



# CHINESE WALLS IN TIME AND SPACE

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A Multidisciplinary Perspective

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## CHAPTER SIX

### Walls as Multivalent Icons in Early People's Republican Political Cartoons, 1946–1951

*Adam Cathcart*

AS THE ULTIMATE INHERITORS OF the whirlwind of the Sino-Japanese war, during which the long walls of China reached their apotheosis as symbols of Chinese defense against external aggression, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) quite naturally considered the utility of walls as political symbols in the effort to consolidate the authority of their new state. In this chapter we tap a rare collection of Chinese propaganda cartoons to analyze how the new government used various images of walls and gates to discredit political rivals, symbolize national unity, rally support for defense against a distant foreign power, celebrate an alliance with a neighboring state, and identify themselves as the legitimate successors of the Qing dynasts.<sup>1</sup> In the short term, the efforts appear to have been quite successful as the People's Republic warded off domestic and foreign challenges to its rule. In the longer term, however, the arguably related Maoist policies

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<sup>1</sup> Hunter Collection. The collection is named after Edward Hunter, an American journalist who lived in China from 1949 to 1951 and collected nearly three hundred pamphlets. It is housed at the Center for Research Libraries in Chicago. Some of the material may also be found at the Shanghai Municipal Library. For more on the collection, see Reilly et al., "Political Communication"; for background on the collector, see Hunter, *Brainwashing*.



of self-reliance and permanent revolution had mixed consequences for China's capacity to compete with other major powers in the world.

### **Walls as Negative Symbols of "Feudal Tradition" and "National Weakness"**

The Chinese Communists' views of walls were ambivalent from the beginning. As children of the New Culture and May Fourth Movements of the 1910s and as recent denizens of the hills of Yan'an, the revolutionaries had long criticized China's "feudal culture," including Confucian dogma, gender inequality, national weakness, and social stratification. The party's jaundiced view of Chinese "feudalism" would eventually propel it to try to destroy what it would come to call "the four olds" (old culture, ideas, habits, and customs) during the Cultural Revolution. As we have seen in Chapter 2 of this volume, the targets included city walls and gates.

The CCP's critique of China's "feudal" past pervades officially sanctioned cartoons dating from the pivotal years of 1949–1951. The theme was consistent with the party's need to repudiate the old regime and root out lingering opposition, goals that, ironically, placed the CCP squarely in line with the previous polities we generally call "dynasties."<sup>2</sup> During the initial years of the People's Republic, the image frequently appeared of uprooting, or "turning over" (*fanshen*) in one common phrase of the day.<sup>3</sup> Some woodcut cartoons depicted enormous human hands digging out deep roots representing "the old society," while others advocated "storming the citadel" to destroy China's sedimentary past.<sup>4</sup> Walls were used to symbolize the supposedly monolithic force of "tradition" and the confining aspects of Chinese culture.<sup>5</sup>

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2 For an early interpretation of the Communist takeover within the framework of dynastic history, see Fitzgerald, *Birth*. For recognition of a more particular parallel between the Ming founding and that of the PRC, see Andrew and Rapp, *Autocracy*; Schneewind, *Long Live*.

3 For an example, see Hinton, *Fanshen*.

4 Li, "Pulling Up"; Li, "Storming the Citadel."

5 Walls were also symbols of "tradition" and targets of "reformists" in the 1988 television series *He Shang (River Elegy)*. See Su, *Deathsong*.

City walls were not only viewed as old, they were also thought to have been ineffective in resisting the Japanese. At the conclusion of the War of Resistance in 1945, the Chinese Communists juxtaposed their own unflinching resistance to Japan in the rural north with the alleged laxity of the Nationalists' defense of urban areas in the south. The Communists hoped to show that they, rather than the rival government and army led by Chiang Kai-shek, were the true carriers of the banner of nationalism. The CCP inspired political cartoons showing images of walls being transgressed to discredit a wide range of Guomindang policies toward Japan.

During the ensuing civil war, the *Northeastern Illustrated Gazette* (*Dongbei Huabao*), published in the party's urban redoubt of Harbin, served as the preeminent forum for the dissemination of political cartoons. Through the efforts of two skilled artists, Hua Junwu and Zhang Ding, the paper printed even more satirical cartoons than emanated from the Communist headquarters in Yan'an.<sup>6</sup> The young Zhang Ding was among the most prolific and influential propagandists for the CCP in the late 1940s.<sup>7</sup> In Figure 1, Zhang uses images of walls to illustrate Chiang Kai-shek's inability to protect China from successive foreign threats.

In the left panel, depicting the year 1931, Chiang allows the Japanese to raise their flag on the wall; in the right panel dated 1946 he permits the Americans to do the same. By placing the blue portion of the American flag outside the 1946 picture frame, leaving only the red and white, the artist cleverly evokes the similarity between the "rising sun" standard of the Japanese empire and the "stars and stripes" of the American imperialists. Given Chiang's apparent willingness to cede sovereignty to stay in power, the walls fall into foreign hands and become merely sites for outsiders to demonstrate and celebrate their domination of China. The walls' onetime function as effective bulwarks against foreign rule has been inverted. Linking the more recent past and the present, the artist depicts Chiang using the radio microphone in 1931 to "encourage cooperation" (*dunmu bangjiao*) with the Japanese and the same instrument in 1946 to trumpet the benefit of a

6 Zhang et al., *Dongbei*.

7 Zhang Ding gained fame as a cartoonist in the "Anti-Japanese Cartoon Brigades" formed during the War of Resistance. See Hung, "Fuming," p. 130.

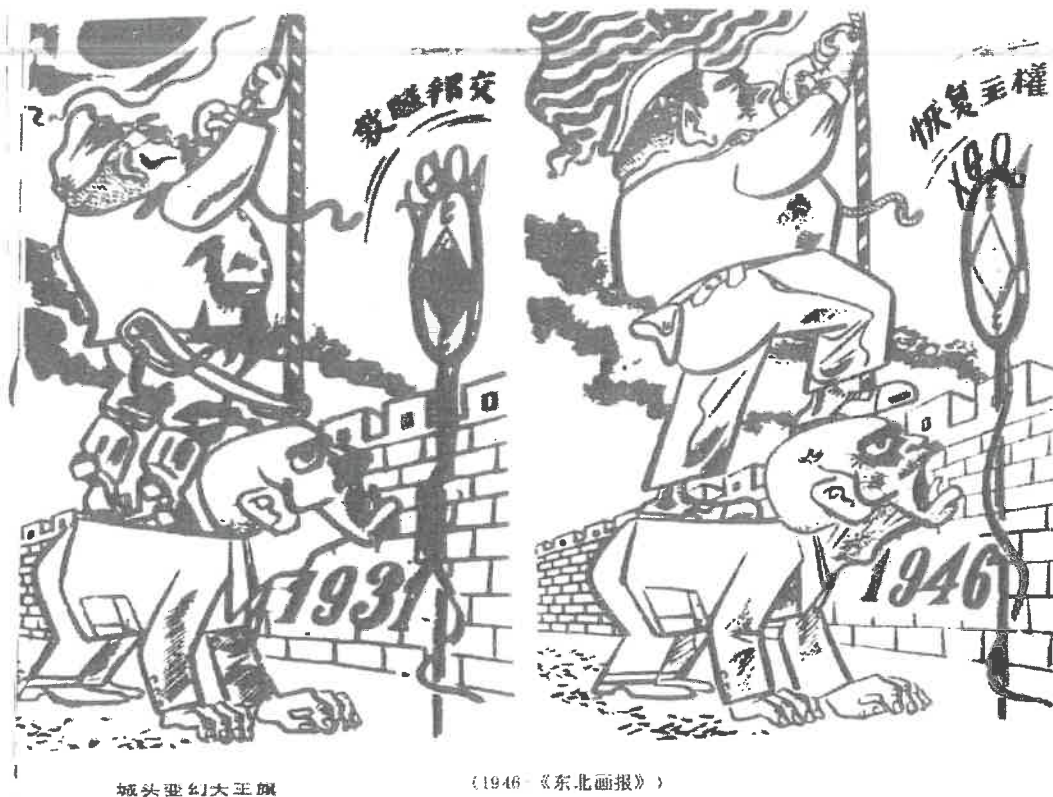


Figure 1 "Switching the Flags of the Rulers at the City Wall" (Zhang Ding, *Dongbei Huabao*, September 1946).

mythical "resumption of sovereignty" (*huifu zhuquan*) under American dominion.<sup>8</sup> The reference to radio broadcasting tacitly reinforced Mao's axiom that technology would never be decisive in warfare and it indirectly suggested Chiang's inability to reach rural areas where radios were in short supply during the civil war.<sup>9</sup> Implied also in the image is China's need for a ruler strong enough to stand up to foreigners—now chiefly the Americans.

