

Mayumi Itoh

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THE MAKING OF  
CHINA'S WAR WITH JAPAN

ZHOU ENLAI & ZHANG XUELIANG



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*For Megumi*



Map: East Asia as related to Zhou Enlai and Japan (*Source:* Constructed by author from blank map of East Asia, courtesy of Daniel Dalet, d-maps.com, [http://d-maps.com/lib=east\\_asia\\_maps&num\\_car=77&lang=en](http://d-maps.com/lib=east_asia_maps&num_car=77&lang=en))

## NOTES ON THE TEXT

Names of people and places in Chinese are in principle given in modern spellings of Mandarin, based on pinyin; however, some historical names of people and institutions that are known by their old spellings, as well as names concerning Taiwan, are given in Wade-Giles style, as in Chiang Kai-shek and the Kwantung Army. The old names of places which are no longer in use appear with their modern names within parentheses, for example, Beiping (Beijing) and Fengtian (Shenyang). The spellings in Wade-Giles style in direct quotations are converted to pinyin for consistency with the rest of the text. For Japanese, the Hepburn style is used, with macron; however, macrons are not used for words known in English without macrons, for example, Kyoto and Tokyo. Another exception is that “n” is not converted to “m” for words where it precedes “b, m, and n”; for example, Saionji “Kinmochi,” instead of Kimmochi. Names for Japanese newspapers, such as Asahi Shimbun, are given ‘as is’ because they are their official English names.

Chinese and Japanese names are given with the surname first, except for those who use the reversed order in English. Honorific prefixes, such as doctor and mister, are not used in the text, except in direct quotations. Positions and titles, as well as ages, of individuals correspond to the time at which the event is described in the particular passage of the text, unless specified otherwise. English translations of institutions and positions are based on the ones given at the official sites of each governmental organization. The discrepant dates among sources have been cross-checked and the most plausible date in each case has been used in this book; however, where it was not possible to determine the correct date, both dates are

mentioned, as in 1924/1925, which means either 1924 or 1925. Dates of birth and death that were recorded in the traditional lunar calendar have been converted into those of the Gregorian calendar. In addition, a person's age expressed according to traditional counting—which makes the age one or even two years older than in the current system—has been converted to its equivalent in the current system.

All translations, including Zhou's poems, are by the author, in the form of paraphrases, not as literal translations, in order for the translations to make sense in English without losing the original meanings. Citation numbers for sources of information are normally given at the end of each paragraph, instead of at the end of each sentence, in order to allow a smooth reading of the text and also limit the number of citations. Regarding online sources, the dates of actual access are given unless the sources give the posting dates.



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## ABBREVIATIONS

CCCPC	Central Committee of the Communist Party of China
CCYLE	Chinese Communist Youth League in Europe
CPC	Communist Party of China
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
CYCPE	Chinese Youth Communist Party in Europe
IJA	Imperial Japanese Army
KMT	Kuomintang (Nationalist Party)
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
PLA	People's Liberation Army
POW	Prisoner of War
PRC	People's Republic of China
ROC	Republic of China
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association

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## Introduction

Japan occupied an important part of the life of Zhou Enlai (March 1898–January 1976) from his birth to death. He was born just after the first Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895) and grew up in the middle of the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905), in which the two countries vied for the spheres of influence in Manchuria (China’s Northeast region). Zhou went to an elementary school in the former capital of Manchuria, Fengtian (current Shenyang), and observed the effects of the war. Zhou then studied at Nankai Middle School in Tianjin, where a Chinese militia group had besieged international legations of the imperial powers, including Japan (the Boxer Rebellion, 1899–1901). After graduating from Nankai Middle School, Zhou went to study in Japan in September 1917, was enlightened about communism, and returned home in April 1919.<sup>1</sup>

Upon returning to Tianjin, Zhou participated in the May Fourth Movement, the first nationwide popular uprising of nationalism in China, was arrested, and was expelled from Nankai University. Zhou then went to Europe in November 1920 and joined a Chinese communist cell in France in the spring of 1921. Thus, a young Chinese revolutionary and future leader of the People’s Republic of China (PRC or “China” hereafter) was born. Zhou returned to China and moved up the ranks in the Communist Party of China (CPC), while fighting the Beiyang warlords during the first United Front between the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) and the CPC. The CPC then fought the KMT, ruled by Chiang Kai-shek (October 1887–April 1975), and then the Imperial Japanese Army (IJA) until winning the war with Japan (the second Sino-Japanese War, 1937–1945),

and the civil war in 1949. After the establishment of the PRC, Zhou dealt with Japan as the Chinese premier (and foreign minister) until his death in 1976. Thus, from his impressionable years and throughout his adult years, Zhou lived a life concerned with Japan, dealing with Japan, or fighting with Japan.<sup>2</sup>

This work constitutes part two of a three-part study of Zhou Enlai and Japan by this author. Part one examined Zhou's involvement with Japan during his early years and investigated his study years in Japan. Part two in turn analyzes Zhou's relations with Japan during his mid-career, from his participation in the May Fourth Movement and his years in Europe to his involvement in the Xi'an Incident and the formation of the second United Front between the KMT and the CPC against Japan, which paved the way for the Chinese victory in the second Sino-Japanese War.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Early Career of Zhou Enlai*

Despite the significance of Zhou's involvement in the May Fourth Movement and his activities in Europe, this formative period of Zhou's career is not well documented in his biographies in English. *Zhou Enlai: A Biography* by Dick Wilson (1984) and *Zhou Enlai: The Early Years* by Chae-jin Lee (1994) have chapters on this period; however, they are relatively short and contain misunderstandings. In turn, a Japanese diplomat, Ogura Kazuo, wrote a more reliable book in Japanese on Zhou's life in Europe entitled *Pari no Shū Onrai: Chūgoku-kakumeika no Seiō-taiken* (Zhou Enlai in Paris: A Chinese Revolutionary's Experiences in Western Europe, 1992).<sup>3</sup>

Meanwhile, the definitive official biography, *Zhou Enlai zhuan* (Biography of Zhou Enlai, the "Official Biography" hereafter), was published in China. The original one-volume version, covering his life until 1949, was first published in 1989. Then the new version, with the addition of the second volume covering his life from 1949 to 1976, was published in 1998. The actual content of volume one of the 1998 version is almost identical to that of the 1989 version, with major changes in the formatting of footnotes. Both versions were edited by the Central Committee of the CPC (CCCPC) Party Literature Research Office (the official name in English) and they clarify many misunderstandings and speculations made in the previous studies of Zhou's life.<sup>4</sup>

### *Zhou Enlai and the Xi'an Incident*

In addition, the critical roles Zhou played in the Xi'an Incident of December 1936 and in the subsequent formation of the anti-Japanese united front between the KMT and the CPC are not well documented in English. Moreover, the Xi'an Incident itself is still shrouded in mystery, and the previous studies are fraught with misunderstandings, even wrongly speculating that it was a conspiracy of the CPC or of the Third International ("Comintern," hereafter). The Official Biography of Zhou Enlai (1989 and 1998) and the Official Chronology of Zhou Enlai (1989) clarify these misunderstandings by providing more accurate accounts of Zhou's involvement in the incident, as well as that of the CPC and the Comintern. Although they might not have disclosed everything, sources provided for each passage include specific telegrams exchanged among Zhou, Mao Zedong, other CPC leaders, and the Comintern headquarters, with specific dates.<sup>5</sup>

In addition, one of the earliest biographies of Zhou Enlai in any language, written by Matsuno Tanio (1961), provides a credible account of the Xi'an Incident. Matsuno, a reporter for the major Japanese daily *Asahi Shimbun*, resided in Beijing for half a year until the end of August 1957, when he was forced to leave China, as a quid pro quo for the Japanese government's refusal to admit Chinese reporters to enter Japan. During his stay, Matsuno met Zhou many times and gathered information about him. Upon returning home, he wrote an excellent biography of Zhou up to the ten-year anniversary of the founding of the PRC. Although it was written more than half a century ago, it still sheds light on many important aspects of the Xi'an Incident and the secret missions Zhou engaged in for the peaceful settlement of the incident and on the formation of the second KMT-CPC United Front.<sup>6</sup>

### *Zhang Xueliang's Record of Repentance*

In turn, the "culprit" of the Xi'an Incident, Northeastern Army commander-in-chief Zhang Xueliang (courtesy name, Hanqing, June 1901–October 2001), wrote a report on the incident in 1954 (or 1955 or 1956, depending on the source) by order of Chiang Kai-shek, who had placed Zhang under house arrest since December 1936, transferring him to various places across China and then to Taiwan in 1947. Chiang later gave the report to his son, Chiang Ching-kuo. Then the



whole account was leaked and was published as an article entitled “*Xi’an-shibian chanhui-lu*” (“Record of Repentance for the Xi’an Incident”) in the journal *Xiwang* (Hope) in Taipei in July 1964. This caused a political storm and Zhang protested against the publication. Chiang Kai-shek in rage banned the journal, held Chiang Ching-kuo responsible, and punished those who were involved in the publication. Although most of the copies were recalled, some were smuggled to Hong Kong and republished in *Mingbao* (Light Report) in September 1968 (No. 32–34).<sup>7</sup>

Subsequently, this article was compiled in several collections of Zhang’s writings published in China, under the title “*Xi’an-shibian huiyi-lu*” (Memories of Xi’an Incident). Although this account is significant as the sole record of the incident written by Zhang himself, and appears to be accurate overall, it should be read with a grain of salt because it was written for Chiang by his order.<sup>8</sup>

### *Oral History of Zhang Xueliang*

Then in 1990, shortly after the Taiwanese government had rehabilitated Zhang and had given him a complete recovery of his freedom on his 90th birthday (according to the traditional Chinese age counting), Zhang gave an interview to the Japanese public broadcast station, NHK, in Taipei on June 17 and then on August 3–5, 1990. During the interviews, Zhang candidly spoke about his life and his views of Japan, such as “Japan ruined my life.” Soon, a translation of the interviews was published in China and caused a sensation there. In addition, Columbia University history professor, Tang Degang (August 1920–October 2009), interviewed Zhang in January–May 1990 and the transcripts were compiled in *Zhang Xueliang koushu-lishi* (Oral History of Zhang Xueliang, 2009, 2013, and other versions). Then, Zhang’s death in 2001 resulted in another surge in interest in Zhang in China, and a plethora of biographies of Zhang, as well as collections of his oral history and writings, were published in China.<sup>9</sup>

In contrast, notwithstanding the significance of the Xi’an Incident to the contemporary history of China and East Asia, there is no book in English that fully examines the incident. For that matter, there is no biography in English of Zhang Xueliang to the knowledge of this author, with one exception: *Zhang Xueliang: The General Who Never Fought*, written by Aron Shai (2012).<sup>10</sup>

## SCOPE OF THIS BOOK

Through the new and old literature in Chinese, English, and Japanese, this book reexamines Zhou Enlai's mid-career against the backdrop of Japanese imperialism. This book does not go into detail about the actual warfare during the second Sino-Japanese War because this particular subject is already well documented in literature in English.<sup>11</sup> Instead, this study focuses on lesser known and unknown aspects of Zhou's involvement in the Xi'an Incident and the formation of the second KMT–CPC United Front against Japan, as the basis for how China fought with Japan in the war. While it is virtually impossible to write a book totally free of errors, especially biographies of political leaders whose careers are marked by secrecy, including that of Zhou Enlai, this book strives to leave as accurate a record as possible of Zhou's mid-career. This work was made possible only because of the herculean efforts of the previous scholars and writers who tried their best to understand this enigmatic Chinese leader. This book is therefore a synthesis of all of the previous works on Zhou Enlai.

## NOTES

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5. Ibid. (both); Zhonggong-zhongyang wenxian-yanjiushi, ed., *Zhou Enlai nianpu 1898–1949*.
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8. Zhang Xueliang, “Xi’an-shibian Huiyi-lu” (Memories of Xi’an Incident), in Zhang Xueliang, *Zhang Xueliang wenji* (Writings of Zhang Xueliang), edited by Bi Wanwen (principal editor), Beijing: Xinhua-chubanshe, 1992, Vol. 2, 1191–1204; Zhang (2004), 386–400; Zhang (2013), 163–169.
9. Zhang (2013), 11; NHK shuzai-han and Usui Katsumi, *Chō Gakuryō no Shōwa-shi saigo no shōgen* (Last Testimony of Shōwa History by Zhang Xueliang), Tokyo: Kadokawa-shoten, 1991, 16–18 and 260; Zhang Xueliang, *Jianmo wushi-yunian Zhang Xueliang kaikou-shuohua: Riben NHK-jizhe zhuan-fanglu* (Zhang Xueliang Gives Interviews to Japanese NHK Reporters after Fifty Years of Silence), trans. by Guan Ning and Zhang Youkuan, Shenyang: Liaoning renmin-chubanshe, 1992; Zhang Xueliang, *Zhang Xueliang yigao: Youjin-qijian zishu · riji he xinban* (Posthumous Manuscript of Zhang Xueliang: His Statements of House-Arrest Period · Diary and Letters), edited by Dou Yingtai, Beijing: Zuoqia-chubanshe, 2005; Zhang Xueliang, *Zhang Xueliang de jinsheng jinshi* (Life of Zhang Xueliang), edited by Wang Shujun, Beijing: Tuanjie-chubanshe, 2011.
10. Aron Shai, *Zhang Xueliang: The General Who Never Fought*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.
11. See, for instance, William G. Beasley, *Japanese Imperialism, 1894–1945*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1991; Peter Duus, Ramon H. Myers, and Mark R. Peattie, eds., *The Japanese Wartime Empire, 1931–1945*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996; Rana Mitter, *China’s War with Japan, 1937–1945: The Struggle for Survival*, London: Allen Lane, 2013.

## May Fourth Movement and Early Career of Zhou Enlai

Having failed in the entrance exams of the First Higher School and the Tokyo Higher Normal School and with the prospect of studying at a Japanese higher school becoming dim, Zhou Enlai decided to go home and sailed from Kobe on April 11 or 15, 1919. He had just turned 21 a month earlier. Within a few weeks after he returned home, the May Fourth Movement occurred, and subsequently Zhou engaged himself in a student movement, rather than in academic study. Before long, he emerged as a leader of the student movement until he was arrested and detained in January 1920. Upon release in July, he sailed to France in November 1920, in order to study at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland. This chapter examines highlights of this period of Zhou's life, as well as lesser known aspects of it.

### MAY FOURTH MOVEMENT

The time when Zhou Enlai returned to China coincided with the outbreak of the May Fourth Movement, the first nationwide grassroots movement against imperial power in Chinese history. At the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 after World War I, the Chinese government requested the rescinding of Japan's Twenty-One Demands of 1915 (which secured Japan's sphere of interest in China against other imperial powers such as Russia) and the restoration to China of the interests in Shandong peninsula (Qingdao) that Japan had taken from Germany during World War I. When the peace conference acceded to Japan's inter-

ests in the Shandong province, the Chinese people were humiliated and infuriated. On May 4, more than 3,000 students at Peking University and other universities in Beijing held a demonstration in the Tiananmen Square, calling for the rejection of the Treaty of Versailles and dismissing pro-Japanese government officials, such as Communications minister Cao Rulin (January 1877–August 1966, Bank of Communications president), Currency Bureau director Lu Zongyu (July 1876–June 1941, former minister to Japan), and the incumbent minister to Japan Zhang Zongxiang (January 1879–October 1962), denouncing them as traitors. The demonstration turned violent as some students stormed Cao’s residence and burned it down. Cao hid himself and escaped the attack, but Zhang, who happened to be at Cao’s residence during his home leave, was injured by the protesters.<sup>1</sup>

As the Metropolitan Police Department arrested more than 30 students, the remaining students in Beijing went on general strike. In response, students, merchants, and workers in other cities launched strikes in their locales and the anti-imperialism and anti-Japanese protest movement spread nationwide. In the end, the Qian Nengxun cabinet (one of the Beiyang warlord governments) dismissed Cao, Lu, and Zhang from their government positions and decided not to sign the Treaty of Versailles. The Chinese chief representative to the Paris Peace Conference was Gu Weijun (January 1888–November 1985; one of the most prominent diplomats in modern China, known as V. K. Wellington Koo in the West). This popular uprising reflected a call for democratic and egalitarian values by intellectual leaders, such as the *Xinqingnian* (New Youth) editor and Peking University professor Chen Duxiu (October 1879–May 1942) and his colleague Li Dazhao (October 1888–April 1927), who had launched the New Culture Movement in 1915. The prominent writer Lu Xun (real name, Zhou Shuren; September 1881–October 1936) was one of the major contributors to the journal. The May Fourth Movement paved the way for the foundation of the Communist Party of China (CPC) in July 1921 by 12 members in Shanghai, 6 of whom—Chen Duxiu, Li Dazhao, Li Da, Dong Biwu, Li Hanjun, and Zhou Fohai—had studied in Japan. Notable activists/journalists who were influenced by this movement include Zou Taofen (known by this penname; real name, Zou Enrun; November 1895–July 1944) and Du Zhongyuan (1897–September 1943, see Chap. 6).<sup>2</sup>

