

Newsweek - 11/29/65 * *

The U.S. and China: Policy or Obsession?

"Ecuador ... El Salvador ... Ethiopia ... Finland ..."

Beneath the great dome in the U.N. General Assembly, the teller droned out the names of the member states in alphabetical order. "Lebanon ... Liberia ... Libya ..."

As his country's name was called, each delegate cast his vote by pressing a button on his desk—green for yes, red for no and amber for abstain. "Yemen ... Yugoslavia ... Zambia." Within seconds after the roll call ended, the result of this year's U.N. vote on the China question flashed on the new indicator boards behind the Assembly's marble podium. And in this efficient electronic manner last week, the U.S. suffered a severe foreign-policy reversal.

On the surface, the vote had all the markings of an American victory. First, a U.S.-sponsored resolution, declaring that the admission of Communist China must be classified as an "important issue" requiring a two-thirds majority, passed by a vote of 56 to 49 with 11 abstentions. Then, in the actual vote on whether or not to seat the Communists in place of the Nationalists, Peking's sponsors failed to gain even a simple majority and had to content themselves with a 47 to 47 tie.

Hair's Breadth: Upon closer inspection, however, the vote only served to prove that the U.S. had won a battle—but may soon lose the war. For the first time in sixteen years, the U.S. came within a hair's breadth of being in a minority in the U.N. on the China question. Obviously, sooner or later—and probably sooner—Peking was certain to be invited to join the world body. No one quite knows if it will accept—or set such unacceptable conditions that its presence at the U.N. could not be tolerated. But the sobering impact of the U.N. vote pointed to an even harsher

fact: that a great and growing number of nations regard the present China policy of the U.S. as misguided and untenable. Clearly, the whole postwar edifice of the U.S. strategy to keep Communist China in the diplomatic isolation ward was near collapse.

On the face of things, this posed a problem of immense complexity for U.S. policymakers. In recent years, as U.S. relations with Russia have eased, Communist China has increasingly come to occupy the role of chief international devil figure in the minds of millions of Americans. This, by itself, would tend to make any public review of U.S. policy toward China an awkward matter. And compounding the awkwardness of Washington's position is the fact that for sixteen years successive U.S. administrations have engaged in persistent denunciation of Peking.

Not Static: Actually, however, relations between the U.S. and China have not always been as static as public pronouncements on both sides have suggested. In the first few months following the Communist takeover of mainland China, the Truman Administration seriously considered diplomatic recognition of Peking. The outbreak of the Korean War effectively prevented that, but later, during the Bandung conference of Afro-Asian states in 1955, China's Chou En-lai indicated a willingness to sit down and discuss substantive issues with the U.S. This was rejected by Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, who insisted that the Communist regime in Peking was merely a "passing phase." Not until the Kennedy Administration did the U.S. again evince any interest in improvement of relations; shortly before he was assassinated, John Kennedy cleared a speech by Roger Hilsman, then Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern

Affairs, calling for a new "Open Door" policy combining the elements of firmness, flexibility and dispassion. But this time the Chinese contemptuously refused to rise to the bait.

Since then, Washington's posture toward Peking has been one of unbending hostility. Behind this hostility there lies, in part, a sense of national betrayal. From the time U.S. merchants and missionaries began to flock to China in the nineteenth century, Americans have traditionally taken a kind of paternalistic interest in China—an interest based in great degree on a highly oversentimentalized picture of the Chinese people. The original U.S. Open Door Policy, designed to protect China against complete conquest by European nations, was at least partly a result of this paternalistic attitude. So, too, was Gen. George Marshall's ill-fated postwar effort to arrange a settlement between the Chinese Communists and Nationalists. And when, after all these efforts, the nation the U.S. had come to regard as its special protégé turned Communist, it was inevitable that Americans should be embittered.

