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MANSFIELD, MARINES, AND MOTHERS: THE POLITICS OF RESISTANCE TO THE
AMERICAN INTERVENTION IN NORTH CHINA FROM 1945-1946

By

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B.S. Systems Engineering, United States Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland, 1999

Thesis

presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

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in History

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Dedicated to:
KRH, JMB, JFR, MAF, DEB, WCR, JFB
and all Marines eternally on patrol in East Asia

Abstract

Compton, James, M.A., Spring 2022

History

Mansfield, Marines, and Mothers: The Politics of Resistance to the American Intervention in North China from 1945-1946

Chairperson: Dr. Kyle G. Volk

At the conclusion of World War II, American citizens, including millions of deployed servicemen, reasserted the democratic freedoms they sacrificed to win the war. The American intervention in North China during the Chinese Civil War presented a ripe opportunity for civic restoration in late 1945. Controversial and seemingly at odds with the stated goals of the Second World War—namely the “Four Freedoms” and the Atlantic Charter—the US military presence in North China faced formidable domestic political obstacles. This thesis explores the nexus of domestic politics and foreign policy in the post-World War II era. Focusing on 1945-1946, this project steps beyond the oft-studied foreign service personalities to examine the important role of Congress, the military, and public opinion in constraining US participation in the Chinese Civil War.

As the title suggests, Mansfield, Marines, and mothers are important political characters anchoring this research. I argue that Representative Mike Mansfield, from Montana’s first congressional district, served a vital role in elevating the dangers of the North China intervention in the public consciousness. With speeches critical of the Truman administration’s China policy in the House of Representatives, Mansfield’s words resonated with deployed Marines, their families, and with organized citizens’ groups. The lifting of wartime censorship also allowed

Marines in China to write congressmen, newspaper editors, and their families expressing opposition to direct participation in the Chinese Civil War. Marine leadership also skillfully interpreted opaque orders and carefully avoided an expanded role. Marines' families, and in particular mothers and spouses, crafted sophisticated arguments against expanded US military intervention in the language of self-determination, freedom, and democracy. Finally, I conclude that the deluge of public opinion at the outset of the North China intervention was an important factor in constraining American participation in the Chinese Civil War and in the genesis of the Marshall Mission.

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A Note on Romanization and Names

Historians writing about Chinese history in English must confront the challenge of how to present a language that uses fundamentally different characters and sounds. Two dominant English transliterations, Wade-Giles and Hanyu Pinyin, shifted temporally along with the political landscape of China during its tumultuous twentieth-century history. The Wade-Giles transliteration originated in England and owes its moniker to the two Cambridge professors who developed, refined, and proliferated it in the nineteenth century. Thomas Francis Wade was a product and agent of British imperialism in China, first arriving as a soldier during the Opium Wars and finishing forty years in the middle kingdom as a diplomat during the late Ch'ing (Qing) dynasty. Upon return to England, Wade became a professor of Chinese at Cambridge.¹ Throughout his life, Wade published scholarship about China and, most importantly, developed a romanization technique for Mandarin Chinese based upon the Peking (Beijing) dialect. Wade's successor at Cambridge, Herbert Allen Giles, also served as a diplomat in imperial China and built upon Wade's scholarship. Most notably, Giles published the first Chinese-English dictionary in 1892, which modified and standardized Wade's system for a wider audience.² Hanyu Pinyin transliteration, or simply Pinyin, developed in Communist China after the Chinese Civil War. Pinyin is the official romanization system of the Peoples' Republic of China and Wade-Giles remains in use in Taiwan, reflecting the enduring political chasm.³

¹ James L. Hevia, "An Imperial Nomad and the Great Game: Thomas Francis Wade in China," *Late Imperial China* 16, no. 2 (1995): 1-22.

² "Giles, Herbert Allen." In *Chambers Biographical Dictionary*, by Liam Rodger, and Joan Bakewell. 9th ed. Chambers Harrap, 2011.

³ "Pinyin." In *The Columbia Encyclopedia*, by Paul Lagasse, and Columbia University. 8th ed. Columbia University Press, 2018.

In this thesis, I chose the Wade-Giles Chinese transliteration over Pinyin for place names and historical actors. I did so for two primary reasons. First, Wade-Giles romanization was the language of the 1945-1946 era for Marines, diplomats, journalists, and politicians. The characters in this story, especially Marines, mothers, and wives, all knew and understood Chinese locations and politicians in their Wade-Giles form. Secondly, Wade-Giles is in keeping with the primary source material upon which this thesis is based. Supporting maps and images from the post-World War II period all use the Wade-Giles names for historical actors and locations. I have included historical maps within the body of the text so that the reader can better understand the spatial elements of the story. In the twenty-first century, however, readers may understandably elect to consult digital maps—as I did numerous times during this research project. The digital maps of 2022 will all follow the Pinyin transliteration. Additionally, most published scholarship about mainland China in the twenty-first century uses Pinyin. To mitigate frustration for the reader, I have included a reference table of place names and historical actors in both Pinyin and Wade-Giles.

Wade-Giles	Pinyin
Peiping	Beijing
Tientsin	Tianjin
Chungking	Chongqing
Shantung	Shandong
Hopeh	Hebei
Chinwangtao	Qinhuangdao
Chefoo	Zhifu
Taku	Dagu
Mao Tse-tung	Mao Zedong
Chou En-lai	Zhou Enlai
Chiang Kai-shek	Jiang Jieshi

Introduction

In Montana's Bitterroot Valley in 1945, Ethel Wonnacott scoured newspapers for stories from the Western Pacific. As a devout Mormon, a meatpacker, a wife, and the mother of two, Wonnacott would seem an unlikely candidate for political activism regarding America's foreign affairs.⁴ Yet like millions of other American mothers during World War II, Wonnacott had ample reason to stay informed and involved. Her youngest son, twenty-year old Private First Class Gilbert E. Wonnacott, was fighting across the Pacific with the United States Marines.⁵ With the sudden news of the Japanese surrender in mid-August, the Wonnacott family must have felt a profound sense of relief. The much-dreaded invasion of the Japanese mainland would not take place. Wonnacott and the rest of the Third Amphibious Corps (IIIAC), however, did not return immediately to the comfort of their waiting families. Instead, he and 53,000 other Marines deployed from Guam and Okinawa to China's Shantung and Hopeh Provinces. A warm and raucous Chinese crowd welcomed the IIIAC Marines at Taku on September 30 during the initial landings.⁶ Victory parades in Tientsin and Peiping underscored the celebratory sentiment prevailing in China in early October 1945.⁷ This elation, however, proved to be short-lived; soon Wonnacott and his fellow Marines found themselves with a front row seat to a renewed Chinese Civil War. Just six days after their arrival, Marines came under fire from Chinese Communist forces and suffered three casualties while guarding the railway 20 miles north of Tientsin. Six

⁴ "Ethel Wonnacott," *Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940*. April 8, 1940. Stevens Township, Ravalli County, Montana, Sheet 3B. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

⁵ "Gilbert E. Wonnacott," *U.S. Marine Corps Muster Rolls, July 1945*. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. PFC Wonnacott served with Golf Company, 2nd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment.

⁶ Henry I. Shaw, *The United States Marines in North China 1945-1949*. (Quantico: U.S. Marine Corps Historical Branch, 1960). 3-5.

⁷ "Parade After Japanese Surrender, 1945," John C. McQueen Collection, US Marine Corps History Division Archives, Collection 64.

thousand miles away in Stevensville, Montana, Ethel Wonnacott intently read newspaper stories and letters from her son. Confused and incensed by a US intervention that seemed to make no sense to her, Wonnacott became one of many mothers to engage in political action.

In October 1945, the political, economic, and military situation in North China was dire. Ravaged by war since July 1937, China suffered perhaps as many as 20 million deaths in its resistance to Japanese aggression and an additional 100 million people displaced.⁸ Famine, pestilence, and the Japanese war effort brought North China into a deep depression, and runaway inflation compounded the economic woe.⁹ As the internationally recognized National government led by Chiang Kai-shek sought to reestablish sovereignty over the devastated region, a resurgent Communist opposition, led by Mao Tse-tung, presented a formidable challenge. Given these difficult circumstances, just what was the US interest in North China? Protecting infrastructure? Enabling the Chinese Nationalist regime to reoccupy territory under Japanese control ahead of advancing Chinese Communist forces? Fighting communist insurgents? Absent a coherent message from political and military leaders in Washington, a vocal portion of the American people recognized the potential for the US to get stuck in a quagmire.

American intervention in North China not only lacked the moral clarity of the Second World War, it also conflicted with stated American foreign policy ideals of self-determination, freedom, and democracy. In important ways, the intervention in North China exposed the limits of American idealism in the post-war order to its domestic audience. The “Four Freedoms” and the Atlantic Charter framed the US aims during World War II to the American public. Its citizens

⁸ Richard Bernstein, *China 1945: Mao's Revolution and America's Fateful Choice* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014), 65-69.

⁹ James Chieh Hsiung and Steven I. Levine, eds. *China's Bitter Victory: The War with Japan, 1937-1945* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1992), 203-204.

fought to champion the values of freedom instead of tyranny; self-determination above imperialism; and democracy over autocracy. The American people viewed the war as a battle between good and evil—and the Americans were, according to anthropologist Margaret Mead, “on the side of the Right.”¹⁰ This perception was deliberately reinforced by government propaganda through the Office of War Information (OWI) and through the seven war loan campaigns that used bonds, as Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, Jr. suggested, “to sell the war, rather than vice versa.”¹¹ During the war, Americans turned a blind eye to Allies of convenience, most notably the Soviet Union, whose post-war political aims clashed mightily with the United States. While closer in political alignment, the US and Great Britain also clashed over the future of liberated colonies and the resumption of European empires.¹² In the aftermath of World War II, as these geopolitical pressures exposed the fissures in the grand alliance, it also highlighted the more complicated realities to the American public. In the shadows of victory, the black and white narrative of defeating despotic, evil regimes yielded to uncomfortable shades of grey.

Victory was achieved at tremendous cost. Most notably, more than 405,000 Americans were killed, over 72,000 were missing, and over 670,000 were wounded. Even families that did not suffer direct losses likely knew someone who served personally, as over 12 percent of the US population donned its nation’s uniform. Approximately 300,000 women joined the armed forces and over 19 million women were employed by 1944—including a 141 percent increase in the

¹⁰Allen M. Winkler, *Home Front U.S.A. America During World War II*, 3rd Ed. (Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, 2012), 32-35.

¹¹James T. Sparrow, *Warfare State: World War II Americans and the Age of Big Government* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 129.

¹²Walter LaFeber, *The American Age: United States Foreign Policy at Home and Abroad since 1750* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1989), 429.

manufacturing sector.¹³ Millions moved from agriculture to manufacturing, from the countryside to cities, to the North and West. The massive wartime mobilization impacted almost every facet of American society.

The wartime sacrifices also profoundly impacted American civic life. To win the war, Americans tolerated the temporary suspension of democratic ideals for the larger purpose of victory. The sacrifice of individual freedoms matched an overall pattern of subordination to the greater war effort. Americans displayed their patriotism through price controls, “victory gardens,” scrap metal drives, and volunteerism. They also acquiesced to a concentration of power in the executive and the curtailment of individual rights. As Clinton Rossiter noted, “the problems of civil liberty were . . . comparatively easy to solve” due to the American consensus about the war’s paramount importance.¹⁴ This emergency interruption of due process and the separation of powers, however, was not without consequence. The world’s foremost constitutional democracy elected to use repressive methods during the war. Most egregiously, Executive Order 9066 permitted—and the Supreme Court upheld—the forcible relocation and internment of 110,000 persons of Japanese ancestry, including 79,000 American citizens.¹⁵ Americans embraced propaganda through the OWI and accepted the requirement for the censorship of news. Sixteen million Americans served within an autocratic military structure and experienced significant limits to their individual rights. The cherished freedom of speech, for instance, was detrimental to good order and discipline in the uniformed ranks. In an environment where inadvertent exposure of operational plans could yield drastic consequences, American

¹³ Winkler, *Home Front U.S.A.*, 58-59.

¹⁴ Ira Katznelson, *Fear Itself: The New Deal and the Origins of Our Time* (New York: Liveright Publishing, 2013), 352-353.

¹⁵ Winkler, *Home Front U.S.A.*, 86.

servicemen understood the need for censorship.¹⁶ As such, communication with family, friends, spouses, and lovers were reviewed, redacted, and occasionally blocked altogether.

At the conclusion of World War II, American citizens—including millions of deployed servicemembers—reasserted the democratic freedoms they had sacrificed to win the war. The American intervention in North China presented a ripe opportunity for civic restoration. With the lifting of wartime censorship protocols, foreign correspondents painted word pictures for American audiences freely. Although no formal censorship had existed for domestic newspapers during the war, the federal government made efforts to restrict the flow of information to the press. Self-censorship was promoted as a patriotic virtue during the war.¹⁷ After V-J day, editorial boards opined on the intervention in North China without fear of reprisal or upsetting the national war effort. The complexity of the Chinese Civil War bombarded the pages of American periodicals without government filters. American GIs wrote letters home unencumbered and engaged in political activism through contacting their representatives in Congress, via local labor unions, or in letters to newspaper editors. With the surrender of the Japanese, these young soldiers, airmen, sailors, and Marines rapidly sought to turn their swords back into plowshares. In this sudden transformation, they became voters awaiting demobilization—not a conquering army—and reminded their political leadership about accountability at the ballot box. The Marines in North China had endured the savagery of Okinawa with purpose but had neither received nor accepted the anti-communist logic of the imminent Cold War. Their parents, spouses, and family members also stepped boldly back into

¹⁶ Sam Lebovic, *Free Speech and Unfree News: The Paradox of Press Freedom in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), 116-117. Ronald H. Spector, *Eagle Against the Sun: The American War with Japan* (New York: Vintage Books, 1985.) 452-453. The military term for this is “Operational Security,” designed to deny enemy intelligence advanced warning of impending American plans. The OWI reduced this to a simple highly proliferated phrase: “Loose lips sink ships.”

¹⁷ Lebovic, *Free Speech and Unfree News*, 112-113.

the political fray. Eager to prevent further bloodshed—particularly to their loved ones—they wrote congressional representatives, editorial boards, and President Truman and expressed their opposition to the intervention in North China. Meanwhile, the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) and local labor unions organized meetings in protest. Spouses, parents, and organized groups repurposed the language that Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s OWI convinced them that World War II was about: self-determination, freedom, and democracy.

In this reassertion of American democracy from the home front to North China, congressional representatives served as a nexus of grass-roots political activism. Congressman Mike Mansfield, a second term representative from Montana’s first district, exemplified the post-war reassertion of Congressional influence on American foreign policy. At an acute moment in late 1945, Mansfield delivered three speeches in the House of Representatives critical of US policy. Advocating withdrawal, Mansfield cautioned his colleagues that “if we decide to intervene, which I pray that we do not, we must be prepared to maintain armed forces in China for years to come.” The national angst over the Truman administration’s aims, according to Mansfield, stemmed from “secrecy.” The “force of public opinion” should “serve as a reminder” that only “the truth . . . will satisfy the American public at home and the American boys who are being forced to do an unpleasant job in north China.”¹⁸ While Mansfield’s speeches reflected his personal expertise about East Asia, they also included sentiments from a deluge of constituent letters—including deployed Marines—that to Mansfield illustrated the “force of public opinion.”¹⁹

¹⁸ “Our China Policy,” Congressional Record 91, December 11, 1945. 11852-11853.

¹⁹ “Demobilization, CBI,” Series IV, Box 26, Folders 5, 6, Mike Mansfield Papers, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana. (hereafter cited as Mansfield Papers).

In a crucial period from late 1945 to late 1946, an unlikely pairing of actors—Marines and mothers—displayed agency, engaging in various forms of political activism to question US involvement in the burgeoning Chinese civil war. Marines deployed in China contributed to shaping the discourse of American foreign policy with their blunt assessments of conditions on the ground. Simultaneously, as the visible agents of US power in China, Marine Corps officers directing the deployment carefully and deliberately avoided a costly escalation that could have trapped the United States as an active combatant in the Chinese civil war. The Marines’ families—especially mothers—wrote letters to congressmen, newspapers, and government officials demanding an end to the mission in North China. While the Truman administration faced a conundrum at the outset of the Chinese Civil War, Mansfield, Marines, and mothers sought to galvanize the American public firmly against a de facto American intervention in North China. In the wake of the Second World War, engaged citizens with a life-or-death stake in the outcome reasserted themselves into the American democracy they had sacrificed to preserve.

* * *

This thesis is the first scholarly exploration of the domestic and military politics surrounding the US military intervention in North China after World War II. The state of the field regarding the American intervention into North China is relatively thin. Intersecting several historiographical fields, this event occupies a tangential position in existing military, foreign relations, and Cold War scholarship. Even less explored is the nexus between domestic politics and US-China policy at the conclusion of World War II.

