulated for the defense of the Yangtze River line in the event of a breakdown of negotiations for a peaceful settlement with the Reds. The communists continued the deployment of troops along the northern banks of the Yangtze and replied to government peace bids that communist forces would have to cross the Yangtze River.

Meanwhile, Generalissimo Chiang prepared to make Taiwan (Formosa) a fortified redoubt against the communists. To the island fortress went almost the entire government gold reserve, much of the equipment shipped from the United States, and large concentrations of trusted troops, the navy, and the air force. Though outwardly cooperating with the acting president, the Generalissimo was in effect maintaining independent political and military authority. Li had no unified control of nationalist China. An able general, Li did not even control the larger portion of the army. The Generalissimo's power continued to be felt in military affairs. What Li needed--the
CIVIL WAR

Crossing the Yangtze and Final Conquest of Southern China
money, the troops, the naval and air support, unity of command—all was denied him. The largest single force that the acting president could rely on were the 350,000 troops under General Pai Chung-hsi, whose headquarters in central China command was at Hankow. Altogether the government had, at that time, about 1,800,000 regular army troops; of these Chiang still maintained firm control of two major army groupings under the command of T'ang En-Po and Hu Tsung-nan. 30 The acting president was in dire need of time—three months to re-equip the forces under Generals Pai Chung-hsi and Chang Fa-kuei; to integrate the defense of Hunan, Hupeh, and Kiangsi; and to carry out on a large scale a military training and organization program in the provinces of Kwantung, Kwangsi, Hunan, Yunnan, Szechuan, and Kweichow. He and Pai thought that with this done, southwest China could be defended for at least a year, during which the international situation might turn to their favor. But time was not with Li. There were ample stores in Taiwan, but these were not made available to him even to reequip the forces of Pai and Chang, nor could the government persuade the American ambassador to divert the last consignment of American arms to Hong Kong or to Canton for that purpose. In America, despite the advice of Senator Vandenberg, U.S. aid to nationalist China was gradually being cut off. 31

Li struggled to obtain the full and unhindered authority constitutionally given to the head of state and to effectuate the unity of military command over the government area. But Li was unwilling to wrest authority drastically from Chiang and his generals; he still wished to maintain some semblance of unity before the eyes of the communists. And, as the White Paper pointed out, "He has increased tremendously in stature; has greatly increased in his following, yet the centripetal forces in free China remain too strong for him to overcome." 32 Emissary after emissary was sent by Li to Chiang at Feng-hua in an attempt to secure a clear-cut division of authority and responsibility between Li, as the president, and Chiang, as the titular head of the Kuomintang. All such efforts were to no avail.
Chiang had already begun the flight to Formosa. The move toward establishing a Free Chinese citadel on Formosa was contrary to the basic policy of the government to contain the communists north of the Yangtze and retain the mainland. The move was being debated during the lull in peace negotiations at Peiping. To make a success of this plan, the acting president quite obviously required the maximum cooperation of every element remaining of the nationalist forces. A successful defense of the Yangtze demanded the full support of the navy and air force. Chiang and not the acting president controlled these forces. Along the south bank of the Yangtze River, there were five army corps—about 120,000 men—available to defend the lower river valley. But General T'ang En-Po, who commanded a large force, refused, upon Chiang's secret order, to move his troops up river from Shanghai to defend those sections where the communists would most likely attempt crossing, and to coordinate closely with the forces under General Pai Chung-hsi's command. 33 Chiang was still interfering in military affairs and, as the American ambassador reported on February 20, 1949, hampering rather than helping the Yangtze defense. 34 His desire was executed through the incompetent chief of supreme staff, General Ku Chu-t'ung, whose only contribution to the defense was to entrust the command of the strategic Kiangyin fortress area, the narrowest part of the Yangtze River, to one of his own proteges—the man who deserted to the communists at the critical hour and pointed the fortress guns at the government warships defending the Lower Yangtze. 35

At midnight on April 20, 1949, the communists crossed the Yangtze at several strategic points, with their main concentrations at Kiangyin and south Anwei. General Tai Yung-kwan, the bribed commander of the key Yangtze fortress at Kiangyin, protected the communist crossing and shelled the nationalist naval units. Another one-time aide of Chiang, Commodore Lin Tsun, went over to the communist side with his naval squadron at Nanking. The remaining naval and air forces failed to provide effective support for the defending forces on shore. By the secret order of General T'ang En-po, the Central Army units which had been assigned to resist any communist crossing into the lower Yangtze area were withdrawn. They were reassigned to defend the city of Shanghai by
the secret order of the generalissimo in retirement. The battle was lost, first of all, because of no unity in command.

