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# Agnes Smedley Writes--

On October 10th, the 34th anniversary of the Chinese Republic, it would be well for Americans, particularly the younger generation, to make a realistic appraisal of the China situation and of our own historic policy toward that country.

Because we now have "China weeks" or "China days," and because the late Dr. Sun Yat-sen is hailed by us, as by China, as the "George Washington of China," it may be that American youth in particular believes that our Government has always encouraged democratic elements of China and that it encouraged or supported Dr. Sun during his forty years of struggle against the Manchus.

The incontrovertible fact, however, is that our Government in the past extended no help or encouragement of any kind to Dr. Sun Yat-sen nor to the democratic forces of the Chinese people. Until his death on March 12, 1925, Dr. Sun was branded by the western capitalist democracies—including ourselves—as a "disappointed office-seeker, a visionary, and an impractical dreamer." Instead of supporting him, we supported the decrepid and corrupt Manchu Dynasty, and after Dr. Sun and his followers overthrew the Manchus in 1911, we recognized, not him, but the abortion which established itself as a republican government in Peking under the rule of the "strong man," General Yuan Shih-kai.

After the Russian Revolution of 1917, Soviet Russia renounced all its special privileges and concessions in China and announced the principle of the independence and sovereignty of colonial and semi-colonial countries—actions for which it was, and remains, an object of suspicion and hatred by western capitalist powers. We cannot hide the fact that we, who should have been in the vanguard as defenders of the independence of subjected peoples, did not renounce our old unjust treaties with China until 1943; and months later, eradicate from our statute books the racial discrimination law known as the Chinese Exclusion Act. Even then we acted, not from principle, but because Japanese imperialists were using the unequal treaties and our racial discrimination law as powerful propaganda with Chinese and other peoples of Asia.

Receiving no encouragement or support from us, in 1924 Dr. Sun Yat-sen invited Soviet Russian advisers to help him reorganize his Canton Nationalist Government and the Kuomintang or Nationalist Party, of which he was the founder and leader. This reorganization, which included the training of a Chinese national revolutionary army, transformed the Kuomintang into a national revolutionary party which included the peasants and workers instead of only middle and upper class gentlemen and ladies before that time.

The powerful national revolutionary struggle which sprang from this reorganization conquered all south China within a few months and sent a chill of fear through the western capitalist powers until, by 1927, there was the danger of foreign armed intervention against it. Death had by then removed Dr. Sun Yat-sen's guiding hand, and General Chiang Kai-shek had become the commander of the national revolutionary army. In April, 1927, General Chiang reached a decision in Shanghai which tragically changed the course of Chinese history. In return for loans from Chinese and foreign bankers, and promises of recognition from for-

which Edgar Snow wrote so powerfully in his **Red Star Over China**. The Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931 did not halt these Kuomintang campaigns against its own people. Instead, the Chinese government followed the same policy as did we ourselves, together with England, France, and other powers: i. e. it was more afraid of the revolutionary Chinese people than of Japanese imperialism.

This appeasement of Japanese imperialism was brought to a dramatic end in December, 1936, when Manchurian armies, driven from their homeland by the Japanese in 1931, captured Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek in Sian and brought his plans for continued civil war and appeasement of the Japanese to an end. Plans were then made to re-establish the Chinese national United Front between the Kuomintang and Communist armies, and to prepare for resistance to Japan. Realizing what was happening, Japan began the occupation of China proper on July 7, 1937, and China, which had wasted its manpower and resources for years, was unprepared to meet the menace. However, even during the eight years of the war that followed, Chinese reactionaries, who had for years tried to emulate Mussolini and Hitler, reformed their class lines and, frightened by the support given the Communists by the people, established a blockade against the Red Army which, after 1936, had been transformed into the 8th Route and New 4th Armies.

These two guerrilla armies operating behind Japanese lines in occupied territory, were not Communist armies, but were commanded and educated by Communists. Down to May, 1945, these armies had liberated over 331,000 square miles of territory, and nearly 100,000,000 people, in north and central China and along the coast near Canton and Hongkong in the south. In these liberated regions the Communists and their sympathizers had organized and educated the civilian population, granted them civil rights, including suffrage rights to all men and women over 18 years of age. For the first time in Chinese history the common people elected their own administration organs by secret ballot, won a sense of citizenship, and manufactured or captured arms from the Japanese with which to defend their new-won freedom.