## ZHOU RETURNED TO CHINA BEFORE MAY FOURTH MOVEMENT

To be accurate, Zhou did not return to China because he was inspired by the May Fourth Movement and wanted to participate in it, as many studies have stated. He actually returned home before the outbreak of the movement. Moreover, he did not participate in the initial stage of the movement, let alone being a leader. To state otherwise lends a hand to the creation of a false legend about Zhou Enlai. Zhou left Kobe port, Japan, either on April 11 or April 15, 1919. He most likely sailed first to Yingkou, a port city in Liaoning province peninsula (via Dalian), and then visited his fourth uncle Zhou Yigeng and his friends in Fengtian (Shenyang) and Harbin before returning to Tianjin. Zhou arrived in Tianjin toward the end of April, as the Nankai Middle School newspaper *Xiaofeng* issue dated April 30, 1919, reported: “Our alumnus, Mr. Zhou Enlai, returned to Tianjin from Japan the other day....He is planning to take the entrance exams of Tsinghua School or Peking University.” The fact remains that the May Fourth Movement was not the reason for Zhou to return home.<sup>3</sup>

The primary reason for Zhou’s decision to go home was to study at a new university that was to open in the fall of 1919 at his alma mater, Nankai Middle School (“Nankai” hereafter): Nankai University. Since he was a graduate of Nankai, he was qualified to enroll in the university without taking the entrance exams. Nankai University would serve as his Plan B should he fail in the entrance exams of Peking University or Tsinghua School. Having heard of Nankai’s plan toward the end of 1918 or in early 1919, he eventually gave up the idea of studying in Japan, where he had failed in the entrance exams for two higher schools, and decided to go home.<sup>4</sup>

### CREATION OF TIANJIN STUDENT FEDERATION

Meanwhile, as soon as the news of the arrest of the demonstrators in Beijing reached Tianjin on May 5, Peiyang School of Law and Politics (currently Tianjin University) officials sent a telegram to Peking University and to the Chinese president Xu Shichang, in support of the student demonstration in Peking. Then, on May 7, students in Tianjin held a demonstration, while the Tianjin government issued a martial law decree. It was National Humiliation Day for China: the four-year anniversary of the day the Japanese government gave China an ultimatum on the Twenty-One

Demands in 1915 (the day Yuan Shikai accepted them, May 9, was also National Humiliation Day in China). Subsequently, on May 14, student representatives created the Tianjin Student Federation of Schools Above Middle Schools (“Tianjin Student Federation” hereafter) and elected Chen Zhidu (1896–1975, Tianjin Higher Technology School student) as president and one of Zhou’s closest friends and his debate-club teammate at Nankai, Ma Jun (September 1895–February 1928, of Hui Muslim nationality), as vice president. Then, on May 23, more than 10,000 students at 15 universities and middle schools in Tianjin boycotted classes.<sup>5</sup>

Further, on May 25, female student activists at the Tianjin Zhili First Women’s Normal School (“Zhili” refers to “directly administered by the central government”; Zhili province was renamed Hebei province when the KMT established the Nanjing government in 1928), such as Guo Longzhen (March 1894–April 1931, of Hui origin), Zhang Ruoming (February 1902–June 1958, the school’s Student Council president), and Deng Yingchao (February 1904–July 1992, the future wife of Zhou Enlai), established the Tianjin Society of Patriotic Comrades in Women’s Circles. The school alumna, Liu Qingyang (February 1894–July 1977, of Hui origin), became its president. Then, on June 5, the Tianjin Student Federation organized a patriotic rally at Nankai, in which they called for the Chinese government to nullify the Twenty-One Demands and release the student leaders. On June 10, all the stores in Tianjin closed in protest, and the Tianjin Federation of All Circles was established on June 18. On June 27, ten representatives of Tianjin, including Ma Jun and two female leaders (Liu Qingyang and Zhang Ruoming), went to Beijing to join representatives of other regions in petitioning President Xu Shichang to reject the Treaty of Versailles. With the Chinese government decision not to sign the treaty and the arrival of the summer recess, the May Fourth Movement subsided.<sup>6</sup>

During this period, Zhou essentially remained an observer, just as he had been during the student protest movement in Japan a year earlier. Zhou was not among the ten representatives who went to Beijing to petition the government. He only went to Tianjin train station to see Ma Jun and others off to Beijing. As he did in Tokyo, however, Zhou kept close contact with leaders of the movement, specifically with Ma, and even might have lent a hand in drafting petitions. This reflects the cautious character of Zhou (which affected many of the critical choices he made in his life and even saved him from persecution and execution), as well as his unstable status. Just as he was not a student at a proper school in Japan

(he was a student of a preparatory school called the East Asian Higher Preparatory School), he was not enrolled in any school in Tianjin and therefore was not a member of the Tianjin Student Federation. (Nankai University would not open until September.) In addition, he was still weighing his options between studies and political activism. His heart might have been gravitating toward the latter, but his sense of family obligation dictated him to earn a degree and have a respectable career.<sup>7</sup>

### INAUGURATION OF TIANJIN STUDENT FEDERATION NEWSLETTER

One of the first major projects in which Zhou took part in the student movement was the publication in July 1919 of the daily newspaper of the Tianjin Student Federation—*Tianjin Student Federation Newsletter*. Knowing Zhou's journalistic expertise honed during the Nankai years, Ma Jun asked Zhou to become editor. Zhou in turn asked one of his classmates at Nankai, Pan Shilun (courtesy name Shuan, February 1898–January 1983, from Zhejiang province), whom Zhou referred to as Little Brother Shu (*shudi*), to stay in Tianjin and help him edit the newsletter. Pan was studying at Jinling University (University of Nanking) in Nanjing at that time, but was visiting Tianjin during the summer recess. Zhou wrote an announcement for the publication of the newsletter, which appeared in the Nankai Daily (*regan*) on July 12, 1919 (No. 35). It read:

Regarding present national student voluntary enterprises, they are not rare in the world, but we seldom see them in our East Asia. The Rice Riot in Japan and the Korean independence movement are reverberations of the waves of new thinking in the world. People's self-awareness has only slightly increased in the history of East Asia. The knowledge of [Chinese] students is very shallow and their thought is decayed.<sup>8</sup>

Zhou then listed 20 principles for the newsletter in the announcement, which included reform of mind, innovation, democracy, and pro-activism. Zhou and Pan Shilun worked day and night for the publication of the newsletter. The inaugural issue of the *Tianjin Student Federation Newsletter* appeared on July 2; however, the Tianjin police censored the newsletter several times and suspended its publication in September 1919. When the police raided the editorial office, Zhou managed to escape and took refuge at the house of Nankai University secretary-general Kang



Nairu. Kang was the chemistry teacher at Nankai Middle School when Zhou was a student there and they developed a strong bond, which was more than an ordinary teacher–student relationship. In October 1919, the publication of the *Tianjin Student Federation Newsletter* was restored. Despite the censor and suspension, Zhou kept writing for the newspaper. Zhou also consolidated major student newspapers in Tianjin and created the Tianjin Federation of Student Publications in August.<sup>9</sup>

### TIANJIN STUDENT FEDERATION JOINS THE DEMONSTRATION IN BEIJING

Meanwhile, in early August, the Martial Law Commander of Shandong province, Ma Liang (Beiyang military clique leader and former prime minister Duan Qirui’s protégé), proclaimed martial law, cracked down on local patriotic demonstrations, and arrested and killed three Moslems, including Moslem Society to Support National Salvation president Ma Yunting. In response, the Tianjin Student Federation and the Tianjin Society of Patriotic Comrades in Women’s Circles again sent ten representatives, including two female leaders, this time Liu Qingyang and Guo Longzhen, to Beijing to protest against the brutal suppression. The police arrested all 10 representatives, along with 15 representatives of Beijing on August 23. The remaining student representatives in Tianjin became extremely agitated by the news, but Zhou cautioned them to remain calm and to keep on with their patriotic movement as they had planned. Yet, he also stated that “we have the responsibility to work out a way to rescue the arrested” and published an extra issue of the *Tianjin Student Federation Newsletter*, in order to inform local students of the incident.<sup>10</sup>

Subsequently, on August 26, more than 2,000 Tianjin and Beijing students held a massive demonstration in Beijing, with Ma Jun as general commander, and encircled the President’s Office, the Parliament, and the State Council Office. They held rallies for three days until the Metropolitan Police Department superintendent-general mobilized several thousand armed men of the police, the army, and the security force, which drove the protesters into Tiananmen Square, injured more than a hundred students, and arrested student representatives, including Ma Jun. At Tiananmen Square, Ma and other representatives from Tianjin, such as Liu Qingyang (the female leader), made fiery speeches, for which Ma was given the nickname “Tianan” and was referred to as Ma Tianan afterward. In response,

several hundred students in Tianjin headed to Beijing in order to rescue the arrested leaders. This time, Zhou joined in the action and went to Beijing—the first known case in which he actively engaged himself in the student movement. Even Nankai principal Zhang Boling, Tianjin Zhili Fishery School president Sun Ziwen (close friend of Yan Xiu), and other educators in Tianjin went to Beijing in support of the students. Consequently, they held overnight sit-ins in front of the President's Office, along with representatives of various circles of Beijing, until the arrested representatives were released on August 30.<sup>11</sup>

### CREATION OF AWAKENING SOCIETY

On the train back to Tianjin from Beijing on September 2, Zhou and six student activists, including two female leaders, Guo Longzhen and Zhang Ruoming, discussed the problem that female and male students could not work in the same group because men and women were not allowed to be present together in public according to the tradition in Chinese society. Therefore, female students could not join the Tianjin Student Federation and created the Tianjin Society of Patriotic Comrades in Women's Circles, instead. In order to break this bind, Zhang proposed to merge the two groups. Zhou in turn proposed to create a more rigorous organization than a mere student union, made up of core members of the two groups, and to publish a periodical focusing on the study of science and new thought. Others concurred. This was the origin of *Juewushe* (the Awakening Society).<sup>12</sup>

On September 16, 1919, Zhou joined 19 student leaders (including school alumni) of the Tianjin Student Federation and Tianjin Society of Patriotic Comrades in Women's Circles in the creation of the Awakening Society. True to their advocacy for gender equality, the 20 founding members consisted of 10 men and 10 women. Male members included Chen Zhidu, Ma Jun, Pan Shilun (Shuan), and another Nankai alumnus, Xue Hanyue (also known as Xue Zhuodong), who went to Japan at the same time as Zhou. Zhou referred to Xue by his courtesy name Yinshan and listed him as one of his best friends in his diary in Japan, along with Pan Shilun and several others. In addition, a Nankai student, Zhao Guangchen (Danwen, died in Taiwan), who had helped Zhou publish the *Tianjin Student Federation Newsletter* as a reporter, also joined the society. In turn, female members included Li Xijin, Li Yitao, Liu Qingyang, Guo Longzhen, Zhang Ruoming, and Deng Yingchao, who was the youngest

member of the society at age 15. The Awakening Society also elected nine “friends” of the society, including Huang Zhengpin (Huang Ai), Tao Shangzhao (Nianqiang), and Li Yuru (also known as Li Xizhi), who was Pan Shilun’s fiancée (see Table A.1).<sup>13</sup>

### ACTIVITIES OF AWAKENING SOCIETY

The Awakening Society’s action guidelines included self-awakening and self-determination, as well as self-sacrifice and mutual help. The group also published its own journal, *Juewu* (Awakening), in which members were only referred to by a number in order to conceal their identities from the authorities. Zhou drew No. 5, out of 1 to 50, in the lottery, and wrote under the pseudonym Wuhao (No. 5). In December 1919, for instance, Wuhao wrote “Declaration of ‘Awakening,’” calling for reform of mind and innovation, which appeared in the inaugural issue of *Juewu* on January 20, 1920. Despite the fact that Zhou played a major role in the creation of the society, he declined to assume the position of president, just as he had done during the Nankai years. In addition to being a rational observer and a realistic pragmatist, this modesty is another characteristic of Zhou, which might very well have saved his life in the series of power struggles. Zhou’s forte as a strategist and organizer rather than a theorist and ideologue was already pronounced in the Awakening Society. For him, theory and ideology were the means for political action and movement, not vice versa.<sup>14</sup>

Moreover, the Awakening Society played an indispensable role for Zhou as his first solid group of comrades, with the same commitments and missions, many of whom he had lasting relationships with after the establishment of the PRC (Deng Yingchao being a prime example). In fact, four society members and two “friends” would go to Europe to study during the same period as Zhou (Li Yuru went a little earlier than Zhou, while Zhao Guangchen, Guo Longzhen, Zhang Ruoming, and Tao Shangzhao went with Zhou, and Liu Qingyang a little later, see Chap. 3). Also, 14 out of the 20 members would become members of the Chinese Socialist Youth League and/or the CPC.<sup>15</sup>

One of the events to celebrate the foundation of the Awakening Society was a seminar held on September 21, 1919, with Peking University professor Li Dazhao as a guest speaker. On that morning Zhou went to the Wesley Methodist Church in the French concession to hear Li’s lecture on the Bolshevik Revolution and then escorted him to a group discussion at the Awakening Society in the afternoon. Li’s speech was based on his

articles on Marxism and the Russian Revolution in *Xinqingnian* (New Youth), which in turn were based on writings of the pioneering Japanese Marxist and professor at Kyoto Imperial University, Kawakami Hajime (October 1879–January 1946). The Chinese were learning Marxism from translations of Kawakami’s writings in those days. Nevertheless, Kawakami candidly admitted himself that his understanding of Marxism at that time was very limited and that he developed his own views of Marxism through writing and editing a series of articles in the monthly journal *Shakai-mondai kenkyū* (Studies of Social Problems) from January 1919 to October 1930. Kawakami was the sole writer of the journal from No. 1 to No. 89. He then coedited the journal from No. 90 to No. 95 and then became the sole editor from No. 96 to No. 105. The level of understanding on the part of Kawakami’s disciples in China, who would create the CPC in July 1921, was accordingly rudimentary.<sup>16</sup>

Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that Zhou’s understanding of Marxism at that time was still nascent. As the female leader Liu Qingyang writes in her recollection:

We always held meetings and discussed and studied various new thoughts. We were very naïve at that time. We were full of patriotic passions but were void of a certain credo to subscribe to. We discussed everything—socialism, anarchism, and guild-socialism—but we did not have the slightest understanding of what communism was.<sup>17</sup>

## ZHOU AS BURGEONING POLITICAL ACTIVIST

By this time, Zhou had already given up the idea of going to Tsinghua School or Peking University and he enrolled in the Liberal Arts Division of the College Department of Nankai School on September 8, 1919. His student ID number was 62. The four-year college department with three divisions (liberal arts, sciences, and commerce) opened on September 25, with 17 faculty members and 96 students. The school changed its name to Nankai University several days later. The official inaugural ceremony of the university was held on November 25. Thus, Zhou finally became a college student at age 21, which was one of the major goals of his youthful period. Nevertheless, he seldom went to classes and instead immersed himself in organizing and writing for the student movement.<sup>18</sup>

On October 1, student representatives in Tianjin, including Guo Longzhen and Huang Zhengpin, visited Beijing again, joined

representatives from Shandong and Shanghai, and together petitioned the President's Office on the Shandong issue. Zhou accompanied them as communications liaison. Zhou's former teachers at Nankai, Ma Qianli (who was married to Nankai principal Zhang Boling's younger sister) and Shi Zizhou also joined the rally. One of the founding members of the CPC, Zhang Guotao (December 1897–December 1979), was a student leader at the Peking University and also participated in this rally. There the police arrested scores of student representatives, including Guo and Huang. Zhou was not arrested because he was not in the forefront of the demonstration, being in charge of communications and logistics.<sup>19</sup>

Zhou returned to Tianjin, where 40,000–50,000 citizens joined in a public meeting and demonstration held at Nankai University on October 10, to commemorate the eighth anniversary of the foundation of the Republic of China. There, the police and security force obstructed the demonstration and injured 11 people, including Deng Yingchao and another female Awakening Society member Li Xijin, who were both hospitalized. Afterward, the demonstrators marched to the Metropolitan Police Department, and four representatives, including Zhou and female Awakening Society member Li Yitao, questioned the police action. On October 13, the Tianjin Student Federation and the Tianjin Society of Patriotic Comrades in Women's Circles decreed a boycott of classes for four days. It was Zhou who wrote the declaration. Zhou for the first time assumed a central role in the protest movement in Tianjin, in the absence of the several leaders detained in Beijing and Ma Jun and Liu Qingyang, who were away in Shanghai.<sup>20</sup>

Thus, through his participation in the student protest movement embroiled in the diplomatic issue of China's postwar settlement of World War I, Zhou was fledged as a young political activist in Tianjin at age 21. Observing the unfortunate plight of China and the trials and tribulations for reforming it, Zhou chose action over academics. He searched for and found a new mode of action, a new revolutionary movement different from the Republican Revolution of Sun Yat-sen. Zhou's two-year study period in Japan from 1917 to 1919 proved to be valuable for his political activism. He expertly analyzed political and military events in Japan by reading Japanese newspapers and also translated Japanese articles into Chinese and published them in the *Tianjin Student Federation Newsletter*. Knowing that progressive intellectual Japanese opposed Japanese invasion of China, Zhou understood that Japanese people at large should not be blamed for Japanese imperialism but that the Japanese military

establishment and capitalists were to be blamed for it. He even wrote an article calling for social reforms in Japan by uniting the intellectual class with the working class. In the words of Dick Wilson, “[h]is experience of decaying feudal life with his family had conditioned him for radicalism. Those feelings were now given organization.”<sup>21</sup>

Being conscious of gender equality, Zhou also proposed to merge the Tianjin Student Federation with the Tianjin Society of Patriotic Comrades in Women’s Circles. This was realized on December 10 in the form of the New Tianjin Student Federation. Its Governing Council elected Zhang Ruoming (Tianjin Zhili First Women’s Normal School Student Council president and Awakening Society member) as one of the co-presidents. Its General Affairs Committee members included Chen Zhidu, Ma Jun, Liu Qingyang, and Li Yitao. Deng Yingchao was elected to the Education Committee and the Speeches Committee and soon became Speeches Committee chairperson. Again, Zhou did not seek a position on the Governing Council and instead became Executive Division director in charge of day-to-day administration of the organization, as well as Weekly Publication Division director.<sup>22</sup>

