

# Across the Formosa Straits, thirty years after Quemoy-Matsu

by Webster G. Tarpley

The month of August marks the 30th anniversary of the beginning of the Aug. 23, 1958 Chinese Communist attempt to seize control of the offshore islands, Quemoy and Matsu, with massive artillery and air bombardments in preparation for an amphibious assault. As any American schoolboy in the late 1950s knew, Quemoy and Matsu are two small islands a few kilometers off the Chinese mainland coast which had remained under the control of Nationalist Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang (KMT) government when the KMT was forced to transfer its capital to Taiwan (Formosa) in 1949, following the victory of the Maoist armies in China's civil war. The Chinese Communists sought to seize these islands in preparation for a general assault on Taiwan, which is separated from the mainland by 100 miles of the Formosa Straits.

The Communist attempt to grab the offshore islands came just five years after the Korean armistice of July 1953. As U.S. Gen. Douglas MacArthur had predicted, the Beijing regime was made more aggressive by U.S. and British appeasement. The intensive phase of the Battle of Quemoy (known as Kinmen in Mandarin Chinese) lasted from Aug. 23, 1958 to Jan. 7, 1959, although Communist shelling of the islands went on for years after that. During the main battle, the Communist People's Liberation Army tried to flatten the Nationalist fortifications on the islands to open the way for assault landings, while also seeking to cut off supplies to the Nationalist garrisons. Quemoy, the largest of the offshore islands, is located in a bay, surrounded on three sides by mainland gun positions. During more than four months of battle, the Communist Chinese troops fired some 600,000 shells at Quemoy, causing 800 casualties and destroying almost 10,000 buildings and dwellings. There were several Red landing attempts. The Nationalists countered by denying the Communists sea and air supremacy, shooting down 30 MiGs, destroying 97 fortified gun emplacements, and sinking 27 Red naval vessels, thus preventing the Communists from massing for an effective amphibious assault.

Quemoy and Matsu were, along with the 38th parallel

truce line in Korea and the Western zones of Berlin, the front lines of the Cold War confrontation of the free world with the Sino-Soviet bloc. The defense of these islands was one of the main issues in the 1960 Kennedy-Nixon presidential debates. Today, the offshore islands remain fortified but peaceful, with a civilian economy that has revived after decades of living the life of a garrison under siege. But observers in the Republic of China on Taiwan point out that Beijing has often reiterated, and never renounced, its threat to attack Taiwan and reunify China by force under Communist rule. The Taiwan government is thus still in a state of war with Beijing.

Beijing recently staged a large-scale, live-fire mock invasion of its Hainan Island. Missiles have been fired off Chekiang. In March, 3,000 Red trawlers massed in the Min River opposite Matsu. Mainland trawlers frequently violate territorial waters of the Republic of China (R.O.C.). Some have been found carrying weapons.

Thirty years after the battles around the offshore islands, a lively debate has broken out in the R.O.C. concerning the likely shape of future relations with the mainland regime. This debate has been accelerated by the fact that the R.O.C. itself is in a period of rapid change, with a new President (Lee Teng-hui, who replaced the late President Chiang Ching-kuo, the son of the late Generalissimo, back in January) and the XIII Party Congress of the ruling Kuomintang, which has led to numerous changes in the key Central Standing Committee and other party organs. There is now ferment in the R.O.C. about the possibility of increased visits and exchanges with the mainland, including the possibility of direct merchandise trade, which has been ruled out by the KMT since 1949. In practice, R.O.C.-mainland trade has become large and has been routed through Hong Kong.

KMT policy toward the mainland remains tied to the "three no" policy, which stipulates no contact, no negotiation, and no compromise with Beijing. For years, the R.O.C. upheld its own Chinese version of the postwar Bonn Hallstein Doctrine (*Alleinvertretung*) by claiming to be the sole Chinese nation. Beijing for its part has answered with its "four cardi-

nal principles” or non-negotiable demands of taking the socialist road, the dictatorship of the proletariat, the leadership of the Communist Party, and Marxist-Leninist-Maoist thought.

Although the KMT has remained locked in its “three no” position despite obvious contact and some de facto negotiation, Beijing has introduced some variations into its own theme. In 1981, Beijing’s Yeh Chien-ying offered a nine-point peace package that was supposed to lead to a united front of Beijing and Taipei. More recently, Beijing’s “paramount leader,” Deng Xiaoping, has been promoting the slogan of “one country, two systems” to raise the issue of Chinese reunification, although clearly under Beijing domination. “One country, two systems” reflects the Beijing policy towards the British Crown Colony of Hong Kong, which is scheduled to be annexed by Beijing in 1997. Deng has pledged to allow the economic system presently extant in Hong Kong, defined as capitalism, to remain in force for at least 50 years.