More Pragmatic: Beyond this, however, there are far more immediate and pragmatic reasons for the present U.S. stance on China. One of them can be found in the person and policies of Secretary of State Dean Rusk. In an Administration whose top policymakers are all hard-liners on the China question, Rusk stands out as one of the hardest. Some State Department insiders speculate that Rusk's attitude goes back to his experiences during World War II in the China-Burma-India theater. Others, however, believe he is overcompensating for the position he took in 1950, when, as Deputy Under Secretary of State, he publicly compared all Asian revolutions

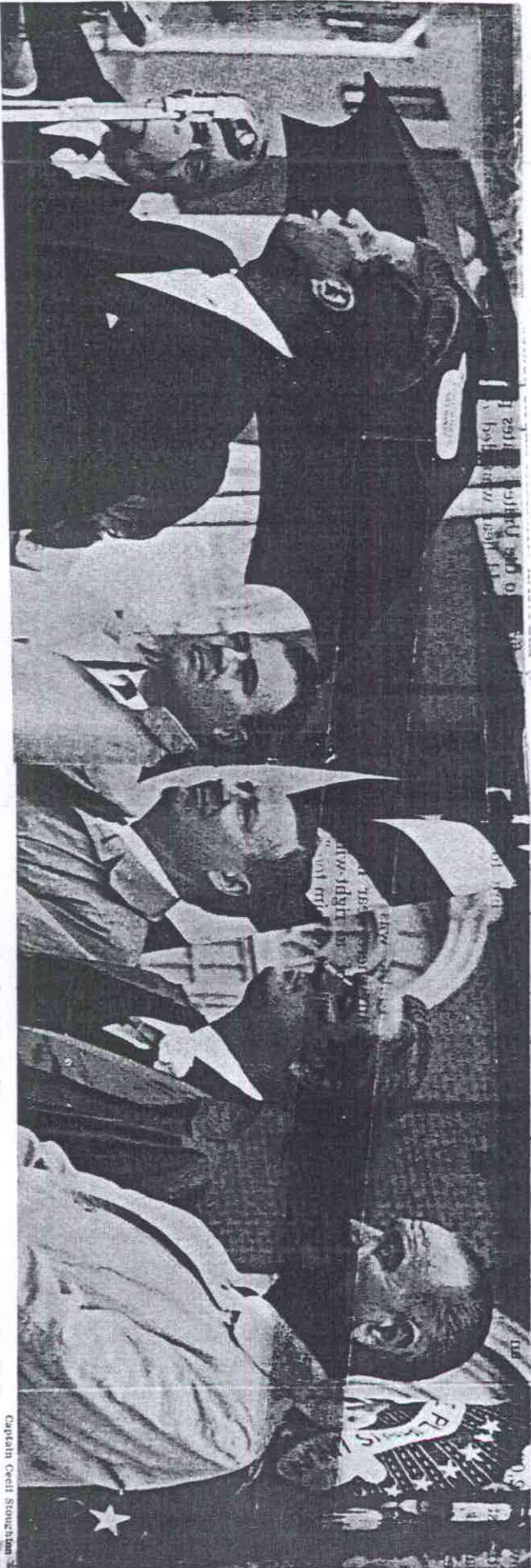
(CCNY)



Marshall and Mao (right) in 1946
Rusk in China-Burma-India theater



Red Chinese troops hail



ANNIVERSARY: Two years ago, he stood in a rain-splattered parking lot in Fort Worth, earnest, intent and full of life. With him were Texas Gov. John Connally and Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson. A few minutes later, they all flew to Dallas, and four hours after this picture was taken, John F. Kennedy was dead. This Thanksgiving week, another day Nov. 22 had rolled around; the queues would file once more past the

Newsweek

grave on a gentle slope in Arlington, peer once more at the Dallas warehouse window where the assassin knelt. The books about JFK still rolled off the presses and were prominently displayed in store windows (including an anthology, "John Fitzgerald Kennedy . . . As We Remember Him," containing the striking photograph above). It was another Nov. 22; again a nation would pause in its business and remember.

November 29, 1965

Newsweek 11/29/65

Copyright © 1965 Newsweek Inc.

to the revolt of the American colonies against Great Britain.