## ARREST

On December 20, 1919, a massive demonstration was held at Nankai University in the wake of the nationwide boycott movement of Japanese goods following the killing of Chinese protesters by the Japanese in Fuzhou, Fujian province, in November. Nankai faculty members, such as Ma Qianli and Shi Zizhou, as well as Awakening Society members, such as Guo Longzhen and Li Yitao (both females), were among about 30 leaders of the rally, whereas Zhou was not listed as one of the leaders. Before marching in the streets, the demonstrators adopted an anti-Japanese resolution and burned more than a dozen carts carrying huge piles of Japanese goods that were confiscated from the stores. The Tianjin Student Federation and the Tianjin Federation of All Circles then joined forces to work out more effective measures to confiscate Japanese goods from Chinese merchants and burn them. When three Japanese hired by a Chinese storeowner injured students who came to inspect the store on January 23, 1920, civic and student leaders in Tianjin, including Ma Qianli, Shi Zizhou, and Ma Jun, went to the Zhili province government office to protest, only to be arrested by the police. The police also closed down the offices of the Tianjin Student Federation and the Tianjin Federation of All

Circles, stating that “these organizations have not applied for government approval, they are not registered with the government, and therefore they are illegal.”<sup>23</sup>

In response, Zhou and other members of the Awakening Society held secret meetings in the basement of the Wesley Methodist Church in Tianjin and decided to organize a demonstration to seek the release of the detainees. On January 29, several thousand protesters gathered in front of the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) building, held a meeting, and marched toward the Zhili province government office. Zhou was one of the four student representatives for this rally, along with Guo Longzhen and Zhang Ruoming (two female members of the Awakening Society) and a male student leader at the Tianjin Zhili First Middle School, Yu Lanzhu (Fangzhou, 1900–1928, executed). Zhou took charge of this demonstration all the more so because he had a strong bond with Ma Qianli, Shi Zizhou, and Ma Jun. Although the four representatives only tried to deliver a petition to the governor peacefully, the police arrested them upon their entering the gate of the government office, while severely injuring more than 50 unarmed students and causing minor injuries to 800 others outside the gate. This incident was called the “Tianjin Bloody Incident of January 29.” The four representatives were not released for almost six months until July 17. This was the first arrest of Zhou by the reactionary authorities.<sup>24</sup>

## DETENTION

For the first week after the arrest, Zhou and the three other student representatives were detained in the garrison barracks (the two men in one room and the two women in another) and then all four were transferred on February 6 to the Tianjin Metropolitan Police Department, where 22 leaders had been detained. There, Zhou joined his former Nankai teachers, Ma Qianli and Shi Zizhou, as well as his friend, Ma Jun. The 26 inmates came from a variety of groups: their ages ranged from 15 to 51. The youngest was Tao Shangzhao (Nianqiang, 1903/1907–1922, Awakening Society “friend”) who was released soon. Tao would go to France with Zhou in November 1920. The second oldest was Shi Zizhou at age 42. In addition, three inmates—Shi Zizhu, Ma Jun, and Guo Longzhen (female)—were Hui Moslems, but the camaraderie and solidarity among the inmates transcended their diverse backgrounds.<sup>25</sup>

*“Record of Detention in the Metropolitan Police Department”  
and “Diary at the Public Prosecutor’s Office”*

Zhou did not waste his time in prison. For one thing, he meticulously chronicled the imprisoned lives of himself and his fellow inmates in the “Record of Detention in the Metropolitan Police Department” (which was completed on June 5, 1920) and the “Diary at the Public Prosecutor’s Office” (which was completed on November 24, 1920, aboard the ship on his way to Europe). As the inmates were allowed to hold meetings, Zhou gave lectures on Marxism and expounded the history of class struggle and other subjects. On May 1, the inmates celebrated May Day (International Workers’ Day) and Zhou talked about political subjects such as the history of Japanese control over Qingdao and the Shandong question. On May 4, Zhou presided over a program to celebrate the first anniversary of the May Fourth Movement. He also taught the Japanese language to his colleagues, while Ma Jun lectured on anarchism. Ma Qianli, who was a Protestant convert, talked about Christianity and held prayer services. For “entertainment,” Zhou performed Shingeki (*lit.*, “new theater”; the Japanese new drama based on Western realist plays by Henrik Ibsen, Anton Chekhov, and others) plays. They included *Jinguojing* (“national salvation mirror”), which portrayed Vietnamese resistance against the French authorities, and *Xincunzheng* (“new village”), which dealt with people who were manipulated by a ruthless landlord. Zhou also reenacted his acclaimed role in *Yiyuanqian* (“one yuan”) during the Nankai years.<sup>26</sup>

It is interesting to note that the “Diary at the Public Prosecutor’s Office” was successively in the possession of many bookstores during the civil war. Then, an antique bookstore in Beijing bought it after World War II and it was presented to the CPC authorities for an appraisal. Zhou acknowledged that it was his own writing. However, he was not in favor of buying it back and publicizing it, because he felt that the exhibition of documents concerning Chinese revolutionary history should center on those of Mao Zedong. This episode is indicative of the modest and prudent nature of Zhou and might also explain why few of his own writings, with the exception of some poems (because they were of a more literary nature and less of a political nature) were published during his lifetime. This stance of Zhou was also instrumental in his almost miraculous survival in the successive ideological conflicts and power struggles in the history of contemporary China, in which a number of leaders perished, such as Liu Shaoqi and Lin Biao, just to name two.<sup>27</sup>



Meanwhile, on April 2, the detainees staged a hunger strike to demand immediate release or prompt trial. In response, 24 representatives of the New Tianjin Student Federation, including Chen Zhidu, Zhao Guangchen, and Deng Yingchao (she was not one of the detainees as some studies have stated), again went to the Tianjin Metropolitan Police Department on April 5 and requested that they replace the current inmates. Their request was denied, but they were allowed to meet the detainees. Then, the inmates were transferred to the Tianjin Local Public Prosecutor's Office Prison on April 7. The male inmates were accommodated in five rooms, while the two female inmates were confined in a separate room.<sup>28</sup>

### POEM FOR LI YURU

On June 8, 1920, Li Yuru (also known as Li Xizhi, 1902–July 1980, from Zhejiang province), a “friend” of the Awakening Society (not to be mistaken as one of the society's female members by the name of Li Xijin), visited Zhou at the Tianjin Local Public Prosecutor's Office Prison before she sailed to France on a work–study program (see Chap. 3). Li was teaching at the Tianjin Hebei Women's Fourth Elementary School after graduating from the Tianjin Zhili First Women's Normal School. Her fiancé, Pan Shilun (Shuan), was about to set out for the USA to study in September 1920 (Li would marry Pan upon returning home). On this occasion, Zhou wrote a letter to Li and a lengthy send-off poem entitled “Parted from Li Yuru, Presented to Little Brother Shu.” The poem expresses Zhou's desire for freedom and independence for China as well as equal rights for women, in reference to the national anthem of France, *La Marseillaise*. The poem also reveals that he was planning to go to France upon release from jail, as he states that he might be able to see Li Yuru on the shore at Marseille or in the suburbs of Paris three months later.<sup>29</sup>

### TRIAL AND RELEASE

The trials of the 20 detainees (6 detainees had been released earlier) began on July 6, 1920, in which the renowned lawyer Liu Chongyou forcefully defended their case. On July 17 Zhou and 10 male inmates were sentenced to two months in prison for the crime of social disturbance, 1 male inmate received ten days in prison, and 6 male inmates were found not guilty. The 2 female inmates were sentenced to a fine of 60 yuan each. As all the inmates had already served a time in prison longer than their

sentences, they were immediately released on that day. They received an enthusiastic welcome from Tianjin citizens as heroes with the honor of “sacrifice for the nation.” Upon release, while resuming the work at the Awakening Society, Zhou made preparations for going to Europe to study and then sailed for France from Shanghai on November 7, 1920.<sup>30</sup>

## NOTES

1. Jin Chongji, ed. (principal editor), *Zhou Enlai zhuan* (Biography of Zhou Enlai), edited by Zhonggong-zhongyang wenxian-yanjiushi, Beijing: Renmin-chubanshe and Zhongyang wenxian-chubanshe, 1998, Vol. 1, 46–47. For details, see Rana Mitter, *A Bitter Revolution: China's Struggle with the Modern World*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.
2. Ibid.; Mizuma Masanori, *Imakoso Nihonjin ga shitteokubeki “rōyodo mondai” no shinjitsu* (The Truth about the “Territorial Issues” that the Japanese Must Know Now), e-book, Tokyo: PHP kenkyūjo, February 8, 2011, 85.
3. Jin, 45–46; Wang Yongxiang and Takahashi Tsuyoshi, eds., *Riben liuxue-shiqi de Zhou Enlai* (Zhou Enlai During His Study Period in Japan), Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian-chubanshe, 2001, 200.
4. Jin, 46.
5. Ibid., 47.
6. Ibid., 47–48; Chae-jin Lee, *Zhou Enlai: The Early Years*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994, 120–121.
7. Jin, 47–48; Lee, 121–123.
8. Jin, 48–50; Pan Shilun, “Zhou Enlai he Tianjin xueshang lianhe hui bao” (Zhou Enlai and Tianjin Student Federation Newsletter), in Zhongguo shehui kexue-yuan jindaishi yanjiusuo, ed., *Wusi-yundong huiyi-lu* (Memoirs of May Fourth Movement), Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue-chubanshe, 1979, Vol. 2, 575; Zhou Enlai, *Zhou Enlai zaoqi wenji 1912.10–1924.6* (Early Writings of Zhou Enlai 1912.10–1924.6), edited by Zhonggong-zhongyang wenxian-yanjiushi and Nankai-daxue, Tianjin: Zhonggyang wenxian-chubanshe and Nankai-daxue chubanshe, 1998, Vol. 1 (“*Zhou Enlai zaoqi wenji*” hereafter), 419–420. Pan Shilun’s courtesy name, Shuan, is misspelled in Lee (p. 227).
9. Jin, 49–50; *Zhou Enlai zaoqi wenji*, 420; Pan, 576–578; Lee, 128.
10. Jin, 50–51; Lee, 126–127.

11. Jin, 51–52; *Zhou Enlai zaoqi wenji*, 524; Lee, 127.
12. Jin, 52; Lee, 127–128.
13. Jin, 53; Lee, 134–135; *Zhou Enlai zaoqi wenji*, 525; Jin Chongji, ed. (principal editor), *Shū Onrai-den, 1898–1949* (Biography of Zhou Enlai, 1898–1949), translation supervisor, Hazama Naoki, Kyoto: Aunsha, 1992, Vol. 1, 65; “Juewushe quanti chengyuan de jinli jianjie” (Brief Resume of All Members of Awakening Society), No. 1, [cpc.people.com.cn/GB/64162/64172/85037/85038/7039049.html](http://cpc.people.com.cn/GB/64162/64172/85037/85038/7039049.html) and No. 2–No. 6, <http://cpc.people.com.cn/GB/64093/67507/7039155-7039159.html>, accessed August 3, 2014 (“Juewushe” hereafter). Zhou Zhilian is misspelled in Lee (p. 135). Jin (1992) erroneously gives Li Xijin’s courtesy name as “Yuru”: Li Xijin is a different person from Li Yuru. Li Yuru is a “friend” of the Awakening Society, not a full member, who is also known as Li Xizhi.
14. Jin, 53–55; *Zhou Enlai zaoqi wenji*, 471–472; Lee, 134–137; “Juewushe.”
15. Lee, 137–138; “Juewushe.”
16. Jin, 53–55; Lee, 129 and 136–137; Kawakami Hajime, *Jijoden* (Autography), Vol. 1, Tokyo: Iwanami-shoten, 1952, 127–130, 139–173, and 248–262.
17. Jin, 56–57; Liu Qingyang, “Juexing le de Tianjin renmin” (Awakened People in Tianjin), in Zhongguo shehui kexue-yuan jindaishi yanjiusuo, ed., *Wusi-yundong huiyi-lu* (Memoirs of May Fourth Movement), Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue-chubashe, 1979, Vol. 2, 553.
18. Jin, 54; Lee, 130–131. Lee states that Zhou’s classmates at Nankai University included Ma Jun and Pan Shilun (p. 130); however, Pan did not enroll in Nankai University, but went to Jinling University (University of Nanking) in Nanjing (Pan, 575 and 578).
19. Jin, 54; Lee, 131 and 203n33.
20. Jin, 54; Lee, 131–132; *Zhou Enlai zaoqi wenji*, 443–445.
21. Lee, 139–140, Dick Wilson, *Zhou Enlai: A Biography*, New York: Viking, 1984, 28.
22. Jin, 57; Lee, 138–139.
23. Jin, 56–57; Lee, 141–143.
24. Jin, 57–58; Lee, 143–144.
25. Jin, 58; Lee, 144–147; *Zhou Enlai zaoqi wenji*, 525; “Juewushe,” No. 6; <http://www.baike.com/wiki/tao.shangzaho>, accessed

August 3, 2014. Tao's age and his birth year do not match. Sources also vary on Tao's birth year.

26. Jin, 58–59; Lee, 144 and 147–148; *Zhou Enlai zaoqi wenji*, 479–523 and 532–622; Zhongguo lishi bowuguan, ed., *Bunbutsu de kataru Shū Onrai: Goshi undō kara bannen made* (Zhou Enlai as Told by Cultural Things: From May Fourth Movement to Late Years), trans., Lin Fang, Tokyo: Tōhōdō, 1979, 15; Suzuki Naoko, “Goshi-jiki no gakusei engeki: Tenshin-Nankai Shingeki-dan to Pekin-daigaku shingeki-dan” (Student Drama during the May Fourth Period: Tianjin Nankai Shigeki Theater and Peking University Shingeki Theater), *Ochanomizu joshi-daigaku Chūgoku-bungaku kaihō*, No. 27, April 2008, 49–66, <http://teapot.lib.ocha.ac.jp/ocha/bitstream/10083/35303/1/KJ00005479348.pdf>.
27. Zhongguo lishi bowuguan, 15.
28. Jin, 58; Lee, 145–146.
29. Jin, 61; “Juewushe” (No. 6); *Zhou Enlai zaoqi wenji*, 524–528.
30. Jin, 59–62; Lee, 146 and 148–149.

## Zhou Enlai Goes to Europe and Becomes a Communist

A round-shaped bronze relief of a young man's profile on a rectangular plaque is mounted on a wall of the Hotel Altea at 17 rue Godefroy, in Paris, France. It is located near Place d'Italie (there is a Metro station) in the 13th administrative district in southeastern Paris. The piercing eyes of the young man are staring at the streets of Paris. The bottom of the plaque says: "Zhou Enlai lived in this building during his stay in France from 1922 to 1924." The hotel Zhou lived in was called the Hotel Godefroy at that time, and he stayed in Room 16 on the second (or third) floor. The run-down three-story hotel was demolished in 1992 and the Hotel Altea was built on the site. (The Godefroy Hotel at 27 rue Godefroy is a different hotel in the north-western suburbs of Paris, west of the Boulogne Wood.) Zhou's relief was made by the renowned painter/sculptor Paul Belmondo of Italian descent (August 1898–January 1982, once French Art Academy president), who was the father of the French actor Jean-Paul Belmondo (b. April 1933).<sup>1</sup>

Why did Zhou come to Paris and live there? What was his life in Paris like? This chapter examines his years in Europe and in so doing clarifies ambiguities and discrepancies in the previous studies and presents a record as accurate as possible.