This research into the deployment to North China contributes to the under-recorded military history of small wars against non-state foes and low intensity conflict. Additionally, this

thesis views the Marines in China not as blunt instruments of national power, but as contingent actors who sought to shape policy and to favorably interpret directives towards de-escalation. In this statement, I do not intend to suggest that Marines in North China were either rogue or fully autonomous, but rather that a significant range of interpretive freedom, particularly in late 1945, existed for Marines in the III Amphibious Corps. Second, the Americans who primarily interacted with key Chinese leaders throughout the strata of North China were in fact military figures, rather than diplomats from the foreign service.²⁰ Why was the deployment to North China a seemingly forgotten historical event in US military history? The confines of historiography itself is partially to blame. Occupations and political transitions are rarely captured in scholarship—and only occasionally connected to the grand campaigns of war. Narratives of the Second World War frequently conclude with the surrender on September 2, 1945.²¹ Lost in this periodization are the vital governance positions held by military figures during substantive and lengthy occupations after World War II.²²

This research builds upon American foreign relations histories by investigating the role of domestic politics and deployed military influence in formulating US-China policy after World

²⁰ This interpretation builds upon scholarship by Richard D. Challener and Robert L. Beisner, which touch upon the roles of military officers in the development and execution of foreign policy.

²¹ Max Hastings, *Retribution: The Battle for Japan 1944-1945* (New York: Vintage Books, 2009), 540. Spector, *Eagle Against the Sun*, 560.

²² Scholarship regarding military occupations tends to focus on the top-level administrative roles served by military figures, such as General Douglas MacArthur in Japan or General John Hodge in Korea. For this research, the comparisons of Japan and Korea to North China serve to highlight the burdens facing military administration. Substantial autonomy for military commanders—and the responsibility to make political choices—existed in all three East Asian occupations. The official USMC history, *Victory and Occupation*, is notable in that it both includes North China as a part of World War II and also surveys the roles everyday Marines experienced during the intervention. For more on Japan and Korea, see: William Manchester, *American Caesar: Douglas MacArthur 1880-1964* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1978), John Gunther, *The Riddle of MacArthur: Japan, Korea, and the Far East* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1951), Richard E. Lauterbach, “Hodge’s Korea,” *The Virginia Quarterly Review*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (Summer, 1947) and Michael Schaller, *Douglas MacArthur: The Far Eastern General* (Oxford University Press, 1989).

War II. This leads to an exploration of the influence of Congress—specifically Representative Mike Mansfield and his Montana constituents—on American foreign policy towards China. The preeminent scholars in this field typically focus on the policy experts and major diplomatic players. I deliberately expand this view to include Congress, the deployed Marines, and American public opinion. Examining the constraints and impact of democracy, this research supports the view that American foreign relations were a balance between political and practical realities and argues against economic or imperialist determinism.

Historians have typically marked the beginning of the Cold War in 1945.²³ This research supports this periodization with an important caveat. While senior officials in the Truman administration were well ensconced in the new Cold War mentality, Congress, the Marines in China, and the American people writ large did not view China through a Cold War prism in 1945-1946. Furthermore, the Truman administration made no attempt to convince its citizens otherwise. While checking Soviet power took precedence over anti-communism, overt American assistance for the National Government of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek faced practical domestic opposition. In the aftermath of the Chinese Civil War, historians and politicians would debate who “lost China” to the communist sphere, yet very little Cold War scholarship has acknowledged the significant American combat power deployed to China in 1945.²⁴

* * *

Organized both thematically and chronologically, this thesis examines the initial phase of the intervention in North China from 1945 to 1946 through three primary lenses: political and diplomatic actors shaping and setting strategy, military officers and enlisted men interpreting and

²³ Caroline Pipe-Kennedy, *The Origins of the Cold War* (London: Palgrave Macmillian, 2007), 2-4.

²⁴ Daniel Kurtz-Phelan, *The China Mission: George Marshall's Unfinished War, 1945-1947* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 2018), 360-361.

influencing policy, and finally the impact of public opinion and domestic politics on foreign relations. While a relatively small number of Marines remained in North China until 1949, this thesis focuses on the critical first four months from the end of the Pacific War with Japan until the early weeks of the Marshall Mission in 1946. I contend that during this tumultuous period, the US had a range of policy options in East Asia. It is tempting to wade into counterfactual territory given the myriad of options available and debated in 1945. The purpose of this inquiry, however, is to focus on the actors and contingent moments, their choices, and how events unfolded over time. Rather than presenting a theme of inevitable expansion of US military roles and missions, this thesis explores a debate about foreign policy choices within the broader context of American democracy.

Chapter One, *Changing of the Guard and Competing Interests*, demonstrates that President Truman and his top advisors had adopted a Cold War mindset prior to the cessation of hostilities with Japan. Indeed, the very reason Marines were sent to North China and soldiers to South Korea was Truman's desire to limit the advance of the Soviet Far East Army's occupation. This chapter provides a brief overview of competing policy interests, the rapidly shifting military landscape, and the sea change of leadership in 1945. The intent is not to conduct a deep analysis of the sources of post-war planning, but rather to frame the events in North China in the proper political and military context.

The second chapter, *Congressman Mike Mansfield Sounds the Alarm and Seeks Answers*, surveys Mansfield's largely unexplored role as the public face of early opposition to military intervention in China and his substantial interaction with key actors in the Truman administration. I argue that Mansfield elevated the Marine intervention in China as a political issue in popular discourse. While Mansfield attempted to leverage his influence for an immediate

withdrawal of the IIIAC, his access to President Truman as well as in the State and War Departments yielded few tangible policy results. Mansfield's speeches, however, did resonate with deployed Marines, their families, and organized citizens' groups. Finally, I highlight Mansfield's voice—and the limited foreign policy debate in Congress—as an example of a reversion to pre-war democratic norms.

The third chapter, *Marines, Morale, and Mission: Military Voices*, investigates how Marines deployed to North China interpreted and influenced their mission. I argue that the Marine Corps leaders resisted the expansion of their mission while carefully constraining the use of force through strict rules of engagement. Additionally, I conclude that senior Marine officers were prepared for the political nature of the North China operation due to extensive experience in pre-war China and Latin America. The fine line of *assistance* to the Nationalist government and *neutrality* in “civil strife” placed tremendous responsibility upon the American expeditionary forces.²⁵ This was a nuance intended—if not fully appreciated—by the leadership in Washington.²⁶ It would be up to the Marines of the IIIAC to strike, in the words of its commanding general, this “difficult but essential” balance.²⁷ This equilibrium was not well understood by the rank and file Marines eager to return home. Speculation about their true purpose in China promoted vocal political activism. The removal of wartime censorship protocols in October 1945 enabled young, enlisted Marines to engage parents and congressmen on the merits of the mission in North China.

²⁵ Benis M. Frank and Henry I. Shaw, *Victory and Occupation: History of the U.S. Marine Corps Operations in World War II, Vol. V* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1968), 569-570.

²⁶ Marc S. Gallicchio, *The Cold War Begins in Asia: American East Asian Policy and the Fall of the Japanese Empire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 100-101.

²⁷ Frank and Shaw, *Victory and Occupation*, 570.

The fourth chapter, *Political Agents: Mothers, Wives, and Citizen Groups*, explores the role of public opinion and how domestic politics constrained foreign policy. I argue that the families of deployed Marines—mothers and wives—as well as organized citizen groups formed an effective public opposition to intervention in North China. The formal end of hostilities—V-J Day—proved a watershed moment both practically and psychologically. Wartime protocols like censorship and propaganda ended, and the public demanded rapid demobilization. Front page stories about the perilous Chinese Civil War raised important questions about American post-war aims in East Asia. Finally, I contend that the well-ingrained OWI messaging that underwrote American sacrifices to defeat Japan provided both the logic and the language of opposition to intervention in China.

In focusing on October 1945-January 1946, I have sought to emphasize the contingent moments of US-China relations in transition. This transition existed across multiple planes from Roosevelt to Truman, war to peace, Grand Alliance to Cold War, and anti-fascism to great power rivalry. In this watershed period, the United States assumed the mantle of world leadership, but many of its citizens were reluctant to assume the duties and costs of a global hegemon. Rather than viewing deployed forces simply as blunt instruments of national power, this thesis highlights the political agency, policy interpretation, and diplomatic influence of the citizen Marines. Additionally, I have elected to explore the role of Congress, grass roots citizens, and organized political groups in foreign policy discourse, rather than to focus on elite diplomatic circles. This bottom-up approach sheds light upon how everyday citizens conceived of and participated in American democracy. At the zenith of American political and economic power in 1945, informed public opinion steered the United States away from armed intervention in China. This is a story about citizenship and activism. It is a story of American democracy.

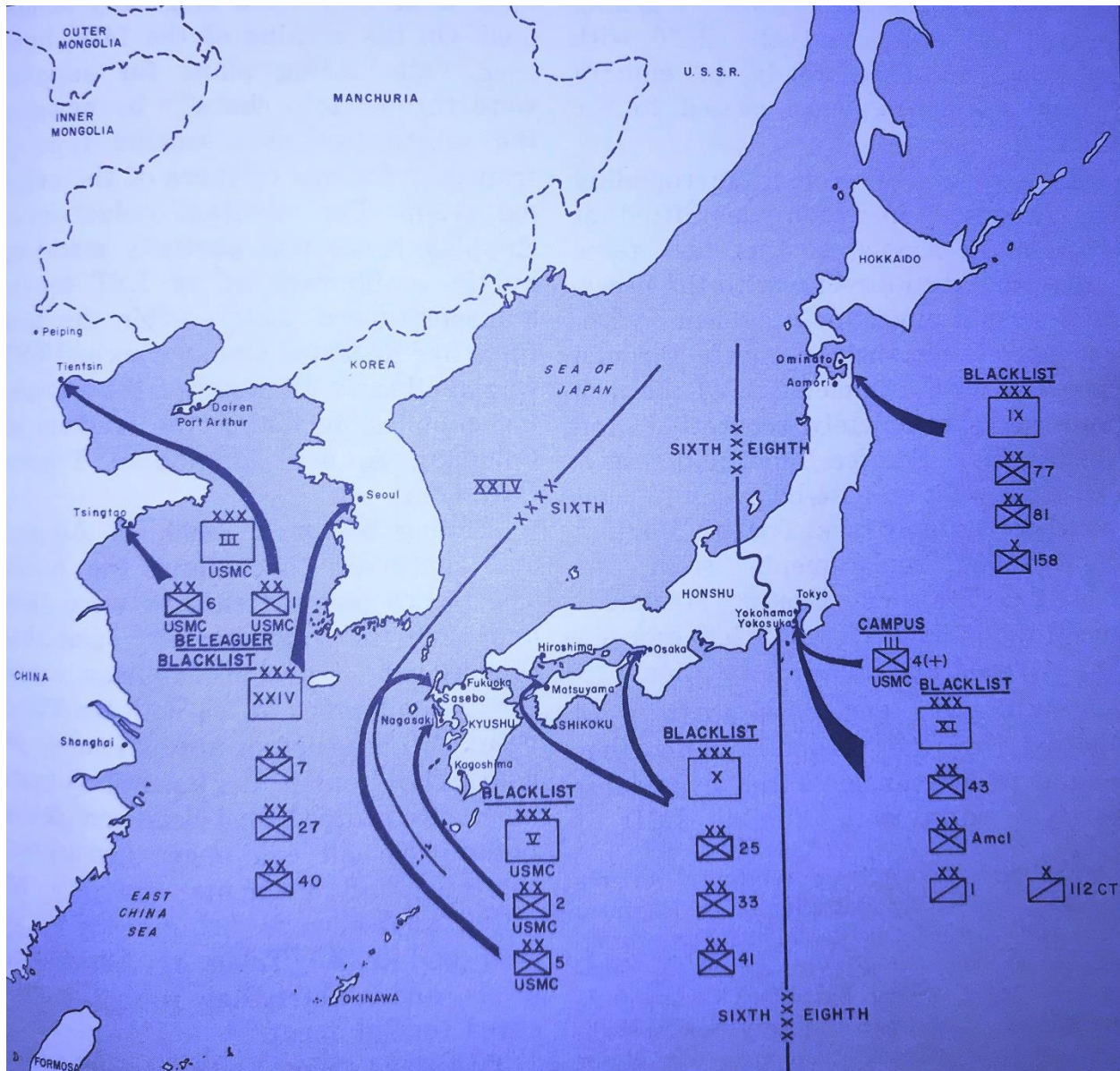


Figure 1: Occupation Plan for Imperial Japanese Held Territory 1945. Operation Beleaguer would be the responsibility of the Marine III Amphibious Corps (IIIAC) in China. Three X's constitutes a Corps sized element (50-60,000), Two X's a Division (15-20,000). The Soviet Far East Army (not depicted) would occupy Manchuria and North Korea. Courtesy of Archival Branch, USMC History Division.

Chapter 1

Changing of the Guard and Competing Interests: the Genesis of Operation Beleaguer

Operation Beleaguer, the code name for the IIIAC occupation of North China, emerged in a period of tremendous national and geopolitical transition. Franklin Delano Roosevelt's promotion of China as "the great Fourth Power in the world" frustrated Churchill, Stalin, and the US military leadership.²⁸ Unbeknownst to the public, at the Big Three summit meeting in Yalta in February, 1945, a frail FDR secretly conceded to Stalin's territorial demands in the Far East in exchange for Soviet entry into the war against Japan and tacit support for China's Nationalist government. FDR would not live long enough to serve as the charismatic mediator in the implementation of the Yalta accords as he envisioned.²⁹ That role fell instead to a significantly different personality—Harry S. Truman—at the dawn of the Cold War.

It was one thing rhetorically to support FDR's vision of China as a world power, but faced with an assertive Soviet Union and a sudden end to the war, Truman faced difficult choices and the practical limitations of US strength. By the next meeting of the Big Three at the Potsdam Conference in July, Truman suspected that recent Soviet behavior in Eastern Europe foreshadowed Soviet aims in the Far East. Truman sought to minimize Russian expansion in East Asia by shutting the Soviets out of the military occupation of Japan and by placing US troops on the mainland in China and Korea.³⁰ Furthermore, after V-J day, the new president was

²⁸ Winston S. Churchill, *Memoirs of the Second World War* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co, 1959), 753. Odd Arne Westad, *Cold War and Revolution: Soviet American Rivalry and the Origins of the Chinese Civil War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 9, Tang Tsou, *America's Failure in China, 1941-1950* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 35.

²⁹ Herbert Feis, *The China Tangle: The American Effort in China from Pearl Harbor to the Marshall Mission* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), 248-254.

³⁰ Gallicchio, *The Cold War Begins in Asia*, 56-57.

confronted by strong domestic political pressure to demobilize America's armed forces rapidly and a forthcoming midterm congressional election in 1946.³¹ FDR's public speeches justified the American sacrifice of men and material in a global struggle for freedom, self-determination, and anti-imperialism. In fact, Roosevelt brokered secret agreements with Allies that had yet to abandon the imperial order. FDR famously circumvented bureaucrats, but Truman now faced War, Navy, and State departments with differing ideas about how to occupy Japanese territory.³² As the Pacific War came to a sudden end, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) rushed to issue orders, establish boundaries, and to cope with conflicting priorities.

Operations Blacklist, Campus, and Beleaguer, the occupations of Japan, South Korea, and North China, all competed for limited resources—especially troops and sealift. After debate among the services and theater commanders, the JCS prioritized first Japan, then Korea, and finally China. Until the eleventh hour, an American occupation of the key port of Dairen in Manchuria was in play. With the devil in the details, field grade officers in the Pentagon would establish boundaries that sought to reconcile political directives with military realities, such as the 38th Parallel which would divide the US and Soviet zones of occupation in Korea.³³ On August 9, the Soviets entered the Pacific War and the second atomic bomb destroyed Nagasaki. The next day, Japan broadcast its intent to surrender. The race to the mainland and a contest to shape a new order for East Asia was on.

While countering Soviet ambitions drove Truman to commit forces to mainland Asia and deny Stalin an occupation zone in Hokkaido, supporting the Chinese Nationalist government

³¹ Gallicchio, *The Cold War Begins in Asia*, 120.

³² Gallicchio, *The Cold War Begins in Asia*, 19-37.

³³ Gallicchio, *The Cold War Begins in Asia*, 75.

emerged as an important element of US policy.³⁴ Keenly aware of the growing tension between the Chinese Nationalists and Communists, General Albert Wedemeyer, commanding general of US Forces China and advisor to Chinese Nationalist leader Chiang Kai-shek, requested six American divisions to stabilize North and Central China. With insufficient occupation forces to meet demand, the JCS accommodated Truman's intent by seizing key ports and terrain in North China with the Marines of the IIIAC.³⁵ Prioritized last for seafight, the IIIAC deployed in late September. In the lull of August-September, Mao Tse-tung responded to the long-anticipated Soviet invasion of Manchuria, by redeploying his Communist forces to North China and Manchuria.³⁶ Directed by the JCS, Wedemeyer made US sea and air lift available for nearly 500,000 Nationalist troops to ports and airfields secured by the IIIAC.³⁷ While what turned out to be fruitless high-level negotiations in Chungking between Chiang and Mao were taking place, the scene for a renewed Chinese Civil War was being set in the northeast. Behind closed doors, factions within the Truman administration viewed the IIIAC as an answer to meet different policy aims ranging from checking Soviet ambition to reasserting Nationalist sovereignty. The landing of the IIIAC in North China came as a surprise to the American public. Absent a formal announcement from the Truman administration, as newspapers reported the Marine landings in October, diplomats, politicians, Marines, and the American public wondered aloud: just exactly what were the Marines doing in North China?

³⁴ Westad, *Cold War and Revolution*, 104-105.

³⁵ Frank and Shaw, *Victory and Occupation*, 533.