Be that as it may, Rusk's militant position on China avowedly rests on a set of logical assumptions. The most important of these is the assumption that Communist China is an aggressive, expansionist power whose ultimate goal is the destruction of U.S. influence in the world. And on the face of it, this would seem to be an accurate reflection of the intentions of China's leaders. Indeed, the Chinese themselves lend credence to this view with their frequent calls for the defeat of the U.S.—"the archenemy of the people of the world."

Only last September, China's Defense Minister, Marshal Lin Piao, published a 30,000-word blueprint for the undoing of the U.S. In his brutally frank article, entitled "Long Live the Victory of the People's War!" Lin envisioned the "rural areas of the world"—Asia, Africa and Latin America—rising up and encircling the "cities of the world"—North America and Western Europe.

U.S. Survival: Despite such tough talk, however, many Sinologists do not believe that Communist China will pose a direct threat to U.S. survival in the foreseeable future. For one thing, even with its atomic bomb, China remains a second-rate power. Says Alastair Buchan, director of London's Institute for Strategic Studies: "The industrial bases of the U.S. and Russia are so much more advanced and formidable than China's that they can individually, let alone collectively, offset Chinese power almost indefinitely."

Equally important is the fact that, so far at least, the Chinese have shown themselves hesitant to take major military risks. Except in the case of Korea—when they apparently believed that the U.S. intended to strike directly at China itself—the men in Peking have consistently shunned a frontal clash with U.S. power. Most notably, they have failed to move in Vietnam, thereby lay-

ing themselves open to the jeers that China, not the U.S., is a paper tiger and that Peking is willing to fight to the last Vietnamese. "I think it is clear by now," says one high-ranking State Department official, "that the Chinese want to stay out of the war in Vietnam, or else they would have come in before the U.S. buildup. Only a clear threat to their own territory would bring them in now."

Recently, however, U.S. intelligence has detected a massive increase in civil-defense activities in the three southern Chinese provinces of Kwangtung, Kwangsi and Yunnan. China experts are unsure whether Peking is actually preparing to enter the Vietnam war, or whether China's leaders have fallen victim to their own statements that the U.S. is looking for an excuse to attack the Chinese mainland. "We have made it clear in the regular Sino-American talks in Warsaw," says an official, "that we have no intention of invading China or of crushing North Vietnam. The Chinese should be equally clear in the message by word and deed. The presence of nearly 100,000 U.S. troops in the Asian theater and aerial bombardment in China's southern border are a constant reminder of Chinese territory that is the subject of dialogue between Washington and Peking is a question worth keeping in mind."

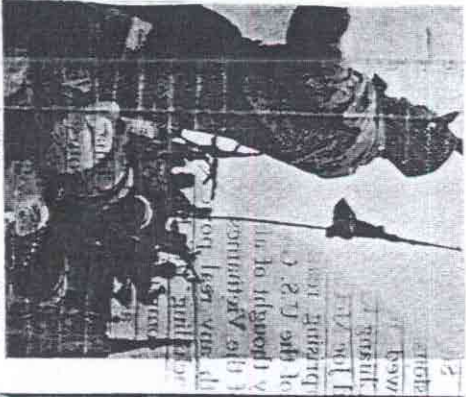
Pure Power: Some senior U.S. officials believe that the cooperation with the Vietnamese by the U.S. has attracted so much attention that the Americans may be tempted to use their own pure power. "The Soviet Union will remain the major threat to the U.S. for decades to come, not all," says one U.S. planner, "the Chinese can't incinerate Honolulu tomorrow." And Kenneth Younger, director-general of Britain's highly respected Royal Institute of International Affairs, concurs. "I just don't see China sweeping over Asia with millions of troops or challenging the U.S. to a Cuba-type confrontation," he declares.

In fact, while most experts agree that China has every intention of fomenting more Vietnam-style conflicts, they believe that these wars will be on a small scale and probably confined to Asia. Much as they may yearn to encompass the total destruction of the U.S., it seems clear that the most the men in Peking can realistically hope for is a gradual erosion of U.S. influence in Asia.