Zhang's cartoon was an example of the CCP's adoption of a strategy of substitution begun during their first united front with the Nation-

8 For a critique of the myth of strong Chinese resistance to Japanese control in the northeast, see Mitter, *Manchurian*. For other literature on this question, see Israel, *Lianda*; Wasserstrom, *Student Protests*; Johnson, *Peasant Nationalism*.

9 For radio communication in China see Chu and Tu, *Great Wall*; Chang, *Mass Media*.



alists.<sup>10</sup> In the 1920s, propagandists on the Northern Expedition had depicted their warlord opponents as pawns of China's foreign enemies, and the Japanese were successors to British imperialism. Now, in the 1940s, Figure 1 explicitly juxtaposes the Japanese past and the American present, ignoring a reality of which Zhang Ding's northeastern audience would have been well aware. In 1946, the foreign army of occupation in northeast China was Soviet, not American.<sup>11</sup> To be sure, there were also 54,000 American troops in Qingdao and Beijing, some of whom committed abuses, but they did not cart off much of the region's industrial plant as the Russians had done in the northeast.<sup>12</sup> By suggesting a parallel between the Japanese and American roles, the CCP attempted to discredit the United States and to sidestep the difficult issue of whether the Soviet Union's role in the northeast was consistent with China's best interests.

In the same month of September 1946, Zhang Ding again invoked historical events to illustrate Chiang Kai-shek's supposed lack of interest in protecting the sovereignty of the northeast. In Figure 2, Zhang depicted an immense soldier of the northeastern army staring north, his attention fixed on a plume of smoke marked with the cipher "9-18," a well-known reference to the Japanese annexation of China's northeastern provinces (also called Manchuria) on September 18, 1931. Japanese flags dot a wall extending to the horizon. Mockingly, Chiang's face appears on a ball and chain attached to the soldier's leg, labeled Don't Resist (*bu di kang*).

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10 For discussion of the effectiveness of Nationalist propaganda in associating foreign imperialism with domestic enemies, see Jordan, *Northern Expedition*, p. 9. For the CCP's postwar strategy of substituting the United States for imperial Japan and Chiang Kai-shek for Pu Yi and Wang Jingwei, see Cathcart, "Chinese Nationalism."

11 Several hundred thousand Soviet troops pulled out of Manchuria in May 1946, but about 50,000 remained in Dalian until 1949, thereafter moving to Lüshun until 1955. See Wang, *Dalian*.

12 American troop levels peaked in China at about 54,000 in late 1945; the number was drawn down to 34,000 by late March 1946, and further reduced to 22,000 by September 1946. U.S. troops remained in Qingdao until April 1949. See Memorandum by General Marshall to the Secretary of State, March 26, 1946, *Foreign Relations*, Vol. X, p. 859, and General Marshall to the Acting Secretary of State, Sept. 25 1946, *Foreign Relations*, Vol. X, pp. 875-76. For figures on Qingdao, see Yang, "U.S. Marines."



Figure 2 “The Ball and Chain on the Legs of the Northeastern Army” (Zhang Ding, *Dongbei Huabao*, September 1946)

In this cartoon, Zhang Ding encouraged Chinese viewers to recall the Guomindang’s appeasement of Japan in 1931, which demonstrated that Chiang’s party did not care about the people.<sup>13</sup> Having left the people to Japanese imperialism in 1937, the reasoning went, the Guomindang would not hesitate to accept similar American domination of the northeast. This line of argument strongly appealed to many people’s sense of recent history, widely evoking the welter of nationalistic arguments first put forth by both moderates and radicals in the 1930s.<sup>14</sup> Referring time and again to the loss of Manchuria in 1931, the CCP

13 For a balanced assessment, see Jordan, *Chinese Boycotts*, ch. 2.

14 Coble, *Facing Japan*.



used history as a weapon to lash out at its opposition.<sup>15</sup> In 1946, images of Japanese flags raised along the length of the Great Wall were an alarming reminder of China's recent domination at foreign hands, effective spurs to Chinese of all political persuasions to work together for the nation's defense.

The CCP used political cartoons to reinforce radio broadcasts and street theatre that were becoming vital conduits of mass communication. Centrally approved and professionally produced cartoons served as models for local amateur artists in the new areas coming under the control of the CCP.<sup>16</sup> Cartoons published in *People's Daily* were widely copied onto posters and chalkboards in outlying villages, schools, factories, and army units. The party center created guidebooks, called "Propaganda Source Materials," to assist legions of both amateur and professional cartoonists across China. Thus the new People's Republic of China, which possessed limited amounts of capital-intensive technology such as radio and television, used longstanding labor-intensive methods to spread its message quite effectively over the entire polity.

In addition to images reproduced on chalkboards and posters and mounted on walls for public inspection, the government encouraged authors to include illustrations of walls in comic books designed for young people.<sup>17</sup> In one postwar narrative of victimization and heroism, an illustration (Figure 3) featured a city wall being defended against the Japanese. During the war with Japan, many Chinese had viewed film footage of the Japanese claiming victory in 1937 at Nanjing, the Nationalist capital. In the clips, Japanese soldiers were depicted standing triumphantly atop the city's formidable walls. The vertical caption on Figure 3 reads: "Chiang's regime believes that American imperialism should be allowed to come to destroy the country and enslave the people, relinquishing our country's sovereignty; but this will result in

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15 For Zhou Enlai's views on the Guomindang policy of "nonresistance" after the September 18, 1931, incident, see Zhou Enlai, "Speech in Yan'an Commemorating the 'Double Twelve,'" December 12, 1946, *Jiefang Ribao*, Dec. 13, 1946 [reprinted in Zhou, *Zhou Enlai xuanji*, Vol. 2, pp. 247-50]. For discussion of CCP party history, see Weigelin-Schwiedrzik, "Party Historiography," pp. 149-73.

16 Cathcart, "Cruel Resurrection."

17 Shen, "Lianhuanhua."



Figure 3 “The Japanese pirates (or bandits) gathered several tens of thousands of soldiers, but after a few days and nights of bombing, they were defeated” (*Xie Shou Lianhuanhua [Bloody Hands]*) (Shanghai: Meishu Chubanshe, June 1951), p. 157.

his self-destruction!” The artists thus effectively melded the lessons of the past and the imperatives of the present.

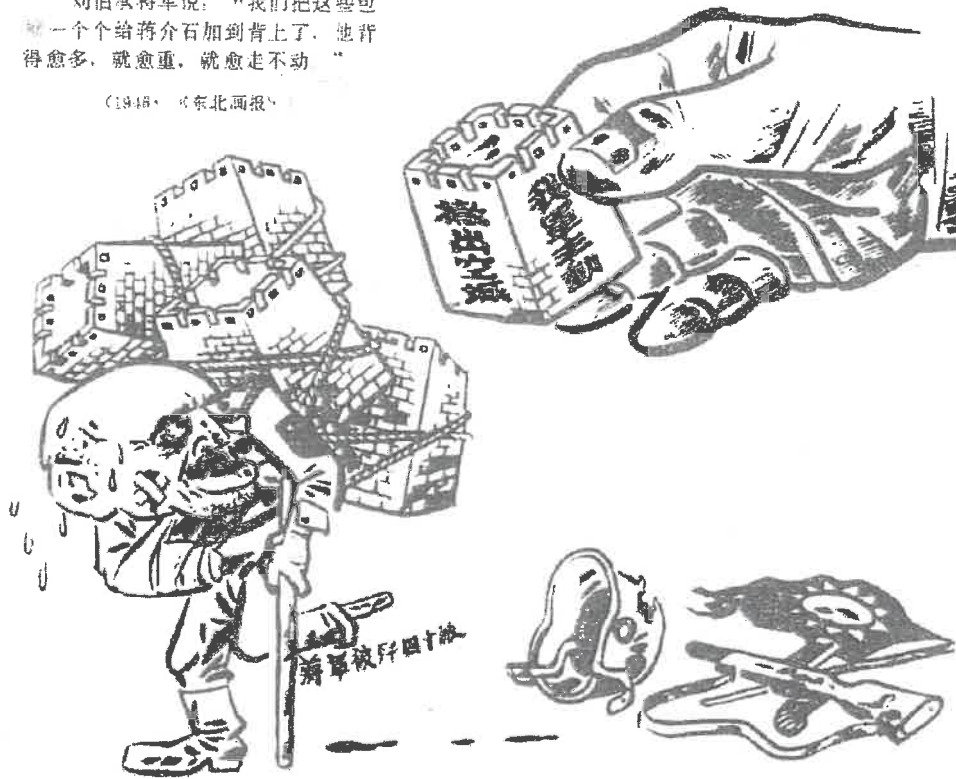
During the civil war, the Chinese Communists ridiculed Chiang’s urban strategy of emphasizing the control of cities and depicted him as weak, passive, and dependent on ineffective city walls for his defenses. Indeed, they suggested, such walls actually weighed him down, acting as virtual gravestones. The success of commander Lin Biao of the People’s Liberation Army in using mobile warfare against the Guomindang seemed to confirm as much.<sup>18</sup> In fact, the Communists had actually tried to take cities in the early years of the civil war, but had been unable to do so. They therefore rationalized their own lack of influence in urban areas by using city walls as symbols of Chiang’s isolation.<sup>19</sup> Still, Communist reservations about trying to take China’s urban areas did not simply result from military weakness. The CCP regarded ur-