³⁶ Westad, *Cold War and Revolution*, 78-79.

³⁷ Gallicchio, *The Cold War Begins in Asia*, 97.

Chapter 2

Congressman Mike Mansfield Sounds the Alarm and Seeks Answers

(October-December 1945)

One congressman's clear and credible voice stood out immediately in opposition to US intervention in North China: Mike Mansfield's. From October to December 1945, Representative Mansfield, of Montana's first congressional district, carried out a veritable media and policy blitz in the halls of Congress, in the State Department, and in print and broadcast media. A member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Mansfield sensed strategic confusion and bureaucratic dysfunction lurking behind America's China policy.³⁸ The Montana Democrat publicly expressed his frustration on the House floor and in public appearances in early October 1945. "What is our policy in the Far East going to be? This is a question which I have been mulling over in my mind ever since the surrender of Japan, and to date, except for our policy in Japan, I have been unable to find the answer."³⁹

In the week following the first Marine landing, Mansfield was one of the first government officials to highlight the potential for war. Appearing as a panelist for the Foreign Policy Association on October 9, Mansfield took a pragmatic stance against an enhanced American empire. Recalling an interventionist era when Marines landed to defend US business interests in China and Latin America, Mansfield emphatically stated that "the policy of imperialism . . . must be a thing of the past."⁴⁰ Furthermore, if the United States were to keep troops in liberated areas, what would prevent the Soviets or British from doing the same? If

³⁸ Mike Mansfield. "Situation in China," Congressional Record 91, No. 210. December 11, 1945, 12031-12034.

³⁹ Mike Mansfield. "American Policy in the Far East," Congressional Record 91, No. 210. October 11, 1945, 9779-9781.

⁴⁰ "U.S. Erred In North China, Foreign Policy Body Hears," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, October 10, 1945.

nothing else, the presence of Marines in China undermined American rhetoric supporting self-determination in the former Japanese empire with its British, French, and Soviet allies.

In a speech before the House on October 11, Mansfield reminded his fellow congressmen—and the newspapers he knew would print his words—of China’s domestic volatility.⁴¹ The fact that Marines’ boots were already on the ground in North China added to the urgency of the day. Not surprisingly, the former Marine Corps private intently focused on the anticipated quandary the Marines would face with the renewal of a Chinese Civil War. Mansfield noted that “the landing of the First and Sixth Marine Divisions . . . constitute an unwarranted interference in the affairs of China . . . the Shantung and Hopeh provinces contain sizeable Communist elements . . . and in that area we might be unable to maintain a hands-off policy.” Mansfield recommended a rapid withdrawal, fearful of a creeping political role for the Leathernecks in the unpredictable Chinese morass. Following a series of questions from colleagues in the House, Mansfield further clarified “I do object to two Marine Divisions being sent up to North China, because I’m afraid we may become involved too much in China’s internal affairs. We should be extremely careful.”⁴²

Mansfield’s speech of October 11 was printed in newspapers around the world, but he also set his sights on persuading key policy makers in the State Department. Visiting the Director of the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs, John Carter Vincent, on October 15, Mansfield reiterated his deep concerns about a lengthy presence of the Marines in North China and emphasized his “fear that the Soviet Union” might postpone withdrawal from Manchuria as a result. Vincent

⁴¹ Speech Notes, October 1945. Series IV, Box 2, Folder 1. Mike Mansfield Papers, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana. (hereafter cited as Mansfield Papers).

⁴² Mike Mansfield. “American Policy in the Far East,” Congressional Record 91, No. 210. October 11, 1945, 9779-9781.

presented Mansfield with an official letter to Congressman Hugh DeLacy stating that “our armed forces are in China not for the purpose of assisting any Chinese faction or group.” After reading the letter, Vincent noted that “the explanation...did not satisfy” Mansfield.⁴³ In a memorandum to Acting Secretary of State Dean Acheson, Vincent proposed that Acheson prompt the Secretaries of War and the Navy to make public statements that the Marines “would be withdrawn as soon as they [could] be relieved by Chinese Government Forces.”⁴⁴ Vincent clearly held similar views to Mansfield. While imploring that the State Department determine the proposed plans by the War Department and place the matter “before the President,” Vincent wrote that “the picture of American troops putting down civil disorder in China is not, of course, a pretty one.”⁴⁵ When confirmation of the proposed landings arrived on September 27, Vincent again pleaded for a Presidential decision. He opined that “unless there are over-riding military reasons for carrying out these dispositions of Marines, the plan should be abandoned in favor of occupation by Chinese troops.”⁴⁶ In Mansfield, Vincent found an ally who not only agreed with Vincent’s position but was a willing partner unencumbered by bureaucratic media protocols. Mansfield would be the public voice that Vincent could not.

The same day Vincent met with Mansfield, Acheson received a cable from Chungking emphasizing the benefits of the Marine presence for Chiang Kai-shek’s Nationalist government.

Despite awareness of heightened Chinese Communist ire towards the United States, the

⁴³ Letter of Undersecretary of State Acheson to Rep. Hugh De Lacy, October 9, 1945. *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1945, The Far East, China, Volume VII*, Document 438. (hereafter cited as *FRUS, China*).

⁴⁴ John Carter Vincent to Dean Acheson, U.S. State Department Memorandum. “American Marines in North China,” October 16, 1945. *Chinese Civil War and U.S.-China Relations: Records of the Office of Chinese Affairs, 1945-195 Collection*. National Archives (United States).

⁴⁵ John Carter Vincent to Dean Acheson, U.S. State Department Memorandum. September 20, 1945. *FRUS, China*, Document 425.

⁴⁶ Vincent to Acheson, U.S. State Department Memorandum. “Occupation of Chinese Cities by American Troops,” September 27, 1945. *FRUS, China*, Document 430.

American diplomatic mission in China was nevertheless pleased that Marines were tipping the balance towards the Nationalists. This was especially noticeable in the major cities like Peiping, where the III Amphibious Corps' garrison induced the Communists' troops to withdraw. The US military attaché happily reported that "Chinese Communists are no match for Central Government troops acting with American assistance."⁴⁷ Mansfield's meeting with State Department officials and speech on October 11 may have influenced the State Department internal deliberations about China policy—and bolstered Vincent's position vis-à-vis that of the American mission in Chungking.

The debate about US-China policy entered an important phase in the autumn of 1945. Mansfield's speech occurred in the wake of the London Foreign Ministers Conference, where significant friction between Secretary of State James F. Byrnes and Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov emerged about the future of democracy in Eastern Europe and the Soviet role in the Far East.⁴⁸ Mansfield's anti-interventionist speech was printed in the Soviet newspaper *Izvestiya* on October 16, and Ambassador Averell Harriman cabled Mansfield's re-translated speech to the Secretary of State—and to Chungking.⁴⁹ The state-controlled Soviet press found Mansfield's position favorable to Soviet interests—which gave American diplomats understandable pause. The Marines in North China were already pawns in a geo-political Cold War chess game that few Americans in October 1945 knew about—let alone understood.

Like Vincent, Mansfield feared that the top officials in the Truman administration, did not fundamentally understand the danger lurking in North China. Mansfield was convinced that

⁴⁷ Chargé Robertson to the Secretary of State, U.S. State Department Telegram. October 15, 1945. *FRUS, China*, Document 440.

⁴⁸ First Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers, London, September 11-October 2, 1945. *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1945, General: Political and Economic Matters, Volume II*

⁴⁹ Telegram of the Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Harriman) to the Secretary of State, October 17, 1945. *FRUS, China*, Document 442.

his resume and reputation as “an expert on the Far East,” would present an opportunity to directly educate and influence President Truman.⁵⁰ In the previous administration, Mansfield sought out—and was granted—a high-profile role as Roosevelt’s personal emissary to China. Just after the 1944 election, FDR sent the freshman congressman to China where Mansfield met with key Chinese and American officials in Chungking including Chiang Kai-shek, Ambassador Patrick Hurley, and General Albert Wedemeyer.⁵¹ Upon returning to Washington in January 1945, Mansfield personally presented his “China Mission Report” to President Roosevelt, Secretary of State Edward Stettinius, and General George C. Marshall.⁵² Following FDR’s death in April, a new president, a new Secretary of State, and new presidential aides complicated Mansfield’s access. As luck would have it, Mansfield was at the White House with President Truman when news of the Japanese surrender was announced in August 1945. In that meeting, Mansfield asked for a chance to reprise his role as a special presidential envoy to China, but the new president declined. Mansfield knew that President Truman was a novice in foreign affairs and was paper thin on East Asia. Despite his early rebuff from President Truman, Mansfield was determined to regain personal access to the President—even more so when 53,000 Marines landed in North China.⁵³

While trying to get on the President’s calendar, Mansfield returned to Congress on October 30 and delivered another speech critical of the Truman administration’s deployment of Marines. Mansfield declared to the House that a Chinese “civil war is in progress,” and that “marines have already been wounded in the province of Shantung because of the fighting

⁵⁰ Don Oberdorfer, *Senator Mansfield*, (Washington: Smithsonian Books, 2003). 84.

⁵¹ “Report on China,” Series XIX, Box 8, Folder 1, Mansfield Papers.

⁵² Don Oberdorfer, *Senator Mansfield*, 81. Hood, Charles Eugene, Jr. “China Mike Mansfield: The Making of a Congressional Authority on the Far East.” PhD diss., Washington State University, 1980, 290-310.

⁵³ Don Oberdorfer, *Senator Mansfield*, 86-87.

between Chinese elements.” Mansfield again called for an unequivocal withdrawal from North China not just on the basis of projected risk, but on hard-earned credit for fighting World War II. “These men,” he said, “have done their job in the Pacific and the best policy for us would be to bring them home to their country and their loved ones.”⁵⁴ As Mansfield spoke, Consul Paul Meyer, from Tientsin, cabled to administration officials an alternate view of the important stabilizing role Marines played in the key railroad city. Meyer noted that the “mission of American Marines . . . daily takes on more of a political aspect” and that “this development is natural and unavoidable . . . and presumably was contemplated when the Marines were sent in here.”⁵⁵ Meyer’s recommendation of preserving the Marine presence in China stood in stark contrast to Mansfield’s, revealing the complicated risk balance the Truman administration faced. All options presented risks.

By the first week of November, headlines like: “Yank Intervention Charged by Reds” appeared nationwide.⁵⁶ After a month of speeches, press events, and State Department meetings, Mansfield took his case directly to Truman and reminded the President about “our fundamental policy of non-interference.” In a letter on November 7, Mansfield wrote the President that “The sending in of over 50,000 United States Marines to North China . . . is, in my opinion, potentially explosive. . . our forces are caught in a situation not of their making and one which may involve us unwittingly.” Mansfield raised the specter of public opinion and appealed to the President’s political sense noting that “it will cause trouble here at home as the American people have no

⁵⁴ US Congress. Congressional Record 91, No. 210. October 11, 1945, 9779-9781.

⁵⁵ Telegram from Consul Paul Meyer to the Secretary of State. October 30, 1945. *FRUS, China*, Document 449.

⁵⁶ “Yank Intervention Charged by Reds,” *Havre Daily News* (Montana), November 5, 1945. This is consistent with a survey of national newspapers during the same period that carried United Press (UP) and Associated Press (AP) stories. The UP and AP served 981 and 1,247 respectively of the 1803 English language newspapers in the United States in 1945. *Associated Press v. United States*, 326 U.S. 1(1945), <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/326/1/>

desire for their boys to become involved in another country's troubles." Finally, Mansfield introduced Truman to indications of low troop morale: "I have received hundreds of letters in the past month from servicemen in Asia and the feeling on their part is one of great discontent. These men have done their job and the best policy for us would be to bring them home."⁵⁷ Truman granted Mansfield a White House meeting about China policy three weeks later, but the Truman administration moved immediately to calm the growing clamor raised by Mansfield and a skeptical public. In early November, Secretary of State Byrnes held a press conference and announced that "the United States is planning to withdraw its Marines from hot spots in China."⁵⁸ Byrnes' statement may have bought some time for Truman's plans to mature, but the deteriorating conditions in North China prevented a hasty withdrawal. The burden of pursuing a more nuanced US policy in the Far East would fall upon the shoulders of the Third Amphibious Corps.

After the initial wave of public response in early November, some in Congress and in print media attempted to justify American intervention in China. One prominent congressman, Dr. Walter H. Judd, Republican of Minnesota, emerged as a counter voice to Mansfield in the House. Judd spoke with definite credibility on military issues and China policy. Judd served—like Truman—as an Army artillery officer in combat during World War I. From 1925-1931, Judd worked as a medical missionary in South China, returning to the United States only because of complications from malaria. From 1934-1938, Dr. Judd worked in North China, where he witnessed firsthand the Chiang Kai-shek government and the Japanese invasion. Elected to

⁵⁷ Mansfield Letter to President Truman, November 7, 1945. Series IV, Box 26, Folder 5. Mansfield Papers.

⁵⁸ "US Marines Soon to Be Withdrawn," *Montana Standard* (Butte), November 8, 1945.

Congress in 1942, Judd frequently spoke about US-China relations.⁵⁹ On November 20, Judd sensed that despite winning the war, the US was in danger of losing the peace in China. Judd asked the House, “Are we now to throw away that hard-bought military victory by abandoning China?” Judd acknowledged the public “confusion” about US policy and countered that “our own obligations and interests” in China “are not nebulous or divided” but “clear and compelling.”⁶⁰ Judd concluded his speech by citing a *Life* magazine article titled “China: What Price Peace.” *Life* also recognized the “cry” from the deployed Marines and that “mass meetings are held, and United States newspapers editorially demand that we quit China” while “families cry, ‘why aren’t our boys back home?’” Dismissing the wave of public opinion as “oversensitivity” and due partly to “Communist propaganda,” *Life* called for “calm and courageous American public opinion” to “support the legitimate government of China with all our heart and soul.”⁶¹

A Portland, Oregon trip to Congressman James Mott’s funeral and congressional hearings about atomic energy occupied Mike Mansfield’s public calendar in mid-November, but China policy remained foremost on his mind.⁶² The principal reason for Mansfield’s sudden public silence about US-Chinese relations, however, was due to a growing unease with Communist-associated political committees and newspapers that were using Mansfield’s speeches frequently.⁶³

⁵⁹ Walter H. Judd and Edward J. Rozek, *Walter H. Judd, Chronicles of a Statesman* (Denver: Grier & Co., 1980), v-vii.

⁶⁰ Rep. Walter H. Judd, “China: What Price Peace,” November 20, 1945. Congressional Record 91, part 8, 10863-10865.

⁶¹ “China: What Price Peace?” *Life*, November 19, 1945.

⁶² *Statesman Journal* (Salem, Oregon) November 16, 1945.

⁶³ Mansfield Memorandum, November 27, 1945. Series XIX, Box 604, Folder 14. Mansfield Papers.

Other Congressmen, most notably Hugh DeLacy from Seattle, ratcheted up the anti-interventionist rhetoric in late November. DeLacy, however, was strongly associated with Communist front organizations and “left a red mark on the hill” with a record that “read like the case history of a fellow traveler.”⁶⁴ In a speech to the House on November 26, DeLacy not only criticized the Marines “being used to suppress the aspirations of millions for a new democracy,” but also excoriated the top US military and diplomatic officers in China. Rogue officers committed war crimes, according to DeLacy, with “neither moral nor political authority.” The US was “so thoroughly committed to armed intervention,” DeLacy opined, that General Albert C. Wedemeyer “authorized air attacks upon a tiny Chinese village . . . in retaliation for a few rifle shots at a train.” As covered in more detail in chapter three, DeLacy’s description of the incident implied an escalation of disproportionate force, instead of the remarkable discipline and restraint that had actually occurred. DeLacy, however, reserved his harshest criticism for Ambassador Patrick J. Hurley and noted that Hurley’s actions “made the present civil war unavoidable” and “committed us to armed intervention.” DeLacy contrasted US actions with “the lofty principles” articulated by the late FDR and placed the blame at the feet of Hurley and Wedemeyer, choosing to leave President Truman out of his remarks. The most explosive language, however, addressed Hurley’s alleged treatment of foreign service officers. DeLacy stated that “Hurley purged able China experts with long records of service who were critical of

⁶⁴ “Thunder on the Left,” *Newsweek*, December 24, 1945. “Fellow Traveler” is a person sympathetic to Communist politics. The insinuation in conservative *Newsweek* was that DeLacy was either a closet Communist or being manipulated to serve Soviet interests. It was later revealed that DeLacy was one of “two Communists who were elected to Congress” in 1944. John J. Abt, *Advocate and Activist: Memories of an American Communist Lawyer* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 117.

his policies.”⁶⁵ Without calling outright for Hurley’s resignation, DeLacy made it clear that Hurley was the problem and that State Department experts advocated a different approach.