It is this development that has brought China to the very brink of civil war. It must not be forgotten that over 80% of the Chinese people are peasants, many of them de facto serfs and some even slaves. The Chinese government, on the other hand, fell more and more into the hands of the great feudal landlords who were simultaneously officials and many of them Generals in the Kuomintang.

the Nazi invasion of Russia in 1941, the Soviet Union supplied Chungking with military supplies and gave it great unsecured loans, while the Chinese Communists received not one gun, one cent of money, or any aid except sympathy, from Russia. If we believe in governments living up to their commitments with other governments, this is but logical. However, after the Kuomintang established a blockade against the Chinese Communist armies in 1940, these armies also received not a cent of money, one gun, or even a cartridge from the Chinese Government. They had to capture or manufacture in small arsenals all the weapons and munitions used. For food they tilled the soil side by side with the people; for clothing they grew cotton, spun and wove, or grew sheep which gave them wool. To supply themselves and the people with life necessities produced and distributed cheaply, they built up a powerful network of industrial, agricultural and consumers cooperatives in the vast liberated regions.

To my mind, the new Soviet-Chinese Treaty of Friendship is a desperate effort of the Soviet Union—and perhaps of our own government—to prevent a third world war which would transform China into a battlefield. A third world war would certainly be just around the corner if Russia should back the Chinese Communists while we backed the Kuomintang. Though not stipulated in the Treaty, we have reason to believe that Russia informed the Chinese Government that the Treaty could become effective only if it established a democratic government which could ensure peace and progress and prevent civil war.

On August 15, the day following the signing of the Treaty, Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek invited Communist delegates to negotiate for these objectives. The Communists refused until a third invitation was issued, then took to Chungking nothing new; nothing but their old, oft-repeated simple demands that the Chinese Government liquidate the one-party dictatorship and introduce a representative people's democracy. These same demands have been voiced by the Chinese Democratic League of smaller parties, groups, and non-party individuals. (Madame Sun Yat-sen is among the latter.)

The demands of the Chinese Communists and the Chinese Democratic League, which is also now participating in the Chungking negotiations include: free speech, press, assembly, and rights of organization; legalization of all parties; release of political prisoners except traitors; liquidation of concentration camps in which thousands of political prisoners have been confined a la Hitler; liquidation of the Chinese secret political police which was founded on the model of the German Gestapo—and which, in fact, was organized with the aid of German Nazis; dismissal from the Government of Fascists and the punishment of war profiteers, traitors, and puppets; lifting of the blockade against the 8th Route and New 4th Armies.

The most important demands, however are: (1) The formation of a coalition government of all parties, groups, and patriotic individuals, to serve as an interim government preparatory to a national people's elections. (2) The dismissal of the so-called Nation-

would surrender their armies provided the Kuomintang did the same.

In the meantime Japanese imperialism captured, after which one of the most sinister developments in world history is being played out in China. Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek ordered the Communist-commanded armies to ground arms, but simultaneously ordered to the Japanese and puppet armies to keep their weapons, their "present assigned areas" and to "maintain peace and order." These orders were tantamount to a request to the Japanese and puppets to continue fighting the 8th Route and New 4th Armies who were attempting to disarm them.

The Chinese Government also appointed new officials in north China cities which are surrounded by the Communist-commanded guerrillas. Four of these officials are Chinese traitors who for years held high positions under the Japanese. In recent weeks, American correspondents in the Nanking-Shanghai and Peiping-Tientsin areas have seen columns of Japanese troops moving out to fight the 8th Route and New 4th Armies, then retreating inside their blockhouses and pill-boxes at night until the following day. General Yen Hsi-shan, Kuomintang Governor of Shensi Province was escorted into Taiyuanfu, the capital, on a Japanese troop train. And American airplanes are being used to transport Kuomintang armies into Chinese cities surrounded by the Communist-commanded guerrillas—actions which can only lead to civil war. The Chinese people would never permit these hated Kuomintang armies to pass through their territory unless flown in by American planes or transported on American ships.

The policy of our Government toward China, as formulated in Washington, is shrouded in secrecy, though all reasons for secrecy vanished with VJ day. If there is nothing reactionary and shameful in our policy, there is no need for secrecy. The American people have every reason, as world events prove, to fear the third world war, now rising like a black cloud over our horizon. Perhaps our industrial and financial barons, who aided world Fascism in its rise to power, nor believe that our own unemployment problems can be solved in a war against Soviet Russia and rebelling colonial countries against whose people we Americans have nothing whatever.