Taipei observers assert that Deng is already trying to water down his promises about the future of Hong Kong through the provisions of a “mini-constitution,” for the Chinese Question has now been projected onto the front pages of the Taipei newspapers via the statements made by Prof. James C. Hsiung of New York University while passing through Taipei after a visit to Beijing. Professor Hsiung said that he had held conversations with top officials in Beijing, whose names he declined to specify. But he did say that one of his discussion partners did speak with a Szechuan accent. This is thought to signify that Professor Hsiung had spoken directly with Deng, who is a native of the Szechuan region. Professor Hsiung is also thought to have spoken with General Yong, a top Beijing military leader.

Professor Hsiung described Deng as now being concerned about his place in the immense chronicle of Chinese history. He painted a picture of Deng as jealous of Mao Zedong and Chou En-lai, his rivals for power who condemned him to years of humiliating rectification as a toilet cleaner during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. Allegedly, Deng thinks that while Mao will go down in history as the architect of the Chinese Communist Revolution, Chou will be remembered as the man who consolidated and strengthened that regime. Deng accordingly wants to secure the niche of the man who united China.

Therefore, according to Professor Hsiung’s account, Deng is genuinely fearful about the tendencies toward Taiwan independence, meaning the creation of a government in Taipei no longer claiming to represent the Chinese state. Such talk of Taiwan independence, with its corollary of giving up the claim to represent the mainland, is outlawed in the R.O.C., but has become one of the more or less open themes of opposition agitation that has emerged in the R.O.C. after the lifting of martial law in 1987. The line of the opposition is that the KMT government is merely the last of a series of colonial oppressor regimes (Dutch, Spanish, British, Japa-

nese) that have usurped power in Taipei.

According to the NYU professor, Deng has secretly turned against communism, which he sees to be inherently unworkable and a failure, although he dare not acknowledge this view in public. To hear it from the professor, Deng is determined above all else to prevent a renewed domination of the Beijing regime by Mao Zedong thought.

As a consequence of this singular state of mind on the part of Deng, Professor Hsiung further expounded, the paramount leader is now ready to be very flexible to prevent Taiwan from taking the path of breakaway independence. According to Hsiung’s report, Deng is now ready to declare peaceful coexistence with the R.O.C. in the interim between now and a pending reunification of Beijing and Taipei. The mainland might even form a coalition government with the KMT, and offer the KMT a consulting role in drafting a new constitution for China. That constitution need not include the four cardinal principles enumerated above. Beijing might even drop its present name of “People’s Republic of China” in favor of calling itself the Republic of China. Beijing might even drop its present red banner in favor of the R.O.C.’s white sun on a blue field.

### **A big hoax?**

All of these alleged openings from Deng contrast with reports of just a few weeks earlier. In early August, the Hong Kong magazine *Cheng Ming* had reported that Deng, on vacation at Peitaiho, a beach resort near Beijing, told an annual Communist Party summit meeting in July that Beijing would not drop its threat of military invasion against Taiwan. This account depicted Deng as “extremely worried” about Taiwan, and personally monitoring reports on the R.O.C.

Concerning Beijing’s offer to renounce the threat of invasion across the Formosa Straits, it is of course evident that the military man must look at an adversary’s capabilities, and not what he claims his intentions to be.

In an interview to the Chinese Television Service, R.O.C. Chief of the General Staff Hau Pei-tsun stated that the R.O.C. is strong enough to defeat an invasion attempt by Beijing. “If the enemy dare to launch an invasion against us, I am confident that we would be able to crush them,” said General Hau, who was interviewed while relaxing by a swimming pool on the hottest day of the year in Taipei. But while stressing the ability of his forces to defeat an invasion, Hau also conceded that he is not strong enough to mount a counterattack on the Chinese mainland. Hau argued against any cuts in the R.O.C.’s defense spending, saying, “Our defense budget should be maintained at a level sufficient to give the people a sense of security. Only then will people make investments, and can the economy continue to develop. The money so spent will be worthwhile.” To meet the requirements of its situation, the R.O.C. maintains a formidable military establishment, with over 500,000 well-equipped troops under arms for a population of about 20 million.