The same day DeLacy harshly criticized Hurley in Congress, Mansfield and Hurley met for a private meeting. Mansfield sought to share his concerns about the dangers lurking in North China and likely hoped to influence Hurley to support a path for withdrawal of the Marines. Before much policy could be discussed, however, Hurley stunned Mansfield with news that radically altered the agenda. Hurley had resigned his ambassadorship due to illness that morning. Hurley further informed Mansfield that he had recommended Mansfield as the best possible choice to serve as his ambassadorial replacement to both President Truman and Secretary Byrnes. Hurley’s reasoning was simple. Mansfield “was the only Congressman who had gone to China, who kept his mouth shut and made no enemies.”⁶⁶

Despite the development of unwelcome Communist activists using his words, Mansfield had good reason for optimism as he entered the White House on November 27; he likely thought he would be returning to China as a Presidential envoy. The date of Mansfield’s White House meeting coincided with an amplification in the China policy crisis: the very public resignation of Ambassador Hurley. Rather than citing health reasons, Ambassador Hurley lambasted US policy towards China as somehow supporting both “imperialism and Communism” and added that “the Hydra-headed direction and confusion of our foreign policy in Washington during the late war is chargeable to the weakness of our Foreign Service.”⁶⁷ When Hurley learned of DeLacy’s

⁶⁵ Hugh DeLacy, “Return of United States Troops from China,” *Congressional Record*, 79th Congress, 1st Session, Vol. 91, Part 8, November 26, 1945. 10993-10995

⁶⁶ Meeting with Ambassador Patrick Hurley, Personal Memorandum, November 26, 1945. Series XIX, Box 511, Folder 2. Mansfield Papers.

⁶⁷ The Ambassador in China (Hurley) to President Truman, November 26, 1945. *FRUS, China*, Document 530.

comments, particularly the detail that likely came from State Department leaks, Hurley angrily and publicly changed tactics.

Mansfield agreed that the administration's foreign policy was confusing, but he did not ascribe the blame to the professional diplomats. The hunt for "Communist spies" in the State Department that Senator Joseph McCarthy would famously weaponize in the coming years was heralded by Hurley's resignation letter and the explosive Congressional hearings that followed.⁶⁸ It is interesting that DeLacy—an actual Communist—did possess sensitive inside details from State Department sources and likely incited Hurley's response.⁶⁹ Mansfield sought to deescalate the polarized rhetoric and to seek a moderate tone. Mansfield publicly commended Ambassador Hurley and simultaneously defended the Foreign Service. The Foreign Service members "who are made the butt of attacks" and "have little opportunity to defend themselves" were extremely appreciative of Mansfield's support. One wrote: "May we prove worthy of such a generous and fair-minded champion!"⁷⁰

In his much-anticipated one-on-one audience with President Truman on November 27, Mansfield must have quickly ascertained that no second presidential mission was in store for him. Instead, that morning, Mansfield discovered a president primarily concerned with Soviet expansion and influence. After Mansfield reiterated his belief that the presence of Marines made involvement in the Chinese Civil War probable, he argued for a definitive withdrawal date for the Marines. President Truman replied in his characteristically blunt Missouri fashion: "I cannot

⁶⁸ John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War*, (New York: Penguin Press, 2005). 39-40.

⁶⁹ Numerous State Department officials including John Stewart Service, George Atcheson, Jr., Arthur Ringwalt, Fulton Freeman, John Carter Vincent and others, faced increased scrutiny as a result of Hurley's resignation. This built upon the *Amerasia* Affair, where its communist-friendly editor Philip Jaffe was found in possession of numerous leaked State department documents. For more information see: Gary May, *China Scapegoat: The Diplomatic Ordeal of John Carter Vincent* (Washington: New Republic Books, 1979), 168-169 and John Paton Davies, Jr., *China Hand* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 226-240.

⁷⁰ Letter from Arthur Ringwalt and Fulton Freeman, January 4, 1946. Mansfield Papers.

do that. The situation is over there is more serious than most people know. We have promised to back Chiang Kai-shek and we will.” Sensing that the President was committed to support Chiang, Mansfield pivoted to recommendations for indirect support and pleaded with the President to be candid and straightforward with the American public about U.S. foreign policy.⁷¹ President Truman made no direct reply to Mansfield’s suggestions, although he added that China’s Nationalist Government trusted “only us and we got [sic] to carry the commitments through to the finish.”⁷² One key US-China policy change did, however, emerge immediately after the Mansfield meeting at the White House. Later that afternoon, President Truman called General George C. Marshall at his home in Leesburg, Virginia and asked him to serve as his “Special Ambassadorial Envoy to China.” The quintessential five-star public servant made no attempt to extend his one-day old retirement, replying only with “Yes, Mr. President.”⁷³

While Mansfield was likely disappointed not to be tapped as ambassador, he sought to influence Marshall with information from the China report Mansfield wrote in January. The second-term congressman’s audacity was fully on display as Mansfield wrote to Marshall—a man more than twenty years his senior who possessed a towering reputation—the following day to offer both his public support and his private counsel. Mansfield implored Marshall to benefit from his own experience by looking “over once again the copy of the report I made to President Roosevelt on my return from China in January of this year.”⁷⁴ Mansfield praised the choice of General Marshall to Secretary of State Byrnes, stating that “No finer choice could have been

⁷¹ Meeting with President Truman, Personal Memorandum, November 26, 1945. Series XIX, Box 604, Folder 16. Mansfield Papers.

⁷² Oberdorfer, *Senator Mansfield*, 87.

⁷³ Kurtz-Phelan, *The China Mission*, 10-11.

⁷⁴ Personal and Confidential letter to Gen. George C. Marshall, November 29, 1945. Series XIX, Box 511, Folder 2. Mansfield Papers.

made . . . he has the tact, diplomacy, and courage necessary to overcome the difficulties he will face.”⁷⁵

As General Marshall prepared for his new assignment, he balanced his time with congressional testimony about the Pearl Harbor attack in 1941. Most of Congress was looking back at the embarrassing beginning of the war, but Mansfield attempted to steer the House of Representatives forward to China policy in a speech he gave on December 11, 1945. Despite his meetings with the State Department and the President, Mansfield sensed that a passive Congress was sleeping while American policy threatened to plunge the United States unwittingly into another conflict. After a lengthy review of Ambassador Hurley’s tenure in China and endorsing Marshall, Mansfield turned to the *de facto* intervention in China and America’s options:

The real issue in China, in the minds of the American people, is intervention. We have two choices, either intervene all the way or get out by a definite date. If we decide to intervene, which I pray we do not, we must be prepared to maintain armed forces in China for years to come because the present situation will not, of course be cleared up overnight. We must act promptly to clarify our policy so that we may know, as far as possible, just what is going on, why it is being done, and what we hope to accomplish.⁷⁶

Mansfield then shifted to the United States’ long-standing “Open Door” policy in the emerging Cold War context, and of the need to explain its foreign policy to its skeptical citizens:

We must not develop an “iron curtain” of our own. We must continue to uphold America’s traditional China policy of non-intervention in her internal affairs...There has been no need for secrecy...and the results achieved by our postwar China policy should serve as a reminder to us that the truth and the truth only will satisfy the American public at home and the American boys who are being forced to do an unpleasant job in north China today.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Letter from Mansfield to Byrnes. November 29, 1945. Series XIX, Box 511, Folder 2. Mansfield Papers.

⁷⁶ Mike Mansfield. “Our China Policy,” Congressional Record 91 (1945): 11850-11852.

⁷⁷ Mike Mansfield. “Our China Policy,” Congressional Record 91 (1945): 11850-11852.

At the conclusion of the speech, Mansfield took questions from House Majority leader John McCormack, holding firm to a policy of non-intervention.

McCormack: Does the gentleman admit that it is of vital importance to our country for generations to come that the friendship...between China and America be cemented as closely as possible?

Mansfield: I certainly do, but that friendship will not be implemented through the dispatching of expeditionary forces to China.

As McCormack demonstrated, appeals to Chinese friendship, unity, and national interests all blurred US policy towards China and provided openings to expand the Marines' mission to a more direct form of participation in Chinese internal affairs. Mansfield's voice in opposition to intervention in China was constant, consistent, and clear—even if the Truman administration was anything but.

The same day Mansfield spoke in Congress about America's China policy, President Truman, General Marshall, Secretary of State Byrnes, and Chief of Staff Admiral William D. Leahy gathered at the White House to discuss Marshall's mission. In Marshall's hand was a written directive that "U.S. support will not extend to U.S. military intervention to influence the course of any Chinese internal strife," but Marshall's charge was to deliver a "strong, peaceful, united, and democratic China." The President was counting on Marshall to achieve "political unity before our troops leave China," which implied either a lengthy stay for the North China Marines or a miracle. Ever the unflappable public servant, General Marshall prodded the President for the limits of his ability to pressure Chiang Kai-shek in the negotiation. The President was clear. When push came to shove, Marshall would have to "continue to back the

National Government” no matter how little Chiang cooperated.⁷⁸ On one hand, Truman selected perhaps the most universally respected, apolitical figure possible to attempt to broker peace in China between Chiang Kai-shek’s Nationalists and Mao Tse-tung’s Communists. On the other hand, the President equipped Marshall with little real diplomatic leverage, and success was contingent upon the behavior of the firmly entrenched Chinese parties.

General Marshall set off to China from National Airport armed with little but hope. As the C-54 lumbered airborne, the diplomat John Carter Vincent prayerfully told his son: “there goes the bravest man in the world. He’s going to try to unify China.”⁷⁹ The country professed great faith in Marshall to be sure. His mission would seek to bridge the deep domestic divisions of China and to unite the country as Roosevelt once dreamed. Despite Mansfield and Vincent’s pleas, the Marines of the III Amphibious Corps would remain in North China for the foreseeable future. In large measure, the IIIAC sought to control its own fate and avoid direct participation in the Chinese Civil War.

⁷⁸ Memorandum of Conversation by General Marshall, *FRUS, China*, Document 555 and 557.

⁷⁹ Kurtz-Phelan, *The China Mission*, 48-49.



Figure 3: An accurate depiction of areas of control in November 1945. Note the recognition of both US assistance to Chinese Nationalist troops and the warring factions. Images like this made it difficult for the Truman administration to explain the role of Marines in North China to the American public. *Time*, November 12, 1945.

Chapter 3

Marines, Morale, and Mission: Military Voices (1945-1946)

Ugly rumors circulated that we would hit Japan next, with an expected casualty figure of one million Americans. No one wanted to talk about that...then on 15 August the war ended. We received the news with quiet disbelief coupled with an indescribable sense of relief. We thought the Japanese would never surrender. Many refused to believe it. Sitting in stunned silence, we remembered our dead. So many dead. So many maimed. So many bright futures consigned to the ashes of the past. So many dreams lost in the madness that had engulfed us. Except for a few widely scattered shouts of joy, the survivors of the abyss sat hollow-eyed and silent, trying to comprehend a world without war.⁸⁰

-Corporal Eugene B. Sledge, 1st Marine Division, III Amphibious Corps

Deployed to North China in October 1945, the Marines of the III Amphibious Corps (IIIAC) implemented a more limited American policy by resisting the expansion of their mission and restraining the use of force. They also wrote home in exasperated frustration. Operation Beleaguer tasked the IIIAC with seizing key ports, railheads, airfields, and cities in North China to accept the “local surrender of Japanese forces,” and “to cooperate with Chinese Central Government Forces,” while “avoiding collaboration” with “forces opposing the Central government.”⁸¹ The IIIAC, commanded by Major General Keller E. Rockey, primarily comprised the First and Sixth Marine Divisions as well as the First Marine Aircraft Wing. All told, the veteran 53,000-man IIIAC brought a formidable, full-spectrum combat force of tanks, fighter aircraft, artillery, and infantry to North China. Despite the Marines’ advantages in firepower and equipment, they were heavily outnumbered in North China by the presence of

⁸⁰ Eugene B. Sledge, *With the Old Breed*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981) 312-315.

⁸¹ “6th Mar Div Op Ord Annex A,” September 18, 1945. Papers. WW II, China, Box 1, Folder 2/1. U.S. Marine Corps Archives, Quantico, Virginia (hereafter cited as USMC Archives).

Japanese soldiers (326,000), Chinese “puppet” troops under Japanese control (480,000), and at least 170,000 Communist Chinese forces.⁸² Exactly how these disparate elements would interact was unclear. Only time would tell whether the Americans would be welcomed as liberators or shunned as invaders by the scores of millions of liberated war-weary Chinese. As confused as the mission and environment seemed to Marine senior officers like General Rockey, the young, enlisted Marines were even more in the dark. The American troops’ morale, peaked by America’s and its allies’ sudden victory in August, quickly evaporated by late 1945, and they sounded off in letters home and in protest meetings throughout the Pacific declaring that “the war is over, bring us home!”⁸³ Armed with pens and newly freed from wartime censorship, citizen soldiers participated in the democracy they had fought to defend.



Figure 2: IIIAC Operations Area of Shantung and Hopeh Provinces. The Marines would secure key ports, cities, and railways. The Soviet Far East Army occupied neighboring Manchuria (Jehol, Liaoning Provinces). 1945. Courtesy of Archival Branch, U.S. Marine Corps History Division.

⁸² Frank and Shaw, *Victory and Occupation*, 533-542. “Puppet” troops were local Chinese troops serving under the authority of the Japanese government.

⁸³ Demobilization, 1945. Series V, Box 111, Folder 1. Mike Mansfield Papers, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana (hereafter cited as Mansfield Papers).

In North China, senior leaders and staff of the IIIAC sought to minimize expansion of their mission beyond simply disarming and repatriating the Japanese. The temptation to serve as facilitators for the Chinese Nationalist forces persisted throughout the Marines' time in North China. While the Marine leaders accepted the Truman administration's preference for a "strong, peaceful, united, and democratic China" under Chiang Kai-shek, they also recognized that American policy would hinge largely upon the Communist response.⁸⁴ Avoiding an outright confrontation required a careful set of directives understood by the lowliest rifleman. Shaped by experienced leaders, the Marines established and maintained a baseline policy of non-involvement and risk mitigation through skillful negotiation and strict rules of engagement.

General Rockey and his senior officers immediately recognized that the Communists desired to maintain their positional advantage and would resist the deployment of Nationalist forces. Fortunately, the Marine leadership was experienced not only in recent combat, but also in occupation duty before the war. Of the eight generals in the IIIAC, only Rockey had never been stationed in China; although he had served with distinction in the occupations of both Nicaragua and Haiti.⁸⁵ Perhaps the most seasoned "China Hand" was Brigadier General William A. Worton, Rockey's Chief of Staff. A Chinese speaker with more than twelve years of China experience, Worton coordinated the advanced party and identified the key locations where the Marines would deploy and billet.⁸⁶ In late September, Worton was contacted by "the people opposed to Chiang Kai-shek." General Chou En-lai arrived for a tense negotiation and informed

⁸⁴ President Truman to General Marshall, US Policy Toward China, December 1945, *FRUS China*, Document 558.

⁸⁵ "Lieutenant General Keller E. Rockey, USMC (DECEASED)," *Marine Corps History Division*, <https://www.usmcu.edu/Research/Marine-Corps-History-Division/People/Whos-Who-in-Marine-Corps-History/Paige-Russell/Lieutenant-General-Keller-E-Rockey/>

⁸⁶ Frank and Shaw, *Victory and Occupation*, 544.

Worton that the Communist troops would fight the Marines if they attempted to occupy Peiping. Unfazed, Worton coolly informed Chou that the highly trained IIIAC would sweep aside any force the Communists could muster. Noting the Marines' superior firepower, maneuverability, and airpower, Worton concluded the tense meeting by informing Chou exactly how the Marines could easily occupy Peiping. Chou replied that "he would get the Marines orders changed." This was possible as Mao Tse-tung and Chiang Kai-shek were negotiating in Chungking.⁸⁷ At this pivotal moment in North China, Chou and Mao chose not to resist the Marines' advance in force.⁸⁸ Mao opted instead for a strategy of information warfare "designed to arouse public opinion" in the United States and China against American support for Chiang.⁸⁹

Marine and Navy senior leaders also sought to avoid direct confrontation with Communists by carefully selecting operating areas and by establishing strict rules of engagement. The governing order stated that the mission "is one of assisting a friendly nation in the discharge of a large and complex task. In accomplishing this task every effort must be made to limit our participation to one of an advisory and liaison nature."⁹⁰ This policy was tested at the outset at Chefoo in Shantung province, where an intended landing site quickly proved a point of friction. When local Communists seized the port before Americans could land, the Navy-Marine Corps leadership faced a dilemma: put ashore and assert American authority in the name of the Chinese Nationalist government or cede the territory to the Communists. In this context, 7th Fleet Commander Admiral Daniel E. Barbey and General Rockey met aboard the *USS Catoctin* just off-shore Chefoo on October 7 and weighed their options. While General Lemuel C. Shephard's

⁸⁷ Frank and Shaw, *Victory and Occupation*, 548.

⁸⁸ E. R. Hooton, *The Greatest Tumult*, (London: Brassey's, 1991), 18-19.

⁸⁹ "Telegram to General George C. Marshall, Chief of Staff U.S. Army from General Albert Wedemeyer, Commanding General, U.S. Forces China" November 14, 1945. *FRUS, China*, Document 472.

⁹⁰ "6th Mar Div Op Ord Annex A," September 18, 1945. Papers. WW II, China, Box 1, Folder 2/1. USMC Archives.