At the eleventh hour Chiang and Li had a serious difference over the grand strategy. The heart of the matter lay in Li's desire to mobilize and concentrate all available forces to hold China south of the Yangtze, his belief that the provinces of Kwangtung and Kwangsi and the southwest should be regarded as the stronghold from which there would be no retreat. Chiang, while ostensibly concurring in principle, was basically unwilling to commit his forces to a last-ditch stand on the mainland. Formosa was, in his view, to be the refuge and the last bastion of nationalist arms.

Chiang secretly withdrew T'ang En-Po's army to Shanghai, not only to prepare for an eventual flight to Formosa but also in some vain hope that the main Red forces could be brought to fight around that strongly defended city where the Chinese might possibly be able to defeat them. Li and General Pai Chung-hsi's plan would have been to concentrate T'ang's army for the defense of the strategic Chekiang-Kiangsi railroad line, there to fight in coordination with Pai's central China armies.36

The Reds occupied Nanking on April 24. In a vain gesture T'ang En-po spoke of making Shanghai a "second Stalingrad" only to lose it a month later after a tepid defense. T'ang's forces were now out of the battle and Pai was stuck in central China. General Hsia Wei's army group, a unit under Pai's command, chalked up the only nationalist victory, at Anking, while communist General Lin Piao (the victor of Manchuria) moved down from the north to meet the main body of Pai's troops. Meanwhile, his forces threatened from the east by the communist capture of the Chekiang-Kiangsi railway, Pai withdrew from central China and retreated in good order along the Hankow-Canton railway toward Kwangtung and Kwangsi.

Around Hengyang Pai seized an opportunity to stand and counterattack in force. He redeployed his troops to trap a Red column of 50,000 men, which he destroyed. His powerful thrust sent the whole communist army under Lin Piao reeling back into Changsha. At Tsin-shu-ping Lin's Reds, estimated at over 100,000 strong and reputedly the best of
the communist troops, were thrown off balance. Pai's force then regrouped and cleared the front. His next objective: the defense of Kwangtung, Kwangsi, and the southwest.

On August 3, 1949, an important conference at Canton brought together Acting President Li and Generalissimo Chiang. Li proposed a change in the nationalist defense strategy. The old defensive policy of holding specific positions and lines would have to be scrapped, he said, in favor of an offensive "on all fronts and all planes." Gaining Chiang's agreement on that point, Li went on to advocate that the Chiang forces then holding sea-coast points be concentrated along the Ta-iyi mountain range in northern Kwangtung and there, in close alliance with Pai's forces on the west, wage a war of movement to defend south China.

Chiang countered that he must insist upon the defense of certain "vital points"--a liberal translation of the Chinese phrase originally derived from the German Schwerpunkt--and that he favored the concentration of all available strength for the defense of Canton as a "strong base point." Only if a surplus of troops were available could the government consider further offensive operations such as Li proposed, he said. Indeed the forces that he had earlier assigned to the defense of Kwangtung province Chiang now withdrew, leaving Pai's forces weakened on the right and left and incapacitated for strong aggressive action. Whether Chiang was prompted in this move by purely military motives, or whether he was unwilling to back Li's plan and support Pai for political reasons, will have to be determined at some future time, when all the smoke of the political battle between Chiang's and Li's supporters has cleared and the full facts can be ascertained.

In any case, Pai's hopes of aggressive action in the south and southwest were dashed. Meanwhile, in the northwest, there were instances of bravery and a strength which was, unfortunately, too little and too late. In June the 125,000-man communist force under General Peng Teh-huai was driving General Hu Tsung-nan's government force westward before it toward Szechuan. Twenty thousand cavalrymen, commanded by the Moslem general Ma Chi-yuan, daringly assailed Peng's flank. Seventy miles beyond Sian, Hu Tsung-nan's force turned and counterattacked in conjunction with the cavalry attacks.
The communists sustained a serious reverse, for Ma pushed Peng’s force back and drove into his new capitol, Lanchow.\textsuperscript{41} Ma’s father, General Ma Pu-fang, was appointed commander-in-chief of China’s northwest, presumably in token of the government’s gratitude for the son’s victories. The generalissimo’s gratitude did not extend, however, to the point of rushing supplies to the younger Ma to enable him to exploit his victory. When two fast-moving communist armies under General Nieh Jung-cheng rushed to the scene, Ma’s ammunition had been expended and he was forced to beat a hasty retreat through the mountains with Peng and Nieh in hot pursuit.

