

Volume 19

Number 028

History's Turning Points (13):
America's Chinese Obsession – II

Lead: Historical study often helps reveal twists in the human journey. Consider one of history's great turning points – America's Chiang Kai-Shek obsession.

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

Content: In a 1927 match made in Chinese political heaven, ambitious General Chiang Kai-Shek, one of the founders of the Kuomintang, the Chinese nationalist party, married

Soong May-ling, the sister-in-law of Revolutionary leader Sun Yat-sen. Soong was a Christian and was educated in the United States. She attended boarding school in Georgia and Wellesley College. Her personal ties to many Americans, stated inclination toward democratic institutions, and Chiang's alleged conversion to Christianity won for them extraordinary support in the United States in the 1930s and during World War II. This was despite the clear corruption of his regime and the on-going struggle with the Chinese Communist Party for control. This power couple seemed for many Americans a formidable bulwark in favor of democracy and Christianity

and against international Bolshevism and fascist Japan.

When Soong toured the United States during the war aiming to drum up support for China's beleaguered fight against Japan, she spoke to Congress and was mobbed by adoring crowds. Even when Chiang lost the Civil War and was banished to Taiwan in 1949, support in America remained unabated. To many Americans in both parties, Chiang represented unrelenting resistance to Communist China's ambitions in Asia and lured America into the bloody effusion of both Korea and Vietnam. Not until the 1970s and the realpolitik of Richard Nixon did the United States abandon its fascination with the Chiangs and

move to see China's value as a counter-weight to the Soviet's in the last two decades of the Cold War.

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Resources

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