6th Division could easily have secured the port by force, Rockey decided to avoid the potential conflict and instead to land the Division at Tsingtao. Rockey later recalled that Chiang was furious about this decision during a face-to-face meeting in November.⁹¹ Rockey, however, was quite comfortable with his decision for reasons he made clear in a letter on October 13 to the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Alexander A. Vandegrift. “Admiral Barbey and I,” Rockey wrote, “both felt that any landing there would be an interference in the internal affairs of China; that it would be bitterly resented by the Communists and that there would probably be serious repercussions.”⁹² Rockey’s caution contrasted with that of his chief of staff Worton, who had stared down Chou just days before. Perhaps Rockey was shaped by his personal experience in Latin America. In 1928, as a young Major, he earned his second Navy Cross while fighting a tough counterinsurgency in Nicaragua. Rockey was reluctant to place his Marines in a similar position.⁹³

One of the principal ways individual Marines resisted participation in the growing Chinese Civil War was through strict rules of engagement. Faced with persistent threats, firefights, casualties, and abductions, Marines sought creative ways to use limited and proportionate force to deescalate perilous confrontations. Non-lethal shows of air power, smaller tactical maneuver elements, and limited armament were some of the techniques Marines used to avoid larger clashes with the ubiquitous Communists.⁹⁴

⁹¹ Frank and Shaw, *Victory and Occupation*, 559.

⁹² Frank and Shaw, *Victory and Occupation*, 559-560.

⁹³ “Navy Cross Citation, Major Keller E. Rockey, USMC, December 11, 1929,” The Hall of Valor Project, accessed March 2, 2021. <https://valor.militarytimes.com/hero/8918#14110>. The Navy Cross is the nation’s second highest award for valor.

⁹⁴ Frank and Shaw, *Victory and Occupation*, 559-593. “Shows of Force” were designed to showcase superior American mobility, firepower, and technology. The missions drew regular ground fire contributing to 22 aircraft losses, but the Marines’ strict rules of engagement prevented aircraft from routinely shooting back. After initial losses, a mandated minimum elevation of 5000 feet Above Ground Level (AGL) minimized the probability of effective ground fire.

On October 6, Marines came under fire while attempting to clear roadblocks twenty-two miles northwest of Tientsin. Not coincidentally, that same day the 92nd Chinese Nationalist Army began to arrive in Peiping via American aircraft. Despite taking three casualties and returning small arms fire, the 1st Marine Regiment refrained from the use of supporting artillery and temporarily withdrew in good order. The following day, the Marines incorporated a visible “show of force” with tanks and fighter aircraft, allowing the road to the ancient capital of Peiping to be cleared without further bloodshed.⁹⁵ Marines routinely employed aircraft as a “show of force,” a non-lethal innovation designed to demonstrate control and improve reconnaissance across the massive operating area.

The mission of these aircraft—like so many of the Marines’ recent Chinese experiences—was perplexing to some. One Corporal wrote that “for almost three days our airplanes flew in formation back and forth and had there been any trouble they would of [sic] not been able to drop bombs on Chinese people.” This was not a cynical “glory hunt” as he supposed and described it, but instead a deliberate tactical choice to limit the use of force and avoid escalation. Coincidentally, this Marine belonged to the 29th Marine Regiment that had disembarked at Tsingtao due to the potential Communist threat at Chefoo. The Corporal noted that “luckily the trouble between the Chinese was to [sic] hot so we was put here into Tsing-tao...now we are doing nothing except stand guard duty over our own camp.”⁹⁶ The relative boredom of the Marines in Shantung was a good problem to have in late 1945.

As the Marines in Hopeh province defended key trestles and junctions of the critical railway, the Communists began to sabotage the tracks and challenge the small, remote Marine

⁹⁵ Frank and Shaw, *Victory and Occupation*, 558.

⁹⁶ Letter from Cpl Taylor to Mike Mansfield, October 30, 1945. Series IV, Box 26, Folder 5. Mansfield Papers.

units in coordinated attacks with mines and harassing small arms fire. Even generals traveling by train were not immune. Visiting his widely spread-out forces along the Tangku-Chinwangtao railway, Major General DeWitt Peck, commander of the 1st Marine Division, came under attack on November 14. After the rail lines were blown in front of the train, rifle fire poured onto Peck and his escort Marines from an adjacent village. Returning fire and maneuvering for cover, Peck worked his way to the radio jeep tied down on a flat car. Radioing for reinforcements, Peck also contacted General Rockey and requested immediate close air support. Interestingly, the aircraft sortied from the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing were to be loaded with “ammunition only” and not equipped with bombs—something the Wing commander protested. Communist fire broke off before the aircraft arrived, preventing a potentially difficult decision. In subsequent messages between Rockey and Army General Albert Wedemeyer, commander of all US forces in China, Rockey “indicated that he was ready to authorize a strafing mission if fire continued from the offending village.” While the considerable restraint shown by Peck and Rockey’s proportional response of strafing rather than bombing was itself notable, Wedemeyer raised the stakes further. In a message to Rockey, Wedemeyer wrote: “If American lives are endangered...it is desired that you inform the military leader or responsible authority in that village in writing that such firing must be stopped. After ensuring that your warning...has been received and understood, should firing continue, you are authorized to take appropriate action for their protection.”⁹⁷ Such restrictive rules of engagement placed Marines at tremendous risk, but also underlined the extent to which military leaders went to avoid greater involvement in the Chinese Civil War.

The restrictive rules of engagement would be tested continuously during the Marines’ tenure in North China in numerous small firefights, but none in 1945 gained the attention of the

⁹⁷ Frank and Shaw, *Victory and Occupation*, 585-586.

American public like the Anshan incident. On December 4, suspected Communists shot two Marines in the countryside.⁹⁸ One Marine succumbed to his wounds and the second Marine survived by playing dead—despite being shot a second time at point blank range. The wounded man slowly crawled back to his post and relayed the story to his chain-of-command. In response, a light infantry force from 1st Battalion, 29th Marines set out to confront the perpetrators in the small village of Anshan. Approaching the village near nightfall, the patrol established a mortar position, and then sought out the local leadership with an interpreter’s help. To this point, they precisely followed Wedemeyer’s directive. The young officer leading the patrol told the village leaders “to surrender the murderers within a half hour” or else the village would be shelled. After a tense thirty minutes expired and no one surrendered, the Marines fired “24 rounds of high explosive and one of white phosphorus” towards the village perimeter. No one was killed by the shelling, and little physical damage occurred.

Nevertheless, American journalists reported a salacious version that alleged commission of a war crime.⁹⁹ Articles like “Marines Shell Village in North China” ran across the country.¹⁰⁰ A particularly harsh editorial in the *Washington Post* on December 12 titled “Semper Fidelis,” elicited a rare letter to the editor in response from the Commandant, General Vandegrift on December 14. The *Washington Post* asked “to what values are the United States Marines forever faithful?” before expressing “shock and shame” at the report of the shelling. The editorial implied that the Marines had committed a war crime like Nazi Germany and that “from the point

⁹⁸ After years of conflict in North China, armed banditry was ubiquitous.

⁹⁹ “U.S. Marines Shell Village After Chinese Shoot 2 Yanks,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, December 8, 1945.

¹⁰⁰ “Marines Shell Village in North China,” *Great Falls Tribune (Montana)*, December 9, 1945.

of view of the Chinese...it is perhaps indistinguishable from the kind of civilization brought to them by the Japanese.”¹⁰¹

Congressman Mike Mansfield noted the *Washington Post* editorial and asked Vandegrift for a copy of the investigative report. Mansfield viewed the Anshan incident as a prime example of the unintended consequences of deploying Marines in China that could only worsen as the Chinese civil war expanded.¹⁰² Vandegrift completed the inquiry and sent a copy to Mansfield as well as the copy of a four-page rebuttal letter to Eugene Meyer, publisher of the *Washington Post*. Vandegrift noted that only “two windowpanes” were damaged and that the rounds were carefully “placed outside” the village walls. Vandegrift then concluded that “in a delicate and confusing situation [the Marines in China] have performed their tasks with exceptional tact and intelligence.”¹⁰³ Such a full-throated defense from the Commandant was notable and reflected Vandegrift’s effort to preserve the Marine Corps structure while facing an existential threat from the War and Navy departments.¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless, the incident at Anshan exhibited how a small unit tactical decision could have a profound impact on the American public via a recently uncensored press.

¹⁰¹ “Semper Fidelis,” *Washington Post*, December 12, 1945. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: the Washington Post pg. 6.

¹⁰² Mansfield letter to General A.A. Vandegrift, December 31, 1945. Series IV, Box 25, Folder 4. Mansfield Papers.

¹⁰³ A.A. Vandegrift Letter to Eugene Meyer, February 1, 1946. Series IV, Box 26, Folder 4. Mansfield Papers.

¹⁰⁴ Important context to General A.A. Vandegrift’s letter is the rapid demobilization and the post-war defense planning. Vandegrift also was well experienced in limited interventions in the Caribbean, Mexico, Nicaragua, and spent 1935-1937 in North China. Vandegrift successfully turned to Congress to preserve the Marine Corps. General A.A. Vandegrift, “Bended Knee Speech to the Senate Committee on Naval Affairs,” May 6, 1945, *US Marine Corps History Division*, <https://www.usmcu.edu/Research/Marine-Corps-History-Division/Frequently-Requested-Topics/Historical-Documents-Orders-and-Speeches/Bended-Knee-Speech/>, “General Alexander Archer Vandegrift, USMC (Deceased), *US Marine Corps History Division*, <https://www.usmcu.edu/Research/Marine-Corps-History-Division/Information-for-Units/Medal-of-Honor-Recipients-By-Unit/MajGen-Alexander-Archer-Vandegrift/>



Figure 3: A Postcard printed by unknown servicemen in the Pacific reflects the malaise deployed servicemen displayed in late 1945. The anger turned to political activism and thousands of letters written were stamped with “no boats, no votes.” This specific postcard was sold in an online auction from a private collection in Idaho in February 2022.

As wartime censorship laws were lifted in September 1945, enlisted soldiers, airmen, and Marines in occupation duties throughout the Pacific expressed their frustration through letters, telegrams, and organized meetings.¹⁰⁵ The Tokyo-based editor of the GI paper *Stars and Stripes* estimated that “more than half” of servicemen’s letters for the “Comment and Query” section were complaints about the slow pace and fairness of redeployment. In a clear nod towards political accountability, the stamp “No Boats, No Votes” appeared on thousands of letters mailed from the Pacific in late 1945.¹⁰⁶ The situation in North China pressed the palpable angst of servicemen and their families, and they “flooded Congress” with letters in response.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Letters Presented to the Congressional Record, December 13, 1945. Burton Kendall Wheeler Papers, MC 35, Box 21, Folder 2. Montana Historical Society Research Center, Archives, Helena, Montana. Demobilization, Series V, Box 111, Folders 3-6. Mansfield Papers.

¹⁰⁶ “Pacific Veterans Press for Return,” *New York Times*, December 5, 1945.

¹⁰⁷ Gallichio, *The Cold War Begins in Asia*, 120.

Mansfield was deluged with correspondence from American servicemen overseas containing blunt assessments and serious reservations about what the future held for them.¹⁰⁸ Private First Class Warren Peterson of Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, was a candid and frequent correspondent with Mansfield. Peterson was a student of Mansfield's before the war and attended Mansfield's Far East history class at the University of Montana in 1942.¹⁰⁹ Peterson was skeptical of American policy in China from the outset and kept Mansfield updated with articles from overseas papers and feedback from enlisted Marines. Peterson's unit defended the rail junction at Chinwangtao, a crucial point in transporting essential coal from neighboring Soviet-occupied Manchuria to the major cities of Tientsin, Peiping, and Shanghai. The 7th Marines were spread out along a railway line almost 200 miles in length in Hopeh province, the very section of line where General Peck came under attack.¹¹⁰

Mansfield's anti-interventionist speech on October 11 in Congress resonated immediately with Marines in China who desperately wanted to go back home and dreaded the thought of an extended war. "The Men of the Detachment stationed in Ching Wang Tao, China," wrote to Mansfield: "we who are stationed here appreciate the fact that there is at least one man in Washington who realizes...there is absolutely no reason for us to be here." Cynically recalling the fabled imperial duty of the "China Marines," the Marines of 1945 clearly no longer felt the same allure of exotic duty. The unknown Marine dryly wrote: "The 'old' Corps can claim that title with our blessings."¹¹¹ Included in the letter was a daily "news sheet" distributed by Marine

¹⁰⁸ Redeployment (CBI), Series IV, Box 26, Folders 5-7. Mansfield Papers.

¹⁰⁹ Letter from Mike Mansfield to C. Peterson, November 12, 1945, Series IV, Box 26, Folder 5. Mansfield Papers. The University of Montana was then known as Montana State University.

¹¹⁰ Frank and Shaw, *Victory and Occupation*, 583-591.

¹¹¹ Marines were continuously stationed in North China after the 1900 Boxer Rebellion until December 8, 1941. "China Marines" were veterans of the pre-World War II era and lived well on American salaries in the Chinese economy.

leadership that included a synopsis of Mansfield's position on withdrawal and non-intervention in China.¹¹² This story could easily have been omitted from the short news compilation, but instead was selected by an editor and widely distributed to Marines. Purposefully or not, this story struck a nerve with Marines ready and willing to write to their congressman.

While Peterson was likely involved in the first group letter, he began writing to Mansfield personally on October 26.

We are in the middle of the most confusing mess of international bluff and power politics that I ever thought of. I'm afraid we may mess around until plenty of us get hurt...Yesterday the general in charge of the Communist Army in this area served notice that he plans to move into Chin Wang Tao and set up a government. We received orders from Division headquarters at Tientsin to stop him. Today we checked ammunition and began setting up machine gun emplacements.¹¹³

Peterson and his fellow Marines hoped not to need to use their machine guns.

The palpable tension in Chinwangtao was not just a local phenomenon. Some 300 miles south in Shantung province, enlisted Marines in the 6th Marine Division also expressed a cautious attitude. Corporal David W. Taylor wrote to Mansfield from Tsingtao on October 30: "I hope that...those responsible will get the word and take all troops out of here before somebody [sic] set off the firecracker between these Chinese and have some American boys die. We can see it plenty plain over here."¹¹⁴

In a letter to Mansfield on December 6, Peterson expressed further frustration about the Marines' convoluted mission. Openly skeptical of official statements regarding America's aims in China, Peterson thought that the American position was far from neutral, and Marines were

¹¹² "1st Marine Division Daily Newssheet," October 13, 1945. Series IV, Box 26, Folder 5. Mansfield Papers.

¹¹³ Letter from Warren Peterson, October 26, 1945, Series IV, Box 26, Folder 5. Mansfield Papers.

¹¹⁴ Letter from Cpl David W. Taylor, October 30, 1945, Series IV, Box 26, Folder 5. Mansfield Papers.

openly “aiding the Chinese Nationals.” Peterson presented a series of concrete examples of how American policy had aided and abetted the Nationalist military.

American-trained, American-equipped Nationalist troops landed in Chinwangtao from American transports. Apparently the Marines had made a beachhead for the Nationalists. We had taken strategic points without resistance from the Communists. Then the Nationalists landed in large numbers and pushed inland. Meanwhile we guarded their communication and transportation lines.¹¹⁵

In thinking aligned with Mansfield, Peterson extrapolated America’s China policy in the emerging Cold War context. Drawing a parallel to the US Army’s incursion into Russia in 1919, Peterson wrote:

There has been more firing at various points up and down the railroad...as many as five Marines have been shot. I want to know why they have been killed. I want to know why we are here. I want to know why the American people are not told what we are doing here...is this an Archangel Expedition to save China from Communism? Does our government feel that we must keep China under our influence in order to keep out of Russia’s? Is this the testing ground of World War III?¹¹⁶

Mansfield wrote back to Peterson and included a copy of his speech in Congress from December 11. Mansfield was “wholeheartedly in accord with” Peterson’s sentiments and solicited further supporting data from the ground level that Mansfield could use in Congress, including local press clippings and news stories from the military newspaper *Stars and Stripes*.¹¹⁷

Some Marines in North China leveraged war correspondents to critique American foreign policy in stateside newspapers. Marines exposed the difference between US public policy and the reality on the ground in China with the help of a willing journalist from the *New York Times*.

¹¹⁵ Letter from PFC Warren Peterson, December 6, 1945. Series IV, Box 26, Folder 5. Mansfield Papers.

¹¹⁶ Letter from PFC Warren Peterson, December 6, 1945. Series IV, Box 26, Folder 5. Mansfield Papers.

¹¹⁷ Letter from Mike Mansfield to Warren Peterson, December 31, 1945. Series IV, Box 26, Folder 5. Mansfield Papers.

Titled “Marines Angered by China Rail Job,” the unnamed Marines near Chinwangtao noted that in late December, 9,000 Japanese soldiers were still armed and used for “railway guard duty” while the Marines guarded a British-owned coal mine against Communist attacks twenty-four hours a day. Working with the Japanese infuriated the veterans of Okinawa but protecting the interests of British capital also proved difficult to accept. One Marine noted that he “did not enlist to guard British property.”¹¹⁸ While perhaps invisible to the Marines in Chinwangtao, the coal served to prevent a humanitarian crisis during the bitter cold winter months in Shanghai and Peiping. Both the Japanese and Marine guards enabled the Nationalist Chinese armies to focus on fighting the Chinese Communists in North China.