By August, Canton and all of south China were directly imperiled. The generalissimo strove vainly to regain the presidency but, checked by constitutional considerations, was unable to do so. According to critics, Chiang seemed to have directed much of his effort toward preventing Li from gaining any tighter hold on power by ensuring as far as possible that Li’s war against the Reds in south China should not be too successful. As the nationalists struggled among themselves, Canton fell on October 16, and in November the Red flag fluttered over Chungking and Chengtu. Chiang’s forces under Generals Hu Tsung-nan and Sung Hsi-nien collapsed in a week. The government force of General Pai originally intended to protect Kwangtung, Kwangsi, and Yunan provinces was stunned by the news that Yunnan had gone communist.

Pai himself was caught between the dictates of his own best judgment and the desire to compromise with Chiang if possible. His position had been weakened considerably by Chiang’s withdrawal of troops from both his flanks; his own troops, by reason of supporting Chiang’s defense of the Szechuan-Kweichow region, were now thinly dispersed over a large area. When Szechuan fell after a feeble defense, Pai decided to draw his troops into the Luichow peninsula and prepare for possible eventual evacuation to Hainan Island, dispersing parts of his forces in the mountainous regions of southwest China to wage future guerrilla warfare. Lin Piao’s fast-moving columns swiftly took the decision out of Pai’s hands, however, by launching an attack. In the ensuing confusion, the five army groups commanded by Pai were partly destroyed and partly dispersed in the mountains of
Kwangtung and Kwangsi. Forces loyal to Chiang were driven by Lin Piao's might to Formosa or to smaller islands out of the reach of the communists.

Is it Chiang's vision or his deliberate policy of conserving his own basic forces at all costs that led this titanic figure of China, the one-time leader of the revolution and the successor of Sun, to determine to continue the nationalist struggle from Formosa, when armies on the mainland of China were not given the opportunity to make their best stand against the onrushing Red tide? History will eventually provide the answer to the question and indicate whether Chiang's policy of the Formosan bastion or Li's policy of a concerted stand in south China was the better strategy. Meanwhile, the Red banners of communism had been hoisted all over the mainland of China.

In eleven months the communist banners of Mao Tse-tung and Chu Teh had advanced 2,000 miles from Mukden to Chengtu, averaging well over six miles a day. Theirs was a fine fighting force, but historians must nevertheless conclude that in the communist conquest of the vast mainland of China much of their success must be attributed to the default of the Chinese nationalist military power—a great military force taxed by eight years of supreme effort against Imperial Japan and betrayed from within by corruption, maladministration, and dissension in high places.
Even during the Sino-Japanese war the nationalists had a premonition of this, and the people were saying, "The Japanese are only lice on the body of China, but communism is a disease of the heart."

2 U.S. Department of State, United States Relations With China (Washington: GPO, 1949), "Ltr Acting President Li Tsung-jen to President Truman, May 5, 1949," P. 409.


4 U.S. Relations with China, p. 255.


7 Ibid.


9 Ibid, p. 10.

10 U.S. Relations with China, p. 314.


13 U.S. Relations with China, p. 317.

14 Ibid.


16 Ernburg, G.B., Ocherki Natsional'no-osvoboditel'noi Bor'by Kitaiskogo Narada (Moscow, 1951), p. 227.


21. China Handbook, 1950. This estimate of communist strength was given from a ministry of defense source.


23. Author’s interview with former Acting President Li Tsung-jen.

24. Chiang was reported to have offered Pai the "concurrent" command of the armies around Hsuchow at the eleventh hour. Pai, however, declined the offer on the ground of differences over strategy and of his inability to remedy the situation at that late hour.

25. Consult a series of articles written by the Chinese communist war correspondents on the Huai-Hai campaign in Liberation Daily and any other official communist papers during the period from December 1948 to February 1949. Also see China’s Revolutionary War, op. cit., articles on the campaign.


28. Information from a senior staff officer who escaped from the communist siege, but who preferred to remain anonymous.


33. Ltr., former Acting President Li Tsung-jen to President Eisenhower, March 19, 1954.

35 Ltr. Former Acting President Li Tsung-jen to former Premier Chang Chun, March 1, 1954.


38 Yin Shi, op. cit., pp. 133-134.

39 Ibid.

40 Ltr. Li to President Eisenhower, op. cit.


42 Liang, op. cit., pp. 196-197.