### DECISION TO GO TO FRANCE

Upon release in July 1920 after six months of imprisonment in Tianjin, Zhou resumed his work at the Awakening Society and then sailed to France in November. A Japanese diplomat, Ogura Kazuo, who wrote *Pari*

*no Shū Onrai* (Zhou Enlai in Paris, 1992), wonders why Zhou abruptly went to France and notes that few biographers of Zhou have accounted for this. Actually, Zhou did not go to France abruptly. He had planned for this. Zhou and his fellow inmates, including Ma Jun, had been expelled from Nankai University after their arrest, but Zhou had not given up the dream of going to college. While in prison he decided to enroll at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland, as he had learned that he would be exempted from taking the entrance exams of the university. He would only need to take an English proficiency test. Given that Zhou had failed in the entrance exams for two higher schools in Japan, this was a great relief for him (but there was a catch, examined below). The legendary revolutionary Huang Xing's colleague and educator, Zhang Shizhao (1881–July 1973), studied English at the Seisoku Higher School in Tokyo and then studied law and politics at the University of Edinburgh.<sup>2</sup>

In addition, London was the political and commercial center of the world at that time, as Zhou wrote to his fifth uncle Zhou Yiding (Jingzhi, his father's cousin) from London in late January 1921: "London is the world's largest city...it is an epitome of the world. If one studies in London, without attending classes and listening to lectures, hundreds of phenomena on the streets are all subjects worthy of study." Zhou also wrote to his cousin Chen Shizhou (his foster mother Madame Chen's nephew) from London on January 30: "I plan to study here for three or four years and then go to the United States and study there for a year. I will travel the continent during the summer recess."<sup>3</sup>

On his way to England, Zhou stopped over in France, which was a popular country for the Chinese to study in at that time (examined below). France was also the country of "liberty, equality, and fraternity" (Zhou learned Rousseau and Montesquieu at Nankai Middle School). Paris had attracted like a magnet such revolutionaries as Vladimir Lenin, Leon Trotsky, and Nguyen Ai Quoc (Ho Chi Minh). This explains why Zhou mentioned in his poem to Li Yuru (also known as Li Xizhi) and her fiancé Pan Shilun (courtesy name, Shuan) in June 1920 that he might be able to meet her in France three months later. During his imprisonment he had already been planning to go to Europe (see Chap. 2).<sup>4</sup>

## CHINESE WORK-STUDY PROGRAM IN FRANCE

In 1912 Chinese education minister and Peking University president Cai Yuanpei (January 1868–March 1940) began preparations for creating a "work-study" program (its full name was *qinggong jianxue*; *lit.*, "diligent work and frugal study") in France in order to enable aspiring Chinese

youth who could otherwise not afford to go abroad and study. France had a tradition of accepting foreign laborers and students, and Cai envisaged that Chinese students could find work in France and pay for their tuition on their own along the way. It also met a need for the French government, because the country was suffering from a serious labor shortage during World War I due to conscription, and the Chinese work–study program offered cheap labor to factories in France. Therefore, both the Chinese and French governments promoted this program through the Sino-French Education Society. The program gained momentum after the end of the war, with the number of students in the program increasing to 1,200 in 1920 from 400 in 1919. In addition, as many as 120,000 or 200,000 Chinese went to France as full-time workers at that time.<sup>5</sup>

Prominent Chinese work–study students in France at that time include Cai Hesun (March 1895–August 1931, executed; no relation to Cai Yuanpei) and Zhao Shiyun (April 1901–July 1927, executed). Cai was a close friend of Mao Zedong and together they founded the New People’s Association in Hunan province in April 1918. Cai also participated in the May Fourth Movement. He then went to France in the spring of 1919, along with his mother Ge Jianhao, his younger sister Cai Chang (May 1900–September 1990, married Li Fuchun in 1923), and his soon-to-be wife, Xiang Jingyu (September 1895–May 1928, executed)—all of whom (including his mother aged over 50) went as work–study students. In Paris, Cai organized the Work–Study Promotion Society in order to help Chinese students in France. In turn, Zhao Shiyun was a close friend of Chen Duxiu and went to France in June 1920. Zhao’s younger sister, Zhao Juntao, married Li Shuoxun (1903–1931) and bore Li Peng (b. October 1928). After Li Shuoxun was executed by the KMT, Zhou Enlai adopted Li Peng. Another notable work–study student was a 16-year-old called Deng Xihou. He was the youngest of 84 students from Sichuan province who participated in the program in the fall of 1920. This young student was the future vice premier Deng Xiaoping (August 1904–February 1997). Deng arrived in Marseille on October 19. Zhou would arrive there two months later and meet Deng in Paris.<sup>6</sup>

### SAILING TO FRANCE

Upon Zhou’s release from prison in July 1920, Nankai University founder Yan Xiu (April 1860–March 1929, generally known in China by his courtesy name, Yan Fansun) recommended to school president Zhang Boling (April 1876–February 1951, known by this courtesy name) that Zhou and one of his best friends at Nankai, Li Fujing (courtesy name, Xinhui;

not to be mistaken as Li Fuchun), be sent abroad to study. For this, Yan created the “Fansun Scholarship” at the school and Zhou and Li became its recipients. Yan even wrote a letter of recommendation for them to the Chinese minister in England, Gu Weijun (courtesy name, Shaochuan; English name, V. K. Wellington Koo; January 1888–November 1985; see Chap. 5). Because of this scholarship, Zhou and Li, unlike “work–study” students, obtained a “certificate of frugal study,” which qualified them to carry “gold bars” for educational expenses in Europe. It should therefore be noted that Zhou was not a “work–study” student, as most of the biographies of Zhou Enlai have stated. Zhou not only obtained some additional financial assistance from his second uncle Zhou Yikang (Tiaozhi, his birthfather’s cousin) and the defense lawyer for Zhou’s trial, Liu Chongyou, who was impressed with Zhou, but also made arrangements with a local Catholic newspaper *Tianjin Yishibao*, which appointed him as a special correspondent in Europe.<sup>7</sup>

Zhou and Li Fujing thus joined the fifteenth mission of the Chinese work–study program organized by the Sino-French Education Society, consisting of 197 students, and left Shanghai on November 7, 1920, aboard the French postal ship *S. S. Porthos*. The work–study students aboard the *S. S. Porthos* included Zhou’s colleagues at the Awakening Society, Guo Longzhen (Zhou’s former female fellow inmate), Zhang Ruoming (another female fellow inmate), and Zhao Guangchen, as well as a society “friend,” Tao Shangzhao (the youngest fellow inmate, see Chap. 2). On November 10, Zhou sent a postcard, with a photograph of a fallen (shot) elephant, to his younger brother Zhou Enshou (Tongyu) from Saigon, stating, “Like Tianjin, the river winds down to the ocean at the port of Saigon... Many Chinese live in Vietnam. This is an Overseas Chinese settlement.” It was an audacious trip that took 36 days, and many students became seasick, but Zhou managed to finish the “Diary at the Public Prosecutor’s Office” on November 24, just before arriving in Colombo, Ceylon (current Sri Lanka), the next day.<sup>8</sup>

### ARRIVING IN PARIS

Zhou and company arrived in Marseille around December 13, 1920. They took an overnight train to Paris, where many of Zhou’s friends awaited him, such as Li Yuru (Xizhi) and Yan Zhikai (Jichong, Yan Xiu’s youngest son), who was studying at the École des Beaux-Arts. Together with Li Fujing (Xinhui), Zhou wrote to Yan Xiu from London (not from Paris;



he did not write from Paris because he was sick from the long voyage) on January 25, 1921: “There are many Chinese students in France. Combining the work–study students and the frugal students together, there are about two thousand students, which is not much different from the number in Japan. There are a little more than twenty Nankai alumni in France, but they are scattered around in various places and only a few live in Paris.” Li Fujing soon left Paris in order to enroll at the University of Manchester in England, whereas Zhou was obliged to stay in Paris for a few weeks to recover from sickness. Yan Zhikai might have made arrangements for Zhou’s accommodations in Paris, just as Yan had let Zhou stay in his boarding room when Zhou arrived in Tokyo in September 1917 (Zhou was Yan Xiu’s favorite student and Yan regularly sent money to Zhou via Li Fujing’s father).<sup>9</sup>

According to Zhou’s letter to his fifth uncle Zhou Yiding, written in London in late January 1921, after having recovered from the illness, Zhou crossed the Strait of Dover and arrived in London in early January (most likely on January 5), where Karl Marx had lived in exile for nearly 30 years. Zhou also sent a postcard to his cousin, Zhou Peiqiu, dated January 22, with a picture of the London station, stating that “this train station is the one I arrived in London from Paris, France!” In his letters to Yan Xiu and his cousin Chen Shizhou, written from London in February, Zhou explains that he stayed with one of his best friends from Nankai, Chang Ceou (Xingya), who was studying at the London School of Economics. Zhou had thought that he was not required to take any entrance exams for admission to the University of Edinburgh, except for an English proficiency test; however, it turned out that he had to demonstrate competence in another European language for admission to the university. The new academic year at the school did not begin until October 1921, but the cost of living in London was the highest in the world at that time. Zhou thus decided to study French in Paris until the fall, where he thought that he could save “as much as 60 or 70 percent” on his living expenses, and returned to Paris in late February 1921 (Zhou sent a letter to his cousin Chen Shizhou from London on February 23). Little did he know then that this move would change his life forever.<sup>10</sup>

Here Ogura Kazuo notes that it is unlikely that Zhou launched a discipline movement of Chinese students in Paris soon after he arrived there, as some studies have suggested. In January 1921, several newly arrived students stormed into the Chinese Student Hall in Paris, distributed leaflets reprimanding Chinese students who were playing mahjong and fooling around with prostitutes, and left. Actually, Zhou was sick from the long voyage in December 1920, to the extent that he had to postpone his original plan to

immediately go to London with Li Fujing. As soon as he recovered, he left Paris and went to London in early January. Accordingly, it seems unlikely that Zhou could have planned for this action in a short period of time just after arriving in Paris and when he was sick. It also seems atypical of his character to have staged such an abrupt and impulsive action. In addition, a Chinese writer speculates that Zhou was homosexual because he lived together with Li Fujing in London. This is unfounded. They did not live together “alone” there. They stayed at the residence of Chang Ceou, whose wife also lived there.<sup>11</sup>

### SITUATION OF CHINESE WORK-STUDY STUDENTS IN FRANCE

After returning to Paris in late February 1921, Zhou keenly observed the situation in Europe and reported to the *Tianjin Yishibao* that World War I had brought about an unstable situation in European society, with production shortages, economic depression, and poverty. Zhou also witnessed the disturbing conditions for Chinese work-study students in Paris. There were 1,672 Chinese work-study students in France in 1921, but many of them worked under harsh and exploitative conditions. Their wages were also low. A daily wage for an experienced work-study student was 17 or 18 francs, while that for an apprentice-level student ranged from 5 to 8 francs. This was a time when a meal at a café cost 2 francs and a model for artists in Montparnasse for three hours earned a minimum of 5 francs. Also, Léopold Zborowski, the Polish art dealer and patron of Amedeo Modigliani (July 1884–January 1920), paid him between 15 and 20 francs per day (regardless of his output) in order to stabilize his living conditions, in addition to supplying a studio apartment, models, and painting materials. Zhou wrote to Yan Xiu, “Chinese work-study students were physically weak, unable to find suitable jobs, and too exhausted from working full-time in hard labor to study. They were in a contradictory situation: The more they wanted to study, the harder they had to work to earn their tuition; however, the harder they worked, the more exhausted they were to study.”<sup>12</sup>

### ZHOU’S LIFE IN PARIS

Zhou’s own living conditions were also dire, except that he did not have to engage in hard physical labor like most of the work-study students. He lived frugally in the suburbs and in a small room at the Hotel Godefroy (he moved frequently as he had in Japan), and mostly lived on bread and veg-

etables. When he could not afford to buy vegetables, he “swallowed” hard baguettes with hot water (Chinese students had to be told that the hard parts of baguettes were edible). He read books and wrote letters in the small room at the Hotel Godefroy. As his room was too small to hold meetings, he and his friends often went to cafés and bistros in the Latin Quarter. He apparently had accumulated unpaid bills there. It is said that in later years when France established diplomatic relations with the People’s Republic of China (PRC) and its embassy was opened in Paris in 1964, Zhou paid up all of his arrears that he had owed to cafés more than 40 years earlier. In addition, a photograph he took in front of the Hotel Godefroy shows a dandy-like young Zhou in Paris, but careful observation reveals that his jacket and pants were badly wrinkled and shrunk because he had kept on wearing them and washing them, also suggesting his financial situation.<sup>13</sup>

It should be noted here that Zhou did not work at the French auto manufacturer Renault, as many studies have stated. The Renault factory was located in Boulogne-Billancourt, in the western suburbs of Paris, and it was not convenient to commute to from Paris. Moreover, Zhou first lived in the Latin Quarter and registered himself at the French language school, the *Alliance française*, in the suburbs of Paris. Then, he soon moved to Blois, in the Loire region in central France, about 125 miles south of Paris, with four work–study students from Tianjin, and studied the French language there. Zhou might have visited the Renault factory to observe the labor conditions, but he did not work there. Zhou himself denied the rumor in later years. Unlike such future PRC leaders as Chen Yi, Li Lisan, and Deng Xiaoping, Zhou did not work in a factory. The fact remains that Zhou was not a “work–study” student. He was a “frugal study” student. For that matter, it is also unlikely that Zhou received financial assistance from the Third International (Comintern) as many studies have suggested. Zhou did not have a strong tie with Moscow at that time.<sup>14</sup>

Zhou’s major financial sources consisted of the Nankai University Yan Fansun Scholarship, some private financial contributions, and some income from *Tianjin Yishibao*, to which he contributed as many as 50 articles from February 1921 to March 1922. In later years, Zhou recollected that, in response to his friends’ cynical remark that Zhou had used Yan Xiu’s money to become a communist, Yan, a traditional Confucian scholar, defended Zhou by quoting an ancient proverb: “Every wise man has his own aspirations. You cannot force your own aspirations upon them.” The Official Biography of Zhou Enlai also states that “Yan Xiu sent money to Zhou regularly, but since he moved so frequently, Yan gave the money to Li Fujing’s father, who sent the money to Li Fujing in England. Li then forwarded the

money to Zhou in France. The fact remains that Zhou did not work in a factory. This distinguished Zhou from work–study students.”<sup>15</sup>

### SIGHTSEEING IN PARIS

Zhou also found time to stroll the streets of Paris and visit museums. Zhou wrote to Deng Yingchao on his visit to Notre Dame Cathedral with the Chinese student leader, Cai Hesen (and his sister Cai Chang): “My senior, Mr. Cai Hesen, and I climbed up hundreds of stone steps, breathing hard, and reached the top. There we saw strange evil-spirited monsters crouching. We overlooked Paris in the dusk. It was a spectacular view. The River Seine was running with blue water and the sunset was shining on the Fontainebleau Wood far away. We shouted, ‘Très bien!’ in French.” The mysterious creatures Zhou saw were gargoyle statues. He also visited the Army Museum and the Tomb of Napoleon, but it was not a pleasant experience for him. He became indignant when he saw the exhibits of armor and treasured swords of the Qing dynasty, calling them “the robbery of the imperialist.”<sup>16</sup>

### LEARNING MARXISM

As examined in chapter two, Zhou’s understanding of communism was rudimentary in China where the ideology was foreign and was just being introduced. Paris in turn offered Zhou abundant literature on Marxism and he read English translations of the literature, such as *the Communist Manifesto*, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, and *the State and Revolution*. There was also a Chinese magazine shop in Paris run by Chen Duxiu’s sons—Chen Yannian (1898–June 1927, executed) and Chen Qiaonian (1902–February 1928, executed)—and others, which carried the communist literature both in Chinese and in French. Zhou’s nascent understanding of Marxism was also strengthened by discussions with Chinese student leaders such as Cai Hesen, who explained communism to his friend Mao Zedong by writing from France, and Zhao Shiyun, who kept close contact with Chen Duxiu in China. Observing the situation in Europe and the conditions of Chinese work–study students there and reflecting upon the situation in China, Zhou gravitated toward communism.<sup>17</sup>

Nevertheless, the cautious Zhou still had reservations about violent revolution. He wrote to his cousin Chen Shizhou about his dilemma on January 30, 1921: “It is difficult for me to choose either a radical way or a moderate way. If the moderate way goes too far, it becomes conserva-

tive, whereas if the radical way goes too far, it becomes violent. England succeeded in the conservative way, whereas Soviet Russia succeeded in the radical way....But even if the situation in our China is so grave that its reform requires a radical way, going a radical way would cause damage and give an excuse for violence."<sup>18</sup>

The more deeply Zhou observed the situation in Europe, the more he became aware of the failures of the revolutions in Europe and their reactionary consequences. Contending schools of thought ranging from anarchism, Fabianism, reformism, to Syndicalism in Europe posed challenges to the Chinese students who tried to figure out the best way to save their homeland. One particular incident that took place in late February 1921 in Paris made Zhou's conviction for communism unshakable.<sup>19</sup>

### FEBRUARY 28 INCIDENT

The anger and frustration of the Chinese work-study students in France reached a boiling point just when Zhou came to Europe. The number of Chinese work-study students in France had surged in 1919, and more than 1,600 Chinese came to France in just the two years of 1919 and 1920. With the unprecedented popularity of the program, several hundred (or as many as 1,200) of the students could not find jobs in France. Out of desperation, they asked for financial assistance from the Sino-French Education Society that handled the Chinese work-study program in Paris. In mid-January 1921, however, the society abruptly issued a directive stating that it would not provide students with financial assistance from then on and that it would deport those who failed to find jobs. This upset the students because it was a life-and-death matter to them. They requested a meeting with the society executive, but the latter simply responded by stating that the society had already sent a letter to the Chinese Consulate-General official on this issue.<sup>20</sup>

Then, the students contacted the Work-Study World Society, a new student group created in Montargis, a small town about 70 miles south of Paris, where the local school authorities had decided to expel Chinese students who had arrears in tuition payments. Li Fuchun (May 1900–January 1975, PRC vice premier) and Li Weihai (June 1896–August 1984) organized this group in order to carry out a social revolution in collaboration with the New People's Association in China, created by Mao Zedong. His colleague Cai Hesun did not officially take part in the creation of this group because he was too busy reading and translating the *Communist Manifesto*,

but he participated in its activities. Student representatives and Work–Study World Society members met in Paris on February 27 and drew up a petition to the Chinese Consulate-General requesting that it provide work–study students with a monthly stipend of 400 francs for the next four years. The next day, about 400 students marched to the Chinese Consulate-General in Paris, with Cai Hesen’s wife Xiang Jingyu (they had married in Montargis under the poplar trees in May 1920, with a bouquet of China pinks) and other female students walking in front, calling for the “right to live” and the “right to study.” The demonstrators clashed with the French police and one student was hit by a streetcar in the confusion and died. In the end, the students obtained a promise from the consulate-general that it will provide them with a daily allowance of 5 francs for the next three months.<sup>21</sup>

This demonstration became a catalyst for Chinese students in France to launch a political movement and also affected Zhou’s life significantly. Zhou had paid close attention to this issue ever since he came to France and mentioned it in his letter (cosigned by Li Fujing) to Yan Xiu from London dated January 25. Nevertheless, Zhou did not participate in the demonstration. He had just moved back to Paris from London in late February and lived in the Latin Quarter. Then he moved to Blois, in the Loire region, with four other students from Tianjin. Moreover, Zhou was not yet closely associated enough with the Chinese student leaders in Montargis to join their political movement. Thus, just as he had done during the student protest movement in Japan in May 1918, he intently observed the movement and wrote a long report about it on March 21, entitled “Great Upheaval of Chinese Work–Study Students in France.” This was published in a series in the *Tianjin Yishibao* during May 9–18, 1921.<sup>22</sup>