18 Li, “Under the Direction,” p. 11.

19 Peng, “Zhangwo, p. 111; Zhang, *Xue Bai*, pp. 77, 111–16; Potter, *From Leninist*, p. 54.

刘伯承将军说：“我们把这些包袱一个个给蒋介石加到背上了，他背得愈多，就愈重，就愈走不动。”

(1946, 《东北画报》)



59

Figure 4 “General Liu Bocheng . . .” (Zhang Ding, *Dongbei Ribao* 1946)

ban society with ambivalence because they had been roundly defeated there in 1927 and because cities were bastions of feudal/bourgeois power. It would take victory in the countryside to enable the party to once again attempt to take cities like Shanghai that were important hubs of cultural, economic, and political activity.<sup>20</sup> Another cartoon (Figure 4) further dramatized the idea that cities would become dead-weight in Chiang Kai-shek’s effort to maintain his authority in China.

The caption in Figure 4 reads: “General Liu Bocheng [an important CCP general in north China] said: ‘With regard to Chiang’s armies, we will take them one by one. Let him take city after city, for soon the weight will overtake him and he will become immobile.’” The charac-

20 For an example of CCP artists’ efforts to transform urban culture in line with rural socialist models just after liberation, see Shen, *Jiefang*.





閑情

Figure 5 Ah Yang, "At Ease," *Zheshi yige manhua de shidai*, [This is an age of cartoons] (Hong Kong, 1948), p. 6.

ters underneath Chiang's leg read, "Destruction of forty brigades of Chiang's troops," while the citadel in the giant hand is emblazoned with the words, "Take our troops out of the cities on our own."

While Figure 4 suggested that Chiang Kai-shek's reliance on walled cities was anachronistic, such cities still served as important military bastions in the late 1940s. The Chinese civil war was only the most recent of a long line of Chinese military contests over political authority that had as their target walled cities. In the years just prior to the Communist accession to power, city fortifications across China had reached, in many cases, their maximum capability as a means of defense against

bandits, militarists, Japanese armies, and then attacks by Nationalists and Communists.<sup>21</sup>

This militarization of the Republican-period city can be seen in Figure 5, a parody of the Guomindang occupation of Chinese cities during the civil war. The cartoon by Ah Yang, labeled "At Ease," which appeared in an influential left-leaning collection of cartoons in Hong Kong, does not depict the Communist armies in the countryside, but focuses on the Guomindang army, which is shown filling every corner of the city, pushing aside the civilian populace.<sup>22</sup>

Here the walls are used to illustrate the Guomindang's isolation in the cities, which allegedly led to its ultimate defeat. However, with the victory of 1949, the CCP turned to preserving much of what they had discounted and even in some cases had helped to destroy: the cities and their walls and gates.<sup>23</sup>

### Walls as Positive Symbols of a New China

With the retreat of the Guomindang to offshore islands, including principally Taiwan, and with the ascendance of the CCP on most of the mainland, images of walls proliferated and took on more positive connotations. They suddenly became icons of the PRC's own achievement in reunifying China and ending foreign domination over most of Chinese territory. In a decisive break with a "Century of Humiliation," the Chinese people had, in Mao Zedong's forceful if somewhat hyperbolic words, "stood up." In this view, China would henceforth be strong enough to repel any assault from outside. Having failed for a variety of reasons to establish capitalism, China would now seek wealth and power by establishing socialism.

In Figure 6, artist Dun Xin's simple ink drawing depicts the People's Republic of China as an agricultural and industrial utopia. At the center of the frame, the worker raises his arms to celebrate the new order, emphasizing how economic production will now benefit the people.

21 See Chapter 2 in this volume.

22 For a critical first-hand account of the problems caused by Guomindang soldiers inside a besieged city, see Bodde, *Peking Diary*.

23 For discussions of the CCP's changing attitude toward cities in 1949, see Gao, *Communist*; Lieberthal, *Revolution*; Yick, *Making Urban*.

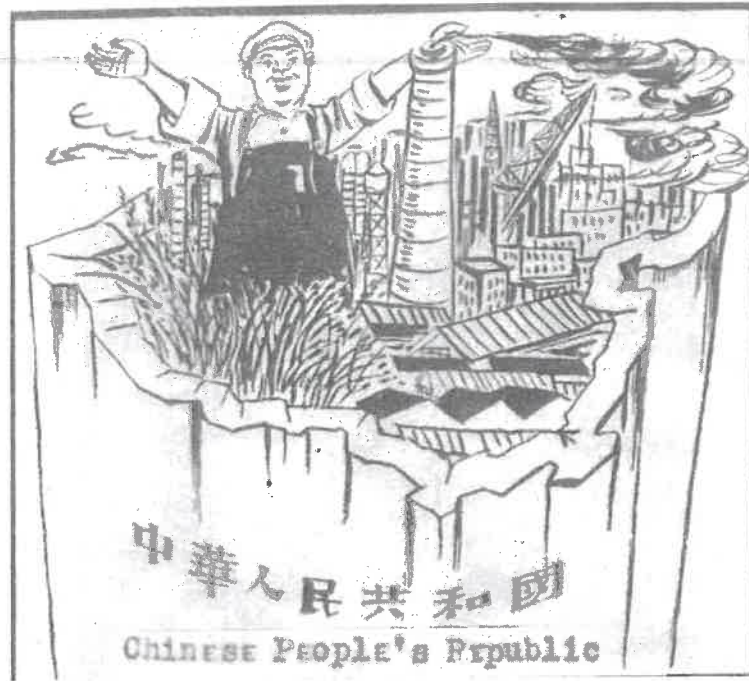


Figure 6 Dun Xin, "Building Up New China," *Jiefang Manhua Xuan* [Selection of Cartoons of Liberation] (Shanghai, 1950), p. 36. (Hunter Collection)

The smokestack offered an implicit criticism of the Guomindang, under which industry had allegedly lain dormant.<sup>24</sup> The image suggests that China, if left to its own devices, will prosper, bringing a smile to the face of its representative worker. Around the country runs a high and stout wall denoting an effective defense of the national borders.

As the party gained control over the artistic production of the entire country, it promoted a wealth of images of menacing foreigners lurking at the gates. However, such dangers were mitigated by representations of China's host of friends from other new "people's democracies." A private artist known as Mengzi drew a series of cartoons, featuring China's friends and foes, that he featured on patriotic postcards sold to PRC sympathizers in Hong Kong. In Figure 7, Mengzi places the entire socialist bloc, with the Chinese in the vanguard, inside a high wall. They are all united against two hapless reactionary leaders: Winston Churchill and a composite figure of Douglas MacArthur and Harry Truman. Both of the imperialists appear terrified by

<sup>24</sup> Westad, *Decisive*, preface to ch. 2.





32. 世界和平人民大團結, 勝利萬歲!

Figure 7 Mengzi, “Long Live the Victory of the Unity of the World’s Peaceful People!” *Postcards to Prevent American Revival of Japanese Militarism*, No. 32.

the slogan on the wall reading, Peaceful People of the World Unite. Apparently most fearsome to the imperialists were the two characters *he* (as in peace) and *tuan* (as in militia) that could be read vertically, thus evoking the *Yi he tuan* (lit., militia of justice and peace), the Chinese name of the Boxers who had famously erupted in violent reaction against foreign missionaries, merchants, and troops in north China in 1900.<sup>25</sup> The power of the graphs evoking the Boxers was emphasized by their central placement and by Churchill’s cigar smoke, which rises away from the wall and its inscription.

