You Can't Fight Communism by Force Alone

By ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

HYDE PARK, Sunday — I was very much surprised to receive a clipping the other day which says that a certain State Department official was naive because he thought that the following recommendation was wise.

The recommendation, made during the war, argued that "a coalition Chinese government in which the Communists find a satisfactory place is the solution of this impasse most desirable to us. It provides our greatest assurance of a strong, united, democratic, independent China, our basic aim in Asia and the Pacific."

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THE writer of the clipping takes it for granted that the effort would have been to set up a government "satisfactory to the Communists," and therefore this government could not be independent of Russia and friendly to the U.S. The flaw in this argument, of course, is that there was no idea of setting up a government satisfactory to Russia. At that time there was in China a still fairly strong Nationalist government. It was considered by many to have among its supporters a small number of reactionaries, such as the old war lords. But there was also among those supporters a middle-of-the-road group, made up in large part of young men following the leadership of Sun Yat-Sen's son, who were supposed to be more democratic and more understanding of western policies and aspirations. The thought was that if there could be brought into a joint parliament the radical representatives from the north who were under Communist domination, many of the urgent reforms might be achieved thru middle-of-the-road leadership, and thus there would be no need for radical Communist action. This was an entirely sensible idea which was in actual operation in many European countries.

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WE must get over the idea, I believe, that the way to fight Communism is by military action alone, or by conservative suppression of the rights of individual people. The true way to fight Communism is to show that the benefits desired by the people can be achieved under democracy, and no people need to accept Communism to attain better living standards or greater freedom. These two things are promised by the Communists; and it is not likely that the people will discover they are slaves, or that they are not as well off in their living standards as they were told they would be, until some time after they have turned themselves over to Communist domination.

The State Department official who made these so-called "naive" recommendations understood Communism and the Far Eastern situation at that time very well. China was lost to the West not because reforms were made that satisfied her people, but because they were not achieved under her Nationalist regime—even if Gen. Chennault believed that with a little extra military help from us the Generalissimo might have kept himself in power. In the long run, only the satisfaction of the aspirations of the people would have decided where the people of China would give their loyalty.

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