

# Chiang Right, Baker Says

(Ed. Note: This is the third and last in a series of articles on John Earl Baker, 72, a former Eagle resident, who returned from Formosa in January. The first two articles told of his experiences as a railroad, communications, and relief administrator for private agencies and the Chinese government for nearly 40 years.)

BY GENE DIVINE  
Freeman Staff

How did China get into its present mess?

It is only natural that the question would arise during any conversation with Baker. Here was a man who had worked closely with the Chinese from the days when it was a struggling young republic with great promise until as recently as last January.

Baker became an intimate of many of Nationalist China's present leaders when they were cutting their political teeth as minor government functionaries, 20, 30, 40 years ago.

It was evident that Baker had given the question considerable thought on previous occasions. His answer was scholarly. It touched many facets.

There was no clear cut answer. He listed many contributing factors. In essence, much of the blame must lie with America and Americans, according to Baker.

THE ONLY clear cut statement he would make was as follows:

"Gen. Chiang Kai-Shek has been right about the commies from the beginning. Many people were fooled by them, but not him. I must admit that I was even wrong about the Communists for a short time."

The story of China's fall rightly begins back in 1921, according to Baker. It was then that "Uncle Joe began sending his boys over the border to form cells." Baker recalls that the Reds made a lot of progress in northern China in the 1930's.

He tells of famine which wiped out nine out of every 10 persons in some provinces. "If you take nine people out of 10 from any area in China you will find that the living standard soars," Baker says. The Reds claimed credit for prosperous conditions following the famine. They gained a foothold.

BY THE TIME the Chinese were tied down fighting Japan, nearly half of China had a well organized Communist party. Although there have been claims to the contrary, Baker insists that the Reds did not help fight the Chinese.

"They made raids occasionally for food and ammunition for their own troops so that when the war ended they were ready and took over half of the country."

At this point the Russians gave the Chinese Communists, all of the Jap arms they had captured. Baker believes that the Nationalists were still strong enough to beat the Reds, but Gen. George Marshall forced the Nationalists to stop fighting and try to form a coalition government.

Before negotiations were broken off the Communists had gained strength. Baker also blamed Communist agents in the American government. He was "amazed" at the many times there was a break down of supplies to the Nationalist army at a critical time.

VINEGAR JOE (Gen. Joseph W. Stilwell) also shares a part of the blame, according to Baker. "Vinegar Joe worked for me as an aspiring young army engineer when I was road building. With a missionary as his go-between and translator he got along fine with the Chinese. He should have learned something about them in his years in China."

Baker doesn't think the general learned much about the Chinese. He expressed his admiration for the man and said that Americans who understand rough manners liked him. "He was a fine man on the line," Baker says.

But he used his rough manners when dealing with the Chinese general staff. Baker pointed out that the Chinese are such a sensitive people that they will tell you a lie if they think you want to hear it rather than hurt your feelings.

"For centuries the Chinese substituted courtesy for the lack of law and order as a protector for their society," Baker explains. They resented the rough treatment of Stilwell and showed it

STILWELL soured on the Chinese in return and soon began saying that Chiang Kai-Shek was a dictator. "Stilwell never realized that every battle plan had to be cleared by Chiang with his war lord generals. He should have known that and not been impatient with the delays this caused," Baker claims. "Joe thought that if immediate cooperation wasn't forthcoming

he was being double crossed. He was too obsessed with the military code that an order is an order," Baker adds.

Baker also placed some of the blame at the feet of the state department. But he added that in a democracy such as ours it is understandable that they should have their ear to the ground here at home.

Another factor mentioned by Baker was the fact that the Chinese intelligencia was not close enough to the people. Many of the intelligencia were former United States students.

THEY TRIED to compare our government with China's. The result was that they claimed their government was bad. Because they were also the most vocal group, American correspondents flocked around them and carried home stories detrimental to the government, Baker insists.



John Earl Baker

He blamed one Red agent especially for poisoning the news and giving the Nationalists a bad press. According to Baker, the man fled Japan where he was to have been shot as a spy. His boss was shot by the Japs. Baker claims, for being a Russian representative in Tokyo.

This man endeared himself to reporters because he spent all of his time taking them around and interpreting for them. He was an aggressive thinker and a glib talker as Baker recalls.

"He was always very fair, 'but regretted' that this or that was wrong about the Chinese government," Baker says. He added that reporters wouldn't have to look far to file a bad report about our own government daily, but that it would not give a true picture.

BUT AS A result of this constant flow of adverse publicity Americans got a poor picture of the Nationalists, in Baker's opinion. Public opinion forced decisions on the state department.

Baker would not comment on Owen Lattimore's part, but said, "Luckily I was never affiliated with the Institute of Pacific Relations although I had given it some thought at one time."

Baker revealed that many persons in high places believe that the Chinese history of passive resistance would eventually lick the Reds. He did not go along with this thought.

He pointed out that a tremendous purge has been carried out. Organized resistance by the Chinese is impossible, he said, because of terrorism tactics, and "individual resistance has become another form of suicide."

HE TERMED the Chinese the friendliest people in the world, but said that they no longer have the chance to show it. He pointed to the fact that for five years now thought control and propaganda indoctrination has been pounded into China's youth.

In another 10 years the youth and strength of the nation will be so indoctrinated that the cause will be lost, in Baker's opinion. "You must remember that for thousands of years the Chinese man's aim has been to just get by today. He is following that same plan with the Reds," Baker said.

"Without armed invasion, the

situation is hopeless," Baker concluded.

ASKED ABOUT the Nationalist army in Formosa Baker said, "It is as good as any. They are a snappy looking bunch of men with excellent training, American equipment, and high morale."

Formosa can produce enough food for them, according to Baker. "Formosa now exports food." He felt that the only thing wrong with the Chinese troops is that they lacked a knowledge of the use of many technical weapons of war such as radar.

"But with the arms we give them they are learning," he quickly added. "They could still use a lot of equipment like radar," he said.

BAKER BELIEVES the Chinese troops are extremely val-

uable to the United States on Formosa. If the Communists attack Indo-China the Nationalists could launch an invasion which would cut off the main communication centers of China.

"After all that's all the Japs ever did—control the communication centers," Baker says. For this invasion he claims the Chinese would need U. S. air cover and food.

Many guerillas would join the Nationalists if they had food. If not they would have to drop their guns and pick up their hoes, Baker believes. He also feels that the Reds would adopt a scorched earth policy that would make the need for food imperative until the following harvest.

"It wouldn't be such a hard job to supply the food," Baker said as he ended the interview. He ought to know.

Waukesha Freeman  
June 12, 1952