### MONTARGIS FACTION VERSUS CREUSOT FACTION

The February 28 Incident also made evident the rivalry between two groups among the Chinese work–study students in France. One group was the Montargis faction, led by Cai Hesen. Montargis is a small town primarily known for pralines (which are said to have first been confected there during the time of Louis XIII and the original shop is still in business), but many Chinese work–study students, including such future PRC leaders as Li Fuchun, Li Weihan, Chen Yi (August 1902–January 1972, foreign minister, one of the closest colleagues of Zhou), and Nie Rongzhen (December 1899–May 1992, PRC military leader), as well as female student leaders Cai Chang and Guo Longzhen, belonged to

this group. They studied either at the Montargis Public School or its Women's School. According to a local historian, a Chinese student at an international dairy farming meeting held in France at the turn of the century stated that soy milk was healthier than cow's milk. This statement interested the representative from Montargis, who invited the student to Montargis, and more Chinese students went there. The living costs and tuitions in the rural area were lower than in Paris. This made Montargis one of the major places to which the Sino-French Education Society sent Chinese work-study students.<sup>23</sup>

In 1921, students held discussions in a school classroom where the *Communist Manifesto* written in Chinese by Cai Hesen in brush-ink was hung. Deng Xixian (Xiaoping) worked at a tire-manufacturing factory, Hutchinson, near Montargis, from February 1922 to March 1923, and participated in the Montargis study group. The Montargis faction was a moderate group in the sense that it stressed the importance of study more than work for the Chinese work-study students.<sup>24</sup>

In contrast, the other group, the Creusot faction, located in Le Creusot in the Bourgogne region in the eastern-central part of France, was a more radical group. It was led by Zhao Shiyan, along with Li Lisan (November 1899–June 1967, committed suicide; PRC labor minister) and Chen Gongpei (former student at Peking University). The group members worked in factories and most of them were employed in the Schneider Iron and Steel mill in Le Creusot (current Schneider Electric). Deng Xixian also worked at Schneider, but he did not belong to the Creusot faction, because he quit the job after three weeks, moved back to Paris, and then worked at Hutchinson near Montargis. Zhao Shiyan kept close contact with Chen Duxiu and planned to organize Chinese workers in France and launch a labor movement. Zhao created the Workers Association in Paris at the beginning of 1921, with Li Lisan and others, and published the *Chinese Workers Weekly*. He soon moved the group headquarters to Le Creusot because many Chinese work-study students lived there. Thus, unlike the Montargis faction, the Creusot faction stressed the importance of work more than study and advocated closer collaborations with labor unions.<sup>25</sup>

Because of the difference in their priorities, the Creusot faction did not participate in the February 28 demonstration organized by the Montargis faction. (The rivalry between the two groups could be likened to that of the Capulets and the Montagues.) Realizing the need to consolidate the Chinese student movement in France, Zhao Shiyan and Li Lisan founded the Work-Study Association, which about 70 to 80 students joined,

including Wang Ruofei (?–April 1946) and Chen Duxiu’s two sons, Chen Yannian and Chen Qiaonian. Then, Zhao and Li visited Montargis in the spring of 1921, and met Cai Hesen. In the three-day meeting, the leaders of the two groups agreed that the two groups would consolidate their ideas and create a communist organization. This Montargis agreement laid the foundations for the establishment of the Chinese Youth Communist Party in Europe (CYCPE) in June 1922. Yet when Cai Hesen had called for its creation for the first time at the Work–Study World Society Congress (of the Montargis group) held in Montargis in July 1921, it had caused an intense debate among the participants despite the fact that Li Lisan, who had attended the meeting as a guest, spoke in favor of it. This reflected a complex dilemma that Chinese work–study students faced in Europe. Cai’s earlier call for the creation of the CYCPE was almost a year premature.<sup>26</sup>

#### LANGUAGE BARRIER

In addition to the February 28 Incident, the failure to master French affected Zhou’s life profoundly and geared him toward communism. Zhou had signed up at the *Alliance française* and had an individual tutor for French for a year; however, mastering French proved to be difficult for Zhou. Foreign languages were not his forte. Despite the fact that he had learned English at Nankai Middle School, his English was not great (an entry he wrote in English in his diary in Japan on July 3, 1918, gives a glimpse of the level of his English). Yet, he still had to demonstrate competence in English as well as in another European language for admission to the University of Edinburgh. Consequently, just as Zhou had confronted the difficulty of the Japanese language (despite the similarity of the language to Chinese), had failed in entrance exams in Japanese higher schools, and had returned to China, Zhou gave up his original plan to enroll at the University of Edinburgh and instead decided to engage in communist activities in Europe.<sup>27</sup>

#### BECOMING A COMMUNIST IN PARIS

Earlier in August 1920 when 11 Awakening Society members, including Zhou, had attended a meeting in Beijing with representatives of four progressive organizations there, Zhou met Zhang Shenfu (June 1893–June 1986), a lecturer at Peking University and a colleague of Chen Duxiu and Li Dazhao. Zhang was a boyfriend of Tianjin Society of Patriotic



Comrades in Women's Circles president and Awakening Society member Liu Qingyang (see Chap. 2). Zhang was appointed to teach at a newly created school for Chinese students in France called the Sino-French Institute of Lyon in that silk-manufacturing town in the eastern-central part of France located between Paris and Marseille. The couple arrived in France on December 27, 1920, two weeks after Zhou did. Then they were married. But Zhang did not come to France only to teach. Chen Duxiu and Li Dazhao had given Zhang a mandate to establish a communist organization in Europe and he created a small Chinese communist cell in Paris.<sup>28</sup>

With the recommendations of Zhang and Liu, Zhou joined the Chinese communist cell in the spring of 1921. This was just before the Communist Party of China (CPC) was founded in Shanghai on July 1, 1921 by Chen Duxiu, Li Dazhao, and others. (Based on this record, the CPC Organization Department in 1985 officially determined that Zhou had joined the CPC in 1921.) Afterward Zhou immersed himself in party organization work and did not take the language exams for the University of Edinburgh in September. This meant that Zhou had given up his life-long dream of obtaining a college degree and become a high-ranking official in the government. He abandoned this stable career path, as expected by the traditional Chinese society in general and by his family in particular, and chose a perilous one. At this moment, the young communist activist Zhou Enlai was born. He was 23 years old. With Zhou being a realist and a pragmatist, it is interesting to think about whether he would actually have become a communist had he been able to enroll in the University of Edinburgh as a college student, as his best friend Li Fujing did at the University of Manchester. In this sense, failures to study at a college—failures in entrance exams in Japanese higher schools, expulsion from Nankai University in China, and barriers of language exams for the University of Edinburgh—contributed to Zhou becoming a communist.<sup>29</sup>

### PROTEST AGAINST SECRET LOAN AGREEMENT BETWEEN CHINA AND FRANCE

Then, in June 1921, Zhou participated in the protest movement against the secret loan agreement that the Beiyang warlord government was concluding with the French government. Chen Yi heard about the secret negotiations from a French worker and the news spread among the Chinese students in Paris. Along with Zhao Shiyun, Chen Yi, and Wang Ruofei, Zhou formed a committee to oppose the loan agreement, in col-

laboration with six organizations such as the Chinese Workers Society and the Federation of Chinese Work–Study Students in France, and drafted the “declaration to reject the loan.” They printed a thousand copies of the “resolution to reject the loan” in French and disseminated them to various circles in France. The resolution was also published in French newspapers. On June 30, about 300 students, led by Zhao Shiyun, Li Lisan, and Zhou, held a protest rally in Paris. Pressured by public opinion, the French government stated that it would postpone the negotiations. In late July, however, French newspapers reported that the agreement had already been secretly signed on July 25. The protest movement escalated in August and Chinese organizations in France held a second rally against the loan agreement on August 13. It was reported that some students who visited the Chinese Consulate-General in Paris hit the secretary there, as the minister refused to see them, but in the end the student representatives succeeded in having the minister pledge to oppose the agreement.<sup>30</sup>

#### SINO-FRENCH INSTITUTE OF LYON INCIDENT

Then, in September 1921, Chinese students launched another massive protest movement, this time in Lyon. In order to solve issues deriving from a sudden influx of Chinese work–study students in France and the radicalization of the students, the Sino-French Education Society had planned to create a new school to open in September 1921: The Sino-French Institute of Lyon, where students could engage in both work (Lyon was a major silk-manufacturing center at that time) and study (it was arranged that students could audit courses at the University of Lyon). The sources of funding were the Boxer Rebellion Indemnity Fund and private donations of financiers in Guangdong province. The KMT Guangdong government planned to send well-groomed students from Guangdong in order to avoid further problems with the French government, whereas the Beiyang government in Beijing did not like this plan because the KMT government took the initiative and the plan favored students from Guangdong. In turn, Chinese work–study students who were already in France felt that the new school should benefit them, not new students from relatively affluent backgrounds in Guangdong. However, the school principal, Wu Jingheng (courtesy name, Zhihui; March 1865–October 1953; studied at the Kōbun-gakuin in Tokyo), presented two requirements for admission to the school: (1) those from Guangdong province be given preference and (2) they must pass a French proficiency test.<sup>31</sup>

In May 1921, Chinese work–study students, including Wang Ruofei, Chen Yi, and Deng Xixian, wrote to education minister Cai Yuanpei, requesting that the Sino-French Institute of Lyon and the Sino-Belgian Institute should become education training centers for Chinese work–study students who were already in Europe. Then on August 20, the Sino-French Education Society announced that it would end the living assistance that it had been providing to the work–study students that was agreed in the aftermath of the February 28 Incident. Then, 127 new students whom Principal Wu Jingheng had selected departed from Shanghai on August 21 and were scheduled to arrive in Marseille on September 24, the day before the official opening of the school. This news threatened the students in France because they would not be accepted in the Sino-French Institute of Lyon. The Federation of Chinese Work–Study Students in France met for three days on September 17–19, and decided to occupy the school before the new students arrived in Lyon. They decided to send an “advance group” to Lyon, while Wang Ruofei and Li Weihan (who was very close to Cai Hesen) remained in Paris to negotiate with the Chinese Consulate-General.<sup>32</sup>

On September 20 (or 21 depending on the source), more than 100 students of an “advance group,” led by Zhao Shiyan, Cai Hesen, Li Lisan, Chen Yi, and his elder brother Chen Mengxi (October 1899–April 1986), went to Lyon from Paris, Le Creusot, and Montargis. Nevertheless, the school had already locked up its classrooms and dormitories and the student protesters could not get into the school facilities. They rested in a field outside the school building and sent representatives for negotiations. Zhao Shiyan met the vice principal, but the negotiations did not work. The Lyon mayor told the students to go back to their factories and engage in their work, but they refused to do so. The mayor called the police and the French government sent a number of armed police to Lyon the next day. The police arrested the students and detained them in army barracks in Lyon. Principal Wu Jingheng arrived in Lyon on September 24 and talked with the students, but he insisted that the Sino-French Institute of Lyon was not for those who were already in France. The negotiations stalemated. In October, the students decided to send Zhao Shiyan back to Paris and Zhao negotiated with the Chinese consul-general unsuccessfully. Then the detained students began a hunger strike on October 10. On October 13, the French government dispatched 200 additional police to Lyon and sent 104 students to Marseille by train and forcefully deported them to China.<sup>33</sup>

The Sino-French Institute of Lyon Incident is shrouded in mysteries. For one thing, it is unclear how and why only Zhao Shiyan was able to

escape the detention in Lyon (there are many rumors about this), whereas other students, including Cai Hesen, Li Lisan, and Chen Yi, ended up being deported to China. As for Zhou, many studies have stated that he participated in the protest in Lyon and that he was among those who were arrested in Lyon; however, this was not the case. The fact was that Zhou did not go to Lyon. As noted earlier, he had paid close attention to this issue ever since he came to France and wrote a long article about it in March, but he took a rational approach to this issue, which was characteristic of his disposition. He warned against taking hasty action, as he stated at a student rally in Paris held on September 17–19: “This conflict is complex, which could drive Chinese students into a corner. This conflict requires careful planning of strategy and full preparation.”<sup>34</sup>

Chen Yi’s elder brother Chen Mengxi, who was among the 104 deported students, writes that Zhou was among the many people who had come to the Paris train station to see them off when they went to Lyon to protest. Zhou shook hands with Chen and encouraged him to fight firmly in Lyon. Chen adds that, after 104 students were detained in the army barracks in Lyon, Zhou visited Lyon and met the detainees through the gate of the army barracks. In addition, Cai Hesen’s sister Cai Chang states that Zhou planned to go to Lyon in order to join in the demonstration, leading a group of students, but hearing the news that 104 Chinese students had been arrested there, he returned to Paris. These statements indicate that Zhou did not participate in the demonstration in Lyon and that he was not arrested there. After the 104 students were forcibly deported, Zhou wrote a long article on this subject entitled “‘Last’ Destiny of the Chinese Work–Study Students in France,” which appeared in the *Tianjin Yishibao* over 18 days between December 18, 1921 and January 9, 1922. Zhou’s prudence proved to be wise as he escaped the forcible deportation.<sup>35</sup>

## MOVING TO BERLIN

After the failure in the protest, the situation for Chinese students in France became unstable and even dangerous. Zhou visited London in January 1922 and stayed with his Nankai friend Chang Ceou. Zhou then moved to a southern suburb of Berlin in early March with Zhang Shenfu and Liu Qingyang (who were married at that time). Zhou wrote to Chang Ceou from Berlin on March 12 (and on March 25) with his address: “Hvrr [Herr], E. L. Tchow, Berlin–Wilnuerdorf, Kaiserallie, 54A, Bei Loeck, Germany” (editors’ transcription). The correct address was “Berlin–Wilmersdorf,

Kaiserallee” (emperor’s alley), which is now called “Bundesallee” (federal alley). It was easier to coordinate communist activities in Germany where the Social Democratic government was more lenient toward radical foreign students than in France. Also, the cost of living in Berlin was much lower than in Paris. Germany was hit by hyperinflation at that time. The German currency escalated to 18,000 marks to the US dollar in December 1922 from 15.5 marks in January 1921, so that the government issued a bill in 5-million-mark denomination in 1923. This made those who lived in Germany on foreign currency instant millionaires, while deepening social unrest in Germany. Zhang, Liu, and Zhou meanwhile held weekly discussions at Zhang’s apartment and recruited new members in order to reorganize the communist cell in Berlin. The new recruits included an Awakening Society member, Zhao Guangchen (Danwen), who had helped Zhou publish the *Tianjin Student Federation Newsletter* as a reporter.<sup>36</sup>

### ZHOU RECRUITS ZHU DE

Another noteworthy recruit was the former warlord and opium addict, Zhu De (December 1886–July 1976), who would become a prominent PRC leader, along with Mao Zedong and Zhou. Zhu had a successful career in the KMT Army (Yunnan Army general), but had resigned from the post as he became doubtful about the war that the KMT was fighting. In early 1922, Zhu met Sun Yat-sen in Shanghai and told him that he would not be able to achieve the goals of his revolution as long as he collaborated with the Beiyang warlords. Then, Zhu applied for a membership in the CPC, but Chen Duxiu had reservations about him because of his past record and advised him to study hard and to reapply later. Disappointed, Zhu and his friend went to Europe in September 1922 to study socialism. In Paris, a Chinese told them that if they wanted to join the communist organization, they should contact Zhou Enlai in Berlin. The rest is history. Zhu and his friend had a fateful meeting with Zhou in Berlin in late October, as described by an American journalist, Agnes Smedley (February 1892–May 1950). Zhou offered to find accommodations for them in Berlin and made them candidate members of the communist cell in Berlin until the CPC in China officially approved their membership. The approval came through a few months later and they became full members of the CPC (but Zhu kept it secret from outsiders because of his past affiliation with the KMT). Thus, Zhu personally owed to Zhou his glorious

career as commander-in-chief of the People's Liberation Army and as vice president of the PRC.<sup>37</sup>

Although Smedley did not disclose the name, Zhu's friend who went to Berlin and applied for membership in the CPC along with Zhu was Sun Bingwen (1885–April 1927). Sun had been a member of the Chinese Revolutionary Alliance. Upon returning from Moscow, Sun joined the faculty of the Whampoa Military Academy, but was arrested by the KMT for involvement in the Zhongshan Warship Incident of March 1926, an incident that gave Chiang Kai-shek an excuse to suppress communists in the Republic of China (ROC) government during the first KMT–CPC United Front. Sun was released with the help of Zhou, but was arrested again by the KMT and was murdered during the Shanghai Massacre of April 12, 1927. Sun had five children. Zhou would adopt the third child (eldest daughter) of this revolutionary martyr, Sun Weishi (1921–October 1968), who would become a renowned actress and theater director, and then a victim of the Cultural Revolution.<sup>38</sup>

In 1922, having moved to Berlin, Zhou spent busy days going back and forth between Berlin and Paris in order to consolidate communist groups in Europe. He also visited factories in Germany in order to observe the workers' situation, including the coalmines in the Ruhr region in the central-western part of Germany. While in Berlin, Zhou frequented the Chinese Student Hall and watched students playing ping-pong. Zhou also found time to enjoy the scenery of Berlin. Just as he had taken a boat ride on the river in Tokyo with his friend during his study period in Japan, he visited Lake Wannsee, with Zhang Shenfu, Liu Qingyang, and Zhao Guangchen. Interestingly, there is a picture showing that Zhou was the one who was rowing the boat at Lake Wannsee.<sup>39</sup>

### EXECUTION OF HUANG ZHENGPIN

The news of the execution of a “friend” of the Awakening Society, Huang Zhengpin (also known as Huang Ai, 1897–January 1922), and Huang's colleague Pang Renquan by warlords during the cotton mill workers' strike in Changsha, in Hunan province, in January 1922 saddened Zhou deeply. But it also strengthened Zhou's commitment to communism. In fact, Zhou avowed his allegiance to communism in a lengthy and poignant poem entitled “*Shengli, sibi*” (Parting in Life, Separation in Death), which he wrote in March 1922 in memory of his martyred friend, Huang Zhengpin.