The depiction of outsized Chinese workers behind a stalwart wall was not coincidental, as party propaganda guidebooks repeatedly recommended the trope. One such guidebook, printed in December 1950, depicts the building of a wall marked “Peaceful Construction” against the “Chiang Bandits” (*Jiang fei*) and “American Imperialists” (*Mei di-*

<sup>25</sup> For Chinese praise of the Boxers as a patriotic movement, a view that would peak in the Cultural Revolution, see Cohen, *History*, ch. 9.

*guozhuyizhe*). A brawny Chinese construction worker towers over a bomb-throwing and unshaven Douglas MacArthur and a squinting Uncle Sam who, like Chiang Kai-shek in Figure 1, uses a radio to project his voice over the city gates. The defensive wall, like the nation, is bright red, an auspicious color in China long before—as well as after—the revolution.<sup>26</sup>

The theme of national defense was picked up in *Manhua* (Cartoon), a graphic publication the importance of which was evident in its relatively lavish production—including colored and glossy covers—in the early People's Republic, a period marked by material shortages. One cartoon shows a sea wall under construction, effectively warding off the surf bearing the visages of the likes of Truman, Churchill, and other “reactionary” and even “fascist” enemies of the New China. The surf may continue to pound the wall, but the wall, symbol of China's defenses, will stand firm.<sup>27</sup>

In another variation on the theme of national defense versus blood-thirsty imperialists, Figure 8 depicts a specific interpretation of Chinese involvement in the Korean War.

In this visual, a Chinese worker leans over an imagined wall between China and Korea to slip a noose around the neck of an American composite figure armed with bombs. While the American prepares his sabotage, off scene North Koreans attack the invader with guns and bayonets from behind. (We might speculate that the hangman's noose, intended for the American imperialist, also alluded to the public executions of “enemies of the people” during the campaign against counter-revolutionaries that accompanied the war in Korea.<sup>28</sup>) With so much news being published in November 1950 about the highly sensitive spot of Andong on the Sino-North Korean border, such cartoons probably reflected and reinforced Premier Zhou Enlai's policy of “not sitting supinely by” as China's borders were threatened by a hostile foe.<sup>29</sup>

26 Ding, “Peaceful People.”

27 Jie, “People's Shoreline.”

28 On the contemporary, less violent “three-anti, five-anti” (*sanfan, wufan*) movements, see Mao, *Jianguo Yilai*, vols. 2 and 3; Tiewes, *Politics*.

29 Zhou Enlai's longstanding personal attachment to this idea is evidenced in a Memorandum of Conversation among President Nixon, Henry Kissinger, Zhou Enlai, Qiao

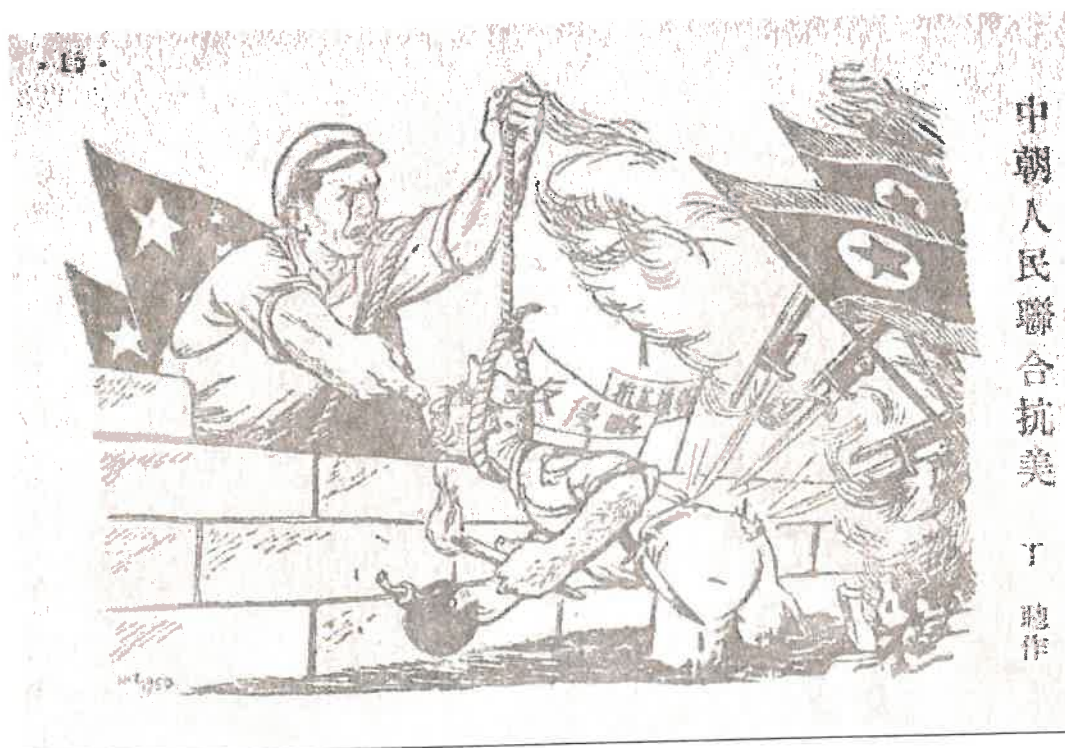


Figure 8 Ding Cong, "The Chinese and Korean People Unite to Resist America" *Xuanchuan huakan Ziliao*, No. 5, p. 15. (Hunter Collection)

In Figure 9, "Truman Tells Himself," a horned American president, recognizing the failures of Chiang Kai-shek and Syngman Rhee to roll back Communism in China and Korea, butts his head against a stout wall labeled "The Democratic Power of the Asian People."<sup>30</sup>

Figure 10 depicts a corpulent capitalist, apparently Harry Truman, plotting war against China.<sup>31</sup> The image plays upon an important dichotomy promoted in the new PRC: Socialist countries were inherently harmonious and consensual, while capitalist nations were predicated on raw coercive force. Figure 10, executed at the height of Chinese/North Korean military campaigns into southern Korea, depicts Truman attempting to cajole a group of imperialist leaders into signing a "Declaration to Invade China." Fearing to sign the declaration, the im-

Guanhua, et. al., in the Great Hall of the People, Beijing, February 22, 1972 (National Security Archive, Washington, DC), p. 22.

<sup>30</sup> See Liu, "Meiguo qin Hua shi."

<sup>31</sup> For Mao's contempt for overweight Westerners depicted in cartoons, see Chang and Halliday, *Mao*, p. 427.



