

Civil War 1946-1949, Communist victory & Soviet influence

(Mao's China 1936-97 -Lynch p35-41)

Military strategy:

Jiang Jieshi abandoned his previous policy of 'trading space to buy time' and attacked Manchuria where the Communists were historically strong.

Mao's strategy in Yanan was an excellent example of giving ground for the greater good, showing strong strategic skills.

CCP used moles to gain information

CCP used prisoners of war and captured weaponry to fight the GMD.

Conscription: Jiang's policy of conscription was hated and falls into his failure militarily but also failure to understand how to gather broad based support. He also treated his troops miserably.

Economic:

Was this a Communist win or simply that they offered an alternative to the disastrous economic and political policies of the GMD?

Eg inflation

Political plans and popular support:

GMD had not been able to gain support of the people due to corruption (and failed economic policy) eg the failed New Life Movement; an unwillingness to cooperate with the CCP (according to the CCP propaganda machine). In addition, Jiang's GMD was funded by the urban elite and the banks thus alienating it from the 'people'.

GMD had failed to understand the peasantry unlike the CCP. Working with and mobilising the peasantry is a key strength of the CCP, unlike other points which are weaknesses of the GMD.

The CCP Land Policy can be used to illustrate how 'pragmatic' the CCP could be, and therefore, how politically astute. For example, in areas where they felt they needed the support of the local gentry, the CCP did not encourage 'land liberation' but where no gain could be made by having the support of the land owners, the CCP supported the peasantry in grabbing land from the hated land lords. This is a key example of political skill and also a key example of GMD failure to grab an opportunity to support land owners.

In addition, the GMD failed to work successfully with local government. With China being so large, local government had to be managed and Jiang chose to try and simply put in place GMD structures rather than listening or compromising with the existing local structures.

Leadership

Jiang had developed a reputation for encouraging nepotism, supporting the elite and being an weak military and economic leader.

Mao had a strong track record as a military leader but had also started to develop the 'cult of Mao' in Yanan. He was also adept at using propaganda.

Mao's self belief and conviction was inspirational to the PLA. Compare this to Jiang's own description of why the GMD lost the war. He stated that the NRA were incompetently led, had low morale, had leaders who could not inspire and had weak military commanders. This conviction can be proven by the rectification programmes of the 1940s.

His absolute control also made it easier for him to make military and strategic decisions.

International intervention - US

The US remained a supporter of the GMD but it was increasingly lack lustre in its enthusiasm, largely as the US had lost faith in Jiang.

In 1946, George Marshall, a senior American general, had been sent to broker an agreement with Jiang and Mao so as to end the civil war. It almost succeeded as the Nationalists were told to pull back from a Manchurian offensive and a coalition government was agreed. The Soviet Union began to withdraw from Manchuria.

Some say this gave the CCP breathing space and handed the upper hand to them. Others do not make this claim. In fact, Jiang broke the ceasefire, refusing to have a coalition government and, with US support, renewed its attack on Manchuria.

International intervention - Soviet Union

There are differing views about the role of the Soviet Union in their support to the CCP in China and thus their role in the CCP victory in the Civil War.

Lynch states that the Soviet Union under Stalin refused to believe that Mao's revolution was a real communist revolution - as it was not based in the urban proletariat. Indeed, in the Yanan years, the Soviet Union refused to listen to CCP intelligence that may have helped avoid the Barbarossa humiliation of 1941.

Lynch goes on to point out that in 1945, the Soviet Union signs a Soviet-GMD friendship treaty. This allowed Soviet forces into Manchuria as long as the Soviet Union recognises the GMD as the only legitimate authority in China. The background is that, on the US bombing of Nagasaki, the USSR had invaded Manchuria, declaring war on Japan.

Other commentators, such as Chang and Halliday (Mao: The Unknown Story) suggest that the land taken by the USSR in this invasion was a positive for the CCP as it formed a Communist bloc of land in Manchuria, from which to expand their influence as the civil war continued. They also comment that the USSR, who had the ear of the US via the nascent Security Council (Four Policemen theory), suggested to the US that the CCP were ideologically motivated but were more aiming for improved economic conditions.

A middle ground is offered by Stewart (China 1900-1976) who agrees that the USSR land grab in Manchuria was positive for the CCP and also states that much of the Japanese military supplies captured were handed over to the CCP. He then agrees that the USSR were pragmatic and wanted a friendly 'face' in China, feeling that the GMD were much more likely to be the overall leader (after a civil war or if diplomacy worked to end the civil war) hence the Soviet-GMD friendship treaty. In addition, the USSR wanted to maintain friendly links with the US at this stage.

Read pp79-81 of Stewart, make notes for further comprehension of the situation and a greater overview of the situation at the start of the war.