Asked to comment on the remarks by Professor Hsiung, Hau described the Beijing message as “a big hoax” and “wishful thinking.” “Do you think political power can be transferred so simply?” he asked. “If we take the words of the Communists at their face value, what would we do if they revert to the name of People’s Republic tomorrow?” Hau criticized those who took the Beijing message seriously for “naive thinking.” He stressed that the policy of the R.O.C. must be to build up its own strength, stay united, and remain vigilant.

A similar skeptical reaction to the Hsiung message comes from exile circles in Hong Kong, where various intellectuals and writers have pointed out that despite Deng’s claims to have introduced economic modernizations and reforms, the political system of Beijing is the same totalitarian state that has been in existence without interruption since 1949. The view of these Hong Kong circles is that Deng and Chinese Communist Party chief Chao Ziyang would like nothing better than to “lock the door and beat the dogs,” conducting murderous purges and crackdowns internally while rejecting foreign protests with a strongly xenophobic line.

Other Chinese intellectual circles recall that liberalizations on the part of Beijing have a way of turning into their opposite. They point to Mao Zedong’s notorious 1957 slogan, “Let a hundred flowers bloom,” encouraging the free expression of dissenting opinion. This was followed in 1958 with a campaign of pitiless retribution against those who had dared to speak out. Mao specified that he had called for flowers, not weeds.

### Deng’s ‘reforms’

After 10 years of Deng’s reforms on the mainland, the Beijing regime is officially posting a 19% rate of inflation, the highest in post-1949 history, and doubtless underestimated. Beijing remains committed to “price reform,” a euphemism for price increases. But these increases have been delayed because of alarm in Beijing about the political implications of price increases of as much as 1,000% in recent months for certain basic foodstuffs and manufactured goods, according to David Chen of the *Taipei China News*. The world food crisis is known to be hitting the mainland hard.

In north-central China, 30 million people still live in caves, according to a report filed by the AP’s Jim Abrams from Beijing. According to the same reporter, there are now upward of 50 million homeless on the mainland, including peddlers, beggars, and drifters who seek work in the construction trades. Before Deng, employees of state-owned companies had de facto life tenure and could not be fired. They described themselves as “eating from the iron rice pot” of state wages. Under Deng, the iron rice pot has been discontinued.

Mainland education has never recovered from the forays of the Red Guards of Chairman Mao’s Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution of 1966-76. The education budget is in-

adequate, despite attempts to improve it. Thousands of schools in the mainland countryside are closing their doors because the teachers, among the lowest paid persons on the mainland, are seeking jobs in Deng’s “socialist commodity economy” private ventures. Teachers who remain on the job are often so poor they cannot buy chalk.

The Beijing strategy behind the Hsiung message was the subject of a mid-August symposium sponsored by the *Flag of China Monthly*, a political magazine with about 10,000 subscribers in the R.O.C. and among Chinese around the world. The symposium was chaired by the editor of the *Flag of China Monthly*, C.M. Lao.

Many speakers viewed the Hsiung message as another trick by Beijing. In the course of the debate, one speaker who said he had been in Britain during the early years of the Second World War compared Professor Hsiung to Rudolph Hess, the Nazi leader who parachuted into Britain and claimed he was Hitler’s messenger. The difference this time, said the speaker, is that Deng’s messenger has no standing whatsoever in Beijing. A professor from the National Normal University pointed out that none of Beijing’s psychological warfare tactics of past years had attained as great an impact as the Hsiung message. He noted that Taipei officials had been shocked by the message, and that Beijing had partially succeeded in creating a panic in the R.O.C. government. He predicted that the mainland rulers would continue to send messages in the hope of paralyzing the entire R.O.C. society. He summed up his own view that “a good Communist is a dead Communist,” a view he attributed to Gen. Douglas MacArthur. Many speakers agreed that from Mao to Chou to Deng, the Beijing policy has remained the same—the overthrow of the Taipei government, preferably by violent means. It was pointed out that an attempt by Taiwan dissidents to declare the island totally independent of China might provide Beijing with the pretext needed to justify an attempt at invasion.

Some speakers recommended the maintenance of the “three no” policy. But one, Professor Teng, the chairman of the Pacific Cultural Association, said he agreed on the no to compromises with Beijing, but saw nothing wrong with negotiation, and thought that the pretense of denying de facto contact is “ridiculous.” Professor Teng, a candidate for the Legislative Yuan in the next elections, said that repeating the three nos covers up for the lack of an effective policy toward the mainland. Professor Teng proposed that traditional Chinese culture be offered as the alternative to communism in proposing reunification. Other participants in the *Flag of China Monthly* debate proposed that the most effective alternative to communist ideology would be Dr. Sun Yat-sen’s three principles of the people, which Dr. Sun enunciated in the course of founding the Republic of China in 1911 as the first republic in Asia. These three principles are national sovereignty, a democratic republic, and economic development.

