

**Volume 3**

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**Nixon Visits China - II**

**Lead: Richard Nixon visited China in 1972. Both he and his hosts had reputations to overcome.**

**Intro.: A Moment in Time with Dan Roberts.**

**Content: After centuries of rule by often corrupt and inefficient imperial dynasties, China embarked on the road to Revolution in 1912. Inspired by Sun Yat-sen, the nation rejected the empire, but his party, the Guomindang, was not able to establish constitutional government. Corruption**

**and chaos increased, and beginning in the 1920s, the government of Sun's successor, Generalissimo Jiang Kai-shek, was almost constantly involved in a civil war against the Communists led by Mao Zedong. After a truce during which both factions fought the invading Japanese in the 1930s and 1940s, the civil war resumed. The Communists won in 1949 but spent the better part of two decades consolidating their hold on China. During that time relations with the United States remained icy due to tensions over the fate of Taiwan, open conflict in Korea and Vietnam, and clear ideological differences.**

**The career of Richard Nixon was only slightly longer than that of the Marxist government in Beijing and he built his reputation and political base with an attack dog approach to communism. From his first campaign in 1946 when he unseated Representative Jerry Voorhis, Nixon was able to exploit the deep concern many Americans had about the growing power and influence of the Soviet Union. He became the darling of the Republican right wing by instinctively voicing the fears of those who felt that moral rot had begun to eat away at the core of western culture and that the forces of democracy were losing badly in the arena of international conflict. Yet, in his**

**writings and public posture, particularly during and after his service as Dwight Eisenhower's Vice-President, Nixon began take on a much more sophisticated view of the world. He never doubted Communism's danger or threat to freedom and peace, but by the time he was elected President in 1968, he knew that Marxism was not the wave of the future and that Communist leaders in the Soviet Union and China were more open than ever to various types of accommodation with the western alliance. Next time: Old adversaries get together.**

**At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.**

## Resources

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**Sheridan, James E. *China in Disintegration: The Republican Era in Chinese History: 1912-1949*. New York, NY: Free Press, 1975.**

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