

THE UNITED STATES AND CHINA:
END OF AN ABERRATION?

by

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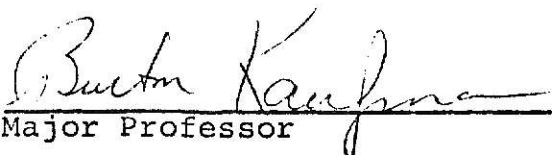
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PREFACE

The aberration in American policy toward China came in the Cold War years when the United States reacted to the triumph of the Communists by refusing to recognize Mao Tse-tung's regime and by aligning itself instead with the defeated and discredited Nationalists on Taiwan. After more than two decades of mutual hostility, the United States and the People's Republic of China are gradually moving toward normalizing their relations. The Taiwan issue looms today as the major obstacle toward ending the aberration in American policy toward China. The United States cannot go on straddling the Taiwan issue indefinitely and is clearly faced with a dilemma. In order to upgrade and consolidate its relations with China, the United States must be prepared to redefine its ties with the Nationalists on Taiwan. The purpose, then, of this report is twofold: first, it illustrates the traditional basis for American policy in China from the wake of the Opium Wars until the fall of Chiang Kai-shek's regime; and secondly, it depicts the drift in recent years toward normalizing relations with Peking and ending the aberration in American policy toward China.

Chapter 1

A SURVEY OF AMERICAN POLICY IN CHINA:

1844-1943

Beginning in the nineteenth century, as the United States gradually freed itself from concern with continental problems, it increasingly became concerned with the overseas expansion of American power, both political and economic. As interests in the outer world grew, Americans looked to Asia as well as to Europe.

The United States has a long interest in China. Despite broad differences in background which separate the U.S. and China, American friendship for China has always been supported by strong political and economic ties. Even in the years before the U.S. became a great power, it claimed to have a special relationship with China.

Beginning in 1844 and lasting until the fall of the Kuomintang (KMT) Government in 1949, American policy toward China was based on the "twin principles of: (1) equality of commercial opportunity; and (2) the maintenance of the territorial and administrative integrity and political independence of China."¹

The United States has also opposed the domination of China by any one nation or group of nations and, traditionally, has advocated a policy of non-interference in China's

internal affairs. It has taken the position that the Chinese should be given time to develop their political institutions in order to modernize. A backward China exploited by other powers held no promise for the U.S. However, a strong, modern China able to preserve its own territorial integrity could provide a stable balance of power in Asia.

During the nineteenth century, the U.S. policy toward China was expressed in treaties and by diplomatic procedures designed to secure equality of trading rights in China. The fundamental principle underlying American relations with China--equality of commercial opportunity--was incorporated in the first treaty between the two nations, the Treaty of Wanghia, signed on July 3, 1844. This treaty provided for a most-favored nation clause,² which guaranteed that whatever treaty rights other nations gained with respect to trade, residence, religious activity, tariffs or other commercial regulations would automatically accrue to the U.S. The principle of commercial equality worked well for the U.S. up until the late 1890's when new imperialistic pressures threatened a division of China into "spheres of influence" among European powers.³

The annexation of the Philippines in 1898 after the Spanish-American War introduced U.S. military power in the Western Pacific. Seen as the key to Asian markets, the Philippines did not in any automatic way secure the American position in China. It appeared that the United States would have to do something more to assert its principle of