Some Marines resented the control the Chinese Nationalist government held over US policy and wrote letters to newspapers as “a plea to the American people to wake up and take notice of ‘we’ the servicemen in North China.” In November 1945, “65 Marines from Tientsin,” wrote a passionate letter to the editor of the *Washington Post*. The Marines noted their “solemn and holy duty to protest, in a body, to the American people” that Chiang Kai-shek “in a subtle way [dictated] the Far Eastern policy of our Army, our Navy, and the Marine Corps.” The Marines articulated a fundamental lack of understanding of their mission in North China. “We have all seen boys die,” one Marine explained, “they died with the thought in their minds and in their hearts that they were fighting for a cause . . . that all minorities oppressed, would once more be a free people.” In their Nationalist ally, Marines sensed both a lack of shared values and effort. In the perception of these North China Marines, the US won the war “in campaigns on far-flung Pacific islands,” but China allegedly failed to contribute. These Marines were undoubtedly unaware of the enormous Chinese losses from 1931-1945. The Nationalist

¹¹⁸ Henry R. Lieberman, “Marines Angered by China Rail Job,” *New York Times*, December 27, 1945.

government collaborated with the despised Japanese and wanted Marines to carry their load once again. Finally, these Marines took time to rebut “that solon from Minnesota,” likely congressman Walter Judd, who “deplored public opinion” for “voicing a whisper of protest on our behalf.” Quoting Judd’s call to “Don’t let China down,” the Marines offered an alternate view, “China has let us down.”¹¹⁹

From October to December 1945, Marines deployed to China resisted open participation in the Chinese Civil War by minimizing their military role, restraining the use of lethal force, and writing letters to families and congressmen. In numerous contingent moments in the early deployment to North China, Marines sought to strike a careful balance between “assistance to a friendly nation,” while avoiding open participation in “fratricidal conflict.”¹²⁰ A frustrating and difficult task, this balance required tremendous discipline, shrewd decision making, and strict rules of engagement. While the rules of engagement were extremely rigid, information control and censorship were not. That laxity enabled the young, enlisted Marines to engage in political activity by writing uncensored letters to their parents, newspapers, and congressmen.

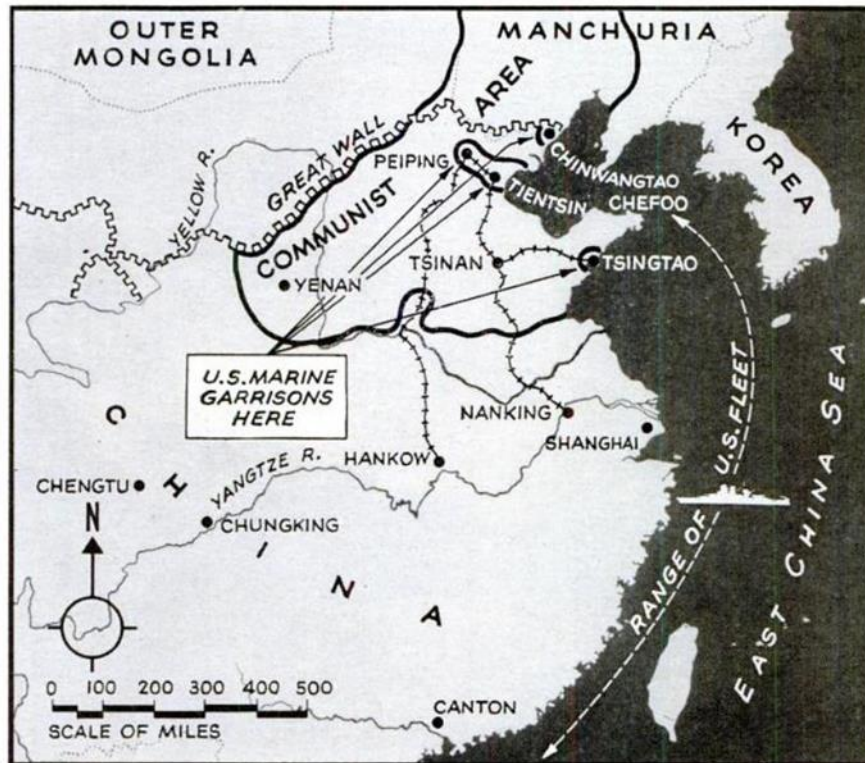
As with all military operations, the moments of contingency apply to all combatants. Just as Marines deliberately avoided escalation, the Communists also side-stepped massed formations and limited themselves to small, isolated, harassing attacks. The Office of Strategic Services assessed this as part of a deliberate Communist strategy to turn American public opinion against intervention on the side of the Nationalists.¹²¹ The troops wanted to go home promptly, and the galvanizing purpose of winning the war expired with the Japanese surrender. By keeping a low

¹¹⁹ “Voices from North China,” *Washington Post*, December 11, 1945.

¹²⁰ “Op Order IIIAC,” September 1945. Papers. WW II, China, Box 1. USMC Archives.

¹²¹ “Meyer to the Secretary of State,” November 16, 1945. *FRUS, China*, Document 476.

military profile vis-à-vis the US Marine deployment, the Communists refrained from offering a Pearl Harbor type moment that cried for revenge.



The Chinese government's problem is to establish its authority over all China in the wake of the Japs and so complete the unification which was Sun Yat-sen's first goal. Communist troops bar way in area shown.

Figure 5: Conservative publications like *Time* and *Life* magazines attempted to make a case for American intervention in North China. The imagery, however, clearly depicted the difficult situation of Marines in North China. Henry Luce, publisher of *Time* and *Life* was a supporter of Chiang Kai-shek and a member of the "China Lobby." His wife, Representative Claire Boothe Luce, represented a pro-Chiang view in Congress. Image from *Life*, November 19, 1945.

Chapter 4

Political Agents: Mothers, Wives, and Citizen Groups

The removal of censorship also brought Chinese stories like the Anshan incident onto the front pages of newspapers—and into the consciousness of citizens—across America. The American people relished the promise of a coming peace and resisted the prospects of a new Asian war in China. At the end of 1945, Americans could proudly reflect upon a four-year national effort to defeat fascist dictatorships overseas in Germany, Italy, and Japan. In that herculean task, the United States placed over 16.1 million personnel in uniform, deployed forces across two oceans, and produced more tanks, aircraft-carriers, planes, submarines, vehicles, and weapons than any other world power.¹²² The war touched every portion of society and lifted the economy out of depression, but at tremendous cost. More than 405,000 uniformed Americans did not return.¹²³ As the perplexing occupation duty in North China emerged as a potential lengthy intervention into a civil war, mothers, wives, and citizen groups rose in opposition to a new conflict via letters to Congress, newspapers, and through organization.

One of the ways citizens sought to influence American policy toward China was by writing their government leaders. Correspondence from parents, spouses, and citizen groups suggest that a de facto consensus existed about the need for American non-interference in China and prompt demobilization of the armed forces.¹²⁴ Several letters penned by blue-star wives

¹²² Richard Overy, *Why the Allies Won* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 1997).

¹²³ U.S. Congress. “American War and Military Operations Casualties: Lists and Statistics. July 29, 2020. 2, 33. <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/RL/RL32492>

¹²⁴ This assessment is based upon detailed archival research in the Mansfield, Murray, and Wheeler papers. A wider view was constrained by the COVID-19 pandemic. While written to a Montana congressman, numerous letters in these archives also originate from Maryland, New York, Illinois, Texas, Utah, Virginia, and Washington indicating a geographic diversity with a similar viewpoint.

(women with husbands in service), pleaded for assistance to return a husband to help raise young children, run a family farm, or otherwise provide a living. Above all, wives and mothers wanted their loved ones' home safely. They remained all too aware of the gold-star wives and mothers who would never be so fortunate.¹²⁵

Mothers voiced steadfast opposition to the Marine deployment to North China in late 1945. These women did not mince words. Writing from Stevensville in December 1945, Ethel Wonnacott reminded Mansfield that mothers wanted their sons back: "I gave my son proudly to fight for our country but not to fight China's Civil War . . . he has seen enough war and hell." Just in case the blunt meat packer failed to reach Mansfield on the merits, she reminded the congressman that she was an active voter ready to organize. "I feel the voice of Montana Mothers should be enough to command your attention."¹²⁶ Wonnacott penned similar comments to Montana Senator James E. Murray noting that "the sentiments of all Mothers" were that "China's war" was not worth "one American boys' life."¹²⁷ When Wonnacott later penned a letter to the editor of the *Missoulian*, she signed it "A Mother of a Montana Marine, Stevensville" and issued a call to arms for the community to "raise a howl" so that "Washington will have to listen . . . and demand that our sons be taken out of China, fast. The danger is great."¹²⁸ The *Missoulian* consistently advocated self-determination in the newly liberated territories of the world—including China. In a line that Wonnacott would later celebrate in her letter to the editor, the *Missoulian* opined: "if Chiang Kai-shek cannot win without American soldiers, what should happen seems reasonably obvious. We shouldn't fight anybody's war but

¹²⁵ Families displayed a blue star for each family member in service. The Gold Star represented the ultimate sacrifice.

¹²⁶ Letter from Mrs. R. M. Wonnacott, December 9, 1945. Series IV, Box 26, Folder 4. Mansfield Papers.

¹²⁷ Letter from Mrs. R. M. Wonnacott, December 9, 1945. Series I, Box 216, Folder 4. James E. Murray Papers, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana.

¹²⁸ "The U.S. and China," *Missoulian*, December 19, 1945.

our own and this is not ours.”¹²⁹ The angst of uncertainty without clear national purpose rippled across the nation.

The *Missoulian*'s editorial position of non-intervention reflected a national trend of which President Truman was well aware. On Armistice Day, November 11, 1945, President Truman hosted British Prime Minister Clement Atlee and Canadian Prime Minister Mackenzie King in a ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery.¹³⁰ At this solemn event, Truman, an Army combat veteran, undoubtedly reflected upon the tremendous sacrifice of two costly world wars. The situation in China, however, was also likely on Truman's mind. The same day, Truman saved a compilation of six geographically dispersed editorials about American policy towards the “Civil War in China.”¹³¹ The *Christian Science Monitor* opined that the US was involved in “a degree of intervention which American opinion will not support even in Latin America and to which it violently objects when followed by others.”¹³² The *Milwaukee Journal* predicted a long struggle in China and concluded that “it is not an American responsibility to furnish arms...or one American life to settle this Civil War.”¹³³ The *Hartford Courant* highlighted the duplicitous appearance of American intervention and opined that the US should be “scrupulous in avoiding actions that at least can be interpreted as giving military support to Chiang.”¹³⁴ Reflecting the lack of clarity in the US position, the *New York Times* offered Truman “a way out” of the “East Asia tinder box” by advocating “a more forthright diplomacy.”¹³⁵ Earlier that week, on

¹²⁹ “Editorial,” *Missoulian*, December 10, 1945.

¹³⁰ President's Daily Appointment Calendar, November 11, 1945. Harry S. Truman Papers, Truman Library.

¹³¹ “Civil War in China, Editorial Opinion on Policy,” *New York Times Overseas Weekly*, November 11, 1945. Harry S. Truman Papers, President's Secretary Files (HST-PSF), Foreign Affairs File 1940-1953, China 1945. National Archives Identifier 205715965.

¹³² “American Policy,” *Christian Science Monitor*, quoted in *New York Times Overseas Weekly*, November 11, 1945.

¹³³ “For No Participation,” *Milwaukee Journal*, quoted in *New York Times Overseas Weekly*, November 11, 1945.

¹³⁴ “Keep Out of China,” *Hartford Courant*, November 5, 1945.

¹³⁵ “The Chinese Tinder Box,” *New York Times*, November 10, 1945.

November 7, Secretary of State Byrnes announced that “plans were underway to withdraw the marines,” but he hedged this statement by noting that “marine participation in China is a military, and not a political matter.”¹³⁶ Truman likely hoped that this statement would calm American anxieties over America’s role in China’s internal strife, but throughout the remainder of 1945, wives and mothers continued to keep the pressure on.

Wives of deployed Marines engaged government officials on the geopolitics of the confusing US policy in North China. If the Truman administration thought it could lay a smokescreen of diplomatic jargon and buy time against a distracted public, numerous Marine wives proved the diplomats and politicians mistaken. Some spouses felt that assisting Chiang Kai-shek was tantamount to fighting for the kind of fascism so many sacrificed to defeat in World War II.¹³⁷ Josephine McBroom Junge wrote: “We asked these men to fight, in Tarawa, and in Iwo Jima, and in Okinawa—for democracy. Many are dead. Many are crippled...can we ask them now to fight in China—against democracy?”¹³⁸ The nuanced logic of America’s China policy failed to convince interested life partners. Lucy Bell pointed out the hypocrisy of the Nationalist Chinese forces using armed Japanese troops—that the Marines were in North China ostensibly to disarm—to guard infrastructure from Communist attacks. “Sir, I am not a person who is familiar with the intricacies of diplomacy,” Bell wrote with a dash of sarcasm, “but I call our military operations...out-and-out intervention on the side of the Chungking government.”¹³⁹ Mrs. B. P. Pope agreed that her husband had no business tipping the scales for Chiang Kai-

¹³⁶ “Exit of Marines from China is Set,” *New York Times*, November 8, 1945.

¹³⁷ That Americans in 1945 could interpret Mao Tse-tung as a democrat suggests that Mao’s information campaign was initially successful. This was also perpetuated by correspondents Theodore H. White and Edgar Snow to popular audiences in *Thunder Out of China* and *Red Star Over China* respectively.

¹³⁸ Letter to Mansfield from Mrs. Josephine McBroom Junge, November 4, 1945. Series IV, Box 26, Folder 5. Mansfield Papers.

¹³⁹ Letter to Mansfield from Mrs. Lucy Bell, October 30, 1945. Series IV, Box 26, Folder 5. Mansfield Papers.

shek's forces: "the war is over...China should take care of her own internal affairs," parroting a line from Mansfield's speech just days earlier. Pope concluded, however, with a common sentiment all Marine families shared: "we need him home now — he has done his duty."¹⁴⁰



Figure 4: Even small-town Newspapers regularly carried disturbing news of the growing peril in North China, much to the chagrin of awaiting families. Image from Newspapers.com, Havre Daily News, November 8, 1945.

While military family members were personally and politically engaged, the pervasive news stories about the Marines and the Chinese civil war acutely raised public awareness in late 1945. In periodic headlines and stories from October-December 1945, magazines and newspapers brought the North China dilemma into the homes of Americans. Even small-town

¹⁴⁰ Letter to Mansfield from Mrs. B. P. Pope, October 16, 1945. Series IV, Box 26, Folder 5. Mansfield Papers.

newspapers delivered the United Press and Associated Press' stories from North China that emphasized the complicated position the Marines were in.¹⁴¹

Stories about shifting China policy appeared in a multitude of periodicals spanning the ideological spectrum in late 1945. The conservative *Time* magazine observed that events on the ground in China exceeded the imagination of American post-war planning. "Nobody planned, in August or September," correspondent William Gray wrote, "that things would happen this way in China in November." *Time* opined that "we can hardly desert the job . . . until we are sure some order will go on." Despite this moral advocacy for intervention, Gray further noted that "some Americans in China would risk a stronger U.S. policy and go all-out to insure China's peace by supporting Chiang's Government, imperfect as it is." Gray concluded, however, that "most Americans in China, being civilians in uniform, are ready to go home, and the hell with it. They believe that they accurately reflect public opinion at home."¹⁴² Henry Luce, owner of *Time* magazine, was born in China to Protestant missionaries and a well-known member of the "China Lobby" that promoted Chiang Kai-shek.¹⁴³ Despite a clear editorial bias, however, *Time* noted that intervention faced strong public opposition and this political reality would likely "leave China to God's opinion."¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ *Billings Gazette, Great Falls Tribune, Helena Independent Record, Daily Interlake (Kalispell), Missoulian, Montana Standard (Butte)* October-December 1945.

¹⁴² Willam Gray, "Report on China," *Time*, November 19, 1945.

¹⁴³ Haygood, Daniel M, and Glenn W Scott. "Henry Luce's American & Chinese Century: An Analysis of US News Magazines' Coverage of General Chiang Kai-shek from 1936 to 1949." *American Journalism* 38, no. 1 (2021): 4-27.

¹⁴⁴ Willam Gray, "Report on China," *Time*, November 19, 1945.



Revolutionary armies elsewhere,
Nov. 3, 1945. (Story inside)

★ ★ FINAL

VOLUME CIV.—NO. 264 C

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THREE CENTS—PAY NO MORE

HEAVY FIGHTING IN CHINA!

CAIRO RIOTERS LOOT AND BURN JEWISH AREAS

Youths Injure 380 in Outbreaks

BY ALEX SHALL
Cairo, Egypt, Nov. 2—Violent outbreaks, including youths looting and burning Jewish areas for five hours today, leaving at least 380 persons injured, many above at Jews in Alexandria, a synagogue damaged, a Catholic church partially sacked and the city's ghetto in an uproar.

It was Cairo's largest anti-Jewish explosion of modern times and three more outbreaks that were reported here today. In another rioting in Alexandria, Jews were looted and a Catholic church partially sacked and the city's ghetto in an uproar.

The rioters struck where police were not prepared and at the time of the outbreak for "Hollow day" occasion of work to prevent racial war. Rioting broke out in Jewish areas of Cairo and Alexandria, and in other parts of the country. In a few instances the rioters spread wildly into the center of Cairo and moved eastward from the main Jewish quarters into the main district, which is surrounded by a wall and has a large police force. In some instances the rioters were armed with stones and bricks.

U.S. Trained Army Attacks, Reds Charge

(Map on page 2)
CHUNGKING, China, Nov. 2 (UPI)—A Chinese communist dispatch charged today that the central government's new 100,000-man army, equipped and trained by Americans, is in action against the Reds along the northern section of the Szechwan-Fukien railroad.