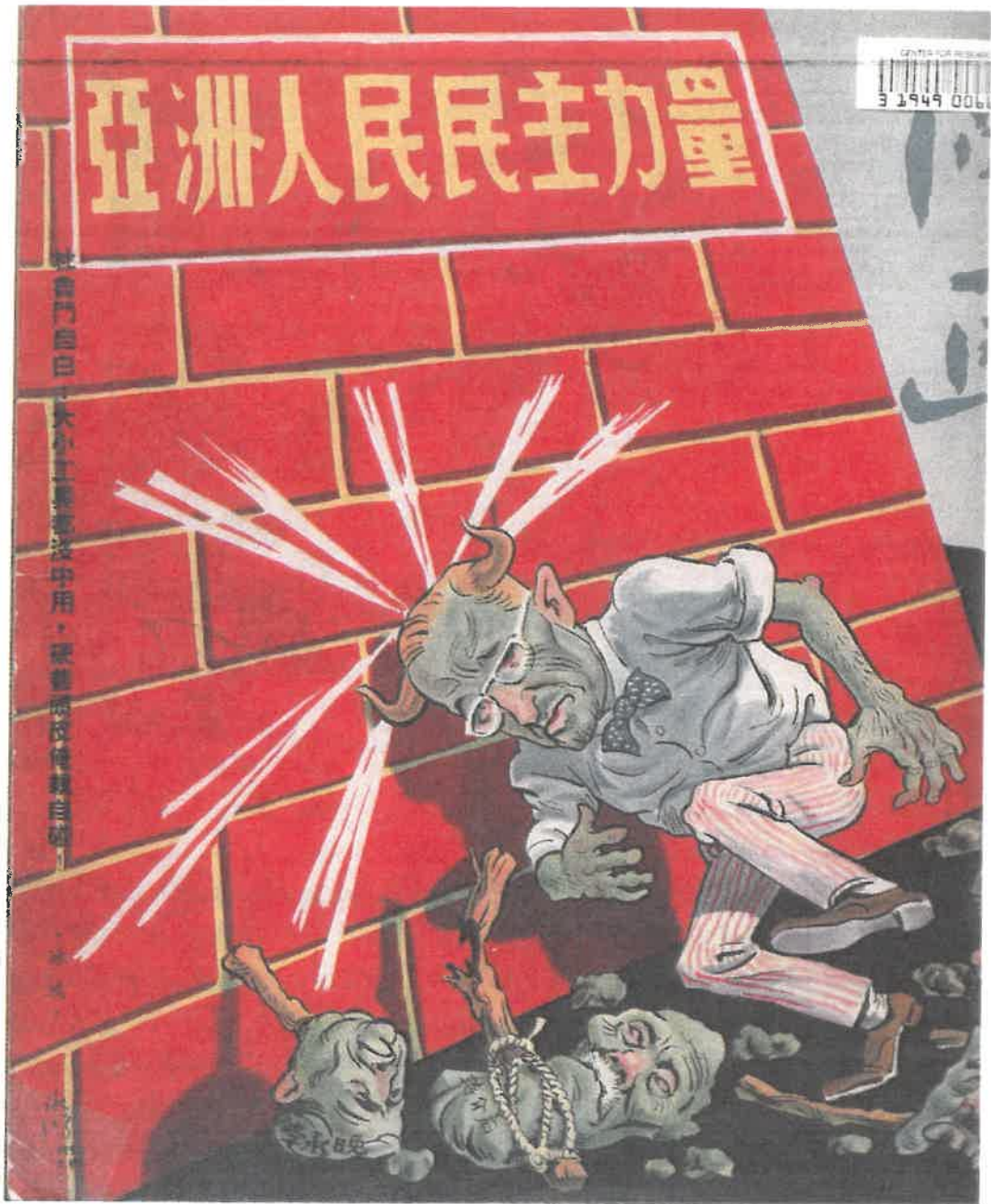


Figure 9 Bing Hong, "Truman Tells Himself: Big or Small, None of Them Worked, So I Will Bang My Own Head!" (Yingzhe toupi, an qin zi peng!) *Manhua* No. 3, cover. (Hunter Collection)

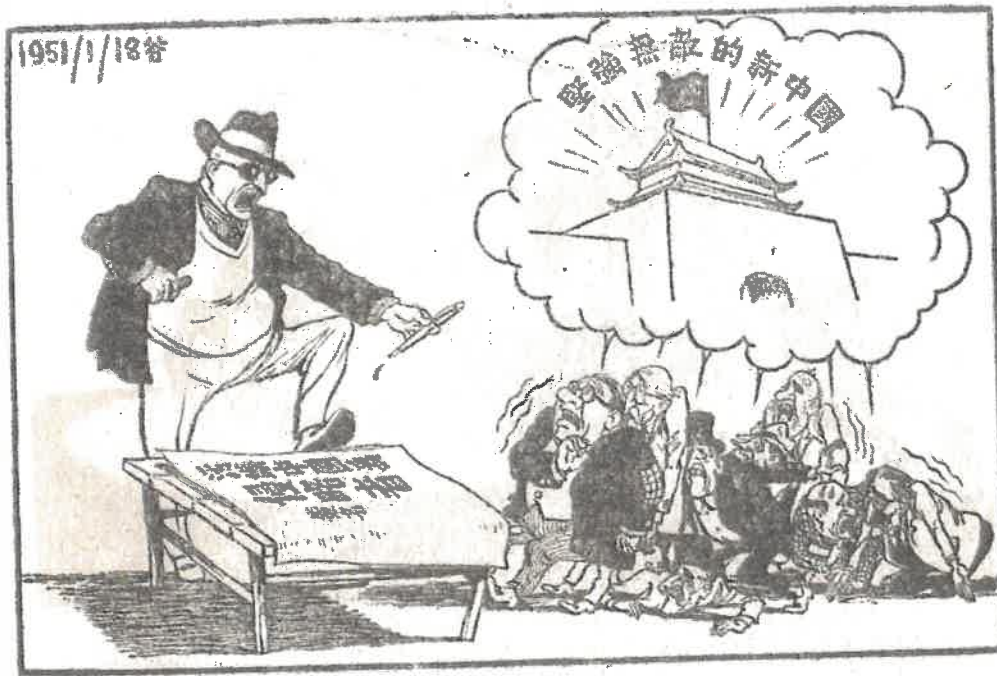


Figure 10 Mi Gu, "How Dare You Put Down the Pen So Easily?" (Qi gan qing yi xia bi) (*Kangmei Yuanchao Manhua Xuan*, p. 22). (Hunter Collection)

perialists unanimously point out that "New China is too strong to oppose."

Such cartoons, depicting foreign reluctance to sign declarations, both contrasted and tallied with others celebrating the ostensible enthusiasm of young Chinese men to volunteer publicly for military duty in Korea. Within China, the Korean War had brought with it an intense campaign of mobilization including pledge drives of all types.<sup>32</sup> Students, women, farmers, and factory workers were encouraged and sometimes coerced to sign a host of banners declaring opposition to war, desire for peace, solidarity with the besieged North Korean people, material support for the Chinese People's Volunteers, and—most important—enrollment in the armies of defense. The cartoon may subtly allude to silent resistance to these campaigns among the Chinese populace by placing Truman in the position of an overbearing solicitor of signatures. At the same time, the cartoon was designed to

32 Gao, "War Culture."



encourage Chinese youth to sign up by noting that the imperialists were also trying to enlist support for their cause. The cartoon implies that, for both money-sodden imperialists and poor but patriotic Chinese, the act of signing a petition signaled but one overwhelming thought: China's substantial defensive capabilities.

This cartoon also places the image of Tiananmen in the collective imagination of the foreign powers, giving that symbol of China added significance. China's future strength, so different from its past weakness, will be enough, it seems, to keep the foreigners from invading. This idea so appealed to the editors of a major collection of "Resist America, Aid Korea" cartoons that they replicated the image inside the speech balloon of Figure 10 and printed it prominently on the collection's title page.

Two weeks after this cartoon appeared, another one used different images to reinforce the idea of China's changed status vis-à-vis its foreign adversaries. The CCP artist Mi Gu, who had thrown his barbs at Chiang Kai-shek from postwar Hong Kong, now focused on the United States' "reverse course" in Japan, dramatizing the American halt in war-crimes prosecutions and the U.S. sponsorship of the Japanese "self-defense force." In the first panel, MacArthur and a fascist Japanese soldier in the same bed "recall the past" when Japan had kicked down the flimsy door of the "Republic of China." This image reminds viewers of Chiang Kai-shek's past inability to protect China from Japanese aggression and the ostensibly unchecked continuation of Japanese militarists' dreams to restore Japanese influence on the continent. In the second panel, perhaps reflecting Chinese awareness of covert Japanese support for the American invasion of Korea, MacArthur sends the Japanese soldier off toward China, saying, "You're familiar with the gate and the road." In panel three, the Japanese soldier fails to smash the powerful new gate of the People's Republic of China, dramatizing the difference between the old and new China. Notably, MacArthur fears even to approach this new gate, having been bloodied by Chinese troops in the mountains and hills of Korea. Instead he ends up leading a retreat back into southern Korea, which Secretary of State Dean Acheson called the greatest U.S. defeat since Bull Run.