In the poem, Zhou asks if there was such an easy thing in the world as dreaming of red flags flying high, and yet not dyeing them with blood. He also wonders if eternal separation should matter if one made the best of life and of death.<sup>40</sup>

Zhou learned in Germany that political organization was insufficient for success in communist revolution. He realized that sacrifice of blood was necessary to achieve communist revolution. Earlier, in January 1919 in Berlin, Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg were brutally murdered. Then, on January 15, 1923, Zhou in person attended a four-year memorial anniversary meeting for Liebknecht and Luxemburg in Berlin. Luxemburg's words, "the revolution is impossible without an army," reverberated in Zhou's mind. There Zhou also thought of his martyred comrades, Huang Zhengpin and Pang Renquan. Zhou also visited London a few times during his stay in Europe and observed labor strikes in protest of the exploitation by capitalism there. This was a different form of exploitation from that in feudalistic China, and Zhou became more conscious of the class struggle. At this juncture, Zhou departed from the Japanese development model that was designed to save the nation by promoting industrialization based on a capitalist system.<sup>41</sup>

### BIRTH OF CHINESE YOUTH COMMUNIST PARTY IN EUROPE

Zhou's resolve culminated in the creation of the Chinese Youth Communist Party in Europe (CYCPE) in June 1922. Earlier in 1921, Zhou wrote to Zhao Shiyan (who lived in a hideout in northern France at that time because he had his ID documents confiscated during the Sino-French Institute of Lyon Incident and could not live in Paris) and proposed that they make preparations for the creation of the CYCPE before May Day (International Workers' Day) of 1922. Toward the end of 1921 (or at the beginning of 1922), Zhou and Zhao had entrusted someone with a letter to Li Weihan in Montargis, asking him to come to Paris. The three met in Paris and discussed how to organize the CYCPE and agreed to proceed with the preparations for their plan. Then about 20 (18 or 23, depending on the source) representatives of the Chinese work-study students in Europe met in a café in Boulogne Wood, in the western suburbs of Paris, in June 1922, and founded the CYCPE. The three-day meeting established a three-member Standing Committee, consisting of general-secretary Zhao Shiyan, director of propaganda Zhou, and acting

director of organization Li Weihan (he became full director after he moved from Germany). They also decided to create the CYCPE secretariat at the Hotel Godefroy, 17 rue Godefroy, in the southeastern section of Paris. It was conveniently located for Chinese students because China Town was nearby, and several Chinese, including Chen Duxiu's two sons and Wang Ruofei, lived in the Hotel Godefroy. After the meeting, Zhao moved into the hotel. Zhou returned to Berlin, but he visited Paris occasionally and stayed at the Hotel Godefroy.<sup>42</sup>

The CYCPE held its second congress in October 1922, reorganized its leadership into a five-member Standing Committee, which included Zhou. The group decided to send Li Weihan to China, in order to seek approval for affiliation with the Chinese Socialist Youth League in China, whose first congress had met in Guangdong a month earlier. Then, 42 representatives of the CYCPE met at Boulogne-Billancourt in the suburbs of Paris on February 17–20, 1923, and held an extraordinary congress (the third congress) on the instructions of Chen Duxiu. The congress decided to change its name to the Chinese Communist Youth League in Europe (CCYLE), as the original name gave the impression that it was an independent communist party from the CPC in China. The congress elected a new five-member Standing Committee, this time with Zhou as general-secretary. Zhao Shiyan was president of the congress but he was not elected general-secretary of the CCYLE: Zhao had already been chosen by the CPC, as one of the 12 members of its European branch to go to Moscow to study at the Communist University of the Toilers of the East (KUTB, the Chinese Department of which became Moscow Sun Yat-sen University in 1925). The 12 also included Wang Ruofei and Chen Duxiu's two sons, Chen Yannian and Chen Qiaonian.<sup>43</sup>

In addition, the congress voted to expel Zhang Shenfu (whom many members considered arrogant and eccentric) from the group despite the objection of Zhou. (The CPC in China overturned the decision to expel Zhang.) With prominent student leaders such as Cai Hesen having been deported in the aftermath of the Sino-French Institute of Lyon Incident and Zhao Shiyan and others leaving for Moscow, there was no one but Zhou who could lead the CCYLE. Thus, Zhou assumed a top position in the European branch of the CPC, with a total membership of 72 (58 in France, 8 in Germany, and 6 in Belgium). He was two weeks shy of 25 years. After Zhao Shiyan had left for Moscow in the summer of 1923, Zhou moved into Room 16 on the third (or second, according to Ogura



Kazuo) floor at the Hotel Godefroy, where Zhao had stayed, and worked fulltime for the CCYLE while writing articles for the *Tianjin Yishibao*.<sup>44</sup>

### CREATION OF THE KMT EUROPEAN BRANCH

Then, a major organizational change in the CCYLE occurred in June 1923. Earlier in August 1922, a leftist member of the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT), Wang Jingqi, who had been deported to China in the wake of the Sino-French Institute of Lyon Incident, returned to France. Wang and Zhou met in Paris and discussed the matter of forming a united front between the KMT and the CPC that had been negotiated between the Third International (Comintern) and the KMT–Guangdong government led by Sun Yat-sen. Then, KMT members in Europe attended a CCYLE meeting in March 1923 and discussed how to make CCYLE members join the KMT. In China in June 1923, the Third National Congress of the CPC officially approved Comintern’s instruction to have its members join the KMT on an individual basis and to form a united front with the KMT. Following this, Zhou and Wang Jingqi agreed to have CCYLE members join the KMT on an individual basis. Consequently, about 80 CCYLE members became affiliated with the KMT at that time.<sup>45</sup>

In November 1923, the inaugural congress of the KMT European branch was held in Lyon and Zhou spoke there as a CCYLE representative. The congress elected Wang Jingqi as chairman of the Standing Committee, Zhou as general affairs director, and Zhou’s colleague Li Fuchun as propaganda director, and another colleague Nie Rongzhen as Communication Office director. When Wang returned to China, Zhou also became acting chairman. Thus, Zhou assumed a leadership role for both the CCYLE and the KMT European branch. In China, the KMT held its First National Congress in Guangdong in January 1924. It approved the principles of “going along with the Soviet Union, accepting communism, and helping workers and farmers” and thereby the first KMT–CPC United Front was officially formed. Thus, although the organization of the CPC branch in Europe turned out to be different from what Zhou had envisioned, Zhou proved to be an effective organizer.<sup>46</sup>

Meanwhile, Zhou also wrote many articles and reports in the CCYLE’s monthly gazette that focused on the theory called *Shaonian* (the Youth), under the penname Wuhao (No. Five), from its inaugural issue in August 1922. The French title of *Shaonian* was *La Jeunesse*, the same as that of Chen Duxiu’s *Xinqingnian*. The CCYLE changed *Shaonian* to a

bimonthly journal *Chiguang* (Red Light) in February 1924, in order to change its focus to “action” from “theory” in the words of Zhou, who became its editor. At that time, Zhou made the 19-year-old work–study student, Deng Xixian (Xiaoping), who was referred to as a “Ph.D. in mimeographing” by his colleagues, his assistant in charge of printing. Deng had worked at the Schneider Iron and Steel mill in Le Creusot and then at a tire-manufacturing factory, Hutchinson, near Montargis. Zhou suggested to Deng to open a tofu shop in Paris, which he did, and his tofu shop thrived. Thus, Deng became Zhou’s protégé in Paris and together they would go through the tumultuous course of the history of the PRC and shape the nation.<sup>47</sup>

### ZHOU’S PERSONAL LIFE IN EUROPE

During his years in Europe, Zhou was closely associated with his colleagues at the Awakening Society. In addition to Liu Qingyang and Zhao Guangchen, two other members of the Awakening Society were engaged in the communist movement in Europe: Guo Longzhen and Zhang Ruoming, the two female inmates who had served time with Zhou in Tianjin. When Zhou lived in Blois in central France, Zhou fell in love with Zhang Ruoming (February 1902–June 1958), who was beautiful and bright, but this relationship ended in France due to growing ideological differences between them. As Zhang decided to quit communist activities and study literature and psychology at the Sino-French Institute of Lyon, Zhou felt that she was not suitable as a lifelong companion of a career revolutionary. After Zhou had married Deng Yingchao in August 1925, he secretly met Zhang again in the suburbs of Lyon in the spring of 1930 on his way to Moscow, via Marseille, to attend the Comintern meeting in disguise with a fake passport (he took the land route, via Siberia, on his way back to China from Moscow). Zhang meanwhile received a doctoral degree in literature from the University of Lyon, with her dissertation on André Gide, and thereby became the first Chinese female doctor of philosophy who had studied in France. Upon returning home, she taught at the Sino-French University in Beijing and YunNan University. She joined the liberal China Democratic League and became a victim of Mao Zedong’s Anti-Rightist Movement, as she refused to conform and committed suicide in 1958.<sup>48</sup>

Zhou was also interested in his best friend Li Fujing (Xinhui)’s sister, Li Fumin, and sent her a postcard from Paris on May 14, 1921, while writing frequently to Deng Yingchao. Deng published Zhou’s letters and reports in the Awakening Society’s irregular publication, *Jueyou* (Awakening Mail),

in the spring of 1923 and their bond was gradually cemented through the correspondence during this time. In addition, Zhou closely associated with a “friend” of the Awakening Society and his youngest fellow inmate in 1920, Tao Shangzhao (Nianqiang, 1903/1907–1922), in France. Sadly, Tao accidentally burned himself to death in Lyon in late 1922, when he was cooking with wine. While deeply mourning Tao’s death, Zhou made arrangements for his funeral and sent his belongings to his family in China.<sup>49</sup>

### CORRESPONDENCE WITH WU HANTAO

Zhou also frequently wrote from Europe to his friends in China, Japan, and the USA. Upon arriving in Paris in 1920, he had postcards made with his color photograph printed on them and sent them to his friends, including his Nankai classmates, Pan Shilun (Shuan), who was studying in the USA, and Wu Hantao (Wu Dage, courtesy name Diqian), who was studying at the Third Higher School in Kyoto at that time. Zhou wrote to Wu:

Paris beautiful!—and so are the women! Many friends, many sights. Would you like to come?<sup>50</sup>

This postcard with Zhou’s photograph printed on it was later used as evidence that Zhou indulged himself in petit bourgeois dreams in Paris. However, sending out such postcards from Paris seems to be a natural expression of the excitement of any first-time visitor in Paris. Zhou simply expressed his joy at living in Paris to his friends and there seems nothing petit bourgeois about it.<sup>51</sup>

Zhou also sent his articles published in the *Shaonian* and *Chiguang* to his friends. Wu Hantao (Han X in Kai-yu Hsu), who was then studying at Tokyo Imperial University (he had graduated from the Third Higher School in Kyoto in 1921), was again among the first to receive Zhou’s articles. According to Kai-yu Hsu: Toward the end of 1922 Han received a tightly rolled sheaf of onionskin paper, which contained the complete proceedings of the inauguration of the Chinese Communist Youth Corps in France. Each character was only about the size of a sesame seed, but each stroke was finely drawn and clearly printed—a remarkable piece of calligraphy and mimeographing much to the credit of Deng Xiaoping, who earned the title of “Ph.D. in mimeographing” from his colleagues. Han read it and committed it to the fire. Two postcards later, another roll of mimeographed document reached Han, who again read it and immediately burned it. Then came another postcard from

Zhou, this time without his colored photograph on the back, asking, “Twice sent you publications. Did they reach you? RSVP.—Your younger brother Enlai.” Han reciprocated with a letter: “Twice received your documents. Our ideas were never compatible. Let us each develop his thinking in his own way but remain friends forever.—Your elder brother.”<sup>52</sup>

The ideological differences between the “blood brothers” of the Nankai Middle School had become irreconcilable. As Wu Hantao (Han X) had written in the Nankai school newspaper, *Xiaofeng* (No. 36, September 4, 1916), he held a wholehearted admiration of Japan for its modernization, work ethics, and patriotism, and tried to reform China after Japan’s model, whereas Zhou groped for a new and radical path for China. As fate would have it, Zhou and Wu would meet 15 years later in 1937, in Xi’an, representing opposite sides (see Chap. 9).<sup>53</sup>

### ZHOU MEETS A JAPANESE FRIEND IN PARIS

In addition, Zhou met his Japanese former “boardinghouse mate” Yasuda Jūemon (art name, Ryūmon; May 1891–February 1965) in Paris in 1921. Zhou met this fine arts student for the first time in February 1918 when he moved to Yan Zhikai’s (Jichong) boarding room in Reibai Temple in Yanaka in the suburbs of Tokyo. Yasuda found a patron and went on to study in the USA in 1920 and then in Europe in 1921. In Paris, Yasuda studied at the art studio of the renowned sculptor, Antoine Bourdelle, who was an assistant to Auguste Rodin. Since both Yan and Yasuda were studying fine arts in Paris at that time, Yan most likely gave Zhou Yasuda’s address in Paris. According to Yasuda’s self-written chronology in his resume, “the crew-cut Zhou Enlai came to my art studio. He jokingly likened my colleague’s sculpture to macaroni. He meant that the artwork was empty inside.” Upon returning home, Yasuda became a prominent painter and sculpture and taught at Wakayama University in his hometown, south of Osaka.<sup>54</sup>

### RETURN TO CHINA

With the official formation of the first KMT–CPC United Front in January 1924, Zhou was recalled by the CPC to work on the united front at home in July. His coordination and organization skills exhibited in the foundation of the CCYLE and the KMT European branch were too valuable to pass up for the home base operations. Zhang Shenfu and Liu Qingyang had returned home earlier in 1924 and Zhang became Political Department deputy director at the Whampoa Military Academy

in Guangdong, which had just been created by Sun Yat-sen. Zhang recommended Zhou and Zhou Fohai (one of the founding members of the CPC) to Sun Yat-sen's right-hand man and KMT representative at the Whampoa Military Academy, Liao Zhongkai (April 1876–August 1925, assassinated; father of Liao Chengzhi). Thus, Zhou handed over his general-secretary position of the CCYLE to Lin Wei at its fifth congress on July 13–15, 1924. Before heading home, Zhou also attended the second congress of the KMT European branch on July 20 and bade farewell to Wang Jingqi and other Standing Committee members.<sup>55</sup>

\* \* \*

Zhou arrived in Hong Kong toward the end of August 1924. In Guangdong, Zhou was appointed chairman and director of propaganda of the CPC Guangdong–Guangxi District Committee and worked under the direct leadership of Li Dazhao and Chen Duxiu. Zhou then met Sun Yat-sen for the first time in September and was appointed Whampoa Military Academy Political Department deputy director, teaching political economy, and was soon promoted to director in November. There, Zhou met the academy commandant, Chiang Kai-shek, with whom he would have a long, complex relationship. Zhou also met Mao Zedong, who was working at the Peasant Education Institute in Guangdong. Thus, in Guangdong in 1924, Zhou met three critical players in contemporary Chinese history, and wore two hats, as a CPC district leader and as a KMT military academy director. Then on August 8, 1925, Zhou married one of his colleagues at the Awakening Society, Deng Yingchao, who had moved to Guangdong from Tianjin to become CPC Guangdong–Guangxi District Committee Women's Affairs director. Zhou was 27 years old and Deng was 21. Thus, a new chapter in Zhou's political career and personal life began.<sup>56</sup>

A part of the lengthy poem “Parting in Life, Separation in Death,” which Zhou wrote as a eulogy in March 1922 for Huang Zhengpin, read:

The road for life and death,  
it opens in front of every one,  
To fly towards the light, it is entirely up to you!<sup>57</sup>

\* \* \*

In summary, Zhou spent his adolescent years in Japan and then in France and Germany (with visits to England). They were the only for-

eign countries where he spent his youth, and the experiences in Japan and Europe profoundly affected Zhou's life and even set a career course for him. Paradoxically, his failures to enroll in college in Japan and in Europe foiled Zhou's life goal of becoming an elite official in the Chinese government, the expected path for an intellectual family in traditional Chinese society, made him a revolutionary and eventually a leader of China. His poor upbringing also blocked the implanting of the sense of disdain for the masses that elites often held. Growing up in a poor intellectual family, Zhou developed empathy for the poor working class. Thus, all these factors contributed to Zhou choosing the path to work for the masses and work with the masses, instead of suppressing them. Zhou realized that successful social reform required education and enlightenment of the masses.<sup>58</sup>

In addition, it is noteworthy to mention that, unlike several of his colleagues at the Awakening Society and in the communist cell in Europe, Zhou remained faithful to his commitment to communism, as well as to his comrades. Such close colleagues of Zhou in Europe as Zhang Shenfu, Liu Qingyang, and Zhang Ruoming left the CPC and became members of the liberal China Democratic League (Liu rejoined the CPC later), whereas Zhang Guangchen joined the KMT. In contrast, Zhou did not deviate from his commitment and instead renewed his allegiance each time his colleagues were executed by the reactionary regimes—including Li Dazhao, Chen Yannian, Zhao Shiyan, Ma Jun, Chen Qiaonian, Guo Longzhen, and Cai Hensen. Zhou also valued friendship and did not betray them. Zhou selflessly helped his friends and in turn benefited from the vast network of friendship forged during the formative years of the CPC. Just to give an example, when the CCYLE congress voted to expel Zhang Shenfu, Zhou was opposed. Upon returning to China, Zhang recommended Zhou to Liao Zhongkai for the position at the Whampoa Military Academy. The deep sense of loyalty and solidarity is one of Zhou's attributes, to which he remained true throughout his life.