It was the first accusation that American-trained troops were involved in the current strife.

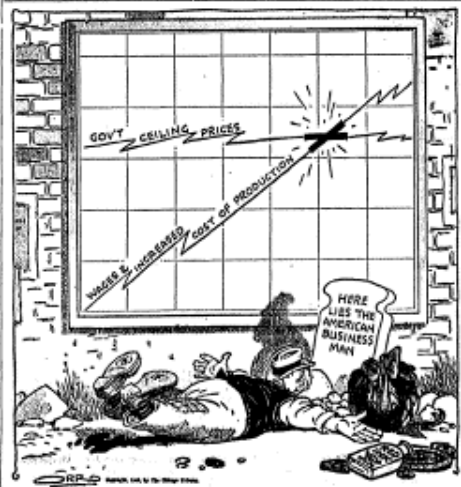
Previously the Communists expressed irritation over employment of United States transports to take central government forces to Chinese anti-communist "liberated areas."

The Chinese Reds may fight the Japanese in northern China should Communist troops were involved in the Szechwan-Fukien highway.

Along sections of the north-south railroad between Ningbo and Hangzhou, which parallels the Tientsin-Peking railroad to the east, the Communists used large scale fighting in progress.

Pearl Harbor 'Gag' Stirs Senate Battle

X MARKS THE SPOT WHERE THE BODY WILL BE FOUND



Charges City Streets Stolen by Railroads

GRACE NOORE TRIES TO ENJOY DINNER ON PROCESS SERVER AT HER DOOR

(Picture on back page)
Washington, D. C., Nov. 2 (AP)—

5,000 Boys of Illinois' 33d Sail for Home

GREEN, BROOKS SPUR U. S. AIR AID TO STATE

Learn City May Get Douglas Airport

BY WILLIAM MOORE
Chicago, Nov. 2 (UPI)—Sen. Charles McNary, R-Ore., today introduced legislation to speed the construction of a Douglas airport in Chicago.

Believe Hess Insane; May Escape Trial

INTERMEDIATE, Germany, Nov. 2 (AP)—Among interrogators of the 20 top ranking Nazis awaiting trial here, the consensus is that Rudolf Hess, once the No. 2 Nazi, is not taking his mental share. There are indications that he might even try to commit suicide.

One doctor still believes the former deputy Führer is only pretending to be an insane victim. He is Lt. Col. Steve H. Jack of Aberdeen, N. C., one of the physicians recently making the physical condition of the prisoners.

CLASH SET OFF BY NEW CURBS ON PROBE BODY

Access to Records Is Refused

BY WILLARD EDWARDS
Washington, D. C., Nov. 2—The administration's gag tactics in connection with the Pearl Harbor inquiry provoked a battle on the Senate floor today.

Figure 5: Major metropolitan newspapers, with independent foreign bureaus, brought news of the Chinese Civil War to American homes. Image from Chicago Tribune, November 3, 1945.

Some high-profile military officers also spoke out against intervention in the media. The *Chicago Tribune* welcomed home Major General Henry S. Aurand from China complete with a smiling picture of his wife and young daughter. The headline, however, was not about a happy homecoming, but a political recommendation to "Let China Solve [Its] Own Problems." Aurand opined that "it is a great tragedy that China must be torn by a civil war, but let's not get any

Americans killed in it.”¹⁴⁵ In this bombardment of news stories from China, citizen groups mobilized with letter writing campaigns, meetings, and advertisements.

Some organized labor groups rallied around an anti-fascist, anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist stance towards post-war Asia. In this criticism, the “Four Freedoms” rationale for World War II contrasted sharply with the murky aims in North China, leading to speculation that intervention in China benefited only “the interests of big monopoly capital,” which mirrored sentiments from enlisted Marines.¹⁴⁶ One such group, the Cascade County Trades and Labor Assembly, promulgated its resolution for withdrawal of Marines from North China in both the local newspaper and in letters to congressional leaders, writing even to members outside of their respective district.¹⁴⁷ Farmers in tiny Westby, near the North Dakota border, also demanded not only the precipitous withdrawal of American forces, but a cessation of all forms of US aid towards Chiang Kai-shek’s Nationalist government.¹⁴⁸

Reflecting the local labor response and anti-imperialist rhetoric, communist-aligned organizations like the ‘Committee for a Democratic Far East Policy’ and the ‘National Committee to Win the Peace’ mobilized for an end to the American support of Chiang’s government and a redeployment of American forces. Like mothers, wives, and siblings, these citizen groups challenged the foreign policy actions of the United States that meddled in the internal affairs of an ally. In a harbinger of Cold War dilemmas to come, Americans stood for

¹⁴⁵ Frank Hughes, “Let China Solve Own Problems, Aurand Urges,” *Chicago Tribune*, November 20, 1945.

¹⁴⁶ “Labor Council Wants Troops Out of China,” *Great Falls Tribune*, December 11, 1945.

¹⁴⁷ Letter from the Cascade County Trades and Labor Assembly, November 4, 1945. Series IV, Box 26, Folder 5. Mansfield Papers.

¹⁴⁸ Letter from the Farmers Educational & Co-operative Union of America, Local 359, November 24, 1945. Series IV, Box 26, Folder 5. Mansfield Papers. Sheridan County, where Westby is located, was a well-known bastion of Communist activity in the 1920’s and 1930’s. For more information see Verlaine Stoner McDonald’s *The Red Corner: The Rise and Fall of Communism in Northeastern Montana* (Helena, MT: Montana Historical Society Press, 2010.)

freedom and democracy, but such clear outcomes remained aspirational at best in Chiang’s China. Communist-aligned groups made significant hay of this uncomfortable fact. While ostensibly neutral, American forces in North China tipped the scales in favor of a “regime that has denied basic civil rights to the Chinese people.”¹⁴⁹ After fighting a national war against totalitarian fascism and liberating the world, a more nuanced policy fell flat in the court of public opinion, and citizens groups played a key role in galvanizing the opposition.

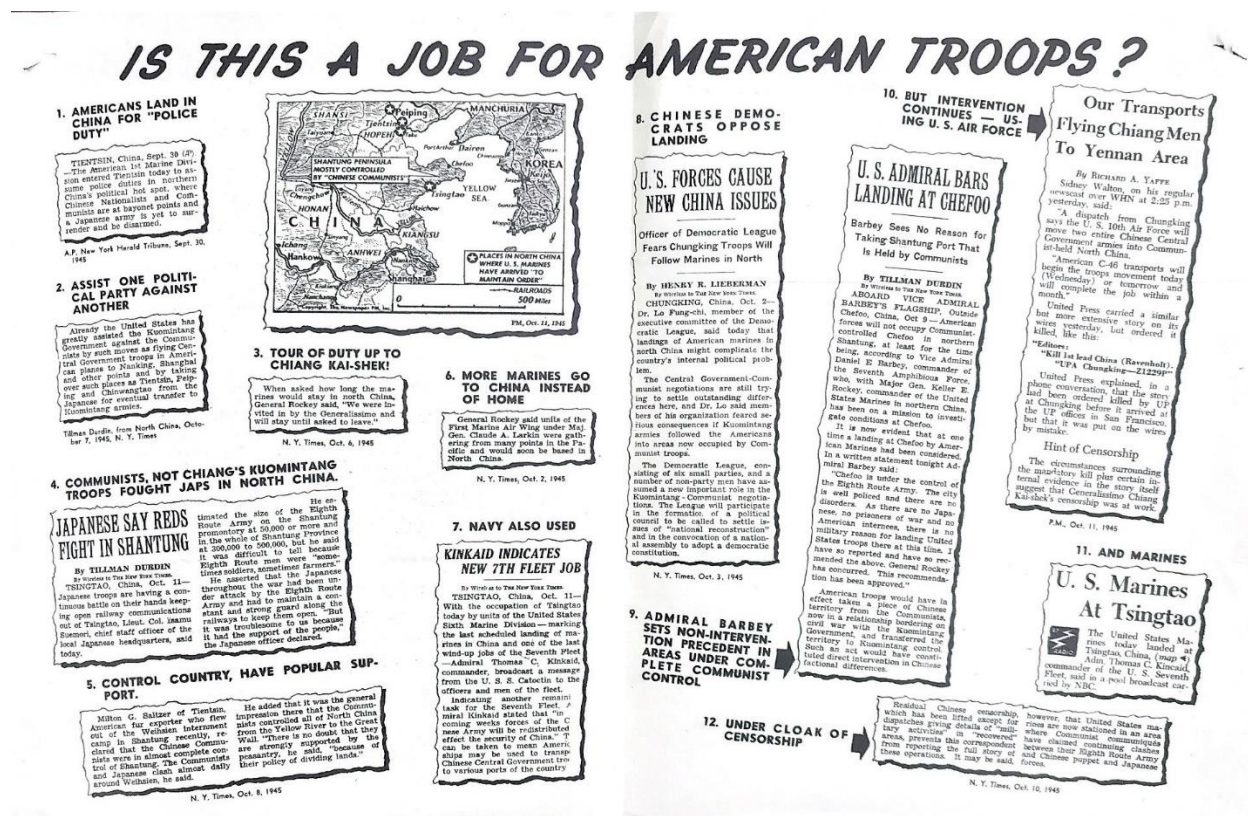


Figure 6: Excerpt from the Committee for a Democratic Policy for China, 1945. Series IV, Box 26, Folder 5. Mike Mansfield Papers, Archives and Special Collections, University of Montana

Both the Committee for a Democratic Far East Policy and the National Committee to Win the Peace benefited from support by respected leaders and spokesmen. One colorful

149 “Why Send U.S. Troops to China Now?” *Committee for a Democratic Policy Towards China*, October 1945. Series IV, Box 26, Folder 5. Mansfield Papers.

individual associated with both far-left activist committees was the decorated Brigadier General Evans F. Carlson. Carlson's illustrious career included time as an observer with Mao Tse-tung's forces in the late 1930s. Carlson admired the fighting spirit and camaraderie exhibited by Mao's Communist fighters and promoted several organizational and tactical innovations the Marine Corps adopted during World War II. Introducing the Marine Corps to the Chinese phrase "Gung-Ho," Carlson led troops at Makin Island, Guadalcanal, and Tarawa earning three Navy Crosses and two Purple Hearts.¹⁵⁰ Suffice it to say, Carlson spoke with widely respected authority about China, combat, and the Corps. Addressing the California Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) convention in December 1945, Carlson praised the labor union's resolution that demanded a rapid return of Marines from China. "It is not compatible with democratic ideals for the United States to intervene in the affairs of any other country," Carlson opined to the crowd. At key moments in the China policy debate through 1946, Carlson effectively rallied public opinion, Congress, administration officials, and media through a grass-roots network of volunteers.¹⁵¹ It remains unknown how much clandestine Soviet messaging contributed to anti-interventionist rhetoric in the CIO, but the possibility should not be discounted. In his memoir, Communist and CIO lawyer John Abt noted that during this period the CIO leadership "was largely but not exclusively Communist."¹⁵²

Some Chinese citizens, living in the United States, also sought to steer the Truman administration away from armed intervention and support for Chiang Kai-shek's government. The tenor of Chinese participation in American political discourse projected a liberal future that

¹⁵⁰ "Brigadier General Evans Fordyce Carlson, USMCR" *Marine Corps History Division*, <https://www.usmcu.edu/Research/Marine-Corps-History-Division/People/Whos-Who-in-Marine-Corps-History/Abrell-Cushman/Brigadier-General-Evans-F-Carlson/>

¹⁵¹ "National Committee To Win the Peace Demanding Action," *Emporia Gazette (Kansas)*, April 8, 1946.

¹⁵² John J. Abt with Michael Myerson, *Advocate and Activist: Memoirs of an American Communist Lawyer* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 84.

this new Mandarin-class sought to build in post-war China. These members of the Chinese diaspora tended to be intellectuals, university graduates, women, and associated with American missionary programs such as the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA).

While Chinese citizens could not participate in democracy in their own country, they did in the United States. Writing President Truman in January 1946, S. H. Huang, a history teacher, noted that "for the first time in Chinese history there is a great possibility for the establishment of a united, democratic government." Yet Chinese democracy, according to Huang, was imperiled due to "the American armed intervention." Huang urged the President to withhold American credit to the Chiang government and to withdraw troops due to "demonstrations . . . held everywhere in China by students, intellectuals and professional people."¹⁵³ Dr. W. H. Chang, a pediatrician and his wife Ssu-yi Liang, a librarian at Columbia University, implored Truman to "use your good offices to stop all material aid to the Kuomintang government immediately."¹⁵⁴ Helen Chung, a graduate student at Columbia, suggested that Truman should withhold the loan "until the new united coalition government" that included both the Kuomintang and Communist parties could be empowered. Chung added that "the united voice of the Chinese people [demanded] the withdrawal of American troops, especially from North China, the center of conflict, in order to guarantee the future peace of China."¹⁵⁵ Yang Kang, the foreign correspondent for the *Ta Kung Pao* newspaper, pressed Truman to recognize that "the Chinese people's attitude toward the United States is on the crossroads."¹⁵⁶ While little is known about

¹⁵³ Letter to President Truman from Miss S. H. Huang, January 18, 1946. Truman Papers, HST-PSF, Foreign Affairs File, 1940-1953: China: 1946, NAI: 205716113

¹⁵⁴ Letter to President Truman from Dr. W. H. Chang and Miss S. Y. Liang, January 19, 1946. HST-PSF, FAF, China. NAI: 205716113.

¹⁵⁵ Letter to President Truman from Helen Chung, January 19, 1946. HST-PSF, FAF, China, 1946, NAI: 205716113.

¹⁵⁶ Letter to President Truman from Miss Yang Kang, January 20, 1946. Truman Papers, HST-PSF, Foreign Affairs File, 1940-1953: China, NAI: 205716113.

the overt political affiliation of the writers, as Suzanne Pepper has demonstrated, the political leanings of the newspapers offer some insight. The *Ta Kung Pao* newspaper was associated with the Political Study Clique within the Kuomintang party.¹⁵⁷ Both economically conservative and politically liberal, this association suggests that criticism of Chiang Kai-shek's government does not automatically equate with support of a communist alternative.

Chinese citizens sought not only to directly influence specific American politicians, but they also engaged with fellow intellectuals and writers. The Chinese rising intellectual class recognized the power of public opinion in the American democracy. In Kang's letter to Truman, she enclosed a translated letter from seventeen writers in China that stated "our hearts are heavy. For the sinister civil war has broken out in China and there are symptoms that the American troops in China are involved in it." The Chinese writers' group accurately opined that "neither the American people nor the American soldiers wish to be a part in China's civil war," and professed belief in the "power of [American writers'] beam-like pens . . . to inform the American people about the truth of developments in China."¹⁵⁸

President Truman in a January 25, 1946, memorandum to Secretary of Commerce Henry Wallace, noted that he "read with a great deal of interest the letters from the various Chinese people in this country," adding that he knew "very little about Chinese politics." The numerous letters, however, had more to do with American politics than anything within the Chinese Nationalist government. Truman approved the loan and Marines stayed in North China; however, he called upon General Marshall to broker a coalition government in China. Truman concluded

¹⁵⁷ Suzanne Pepper, *Civil War in China: The Political Struggle, 1945-1949* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978). 438-439.

¹⁵⁸ Letter to Miss Pearl S. Buck from Kuo Mo-jo and 16 others, November 23, 1945. Truman Papers. HST-PSF. NAI: 205716113.

his memorandum by affirming his long-term aim “to see a strong China with a Democratic form of Government friendly to us.”¹⁵⁹

Newspapers, Congress, and the State Department took notice of the strong wave of public opinion crashing down on American China policy in late 1945. Slow to catch on, the Truman administration lost the crucial opportunity to shape the narrative and convince the American people why the American stabilization of North China was essential to the post-war order. Carlson’s mobilization of labor unions and committees resulted in a wave of telegrams and letters to Congress, State Department, and the White House. Further complicating the public relations crisis, Patrick Hurley resigned as Ambassador to China on November 27 and released a bombshell letter that excoriated “the Hydra-headed direction and confusion of our foreign policy.”¹⁶⁰ Truman, still privately committed to supporting Chiang, reached deep for a game-changing trump card.¹⁶¹ At a cabinet luncheon, Truman adopted a suggestion that he replace Hurley with the widely admired and non-partisan General George C. Marshall. As Marshall arrived in China to try to bring the warring factions together, Dean Acheson, acting Secretary of State, painted the mood of the American electorate to Marshall in a classified cable:

“Communications are practically unanimous in opposing US participation in the Chinese civil war...the CIO and Communist communications are coming in such quantity to suggest an organized drive.” Just in case the left-wing politics of the organizations gave cause for Marshall to dismiss the implications, Acheson’s analysis noted that “other communications are so varied and the geographical spread is so great...that the protests represent a strong feeling among

¹⁵⁹ Memorandum from President Truman to Secretary Wallace, January 25, 1946. Truman Papers. HST-PSF. NAI: 205716113.

¹⁶⁰ The Ambassador in China (Hurley) to President Truman, November 26, 1945. *FRUS, China*, Document 530.