## Political warfare

The conclusions to the debate were offered by Gen. Teng Chieh, one of the most trusted advisers to Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek from the late 1920s on, and the founder of the still-secret Society for the Realization of the Three Principles of the People, known also in China as the Society for National Revival, and known among the Japanese and the Communists as the Blue Clothes Society.

General Teng presented the struggle against the mainland regime in the framework of what he defined as "political warfare," a concept different from traditional military warfare. The problem, he argued, is that the Beijing communist ideology is to conquer the world using surprise attacks, treacherous stabs in the back, and violence and terrorism. Therefore, no negotiation with Beijing should be undertaken. Rather, the Sun Yat-sen program should be propagandized on the mainland, where Dr. Sun is still revered by hundreds of millions of persons.

General Teng argued that the Hsiung message is a lie, sent into the world by a liar (Deng Xiaoping). General Teng noted that the Communist leader has demanded the reunification of China by 1992, and that the great opportunity for subversion will be coming up in advance of the November 1989 elections to the R.O.C. Legislative Yuan, the national parliament. He predicted that Beijing will intervene in the election ferment with the goal of creating mass upheaval and destabilization. If the R.O.C. government cannot be toppled during 1989, General Teng went on, then Beijing will build up the parties in opposition to the KMT, seeking to start an internal revolution that might also provide Beijing with the excuse for an armed attack. General Teng strongly criticized the policy of the KMT, saying that forces inside the KMT are cooperating with the opposition forces and fostering their growth, giving Beijing its long-awaited opportunity to send armed forces across the sea.

He pointed to the unmistakable invasion preparations by the mainland, which constantly holds landing drills and amphibious maneuvers, and probes the Taiwan defenses with fishing boats outfitted for electronic reconnaissance.

He summed up by saying that if the KMT tried to attack the mainland, it would be at a disadvantage. But if Beijing attempts to storm Taiwan, they will be at a decided disadvantage. He pointed to the fact that Taiwan is divided into two halves, east and west, by a spinal mountain chain that has some of the highest peaks in East Asia. If Beijing were to land troops on the west coast of Taiwan, they would have a very hard time enveloping the eastern part of the island. The highlands would be very hard to capture in any case. As long as the mutual disadvantage for the attacker holds, General Teng argued, the political warfare aspect of the struggle will be the dominant one. General Teng concluded by saying that if the R.O.C. can hold out for the next three years, signs of collapse on the mainland will become evident, giving the R.O.C. a perspective for eventual victory.

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## Chaing Kai-shek's Adviser

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# A conversation with

by Webster G. Tarpley

Among those persons alive today who were closely associated with Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek during the titanic struggles in China during the 1930s, the Second World War, and the aftermath of that war, a preeminent place is occupied by Gen. Teng Chieh, an elder statesman of the Nationalist Kuomintang (KMT) Party in the Republic of China on Taiwan. At the age of 84, General Teng was born in the same year as Beijing's Deng Xiaoping, and has dedicated his life to the struggle against Mao's and Deng's Chinese Communists.

Gen. Teng Chieh was born in 1904 in the mainland province of Kiangsu. During the 1920s, he was sent by Chiang Kai-shek to study first at Shanghai University, and then at the famous Whampoa Military Academy. At Whampoa, several members of the Chinese Communist old guard, including Liu Shao-chi and Lin Piao, were among the fellow students whose mentality General Teng came to know well. General Teng also studied at the Meiji University in Japan. In the mid-1930s, General Teng traveled through Europe, visiting Great Britain, Germany, Italy, Turkey, Greece, and Hungary.

By the early 1930s, General Teng had become one of the most trusted advisers to Chaing Kai-shek. In 1931, Chiang approved a plan for the reorganization of the KMT military and political forces that had been elaborated by General Teng. This plan was implemented by General Teng in the years through 1937. The plan brought about "a sea change in China's prospects and real strength, laying the foundation for victory in the eight-year war of resistance against the Japanese invasion that then followed."

### The secret society

At the heart of General Teng's reorganization plan was the creation of a secret society called the Society for the Realization of the Three Principles of the People, also known as the Society for National Revival. The name of the grouping refers to the three principles of the people (national sovereignty, a democratic republic, and economic development) expounded by Dr. Sun Yat-sen, the founder of the Republic of China in 1911. The Chinese Communists and the Japanese referred to General Teng's society as the Blue Clothes Society. Many aspects of this society remain unknown to this day.