I have just received two letters from Asia, one from Edgar Snow, the writer, the other from an American General. Writing for the Chungking negotiations, the General remarks with sarcasm that Generalissimo Chiang had agreed to postpone the so-called National Assembly. He adds: "Now watch the skullduggery." From Delhi, India, Edgar Snow writes:

"China will mend its torn garments once more, and all the colonial powers are going back to sit on their fat fannies exactly as before. Well, not quite; but no Four Freedoms are visible from here. All the fine phrases recently bespoke by Chiang Kai-shek are still—fine phrases. The Chen Li-fu's and the Tai Li's (the leading Fascists of China—AS) go on as before. The Chinese Communists can barter with what real internal strength they have, and nothing more, while Chiang Kai-shek has, of course, our increasingly solid backing."

eign powers, he broke relations with Russia, established a government of the ruling class in Nanking, destroyed the Canton National Government, and began the terror against the masses known as the "purge of Communists" from the Kuomintang.

The most powerful description of these tragic events has been told in Malraux's powerful novel, **Man's Fate**. Thousands of workers, students and intellectuals in Shanghai and other cities were slaughtered without trial, and Madame Sun Yat-sen together with hundreds of other revolutionary intellectuals, escaped as exiles to Europe. In 1928, Chiang Kai-shek's government at Nanking was recognized by us and other western powers, except Russia, as the Chinese National Government.

In July, 1927, four months after the terror began, a part of the Kuomintang army revolted and attempted to re-establish the national revolutionary government. Attacked from every side, all but 1,500 were decimated, but the scattered remnants were reassembled by General Chu Teh, one of the leaders, and two years later formed under Communist leadership into the first "Chinese Workers and Peasants Red Army," with headquarters in Kiangsi Province in the south.

In the following year, while the Japanese prepared to subject China, the Chinese Government waged five great military campaigns against this ever-growing peasant revolutionary army. German military advisers, among them General von Seeckt, one of Hitler's staff officers, designed the strategy for these campaigns. In 1934 the Red Army was pressed so hard that it broke through the **cordon** of surrounding enemy troops and made its epic "Long March" to northwestern China, of

tang armies.

This landlord-peasant conflict, called the Kuomintang-Communist conflict, had world-wide repercussions, resulting even in the recall to the United States of General Joseph W. Stilwell, who tried to force Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek to use his armies against the Japanese instead of against the 8th Route and New 4th Armies, and who refused to surrender American lend-lease material for civil war instead of for use against the Japanese. When General Albert Wedemeyer replaced Stilwell, and General Patrick Hurley replaced Ambassador Gauss in Chungking, our policy then changed from one of criticism to the policies of the Chungking Government, to open support of it. Our Government, influenced by big industrialists and financiers, has since openly supported everything the Chungking Government has done.

The one and only event tending to prevent this disastrous war is the new Chinese-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, signed in Moscow on August 14th of this year. Because, by terms of this Treaty, Soviet Russia recognizes the Chinese Government now in Chungking as the sovereign government of China, reactionary American newspapers and radio commentators, have joyously announced that this treaty "knocked the props out from under the Chinese Communists."

One should ask: "What props?" Since China and Soviet Russia resumed relations in 1932, Moscow has always recognized the Chinese National Government, while, from 1927 down to the present moment, the Chinese Communists and their armies of more than one million regulars and over two million civilian "minute-men" have received no aid whatever from Russia. Until

al Assembly which was to meet in November of this year and adopt a constitution. This demand is based on the fact that delegates for this Assembly were **appointed** by the Kuomintang in 1936, since when hundreds of them became Japanese quislings and others died. The Communists and the Democratic League demand an **election** National Assembly, which in turn would draw up a democratic Constitution. 3) **The formation of a joint High Command to which the Communists**

The corrupt Manchu Dynasty also had our "solid backing" until the Chinese people, led by Sun Yat-sen, overthrew them. Throughout his lifetime Dr. Sun received no backing from us, but after his death we backed Chiang Kai-shek. Must this be forever our policy, or will a new generation of Americans learn from past disasters to support the democratic Chinese people which alone can secure peace, progress, and brotherly cooperation with other peoples?