¹⁶¹ Meeting with President Truman, Personal Memorandum, November 27, 1945. Series XIX, Box 604, Folder 16. Mansfield Papers.

people who are acting, for the most part, spontaneously.” Acheson’s conclusion was atypically blunt: “The use of US troops in China is unpopular with the American people.”¹⁶² If Marshall considered leveraging American force to bring the Communists and Nationalists to the bargaining table, the tide of American public opinion effectively constrained military alternatives.

¹⁶² Telegram from Dean Acheson to General Marshall, December 20, 1945. *FRUS, China*, Document 564.

Conclusion

A Consequential Return to Political Normalcy

The United States avoided stumbling into a quagmire in North China because the American people rallied against it strongly at the outset. The intervention in North China afforded an opportunity for a restoration of democratic practices suspended by the war, and a vocal opposition seized the initiative in public discourse. The dearth of public support ultimately constrained the policy options for the Truman administration, and the President turned to perhaps the most admired man in the country—General George C. Marshall—to calm the political waters. In the wake of the savagery of the Second World War, the American populace—including its hardened Marines—possessed little appetite to extend the war beyond defeating the Axis powers. Wartime censorship laws shielded the public from the true ugliness of blood-stained volcanic beaches, but if Marines questioned why they should die to seize a tiny unknown island, the thoughts were kept close hold. In his epic memoir *With the Old Breed*, Corporal Eugene Sledge reflected about how combat with the 1st Marine Division changed him: “something in me died at Peleliu . . . I lost faith that politicians in high places who do not have to endure war’s savagery will ever stop blundering and sending others to endure it.”¹⁶³ As Marines like Sledge endured the hard slog across the Pacific, they did so with little expectation of survival, but at least each Marine understood the larger purpose of his peril. The sudden end of the war changed that in an instant. Indeed, it transformed the consciousness of the American people as peace at last seemed possible. In a representative democracy, failure to heed popular sentiment would change the government—something President Truman saw firsthand as British

¹⁶³ E. B. Sledge, *With the Old Breed* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 156.

Prime Minister Winston Churchill went down in a shocking electoral defeat in July 1945.¹⁶⁴

Caught flat-footed at the outset of the Cold War, the Truman administration never delivered the affirmative case for US intervention in China.

Congressional voices leveraged public appearances, floor speeches, constituent correspondence, and access to administration officials to shape American policy towards China. Montana's Mike Mansfield played an early and vital role in framing the political argument against US intervention. His three widely disseminated speeches from October to December 1945 publicly challenged the murky Truman Administration policy and provided a rallying cry to skeptical servicemen, mothers, and citizen groups—despite drawing unwelcome political connections with Communist-affiliated committees. Behind the scenes, Mansfield repeatedly influenced key State Department officials and President Truman at key contingent moments as the young administration sought a coherent Far East policy. Ultimately, Truman did not fully implement all of Mansfield's ideas or immediately withdraw the Marines, but the appointment of General Marshall marked a limited victory for Mansfield's incessant lobbying efforts. General Marshall would serve in a diplomatic rather than a military role.

The American citizen Marines were important agents of American policy in North China. The IIIAC faced a nuanced mission and minimized risk however possible. While the Americans still engaged in dangerous firefights with Communist forces, strict rules of engagement and rigid adherence to discipline deescalated tension in contingent moments. Instead of employing their vast firepower advantages of artillery and aircraft, Leathernecks flew aircraft in unarmed "shows of force" and maintained a semblance of frustrating neutrality. The leadership, from General Rockey on down, did not advocate the deployment of more troops or seek to expand the role of

¹⁶⁴ Churchill, *Memoirs of the Second World War*, 995-997.

the mission, although ample opportunities to do so existed. Finally, the removal of wartime censorship protocols permitted Marines like Warren Peterson to make their voices heard in Congress and to the American people.

Mothers, wives, and citizen groups questioned US policy in China in a manner difficult to ignore. As the national mobilization for World War II ramped down, spouses and parents anxiously awaited the safe return of their loved ones. Across America, the loss of numerous servicemen left countless communities scarred. In a national effort against an existential threat, Americans accepted casualties as a solemn patriotic duty, but intervention into China's internal affairs seemingly contradicted the very justification for the war. The Office of War Information's successful propaganda campaign about the Four Freedoms and the Atlantic Charter resonated and offered little room for post-war policy nuance. A flurry of letters to newspapers and congressmen originated from apprehensive family members, but rather than simply pining for a husband, ordinary women displayed extraordinary agency in challenging the Truman administration's policy on the merits of freedom, anti-fascism, and democracy. Citizens' groups, particularly labor unions like the CIO and the Committee for a Democratic Policy in the Far East organized effective opposition on moral grounds. Respected spokesmen like the heroic General Evans Carlson effectively portrayed Chiang Kai-shek's government as non-democratic and on balance as more like fascist Japan and Germany than not. Absent a coherent messaging campaign from the Truman administration, these policy punches landed points with an American populace who embraced the role of liberator—but not meddler.

In the official government retrospective, the public opinion of an informed and active electorate played a key role in China policy. In 1949, with the Cold War firmly entrenched and the Chinese Communist victory all but certain, the Truman administration issued the “China

White Paper,” in response to a new public fervor over “who lost China.”¹⁶⁵ Dean Acheson, Secretary of State, wrote on the first page that “the inherent strength of our system is the responsiveness of the Government to an informed and critical public opinion.” In his narrative description of the 1945-1946 period, Acheson opined that “the Communists probably could have been dislodged only by American arms,” but it was “obvious that the American people would not have sanctioned such a colossal commitment of our armies in 1945 or later.”¹⁶⁶

At the conclusion of a titanic war that Americans ostensibly fought for freedom and democracy, perhaps it was appropriate that Marines and mothers would organize, debate, and help shape American post-war foreign policy. For Warren Peterson, Ethel and Gilbert Wonnacott, and countless other Marines and family members, intervention in North China was more than a moral, anti-communist, or proto-Cold War position—it was profoundly personal. These unlikely political actors shaped US-China policy at a key moment in 1945-1946 when the trap lines of counterinsurgency, nation building, and regional conflict menacingly lurked in the Chinese swamp. In the restoration of American democracy, their voices were heard.

¹⁶⁵ Tsou, *America's Failure in China*, 507-509.

¹⁶⁶ *The United States Relations with China, with Special Reference to the Period 1944-1949* (New York: Greenwood Press) III, X.

Epilogue

An Alternate Path

Over the course of their time in North China, the Marines sustained 42 casualties and lost 22 aircraft, with the worst violence culminating in April 1947 shortly after the failure of the Marshall mission.¹⁶⁷ By mid-1946, only about 30,000 Marines remained in North China; however, the US maintained a military presence in China until May 1949 when the last 200 Marines departed Shanghai for the final time.¹⁶⁸ Ironically, the last unit to depart would be Warren Peterson's Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, which was among the first to land in September 1945. Peterson, however, returned safely in 1946 and renewed a successful academic career, earning his PhD from the University of Chicago in 1956.¹⁶⁹ Gilbert Wonnacott also left China uninjured in 1946 and returned to the Missoula area where he started a family and joined in his parents' meat cutting business.¹⁷⁰ His mother Ethel, lived to the age of 78 and remained active in local civic organizations.¹⁷¹ Both Ethel and Gilbert are buried together in the Victor Cemetery in the Bitterroot valley.

The Chinese Civil War came to an effective end when Chiang Kai-shek fled to Taiwan in December 1949 with a death toll likely in the millions. Mao Tse-tung's new Peoples' Republic of China quickly proved to be anything but democratic. At least a million so-called subversives were executed, and countless others imprisoned.¹⁷² The debate in 1949 sought to answer a

¹⁶⁷ Henry I. Shaw, *The United States Marines in North China 1945-1949* (Quantico: U.S. Marine Corps Historical Branch, 1960). 1-3, 24-26, A-1, B-1, C-1.

¹⁶⁸ Frank and Shaw, *Victory and Occupation*, 600,647.

¹⁶⁹ "Obituary for Warren A. Peterson, 1922-2003," *Kansas City Star*, August 24, 2003.

¹⁷⁰ "Obituary for Gilbert E. Wonnacott, 1925-1997," *Missoulian*, October 7, 1997.

¹⁷¹ "Obituary for Ethel B. Wonnacott, 1892-1971," *Missoulian*, April 25, 1971.

¹⁷² Kurtz-Phelan, *The China Mission*, 348-349.

fundamentally revisionist question: “who lost China?” If an answer truly exists to that question, it remains elusive. What is certain is that this query and the resulting brutality of the Mao regime shaped Cold War foreign policy in Asia for the next twenty years.

In August 1964, two confusing skirmishes between US and North Vietnamese ships tripped the Johnson administration into offensive military action. The “Gulf of Tonkin Incident,” triggered a swift bombing campaign, naval retaliation, and a nationally televised address. As President Johnson rallied the nation to stand up to Communist aggression in Vietnam, Montana’s Mike Mansfield, now Senate Majority Leader, introduced the Tonkin Gulf Resolution in the Senate. Mansfield’s private concerns about the blank check given to the President remained hidden from public view. His full-throated endorsement in the Senate, however, was unmistakable: “the President has set a course for the best interests of the Nation...He asks for and will have...the support of the Congress and the people of the United States.”¹⁷³ Congress overwhelmingly passed the Tonkin Gulf Resolution 416-0 in the House and 88-2 in the Senate. The bipartisan support for granting “all necessary measures to repel any armed attack...and to prevent any further aggression” mirrored the 85 percent of Americans who supported the President’s response.¹⁷⁴ Nineteen sixty-four, after all, was an election year, and displaying strength against communist aggression proved a Cold War bipartisan axiom. A massive buildup of troops began in 1965. The III Amphibious Corps—redesignated as the III Marine Amphibious Force, landed near Da Nang and began military operations some twenty years after a similar landing in North China.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³ Oberdorfer, *Senator Mansfield*, 247-248.

¹⁷⁴ Erich Martel, “Gulf of Tonkin,” *OAH Magazine of History*, Fall, 1992, Vol. 7, No. 2, History of U.S. Foreign Policy (Fall, 1992), pp. 36-39.

¹⁷⁵ Jack Shulimson and Charles M. Johnson, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam, 1965*, (Washington: Marine Corps Historical Division, 1978). 7-9.

The American people rallied around the defense of South Vietnam, in part, because of the consequences of the Chinese Civil War and the difficult Cold War political realities of the era. The United States could not risk “losing” South Vietnam to Communism as it had China. At the core of this thinking was a series of retrospective “what-ifs.” What if American troops served as advisors to the Chinese Nationalist forces? What if American forces supported Nationalist Armies with fire support and aircraft? Inaction—rather than intervention—emerged as the riskiest Cold War foreign policy. Mike Mansfield quietly offered President Johnson alternate paths—at least prior to the Gulf of Tonkin incident—but top administration figures were firm in their anti-Communist resolve. Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara’s counter memo to Mansfield won the day in early 1964: “South Vietnam...is a test of U.S. firmness...U.S. disengagement and the acceptance of Communist domination would have a serious effect on confidence.”¹⁷⁶ The loss of China was on President Johnson’s mind as he ramped up U.S. military action in Vietnam. He lamented “the day that the Communists took over in China.” Johnson went on to project inaction to an even worse fate for the United States “if we lost Vietnam.”¹⁷⁷ In hindsight, President Johnson took the wrong lesson from the Chinese Civil War. Retrospectively considering China, Historian Barbara Tuchman penned it best: “...history will continue to present us with problems for which there is no good and achievable solution. To insist that there is one and commit ourselves to it invites the fate set apart for hubris.”¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁶ Robert S. McNamara, *In Retrospect* (New York: Random House, 1995), 106-107.

¹⁷⁷ Kurtz-Phelan, *The China Mission*, 361.

¹⁷⁸ Barbara W. Tuchman, *Notes from China* (New York: Collier Books, 1972), 111.

Appendix On Sources and Methodology

This project started as a research seminar topic during the COVID-19 pandemic in January 2021. The substantial archival closures presented a formidable, but not insurmountable obstacle to research. Fortunately, I benefited tremendously from continuous access to the Mansfield and Murray papers located at the University of Montana. This was a double-edged sword, enabling a deep and detailed view on constituent correspondence in Montana, but constraining me to a narrow sample size. Recognizing this limitation, I sought to broaden this perspective with digital archival materials, periodicals, and secondary scholarship. Expanding my research base, I found echoes of similar anti-interventionist sentiment in the *Congressional Record*, in national newspapers, and among the digital records of the Truman Library and National Archives.

Constituent dialogue with deployed servicemen, parents, and citizen activist groups is an insight into grassroots American democracy in 1945. The Mansfield, Murray, and Wheeler papers are fantastic revelations into public opinion, but all citizens made their thoughts known to their congressmen. A limitation of this source base is that only motivated citizens would engage their congressman via letters, telegrams, and postcards. Indifferent constituents cannot be fully determined and specific public opinion polling data on China does not exist for the critical 1945-1947 period when most citizen letters were written.¹⁷⁹ Not one pro-interventionist citizen letter, however, was discovered in any of the archival visits. The absence of letters advocating a more intrusive policy does not eliminate the possibility that some Americans held alternate views,

¹⁷⁹ The Roper Center at Cornell University archived National polls by the Roper and Gallup Organizations from 1945-1950. A review of these sources revealed little specific polling data regarding U.S. intervention until 1949.

however, it does suggest a sizable gap in public enthusiasm. Absent detailed polling, public opinion, therefore, is subjective. As this research shows, however, the Truman administration perceived intervention in China to be unpopular.

The *Congressional Record* captures the United States Congress's oversight and policy advocacy regarding foreign affairs in China in the post-war era. Representative Mansfield's speeches and committee hearing records enhance and confirm the archival records found in the Mansfield papers. Additionally, the public thoughts of other representatives like Walter Judd, Hugh DeLacy, Claire Boothe Luce, and others broaden understanding of the congressional role in shaping policy towards China. While the records are extensive, they are limited to what Congressmen and Senators said for the public record and may not include classified briefings or hearings. Newspapers and declassified State department cables serve to mitigate the potential source gap in the Congressional Record.

I heavily made use of the *Foreign Relations of the United States* series for important clandestine message traffic and State department dialogue. Additionally, online access to the National Archives and the Truman Library provided numerous cables and policy documents that revealed US grand strategy, inter-agency coordination, and policy debates for post-war China. Where archival access proved difficult, such as the policy memorandums from the State-War-Navy-Coordinating Committee (SWNCC), I relied on secondary scholarship and footnotes.

The official Marine Corps *War Diaries* of the III Amphibious Corps (IIIAC) and subordinate maneuver elements offer insight into what commanders and principal staff deployed to North China thought of their mission and operations, as well as key personnel and logistics information. Much of this is not yet digitized. I attempted to mitigate this by traveling to the US Marine Corps archives in Quantico, Virginia, and through the limited digitized documents

available online, to review personal papers and archived orders. While I located several primary source maps, operational orders, and pictures, an out-of-print secondary source—*Victory and Occupation*—was an important find on the archival shelves. This historical Marine Corps publication yielded important quotes, data, significant events, and reflections from Marine Corps leadership about the North China occupation.

Newspapers and periodicals between 1944 and 1949 were read by a sizeable portion of the population and numerous news stories about North China kept average American citizens informed. To provide an additional picture of public opinion towards American involvement in the Chinese Civil War, I leveraged newspapers and periodicals from 1944-1949. In selecting sources, I sought to maximize geographic coverage and to balance editorial bias by casting a wide net. I searched *The Missoulian*, *Billings Gazette*, *Great Falls Tribune*, *Helena Independent Record*, *Daily Inter Lake*, *Montana Standard*, and *Havre Daily News*—as well as other small newspapers around the Montana—for articles, opinion editorials, and letters to the editor. These archives not only assist in the understanding of public opinion in Montana, but they also serve to address what information was available to the reading public during the period. Accessed primarily through *newspapers.com* and *montananewspapers.org*, articles about the Chinese civil unrest and Marine Corps deployment to China were prolific and frequently appeared with sensational headlines such as “Five U. S. Marines Killed by Chinese Communists.”¹⁸⁰ During this era, paid daily newspaper circulation actually exceeded the number of U.S. households.¹⁸¹ While such sizable foreign policy debate in the American hinterland is interesting, in order to eliminate the possibility that this was a uniquely Montana phenomenon, I conducted a review of

¹⁸⁰ “Five U.S. Marines Killed by Chinese Communists,” *Helena Independent Record*, April 5, 1947.

¹⁸¹ “Sixty Years of Daily Newspaper Circulation Trends,” *media-cmi.com*, May 6, 2011, accessed on April 11, 2021. http://media-cmi.com/downloads/Sixty_Years_Daily_Newspaper_Circulation_Trends_050611.pdf

national newspapers from major cities as well as national news magazines. Newspapers like the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *Chicago Tribune* maintained their own foreign news correspondents as did periodicals like *Time*, *Life*, and *Newsweek*. As small-town newspapers did not typically have an independent foreign news bureau, the Associated Press and United Press perspectives dominated international news stories. Stories written about China during this period originated from only a handful of correspondents, yet this was likely the singular perspective that Americans read. Of 1803 English speaking newspapers operating in the United States in 1945, the Associated Press and the United Press wire services served 1,247 and 981 papers, respectively.¹⁸²

This is an international story viewed through national, state, and local lenses. I look forward to the opportunity to expand this research in the coming years.

¹⁸² *Associated Press v. United States*, 326 U.S. 1(1945), <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/326/1/>

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