While Figure 11 dramatized the strength of the gate, the most exposed salient of the People's Republic's new wall of "socialist" wealth



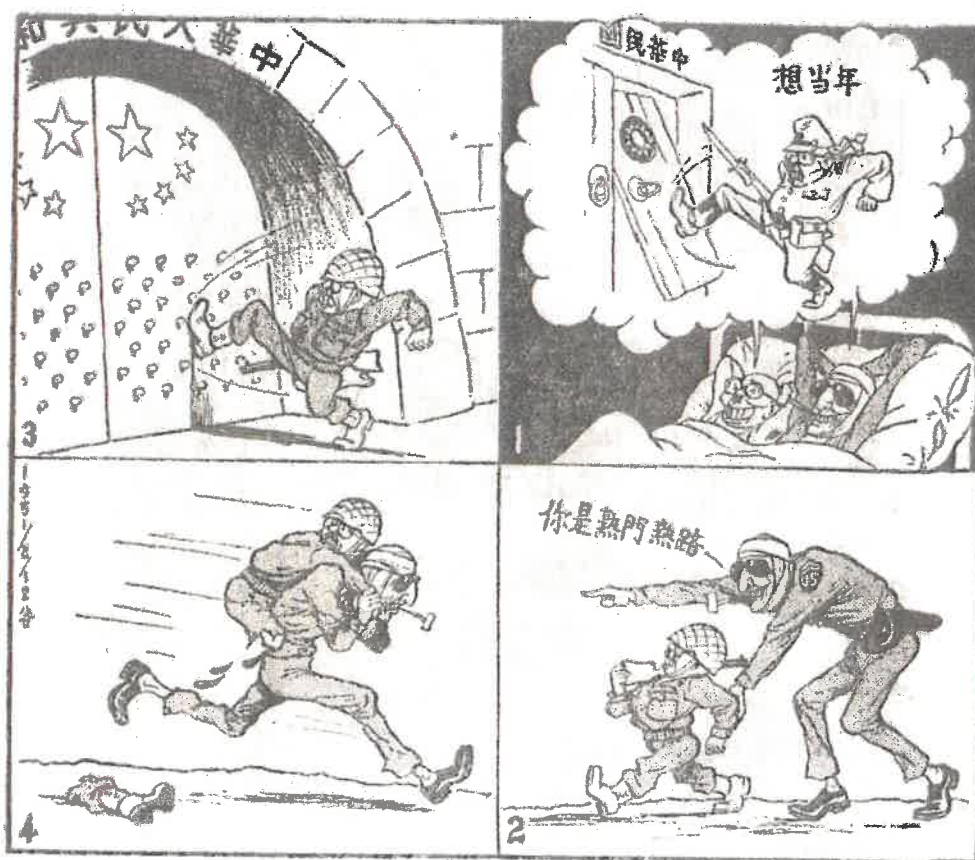


Figure 11 Mi Gu, "The Gate Is Not the Same," *Kangmei Yuanchao Manhua Xuan* (Shanghai: Minzhong Chubanshe, 1950). (Hunter Collection)

and power, Chinese artists never supposed that China alone could defeat Japanese and American imperialism. In particular, one foreign country, the font of socialism, would help to deter Japanese militarism and offer fraternal support on the road to "modernization."

### Walls as Icons of Solidarity with the Soviet Union

Artistic depictions of the Soviet Union, and of Sino-Soviet friendship, proliferated in the early years of the PRC and were particularly abundant in the months surrounding the Sino-Soviet alliance of February 1950. Because that alliance was defensive in nature, aimed against Japan and the unnamed state that might ally with it (i.e., the United States), perhaps the visual association of the Soviets with walls



Figure 12 Chen Yanqiao, “The Torch of Lenin Shines Over All Mankind,” *Jiefang Manhua Xuan* (Shanghai, 1950), p. 67. (Hunter Collection)

redolent of national security should not be surprising. Though walls seemed incongruous, symbolically speaking, with Marx’s praise of internationalism and belief in the universality of science, they also indicated the benefits of transnational cooperation in defense. One cartoon bridged the divide between the drag of anachronistic walls and the benefits of Soviet solidarity by depicting industry itself—in this case a dam—as a kind of “modern” bulwark (Figure 12).

China eagerly sought Soviet aid in building dams to produce hydroelectric power.<sup>33</sup> In the northeast, however, the CCP had to over-

33 Liu Shaoqi, “Telegraphs to Mao Zedong et al., Concerning the Request of Soviet Specialists to Repair Hydroelectric Plants in Manchuria,” December 1949, in Liu Shaoqi, *Jianguo*, vol. 1, pp. 222–25. See also Mao Zedong, Telegraph to Liu Shaoqi, December 29, 1949, in Mao, *Jianguo*, vol. 1, p. 199; Liu Shaoqi, “Letter to Stalin and Soviet Communist



come deep anti-Soviet feelings resulting from the Soviet dismantling of Japanese industry at the end of World War II and its shipment to the war-devastated Soviet Union. The CCP strove to counteract people's suspicions of Soviet motives by associating the Soviet Union with defense against external enemies and downplaying its continued control over the major port of Lüshun.<sup>34</sup> The CCP argued that awareness of the economic benefits of dams should outweigh any rancor at past Soviet misbehavior and any shame in accepting foreign assistance.

The CCP's practice of printing overtly pro-Soviet and Soviet-style images in Shanghai in the late 1940s generated controversy. In response to those who criticized Soviet culture as imported and monotonous, the CCP trumpeted the strategic benefits of the Soviet alliance and invoked the values of nationalism and modernization. In one cartoon, Figure 13, the People's Political Consultative Conference, a kind of constituent assembly that drew up the first constitution of the People's Republic in 1949, was depicted as a thick wall around a Soviet-style building labeled "the Chinese People's Republic."

In this cartoon, a member of the People's Liberation Army, standing underneath the human-size characters for "people" (*renmin*), distributes handbills to workers and farmers. The soldier monitors a gap in the wall through which a path rises up toward the bright new compound, representing the People's Republic. Reflecting the general trend to dismantle city walls at the time, the wall's apertures are ungated, suggesting that the new government should be more accessible to the people. Assuming that the compound, like Tiananmen, faces south, the flags blow to the West and suggest thereby the prevalence of the east wind over the west wind (anticipating a later Maoist slogan).

Although depictions of new socialist architecture suggested a fresh start for the Chinese republic, Mao and the CCP ultimately decided to use a set of older symbols to represent the nation. In the "Propaganda

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Party regarding the Need to Study Soviet Experience in Building a Republic," July 6, 1949, in Liu, *Jianguo*, vol. 1, p. 27.

34 For evidence of CCP sensitivity to the issue of Soviet technical assistance and the persistence of extraterritoriality for Soviet specialists, see Liu Shaoqi, "Comment on Letter Response from Zhang Zhongshi," November 6/7, 1949, Liu, *Jianguo*, vol. 1, p. 136. Interestingly, the U.S. military retained similar privileges by treaty with the Nationalist Government in 1945 that persisted in Taiwan after 1949.





Figure 13 Zhao Yan'nian, "Stepping Up," *Jiefang Manhua Xuan* (Shanghai, 1950), p. 28. (Hunter Collection)

Source Materials," the walls, gates and buildings of Beijing's Forbidden City and Moscow's Kremlin were presented as "bulwarks of liberation of the whole of humanity." Tiananmen (the principal entry to the Forbidden City), Qianmen (the city wall gate to the south) and the "Ten Thousand Li Long Wall" are juxtaposed with the crenellated towers of the Kremlin. These were the bastions of socialism—sometimes paired with human figures, but often standing alone, mute testimony to the strength of what was then widely regarded as "the Soviet bloc."<sup>35</sup>

If depictions of Moscow hinged on the Kremlin and Lenin's tomb, artistic representations of the United States dwelled on the capitol building.<sup>36</sup> The monthly pamphlet "Propaganda Source" depicted the capitol building in Washington, D.C., as fated to crumble under assault by the people of the world.<sup>37</sup> Although the capitol is mislabeled as the White House, the cartoon seems to suggest that the U.S. capitol was

35 *Xuanchuan huakan ziliao*, p. 1.

36 Chinese youth, who had been raised to revere Lenin, demonstrated against him at his tomb in Moscow during the Cultural Revolution. Ma, *Cultural Revolution*.

37 *Xuanchuan Ziliao*, p. 16.



20. 中蘇合作力量大, 不容日寇再猖狂。

Figure 14 Mengzi, "Sino-Soviet Cooperation Is Very Strong, and Will Not Allow the Japanese Pirates to Commit More Mischief," *Postcards to Prevent the American Revival of Japanese Militarism*, No. 20 (Hong Kong: 1950). (Hunter Collection)

destined to suffer the destruction similar to that which the United States was then visiting on the cities of North Korea.<sup>38</sup> Since the early 1950s, a similar image of a smashed heart of American power has been popularized by government artists in North Korea.

The violent destruction of the imperialists was contrasted with the peaceful construction of socialism. In a famous cartoon entitled "Sedan Chair Warriors of the Adventurists," the American general MacArthur is being transported across the sea from Taiwan and Korea toward Tiananmen and the Kremlin, symbols of the Sino-Soviet alliance shining with the beacon of peace.<sup>39</sup> China's shorelines are depicted as impregnable, high, uplifted, and unified. Doves or airplanes hover over the buildings, symbolizing both peace and defense. The imperialists, by contrast, are depicted as mired in antimodern violence.