Zhou's empathy and passion for his martyred friends resonate with the sentiment in a scene in the 1958 Polish film *Ashes and Diamonds*, directed by Andrzej Wajda (based on the novel of the same title by Jerzy Andrzejewski): On May 8, 1945 (the day Nazi Germany officially surrendered), the protagonist, a Polish Home Army resistance soldier, reminisces about his martyred colleagues in a hotel bar and lights up candles one by one for each of his comrades, calling out each of their names. Zhou's

panegyric for Huang Zhengpin has the same nostalgic, and even romantic, flare. Realism and romanticism coexisted in the adolescent mind of Zhou—the former was expressed in his prose and the latter was expressed in his poems. Thus, for the sake of his troubled homeland and for the sake of his martyred friends, Xiangyu (*lit.*, “flying in the universe”; Zhou’s courtesy name) overcame the sorrows of “parting in life and separation in death” and flew toward the light.<sup>59</sup>

## NOTES

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2. Ogura, 30–33; Chae-jin Lee, *Zhou Enlai: The Early Years*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994, 153–154.
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4. Ogura, 39–42; Lee, 150–151.
5. Ogura, 64–66; Lee, 151–152.
6. Jin, 73; Ogura, 65 and 146–147; Lee, 156–157; Ezra F. Vogel, *Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China*, Cambridge, MA: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 2011, 18–19.
7. Jin, 61 and 68; Lee, 151–153 and 8 (Zhou Enlai Family Tree). Only the courtesy name for Gu Weijun is given in Lee, which makes it difficult to identify Gu (pp. 153 and 226).

8. Jin, 63; Lee, 152–153; Zhou Enlai; “Juewushe quanti chengyuan de jinli jianjie” (Brief Resume of All Members of Awakening Society), No. 2–No. 6, <http://cpc.people.com.cn/GB/64093/67507/7039155-7039159.html>, accessed August 3, 2014 (“Juewushe” hereafter); *Zhou Enlai zaoqi wenji*, Vol. 1, 531–622.
9. Jin, 63–64; Lee, 153; *Zhou Enlai zaoqi wenji*, Vol. 2, 4–7; “Juewushe.” Awakening Society members Guo Longzhen and Zhao Guangchen did not go to France before Zhou, as stated in Lee. Guo and Zhao sailed to France with Zhou.
10. Jin, 64 and 67–68; *Zhou Enlai zaoqi wenji*, Vol. 2, 3, 11, and 18–22; Zhonggong-zhongyang wenxian-yanjiushi, ed., *Zhou Enlai nianpu 1898–1949* (Chronology of Zhou Enlai, 1898–1949), Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian-chubanshe and Renmin-chubanshe, 1989 (“*Zhou Enlai nianpu*” hereafter), 45. Jin and *Zhou Enlai nianpu* state that Zhou arrived in London on January 5.
11. Ogura, 111–112; Michael Forsythe, “New Book Reinterprets Chinese Leader,” *New York Times*, December 30, 2015.
12. Ogura, 66–69; Lee 155–156; *Zhou Enlai zaoqi wenji*, Vol. 2, 4–7.
13. Jin, 68; Ogura, 70–72; Kai-yu Hsu, *Chou En-lai: China's Gray Eminence*, Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1968, 30.
14. Jin, 68; *Zhou Enlai nianpu*, 46; Ogura, 73–79.
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17. Jin, 69–70; Ogura, 98–100.
18. *Zhou Enlai zaoqi wenji*, Vol. 2, 8–10.
19. Jin, 66 and 69–70; Ogura, 104–105.
20. Jin, 72–74; Ogura, 105–106.
21. Jin, 73–74; Ogura, 105–106 and 164–165.
22. Jin, 74–75; Ogura, 106–107; *Zhou Enlai zaoqi wenji*, Vol. 2, 4–7 and 23–54.
23. Jin, 73; Ogura, 108–109, 146–147, and 163–164; Lee, 158. Lee includes Li Lisan in the Montargis group, but he did not belong to the Montargis faction.
24. Ogura, 146–147; Vogel, 21.
25. Jin, 73–74; Ogura, 108–109 and 147–148; Lee, 158; Vogel, 21–22.



26. Jin, 75; Ogura, 108–109 and 150.
27. Ogura, 79 and 106; Lee, 158; Zhou Enlai, *Zhou Enlai luri-riji* (Diary of Travel to Japan of Zhou Enlai), edited by Zhonggong-zhongyang wenxian-yanjiushi and Zhongguo geming-bowuguan, Beijing: Xianzhuang-shuju, 1997, Vol. 2, 151–152.
28. Jin, 70–71; *Zhou Enlai nianpu*, 44; Lee, 150 and 157.
29. Jin, 71; *Zhou Enlai nianpu*, 47; Lee, 157–158.
30. Jin, 75–76; Ogura, 109–111.
31. Jin, 76–77; Ogura, 114–115.
32. Jin, 77; *Zhou Enlai nianpu*, 50; Ogura, 115–116.
33. Jin, 77; *Zhou Enlai nianpu*, 50–51; Ogura, 116–117.
34. Jin, 77–78; *Zhou Enlai nianpu*, 50; Ogura, 117–121; Lee, 157 and 206n101.
35. Jin, 78; Ogura, 120 and 162; Chen Mengxi, “Huiyi liufa qingong jianxue qianhou de Chen Yi tongzhi” (Recollections of Comrade Chen Yi Before and After Work–Study in France), in Zhongguo shehui kexue-yuan jindaishi yanjiusuo, ed., *Wusi-yundong huiyi-lu* (Memoirs of May Fourth Movement), Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue-chubashe, 1979, Vol. 3, 531–532; *Zhou Enlai zaoqi wenji*, Vol. 2, 326–365.
36. Jin, 71; *Zhou Enlai nianpu*, 53; *Zhou Enlai zaoqi wenji*, Vol. 2, 444 and 446; Ogura, 129 and 132–133; a German Sinologist, email to the author, December 15, 2014.
37. Jin, 83; Ogura, 127–129; Agnes Smedley, *The Great Road: The Life and Times of Chu Teh*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1956, 150–152.
38. Zhang Langlang, “Story of Sun Weishi,” Writings of Zhang Langlang, [http://blog.boxun.com/hero/zhangll/9\\_1.shtml](http://blog.boxun.com/hero/zhangll/9_1.shtml), accessed October 23, 2014.
39. Jin, 78; Ogura, 136–137 and 140–142.
40. Jin, 71–72; Lee, 160–161; *Zhou Enlai zaoqi wenji*, Vol. 2, 453–456.
41. Ogura, 142–145, 151, and 171–172.
42. Jin, 78–81; *Zhou Enlai nianpu*, 52 and 55; Ogura, 152–153; Lee, 161.
43. Jin, 81–83; *Zhou Enlai nianpu*, 58–59; Ogura, 153–154; Lee, 162.
44. Jin, 82–84; Lee, 162–163; Ogura, 185–188.
45. Jin, 89–90; Ogura, 181; Lee, 163.
46. Jin, 90–91; Ogura, 181–182; Lee, 163.

47. Jin, 84–85 and 91–92; Hsu, 35–36; Ogura, 154 and 160; Vogel, 20–22.
48. Jin, 95–97; Lee, 159; Ogura, 82–85; “Zhang Ruoming,” <http://baike.baidu.com/view/1543905.htm>, accessed June 3, 2014. A Chinese source states that Zhou also visited Zhang in Lyon in the summer of 1928 after attending the Sixth National Party Congress of the CPC in Moscow (convening the meeting in China was dangerous because of Chiang Kai-shek’s suppression of communists) and that Zhang received her doctoral degree in 1930. It is known that Zhou went to Moscow with Deng Yingchao by train via Siberia in 1928, but it is unclear whether Zhou remained in Moscow alone (without Deng) after the CPC congress and returned home alone via Marseille.
49. Jin, 95–97; Lee, 159; *Zhou Enlai zaoqi wenji*, Vol. 2, 115; Ogura, 82–85; “Tao Shangzhao,” <http://www.baike.com/wiki/tao.shangzhao>, accessed August 3, 2014; “Juewushe” (No. 6).
50. *Zhou Enlai zaoqi wenji*, Vol. 2, 518; Hsu, 30; Dick Wilson, *Zhou Enlai: A Biography*, New York: Viking, 1984, 57.
51. Hsu, 30; Ogura, 80–82.
52. Hsu, 35–36.
53. Wilson, 44.
54. Zhou Enlai, *19-sai no Tōkyō-nikki* (Tokyo Diary at Age Nineteen), edited by Yabuki Susumu and translated by Suzuki Hiroshi, Tokyo: Shōgakukan-bunko, 1999, 115.
55. Jin, 97–98; Ogura, 182; Lee, 164–165.
56. Jin, 104–108; Lee, 165–166.
57. *Zhou Enlai zaoqi wenji*, Vol. 2, 455.
58. Ogura, 18–19, 93–94, and 167–168.
59. Lee, 175–176 and 210n6-7; “Juewushe” (No. 2–6); “Ashes and Diamonds (1958),” <http://www.allmovie.com/movie/v3080>, accessed September 23, 2013.

## First KMT–CPC United Front and Assassination of Zhang Zuolin

Upon returning to China from Europe in July 1924, Zhou Enlai joined the Guangdong military government of the Republic of China (ROC), led by Sun Yat-sen, during the first KMT–CPC United Front against the Beiyang warlords, which formed the ROC–Beijing military government in China’s capital. Zhou was climbing up the ranks in the Guangdong military government and in the CPC through the Northern Expedition led by Chiang Kai-shek until he brutally suppressed communists, ending the united front and starting the civil war between the two parties in August 1927. Then a startling event took place in June 1928. The ruler of the ROC–Beijing military government, Zhang Zuolin (March 1875–June 1928), was assassinated by the Japanese Kwantung Army. His eldest son, Zhang Xueliang (courtesy name, Hanqing; June 1901–October 2001), succeeded his father’s territory in Northeast China (Manchuria) and became the “young marshal.” This chapter examines the early career of Zhang Xueliang as the background for the Xi’an Incident, including the truth about the assassination of Zhang Zuolin, based on newly released documents and interviews with those who were directly involved in the incident.

### EARLY PERIOD OF ZHANG XUELIANG

Zhang Xueliang’s father, Zhang Zuolin, was the leader of the Fengtian (current Shenyang) clique of the Beiyang warlords. Zhang Zuolin had won battles with other Beiyang warlords, such as the Anhui clique leader Duan Qirui (March 1865–November 1936; ROC premier, June 1916–May 1917) and

the Zhili (*lit.*, “directly administered by the central government”; Zhili province is current Hebei province) clique leader Feng Guozhang (January 1859–December 1919; ROC acting president, July 1917–October 1918). Zhang assumed power of the Beijing military government (that was the internationally recognized official government of the ROC) in December 1926 and reigned over the entire North China, confronting the KMT Guangdong military government in the south. Zhang Xueliang reminisced about his father at the outset of the interview with the Japanese public TV station NHK in 1990. Zhang stated: “I have never worn underpants since my youth when I was fighting Japan in China’s Northeast. I wore pants directly over the bare skin even in the most severe winter. Wearing underpants makes movement dull. I am a military man. I am a born military man. I am a military man of the Northeast....It might sound superstitious, but my father and I had a special relationship. He won his very first battle on the day I was born. This victory led him to become a powerful leader. He therefore truly loved me. I was a million-dollar child for him....I respected him deeply.”<sup>1</sup>

Zhang Xueliang’s bond with his father grew even stronger as he grew up. He writes in his “Record of Repentance for the Xi’an Incident” (see Chap. 1): “I lost my mother at age eleven. My father loved me even more afterwards, but he was busy with military and political matters. I not only received little discipline at home but also had few real mentors or friends. Before reaching age twenty, I had led a big army and had experienced many big wars...and before reaching age thirty, I became the ruler of Northeast China. But I did not take power. Power came to me. This is exactly what the ancient sage said, ‘An early success makes a great misfortune.’”<sup>2</sup>

Zhang’s father gave him the best education available at that time. He was home-schooled and had several tutors for traditional Chinese studies as well as one for English, but he was lonely. Around age 15, he joined the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) and became acquainted with many Westerners. Zhang states:

I loved sports very much and joined a tennis club called the Mukden Club at age seventeen or eighteen. All the members were foreigners, except for myself. I also joined the Fengtian YMCA through my English teacher, Joseph Platt, who was its secretary-general. I was actively associated with the YMCA and often played tennis and ping-pong there. At that time I wanted to become a doctor and wanted to go to the South Manchuria Medical School in Fengtian, but my father forbade me....He wanted me to succeed him as a political or military leader. It was my remotest idea to become a military man. In retrospect, I wanted to become a doctor to save people’s lives, but I ended up becoming a military man to kill people.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, at age 19, Zhang went to one of the four elite military schools in China at that time, the Three Eastern Provinces Military Academy in Fengtian. The three eastern provinces (current Northeast China) refer to Fengtian (current Liaoning), Jilin, and Heilongjiang. He was the youngest student but was the most brilliant one there. He received the highest score in the first end-of-the-month exams, and then again in the second end-of-the-month exams, and also in the final exams for the semester. Students suspected that he kept receiving the highest scores because of his father and protested. Thus, the Board of Education superintendent made an unannounced visit to the school, came to Zhang's classroom, and administered a pop quiz by separating the students' desks. Only Zhang answered all four of the questions correctly. He proved his brilliance in front of the superintendent. One of his classmates, who became his aide, Chen Zhaolin, states:

Zhang Xueliang was a bright student and always scored the best in our class so that he became class president. One day he told me that he knew names, hometowns, and courtesy names of everyone in our class. I did not believe it. Then, he told me to ask him. I then asked him about twenty classmates that I knew of out of more than three hundred students. He answered them all correctly.<sup>4</sup>

Zhang graduated from the military academy in 1920 and was appointed a brigade commander. Zhang made his former military strategy teacher, Guo Songling (1883–December 1925), his chief of staff. When his father fought the first Fengtian–Zhili War in 1922, the war ended in defeat for the Fengtian Army, but Zhang had deterred the advance of the Zhili Army at Shanhaiguan, a major checkpoint in the Great Wall bordering North China and Northeast China. After the war, Zhang's father reorganized his army in 1924 and appointed Zhang Northeastern Air Force commander-in-chief. Then, the Fengtian Army won the second Fengtian–Zhili War in 1924 and Zhang was appointed Army chief of staff. Zhang states:

Military power had gradually come into my hands and the Fengtian Army won the second Fengtian–Zhili War. But the victory was owed to Guo Songling, not to me. We won because he had supported me.<sup>5</sup>

### GUO SONGLING INCIDENT

Then, an incident that Zhang could never forget occurred. When the Zhili warlord-clique leader Feng Yuxiang (examined below) challenged Zhang's father in November 1925, Zhang's deputy, Guo Songling (his

former teacher) rebelled against Zhang's father, declaring himself to be the Northeastern (Dongbei) Army commander-in-chief. Guo actually had a record of rebellion in the past. During the second Fengtian–Zhili War, Guo had disobeyed a command of Zhang Xueliang and had retreated from the warfront. Zhang questioned Guo then, but Guo apologized, and Zhang forgave him. Zhang states:

I felt that he might disobey me again in the future, but I thought that I would be able to control him and that his rebellion would not succeed. Guo did rebel again. I felt responsible for my men because his rebellion caused many losses to my army and the people in Northeast China. I liked him, but I should not have forgiven him when he rebelled against me for the first time.<sup>6</sup>

In this rebellion, Guo had collaborated with Feng Yuxiang and also with the KMT Army. When Zhang Xueliang returned to Fengtian, Guo took charge of the Northeastern Army at the warfront. Zhang's secretary at that time, Liu Mingjiu, states:

Zhang Xueliang trusted Guo Songling and let him take command of his army. While Zhang was in Fengtian, Guo rebelled against Zhang Zuolin.... Guo was captured by Zhang Zuolin. Hearing of Guo's capture, Zhang Xueliang told me to bring him back. He wanted to save Guo's life and planned to exile him abroad. I told Zhang, "The Grand Marshall [Zhang Zuolin] is indignant and holds you responsible for Guo's rebellion. If you let Guo flee, you will be in a deep trouble." But Zhang said, "Don't worry. Send a false telegram to my father." Before sending the telegram, however, we received a telegram informing us that Guo had been executed by order of the Grand Marshall. Zhang looked very sad when he read the telegram.<sup>7</sup>

This episode suggests misjudgment and naïveté on Zhang's part, which would be exhibited again in the Xi'an Incident.