Peking's Potential: For the time being China is a regional power; on a global level, Peking's potential is still seen by most strategic thinkers as restricted to political mischief-making. And even in this, Peking's efforts have recently come a cropper. During the past six months, China has suffered a series of diplomatic reverses all the way from Africa, where it was forced to postpone the Afro-Asian conference in Algiers, to Asia, where a Communist-inspired coup in Indonesia proved a failure. What's more, even North Vietnam and North Korea, traditional Chinese satrapies, have shown a growing warmth toward Moscow.

Still, however limited China's power, the fact remains that the Chinese avow implacable hostility to the U.S. And in response to this the U.S. has committed itself to a policy of containment which is based on the proposition that so long as Mao Tse-tung and the other original revolutionary leaders remain in power, the U.S. and China have nothing to say to one another. Implicit in this policy, however, is the notion that once Mao & Co., most of whom are advanced in age, pass from the scene, another generation of leaders may come along which will prove more pragmatic and amenable to accommodation.

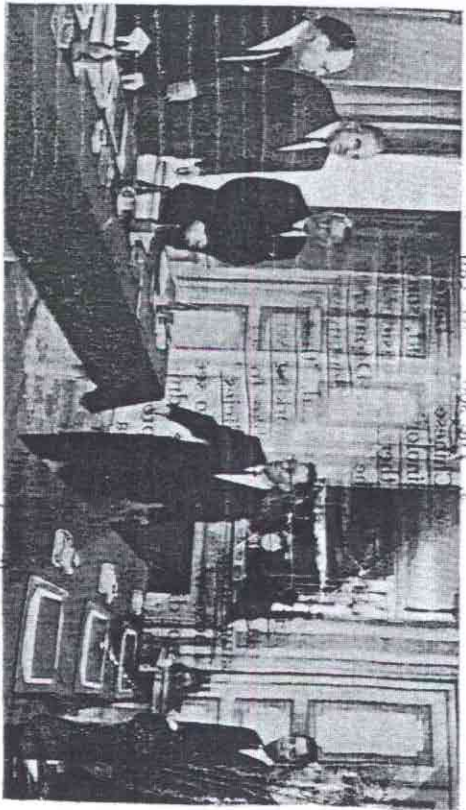
To a number of China experts, however, this is wishful thinking. For one thing, they point out, the so-called "second echelon" of leaders in China are, like Mao himself, veterans of the Long March and the civil war against the Nationalists. For another, most of them



Victory during Korean War



UPI



Joe McCarthy investigating U.S.-Chinese conference at Warsaw

UPI

come from poor peasant stock in southern and western China and have had no experience in the sophisticated school of international diplomacy. "How do we know," says one Sinologist, "that they aren't even more fanatic and ignorant of the world than their elders?"

Coming Generation: Moreover, many Sinologists believe that even if the coming generation of Chinese leaders does undergo a transformation in its attitude toward the West, the process will be much slower than that which occurred among Soviet leaders after Stalin. For the Chinese, unlike the Russians, do not have a heritage of Western values and, to make matters more difficult, are blatantly xenophobic and racist.

Another and even stronger argument against the U.S. policy of containment is that it has had an almost inverse effect to the one it was intended to have. Indeed, by supplying the Peking regime with a ready-made "foreign devil," U.S. policy has justified the endless appeals by China's leaders for national solidarity against an external enemy. "The trouble with this containment policy," says a British official, "is that it doesn't solve the basic problem of what the world is to do about 700 million Chinese. It certainly won't make them wither up and die. It has simply driven them into a hostile isolation behind a ruthless regime which has been able to deploy this enforced isolation as a mighty propaganda stick with which to beat the U.S. in the Afro-Asian world."

Symbolic Embargo: Nor, for that matter, has U.S. policy been a practical success. Already, 56 countries have diplomatic relations with Peking. What's more, the U.S. trade embargo has come to have merely symbolic importance.

Given these facts, a significant number of Western scholars and diplomats take the position that Washington has no sensible choice but to seek more contact with Peking—even though the Chinese themselves persist in showing no desire for better relations. "The sooner we can embourgeois the Chinese the better," says one Harvard Sinologist. And, somewhat surprisingly, there is considerable sentiment within the State Department for abandonment of rigid containment. "I believe," says one official, "that 75 to 80 per cent of those working with the China problem would like to see some change in our present policies."