38 For U.S. bombing of Korea during the Korean War, see Stratemeyer, *Three Wars*.

39 Zhang, "Sedan Chair Warriors of the Adventurists," *Renmin Ribao*, December 1, 1950.

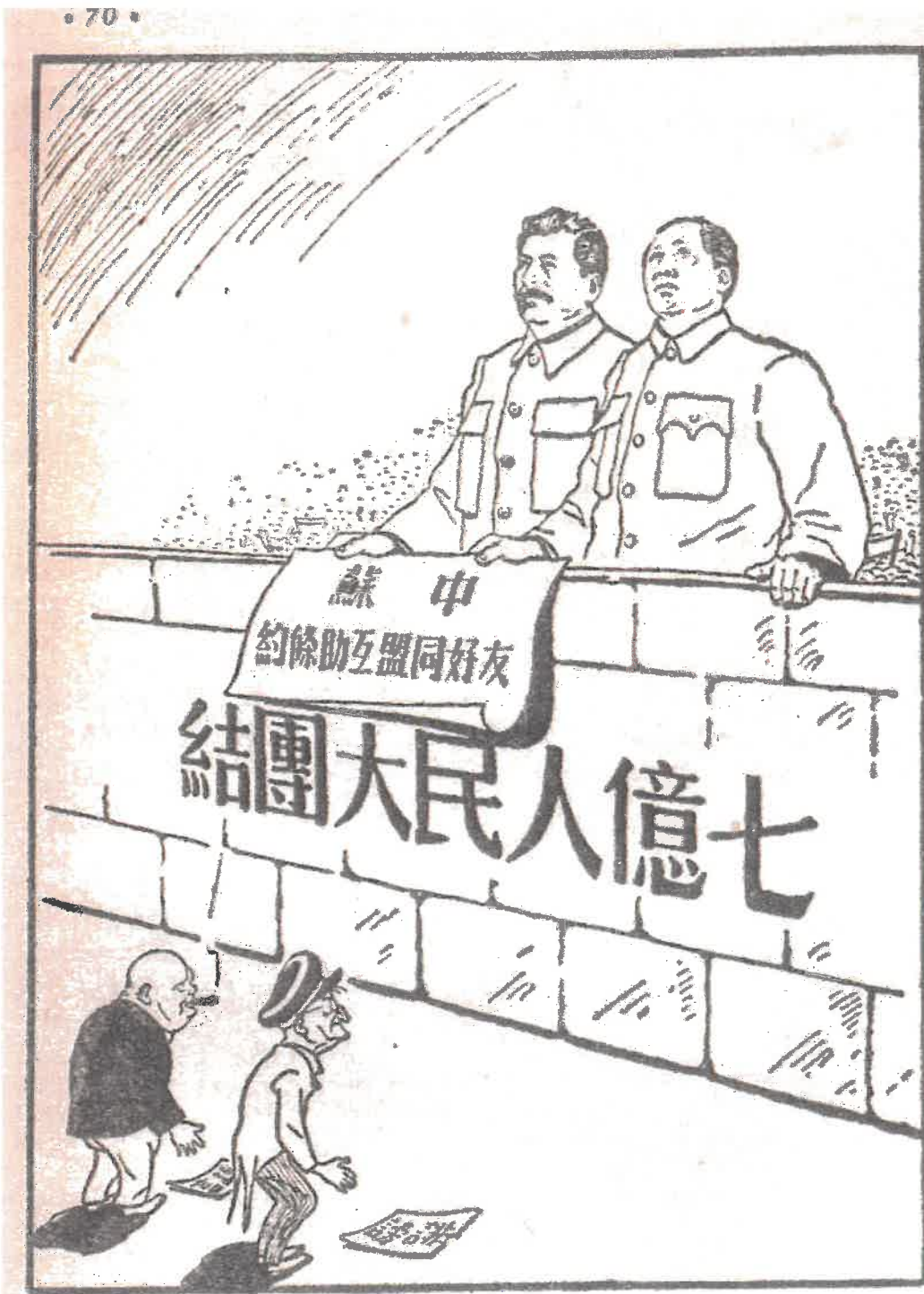
The benefits of the Soviet alliance are seen in a different light in Figure 14. This postcard, interestingly, places Tiananmen on an even higher plane than the Kremlin, but the pairing of the two symbols shows the benefits of the defense alliance against Japan. If we were to put this in terms reminiscent of the Ming period, the PRC, having secured its northern frontiers with Russia, could turn its attention to the seaborne pirates of Japan. The wall as a symbol of Sino-Soviet solidarity emerges clearly in Figure 15. Here Mao and Stalin themselves, rather than stock depictions of the “working class,” represent their respective states. Again Churchill and Truman approach the wall with crazed plans of invasion, again they are diminutive, and again Churchill’s cigar smoke seems to react to the character “*tuan*” (militia, in *tuanjie*, unity) although this time rising toward it! The two socialist leaders, unlike the two comrades in Figure 14, do not stand arm in arm, and Stalin does not assume a protective pose. Instead, they are depicted as equals, their clothing and height indicating parity. Both men gaze beyond the petty imperialists below, but their visions extend in opposite directions. Mao’s, perhaps not accidentally, is directed up to his left, perhaps toward the place where Marx had gone, as Mao would later say, to “see God.” Mao is foregrounded and has both hands on the wall, suggesting perhaps his greater centrality and power.

Artists only infrequently paired Mao Zedong with the Sino-Soviet treaty in cartoons, perhaps because of his and his colleagues’ doubts about the value of the agreement. Although cartoonists had Mao and Stalin share the spotlight in more than a few scenes, Mao’s persona was already growing too grand to be limited by compromising undertakings with foreign mentors. Artists gradually depicted Mao, as much as Tiananmen itself, as the symbol of the new China. Because this notion would only grow, culminating in the huge rallies of the Cultural Revolution and the grim edifice of the chairman’s mausoleum facing Tiananmen, Mao’s association with Tiananmen in the early years of the PRC is worth closer examination.

### **Mao’s Personal Association with Tiananmen**

Mao’s self-identification with Tiananmen was not coincidental, and it had consequences for the PRC. Tiananmen, the southern gate to the





七億人民的大團結 顧炳鑫

Figure 15 Gu Bingxin, "Great Unity of 700 Million People," *Pierce the Paper Tiger*, p. 70. (Hunter Collection)

Forbidden City, afforded the chief passage through the massive walls around the Forbidden City dating from Ming times. Mao was at the apex, as if growing out of Tiananmen, where, of course, he had announced the founding of the People's Republic in 1949. The CCP obviously hoped that Tiananmen, and by extension Beijing, would be a more durable symbol of a longer-lasting regime than the blue tile roofs of Nanjing, symbols of the Republic in the 1930s, had proved to be.

Out of Tiananmen would flow abundance, a result of the long pent-up productive potential of the Chinese people. Derk Bodde, a Fulbright scholar living in Beijing and studying classical poetry, filled the pages of his 1949 diary with images of the city being scoured by the Communists. Its lakes were dredged, its monuments restored, the earthen scars at the Temple of Heaven healed. The Chinese Communists thereby gave a nod to the "feudal past" represented by the gate even as they dedicated themselves to transcending that history.

The cartoonist Mengzi, celebrating China's having "stood up" in a series of postcards, refined the meaning of Mao's famous phrase by honing his caption into a more specific meaning: Japan can no longer spill Chinese blood. By using the phrase "China has stood up" in tandem with images of Tiananmen, Mengzi reminded viewers of Mao's electrifying declaration and implied that the establishment of the PRC would transform relations with Japan. In Figure 16, backed by an image of Tiananmen, a brawny Chinese man denounces a sword-wielding "Japanese devil," the worker's thoughts guided by the watercolor gaze of Chairman Mao, whose plump visage proudly surveys the proceedings, almost like a son of heaven. Rather than a Soviet worker-brother fending off the Japanese, as in Figure 14, here the evocation of Chairman Mao by a single outsized worker is sufficient to deter the blood-thirsty but diminutive Japanese.

