

The Cold War Heats Up

MAIN IDEA

After World War II, China became a communist nation and Korea was split into a communist north and a democratic south.

WHY IT MATTERS NOW

Ongoing tensions with China and North Korea continue to involve the United States.

Terms & Names

- Chiang Kai-shek
- Mao Zedong
- Taiwan
- 38th parallel
- Korean War

One American's Story

First Lieutenant Philip Day, Jr., vividly remembers his first taste of battle in Korea. On the morning of July 5, 1950, Philip Day spotted a column of eight enemy tanks moving toward his company.

A PERSONAL VOICE PHILIP DAY, JR.

"I was with a 75-mm recoilless-rifle team. 'Let's see,' I shouted, 'if we can get one of those tanks.' We picked up the gun and moved it to where we could get a clean shot. I don't know if we were poorly trained, . . . but we set the gun on the forward slope of the hill. When we fired, the recoilless blast blew a hole in the hill which instantly covered us in mud and dirt. . . . When we were ready again, we moved the gun to a better position and began banging away. I swear we had some hits, but the tanks never slowed down. . . . In a little less than two hours, 30 North Korean tanks rolled through the position we were supposed to block as if we hadn't been there."

—quoted in *The Korean War: Pusan to Chosin*

Only five years after World War II ended, the United States became embroiled in a war in Korea. The policy of containment had led the United States into battle to halt communist expansion. In this conflict, however, the enemy was not the Soviet Union, but North Korea and China.



▲ American soldiers fire mortars at communist strongholds near Mundung-ni in Korea.

China Becomes a Communist Country

For two decades, Chinese Communists had struggled against the nationalist government of **Chiang Kai-shek** (chǎng' kǐshěk'). The United States supported Chiang. Between 1945 and 1949, the American government sent the Nationalists approximately \$3 billion in aid.

Talk to the text in the margins!

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Nationalists Versus Communists, 1945

Nationalists Leader: Chiang Kai-shek



- Ruled in southern and eastern China
- Relied heavily on aid from United States
- Struggled with inflation and a failing economy
- Suffered from weak leadership and poor morale

Communists Leader: Mao Zedong



- Ruled in northern China
- Relied heavily on financial aid from Soviet Union
- Attracted peasants with promises of land reform
- Benefited from experienced guerrilla army and a highly motivated leadership

Many Americans were impressed by Chiang Kai-shek and admired the courage and determination that the Chinese Nationalists showed in resisting the Japanese during the war. However, U.S. officials who dealt with Chiang held a different view. They found his government inefficient and hopelessly corrupt.

Furthermore, the policies of Chiang's government undermined Nationalist support. For example, the Nationalists collected a grain tax from farmers even during the famine of 1944. When city dwellers demonstrated against a 10,000 percent increase in the price of rice, Chiang's secret police opened fire on them.

In contrast, the Communists, led by **Mao Zedong** (mou'dzǔ'dǒng'), gained strength throughout the country. In the areas they controlled, Communists worked to win peasant support. They encouraged peasants to learn to read, and they helped to improve food production. As a result, more and more recruits flocked to the Communists' Red Army. By 1945, much of northern China was under communist control.

RENEWED CIVIL WAR As soon as the defeated Japanese left China at the end of World War II, cooperation between the Nationalists and the Communists ceased. Civil war erupted again between the two groups. In spite of the problems in the Nationalist regime, American policy favored the Nationalists because they opposed communism.

From 1944 to 1947, the United States played peacemaker between the two groups while still supporting the Nationalists. However, U.S. officials repeatedly failed to negotiate peace. Truman refused to commit American soldiers to back up the Nationalists, although the United States did send \$2 billion worth of military equipment and supplies.

The aid wasn't enough to save the Nationalists, whose weak military leadership and corrupt, abusive practices drove the peasants to the Communist side. In May 1949, Chiang and the remnants of his demoralized government fled to the island of **Taiwan**, which Westerners called Formosa. After more than 20 years of struggle, the Communists ruled all of mainland China. They established a new government, the People's Republic of China, which the United States refused to accept as China's true government. **A**

MAIN IDEA

Analyzing Causes

A What factors led to the Communist takeover in China?