Those who would like to see a change do not disagree with the Administration's diagnosis of the China problem, only on the treatment. "If China is a disturbed paranoiac and if our aim is to change its behavior," said one expert, "do you do it by tightening the noose of containment or should there be outlets?"

Specifically, these China specialists would like to see a cautious first step toward increasing contacts with Peking, in-

cluding the exchange of newsmen and trade in nonstrategic goods. They argue that even if the Chinese rejected such U.S. offers, the onus of maintaining bad relations would at least shift to Peking. Eventually, it is hoped, the pressure of world opinion, especially from the developing nations which China so desperately wants to lead, would force Peking to reciprocate. And while increased contact would not necessarily ameliorate the power struggle between the U.S. and China, it might, so the reasoning goes, give them greater knowledge of each other and hence a more accurate understanding of one another's actual motives and intentions.

Nor do the advocates of this policy believe that the Nationalist government



Brian Brake—Magnum

Mao Tse-tung: A paper tiger?

on Taiwan has to be jettisoned in order to appease Peking. It is not uncommon, they point out, for nations with great outstanding claims against each other to maintain normal contacts.

Top Six: The fact is, however, that the men within the State Department who are most anxious to see a change in U.S. China policy are largely on the expert, non-policymaking level, while those who make policy are not China experts. Among the six top policymakers who have the President's ear on China—Secretary Rusk, Under Secretary of State George Ball, Under Secretary of State U. Alexis Johnson, Assistant Secretary of State William Bundy, Presidential Assistant McGeorge Bundy and Defense Secretary McNamara—none speaks Chinese, none has lived for any length of time in China itself and none has any per-

sonal acquaintance with the top leaders in Peking.

By comparison, the State Department's Kremlinologists—including former ambassador to Moscow Charles Bolden and Llewellyn Thompson—have the most intimate knowledge of political figures and forces in the Soviet Union. They have hunted and fished with Moscow's top leaders. And as a result, they have a solid background on which to base their policy proposals.

Other, even more subtle differences exist between the State Department's specialists on China and Russia. While there are 139 Russian-language officers in the Foreign Service, there are only 71 who have a "useful" speaking knowledge of Chinese. Those "Old Far East Hands" who managed to survive the purges of the McCarthy days were all associated with Chiang Kai-shek's government in Chungking; none of the present experts was in the hills of Yanan with Mao. And even among recent recruits on the China desk, the specter of McCarthyism still inhibits free and full discussion. Moreover, there persists a real fear among Foreign Service officers that any new proposal dealing with China will stir violent Congressional reaction.

Fears: Actually, such fears may well be exaggerated. A recent opinion poll prepared for the Council on Foreign Relations revealed that 71 per cent of the American public was prepared to follow a Presidential initiative on improving relations with China. In fact, President Johnson, if he made up his mind to do so, could probably start changing U.S. China policy next week.

Almost certainly, however, he will not do so. There does not, in fact, seem to be any serious prospect of such a change in the foreseeable future. One reason for this is that U.S. policy toward China is no longer based on a thoughtful calculation of U.S. interests and possibilities. It is not, in fact, a policy at all, but simply a confused state of mind compounded of half-forgotten childhood experience, Sunday-school talks on the Great Russians, old Charlie Chan movies and a jumbled newspaper clippings of Madame Chiang Kai-shek, Douglas MacArthur and Joe McCarthy.

The surprising reality is that in the top levels of the U.S. Government, China is currently thought of almost exclusively in terms of the Vietnamese war. No U.S. official with any real power, most particularly including the President, feels any serious compulsion to re-examine the long-range aspects of U.S.-China relations. As a result, U.S. China policy appears to be on a collision course with reality—and the collision may come as soon as next year when the official letter at the U.N. drones out the names of the member states: "... Chad ... Chile ... People's Republic of China." **END**