It is not known what feelings stirred in the heart of the young Mao when he first beheld Tiananmen in 1918, but, like others who encountered the gate as fully conscious adults, he probably experienced the tug of history and the weight of "tradition." He must have become aware also of Tiananmen's potential as a symbol of tremendous strength. With the success of his revolution and the demise of the Republican regime in the southern capital of Nanjing, Mao's image would



14. 中國巨人站起來了,要向日寇討還血債。

Figure 16 Mengzi, "The Chinese People Have Stood Up, Preventing the Japanese Pirates from Spilling Blood Again," *Postcards to Prevent American Revival of Japanese Militarism*, no. 14. (Hunter Collection)

be changed as well. His previous association with the rough caves of Yan'an would be transformed into identification with the elegant gates of the Ming-Qing capital city. Like the "Great Within," which he first entered in 1949, Mao's thinking on the legacy of China's past rulers is not readily apparent. There is evidence, however, that he especially revered the commoner founders Han Gaozu and Ming Taizu.<sup>40</sup> Mao's marginalia in the dynastic histories and his own poetry make frequent mention of rural rebellions scattered through China's past.<sup>41</sup> Taking their cues from the Chairman, party propagandists would make repeated visual associations among Mao, China, and Tiananmen, fashioning the three into one indivisible symbol of the nation. Through Mao, the humiliations of the past would be transformed irrevocably into triumphs in the future.

In Figure 17, the masses combine uniformity with jubilation as they face south with Mao, whose image prior to 1949 had been banned by Chiang Kai-shek but now rises out of the gate at the back of the crowd. The red banners declare the "Chinese People's Republic," but these are abstractions compared with the dominant figure of Mao Zedong.

40. Andrew and Rapp, *Autocracy*.

41. Zhongguo Dang'an Chubanshe, *Mao Zedong*.





Figure 17 Mao and the Masses (*Manhua* No. 5, front cover). (Hunter Collection)

In Figure 18, published after the great ceremony atop Tiananmen on October 1, 1949, the artist surpasses the specific archetypes in the propaganda manuals by mixing together all manner of themes. This riotous visual shows that as long as glorification of the leader remained clear, artists were relatively free to elaborate on the state-approved models using their own imagination. As depicted on the back cover of *Manhua* magazine, the very important source of much of the graphic imagery in the new era, Mao's portrait on Tiananmen does not look squarely forward, but gazes upward and to his left as if to mimic the



Figure 18 Marching for Mao. (*Manhua* No. 5, back cover) (Hunter Collection)

living Mao's October First admiration of airplane formations flying overhead. If one opens the magazine to view both back and front covers simultaneously, it appears that Mao's immense head is rising out of the southern edge of the space that would become Tiananmen Square, remarkably near to the site of his sarcophagus today. Mao's personal association with the center of his new republic continues to have lasting consequences.

The teeming images in Figure 19, dating from 1950, helped develop the personality cult around Mao. No one could confuse him any more with Zhu De, the more plebian and modest commander, with whose





慶祝偉大的新中國誕辰

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Figure 19 Ya Wen, "Greatly Celebrate New China's Helmsman" (*Manhua* No. 5, inside cover image). (Hunter Collection)

image Mao's had been regularly paired in street demonstrations in the late 1940s. Here Mao is identified instead with a gate resembling Tiananmen. From this site his personality infuses the new China. His is the guiding spirit of the revolution. Although natural science and technology (represented by the compass) are available to him as they were to his ancestors, Mao is able to steer forward intuitively by grasping the wheel of social science and ideology ("Marxism"). His sturdy clothing is that of a worker, his unbuttoned shirt suggesting a willingness to tackle any problem. The angle of the face, like that of the large portrait printed in the *People's Daily* (*Renmin Ribao*) on the day after the signing of the Sino-Soviet treaty, suggests visionary qualities.

This cartoon reverses the "traditional" *shan-shui* (lit., mountain/water) order of painting in which background, foreground, and mid-



dle ground each unfold in succession. Now Mao, the "mountain" dominating the panel, is in the foreground. In the "water" element of the picture, a trio (worker, soldier, and urban artist) pierce the illusion of Guomindang and American strength in the Pacific. The worker takes an immense sledgehammer to Chiang Kai-shek on Taiwan, an attack buoyed by China's growing industrial wealth and potential naval might. The boxes of supplies behind them, marked "Support the Front Line," morph into a large gate symbolic of the nation. A small and fedora-clad "bandit agent" is lifted from the ground by a righteous and physically superior Communist official, indicative of the national preoccupation with counterrevolutionary activity in 1950 and 1951. This protean depiction of Mao and of new China had only tangential connections to the propaganda manuals discussed earlier, indicating both the fertility of the artist's mind and the limits on artistic expression in 1951. Mao was not yet entirely monopolizing depictions of Tiananmen. But, it may be worth asking, who are the characters defending the critical "rear area" along the coast and at the foot of the gate? The answer is not simply any old Chinese soldier or leader, but Mao himself. The row of flags, a stock image of the time like the portrait of Lenin, forms a wall of sorts, wherein political unity and a quasi-spiritual faith in socialism combine.

To Mao's right, in the lower left corner of the frame, are piled bags of grain and also what appear to be immense radishes, symbolizing the agricultural bounty that would inevitably be achieved in the new order. Farmers reap grain with new machinery, brandishing the "land reform law," while merchants above them transact fair deals overseen by honest cadre. Already adumbrating the grandiose agrifantasy of the Great Leap Forward, the peasants are seen gladly pouring their yield into the national granary, a longstanding Chinese symbol of responsible government.<sup>42</sup> Interestingly, the farmers literally have Mao's ear, and the Chairman appears pleased by the sounds of grain pouring into the state coffers.

In Figure 19, however, nothing rises higher than Communist theory. In the upper left corner of the frame a large red banner identifies the People's Congress, the prime locus of sovereignty in the People's Republic according to its constitutions. Books are held high: one book marked "Fascist Education" is destroyed, while a book of Marxism as

42 Will and Wong with Lee, *Nourish the People*; Leonard and Watt, *Achieve Security*.

large as a human is being lifted up like the Ten Commandments. Above it all, in the most striking of images, rise seven hands reading "Criticism, Self-Criticism," a Maoist version of a Buddhist mantra. Airplanes gild the sky, moving to the east. None of this utopian vision would be possible, the artist implies, without a strong defense. The artist, like Mao himself, chose carefully from the available repertoire in 1950, creating a potent amalgam of Chinese statecraft, proletarian internationalism, and national strength.

Images of walls continued to appear in the new China after 1949, enlisting ancient symbols in support of national strength. Renewal and destruction would coexist throughout Mao's reign, and the latter would arguably limit China's development. Mao's unshakeable belief in continuous revolution would ultimately take priority over the emphasis on strong defense characteristic of the political cartoons of the early 1950s. The promise of agrarian socialism, the fraternity with the communist bloc, and China's ability to hold at bay its external enemies would be put at risk by the anti-Rightist campaign, the Great Leap Forward, and the Cultural Revolution. By closing himself off in the great within of Zhongnanhai, part of the Forbidden City not open to the public, and by maintaining a wall of secrecy and superiority between himself and the people he led, Mao placed China at a great disadvantage at least in the immediate competition among the most powerful states. From 1949 to 1951, however, open speculations on such consequences of Mao's course were limited to a handful of Western observers in the Chinese peripheries of Hong Kong and Taiwan. Mao had thrust most foreigners to the very frontiers of China. The praise and portraits he received as a result helped to promote a national identity that was both new and deeply rooted in the past.

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# CHINESE WALLS IN TIME AND SPACE

## A Multidisciplinary Perspective

Are walls remnants of ancient and medieval societies, destined to become anachronistic in modern and postmodern times? Or will they persist, shaping as well as adjusting to new conditions? Do walls necessarily constrain and even isolate those who live within them, or can they act as a medium of support and communication for people on both sides?

This volume, a result of a conference held in conjunction with major exhibitions of Chinese contemporary art in Beijing and Buffalo, New York, in 2005, addresses these questions. Fourteen authors from seven disciplines—history, literature, law, art, medicine, communication, and film—provide multiple perspectives on various kinds of walls: material ones around and within states, cities, and towns, as well as virtual ones regulating the administration of justice, the flow of pathogens, and the transmission of information. Cultural and scientific walls between East and West, China and America, prosperity and poverty, and viewer and viewed, are here explored in both their fragility and their endurance.

Although the multiplicity of perspectives resists reduction to any single thesis, the discussions here support the view that Chinese walls—like walls everywhere—must be understood in their specific times and places. The ways in which walls have been deployed by residents of one of the world's most populous polities—a polity often identified in popular imagery with its Wall—should interest a broad public within and outside of Chinese studies.

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Panoramic Shanxi. Digital photograph, 2008.

The picture was taken in Jincheng, Shanxi, on a trip to the prominent sites of ancient buildings that are particularly rich in this province. The artist **Zhao Gang** serves for years as the official photographer for the National Geographic (Chinese version). His works have been exhibited and published in a variety of occasions.

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