### YOUNG MARSHAL

As Zhang Zuolin took power in the Beijing military government in December 1926 and then declared himself Army and Navy grand marshal in June 1927, people referred to Zhang Xueliang as the young marshal. The young marshal was very popular in Beijing society. He also had a residence in the French concession in Tianjin and lived there from 1927 to 1932. (This house, which was considered a most prominent and architecturally

typical mansion in the former Tianjin French concession, is now open to the public as a museum.) Qing dynasty's last emperor Aixinjueluo Puyi's (February 1906–October 1967) younger brother Aixinjueluo Pujie (April 1907–February 1994) states:

When Zhang Zuolin began reigning in Beijing, I met Zhang Xueliang. He looked atypical of military men. He was very dandy, wearing Western clothes, and his wife was exceptionally beautiful, wearing a Chinese dress and carrying a dog in her hands. He was a playboy and was very popular. Everyone wanted to meet him. He had progressive ideas that traditional military men did not have. He was also a patriot and did not support the actions of the Japanese military....He was the only military man that I was associated closely with, but I was truly surprised to find that he was an atypical military man. My friendship with him lasted until the Fengtian Army retreated from Beijing.<sup>8</sup>

Zhang Xueliang was a new type of military leader, different from traditional warlords, such as his father. He abhorred the civil war—the Chinese fighting the Chinese—and his sympathetic attitude toward the sufferings of the Chinese people at large became evident in the mid-1920s. The young marshal thought seriously about how to achieve national independence and national unity in China. Unlike his father, who was fighting war for the sake of his own ambition to become a ruler of China, Zhang Xueliang thought about how to end the civil war. He felt that only when the Chinese people were united could China deal with foreign enemies. His philosophy was shaped by his associations with Westerners, such as Joseph Platt, as well as with the progressive Chinese at the YMCA during his youthful period. Zhang states:

I was influenced by Shanghai YMCA secretary-general Yu Renzhang. He came to Fengtian when I was seventeen or eighteen and gave a lecture at the YMCA. I went to listen to him every time he visited Fengtian. One day he advised me to observe three principles: (1) to follow public opinion for every action undertaken; (2) not to manipulate public opinion; and (3) not to lie. I have faithfully observed and acted upon his advice....I was most influenced by Nankai School principal Zhang Boling in Tianjin. When I went to listen to his lecture, he told us that all Chinese people must strengthen themselves and have the resolve to save China. We must have our own beliefs regardless of what others say. I was deeply touched by his lecture and made up my mind. I was a spoiled son of a rich father, but I decided to dedicate myself to serve the nation and the society.<sup>9</sup>

## ZHANG VISITS JAPAN

Zhang Xueliang visited Japan in the fall of 1921 at his father's orders, accompanied by his elder sister Guanying and younger brother Xueming (1908–April 1983), as well as senior officers of the Northeastern Army. His father wanted Zhang to observe Japanese military exercises and Japanese military power hands-on. Zhang states:

If possible, I would like to visit Japan again. As I have aged, I have felt all the more strongly about it. I would like to see how Japan has changed with my own eyes. I went to Japan for the first time when I was twenty years old. I was wearing a big decoration, which created interesting episodes in Japan. I was mistaken for the Japanese crown prince Hirohito twice. The first time was when I observed a military exercise. As I was walking behind a Japanese general, the military band mistook me for the crown prince and played the Japanese anthem. Then, when I visited the Imperial Palace to meet Empress Sadako [Hirohito's mother], she asked her attendant who the third person in line was. I looked very much alike the crown prince. I also met the crown prince himself at that time. He gave me a decoration.<sup>10</sup>

Indeed, there was an uncanny resemblance between Hirohito and Zhang Xueliang. Both of them also were born in 1921 (Hirohito on April 29 and Zhang on June 3). His visit to Japan made him realize the Japanese threat to Northeast China and he set his resolve on national solidarity for anti-Japanese resistance. Zhang also realized the need for modernization of the Fengtian Army and proposed it to his father. Zhang states:

The Japanese were polite and kind, but I was not happy about the Japanese because they always tried to show off their power as if they were trying to subjugate the Chinese by their power. I am a type of person who fearlessly confronts people who impose their power on me. Therefore, my impression of Japan after I came home was not positive....I was never afraid of Japanese power. I was impressed with Japanese military exercises, but I was never afraid of them.<sup>11</sup>

## FORMATION OF THE FIRST KMT–CPC UNITED FRONT

Meanwhile, Sun Yat-sen (October 1866–March 1925) had continued his revolutionary movement after the Xinhai Revolution of 1911, which established the ROC. He unsuccessfully tried to oust the Beiyang warlord turned Republic president Yuan Shikai in the Second Revolution



(July–September 1913) and again failed to oust Emperor Yuan in the Third Revolution (December 1915–March 1916). Sun then established the Guangdong military government in September 1917, challenging the Beijing military government, and reorganized his Chinese Revolutionary Party into the KMT in October 1919. In turn, the CPC was created in Shanghai in July 1921 by Chen Duxiu, Li Dazhao, and other leftist leaders, under the guidance of the Third Communist International (Comintern). Then in January 1924, in order to effectively confront the Beijing military government, Sun Yat-sen formerly established an alliance with the CPC under the slogan “going along with the Soviet Union, accepting communism, and helping farmers and workers.” Sun represented leftists within the KMT and received financial assistance from the Soviet Union in exchange for his commitment not to suppress communists. Thus, the first United Front between the KMT and the CPC was established.<sup>12</sup>

The CPC recalled Zhou Enlai, who had just attended the second congress of the KMT European branch in Paris in July 1924, and charged him with the task of working out the United Front at home. Zhou was also appointed deputy director of the Political Department of the Whampoa Military Academy, where Chiang Kai-shek was commandant and Sun Yat-sen’s right-hand man Liao Zhongkai was the KMT representative to the academy. Nevertheless, the KMT–CPC United Front was based on a fragile foundation. The CPC members joined the KMT only on an individual basis. Although the two parties organized the National Revolutionary Army together, they still maintained their own armies. In addition, their political goals were incompatible. The KMT tried to control communists from within, whereas the CPC tried to use the KMT network to spread communism.<sup>13</sup>

### ZHANG XUELIANG AND SUN YAT-SEN

Unlike his father, Zhang Xueliang viewed Sun’s revolutionary movement favorably. Zhang states: “I met Master Sun Yat-sen [in 1925] when he was gravely ill. He told me, ‘Northeast China is located between the two imperial powers. Therefore the role of young people in the region is very important.’ What he said touched me deeply. I had great expectations for the KMT government because I hoped for unification of China.” Being inspired by such intellectual and political leaders as Sun Yat-sen and Zhang Boling, this “spoiled” heir of the Fengtian warlord-clique leader would mastermind the Xi’an Incident against the backdrop of the civil war between the KMT government and the insurgent CPC amid the Japanese invasion of China.<sup>14</sup>

## COLLAPSE OF FIRST KMT–CPC UNITED FRONT

With the death of Sun Yat-sen in March 1925, Wang Jingwei (real name Wang Zhaoming, May 1883–November 1944), who was the leftist faction leader within the KMT at that time, established the KMT government in Guangdong in July 1925, with the CPC. (The Guangdong government moved to Wuhan when Chiang Kai-shek began the Northern Expedition in July 1926.) In the subsequent internal power struggle within the KMT, Sun's right-hand man Liao Zhongkai was assassinated by the rightist faction in August 1925. Then, the rightist faction leader, Chiang Kai-shek, began suppressing communists despite the existence of the KMT–CPC United Front. He arrested communists within the KMT government on March 20, 1926 (Zhongshan Warship Incident), disbanded the CPC's Labor Army in Shanghai on March 26, and carried out summary executions of communists and revolutionary workers in Shanghai on April 12, 1927 (the Shanghai Massacre). Chiang then established a new KMT government in Nanjing on April 18, separate from the Wuhan government that embraced the CPC. After Chiang's coup d'état, the collaboration between the leftist faction of the KMT and the CPC in the Wuhan government continued for a while until August, when their land reform policies proved to be irreconcilable. The CPC's counterattack against Chiang in Nanchang, Jiangxi province, on August 1, 1927 (the Nanchang Uprising) marked the beginning of the civil war between the KMT and the CPC. This ended the first KMT–CPC United Front.<sup>15</sup>

## CHIANG KAI-SHEK'S NORTHERN EXPEDITION

Chiang Kai-shek meanwhile launched the Northern Expedition in July 1926, in order to defeat the Beiyang warlords. Then, the two KMT governments in Wuhan and Nanjing joined forces in September 1927. Chiang reinstated himself as the National Revolutionary Army commander-in-chief in April 1928 and resumed the Northern Expedition. By this time, powerful warlords, such as Feng Yuxiang and Yang Xishan (examined below), had joined Chiang's camp. Zhang Zuolin tried to hang on to his power with Japanese support. On this, Zhang Xueliang states:

I was opposed to my father fighting the civil war. I asked him, "Is there any meaning to this civil war? Why are we fighting this war?" I felt very sorry when I saw many homeless people on the streets in Henan province. I asked him in tears, "Why are we fighting? What for?"<sup>16</sup>

## ASSASSINATION OF ZHANG ZUOLIN

The Japanese government supported Zhang Zuolin by sending the Imperial Japanese Army (IJA) to Shandong and Jinan in order to deter Northern Expedition troops from attacking Beijing. However, Zhang was defeated and became a burden to Japan. Being concerned that the KMT might try to control Northeast China (Manchuria), the Japanese government recommended that Zhang retreat to Fengtian, but he refused and insisted on remaining in Beijing until June 1928. Also having obtained a verbal commitment from Chiang Kai-shek that he would not cross Shanhaiguan (the border between North China and Manchuria), Japan's need to support Zhang had diminished. Zhang left Beijing on June 3 by train. As the train passed under an iron bridge near Fengtian, the train was bombed on the morning of June 4. Around 5:23 AM, IJA captain Tōmiya Kaneo (August 1892–November 1937, colonel) detonated the bombs that had been placed under the bridge. The bridge collapsed and fell on the train. Zhang was fatally wounded: this was the Fengtian Incident.<sup>17</sup>

It was a conspiracy by the Japanese Kwantung Army senior staff member Kōmoto Daisaku (January 1883–August 1955, colonel). Kwantung Army commander Muraoka Chōtarō (December 1871–August 1930, lieutenant-general) had contemplated assassinating Zhang in Beijing; however, Kōmoto persuaded Muraoka that the assassination of Zhang had to take place in Fengtian (not in Beijing) in order to guarantee momentum for the Kwantung Army to control southern Manchuria. For this, Kōmoto and his collaborators had killed two local Chinese, made them look like members of the Chinese Southern Bianyi (“plain-clothes”) Corps (a guerrilla group disguised as civilians), and left them at the scene of the bombing. By so doing, they planned to blame the bombing on the Chinese Southern Bianyi Corps and use this as an excuse to attack the Fengtian Army upon its arrival at the scene of the assassination. Meanwhile, one of the Japanese military advisers of Zhang Zuolin, IJA head of intelligence operations in China, intelligence operations major Giga Seiya (November 1888–January 1938, major general), was aboard the train with Zhang. Giga miraculously survived the bombing. His son Giga Sōichirō (1919–December 2009), who was associated with Zhang Xueliang, recalls the morning of the bombing:

I was waiting for my father's return home in Fengtian at that time. I woke up due to a roaring sound at dawn. Then my father came home, being injured and very upset. He later told me that he had not been informed of

the plan. As the train approached Fengtian, he left Zhang Zuolin's car in order to pick up his own overcoat. Then, the train was bombed. My father was indignant and said, "How dare they bomb the train, knowing that I was on it!" One of his colleagues told him, "That you were on the train deserves an Order of the Golden Kite, because you constitute the [false] alibi that the Japanese Army was not responsible for the bombing."<sup>18</sup>

Actually, Kōmoto was known to have disliked the Japanese military advisers of Zhang, and bombed the train with the knowledge that Giga was aboard. Fengtian police commander Huang Mu hurried to the scene of the bombing, leading the Fengtian Army. General Huang was actually Japanese. His real name was Araki Gorō. He left the IJA and became a military adviser to Zhang. When Araki arrived at the scene of the bombing, Zhang was still alive. Zhang was carried to his residence, but died there soon after. At the scene of the bombing, Araki (Huang) also saw Giga who was injured and indignant. Araki immediately figured out that it was a conspiracy of the Kwantung Army and forbade the Fengtian Army from firing on the Kwantung Army, thus foiling Kōmoto's plan to use this incident as an excuse to attack the Fengtian Army.<sup>19</sup>

The assassination of Manchuria's ruler and Japan's ally Zhang Zuolin shocked the Japanese, but the Kwantung Army censored the press and reported that it was a conspiracy of the KMT National Revolutionary Army. The Kwantung Army kept Kōmoto's plot secret even from the Japanese prime minister and IJA general Tanaka Giichi (July 1864–September 1929) and from Imperial General Headquarters (a central command for both the IJA General Staff and the Imperial Japanese Navy General Staff) in Tokyo. Prime Minister Tanaka had opposed the hardline policy of the Kwantung Army and had maintained Japan's policy to secure its influence on Manchuria through Zhang Zuolin, while accepting Chiang Kai-shek's rule of the rest of China. The Kwantung Army therefore did not inform Prime Minister Tanaka of this conspiracy. However, the way Tanaka handled the incident afterward would cost him his political life. The assassination of Zhang also became a critical turning point for his son Zhang Xueliang and for Sino-Japanese relations afterward.<sup>20</sup>

#### AFTERMATH OF ASSASSINATION OF ZHANG ZUOLIN

With the assassination of Zhang Zuolin, Prime Minister Tanaka Giichi feared most that Zhang Xueliang would turn against Japan and ally with the KMT government. Tanaka thus tried to find out the truth of the

incident and to persuade Zhang to remain under Japan's influence. Tanaka found out in September 1928 that the Kwantung Army was involved in the assassination of Zhang Zuolin and established a special committee to investigate the incident secretly. As the truth became clearer, the IJA and ruling Seiyūkai party leaders opposed disclosing the truth to the public; they feared that the Chinese people and Japanese opposition parties would demand the IJA's withdrawal from China if they learned the truth. In turn, influential civilian politicians, such as the last *genrō* (elder statesman) Saionji Kinmochi and Makino Nobuaki (Ōkubo Toshimichi's son and Yoshida Shigeru's father-in-law), recommended that Prime Minister Tanaka court-martial Kōmoto and his collaborators and punish them severely. Caught between the two opposing forces, what exactly Tanaka reported to Emperor Hirohito is unknown. It has generally been considered that Tanaka gave a false report to Emperor Hirohito, which infuriated the emperor and resulted in Tanaka's resignation in July 1929.<sup>21</sup>

Nevertheless, newly released archival documents indicate that Tanaka had initially reported to Emperor Hirohito on December 24, 1928, that he would court-martial Kōmoto and others and punish them severely in order to restore the honor of the IJA at home and abroad. Tanaka made this report without obtaining consent of the IJA. Then, Army Minister Shirakawa Yoshinori made his report to the emperor on March 27, 1929, which was quite different from that of Prime Minister Tanaka. This was recorded in a report written by Tanaka's chief cabinet secretary Hatoyama Ichirō (who wrote in his memoirs that he was startled by the incident, endorsing the secrecy of the conspiracy). Reflecting the IJA's opinion, Shirakawa proposed that the emperor not tell the truth to the public so as not to jeopardize Japanese national interests and merely to straighten out the military attitude (rather than court-martial the perpetrators). Tanaka then reported to the emperor again on June 27. This time, he reported that there was no evidence that the Japanese Army or Japanese officers were involved in the incident and he recommended that only administrative measures (not court-martials) be taken in order to straighten out military behavior.<sup>22</sup>

It was Tanaka's contradictory reports that infuriated the emperor and he on the spot suggested that Tanaka resign. The next day, June 28, Army Minister Shirakawa reported to the emperor again and recommended not telling the truth, and merely giving administrative punishments to Kwantung Army commander Muraoka Chōtarō and his subordinates. Emperor Hirohito approved. This was the first and only case in Japanese

modern history in which the emperor's words caused the resignation of a prime minister and the resignation of a cabinet en masse. Having been disgraced by the emperor, Tanaka went into depression and died in September 1929. Reflecting on what happened to Tanaka, Emperor Hirohito decided to approve any policy recommendations of the cabinet afterward, even if he were personally opposed to them. Thus, as Prime Minister Tanaka resigned, assuming responsibility for the incident, the whole truth of the incident was buried in the vault of history.<sup>23</sup>

From a larger perspective, the way the Japanese government handled the assassination of Zhan Zuolin paved the way for the Manchurian Incident of September 18, 1931. In hindsight, had Prime Minister Tanaka not succumbed to the pressure of the IJA and had he court-martialed the conspirators and punished them severely, the Manchurian Incident and the creation of Manchukuo might have been avoided. Moreover, Hirohito's decision for noninterference allowed the IJA and the Kwantung Army to monopolize Japanese policy-making for China. In this sense, the way the military-dominant Tanaka cabinet handled the Fengtian Incident fueled a full-scale Japanese invasion of China. In fact, Kōmoto's successor in the Kwantung Army, colonel Itagaki Seishirō (January 1885–December 1948; army general, executed) planned the Liutiaohu Incident, which developed into the Manchurian Incident. One conspiracy spawned another after another, which led to the Marco Polo Bridge (Lugouqiao) Incident, ushering in the second Sino-Japanese War.<sup>24</sup>

### ZHANG'S REACTION

That the Japanese had not only assassinated his father but also concealed the truth firmly implanted anti-Japanese sentiment in Zhang Xueliang. Zhang's classmate and aide, Chen Zhaolin, was one of those who had waited for Zhang Zuolin at the Fengtian North Station on the morning of June 4, 1928. Chen states:

We immediately hurried to the scene of the bombing...and carried Zhang Zuolin to his fifth wife's residence...but he died soon. Having guarded his body for three days, we had his secretary write up his will (to have Zhang Xueliang succeed to Three Eastern Provinces Security General Headquarters), sent a telegram to Zhang Xueliang to return to Fengtian [from Beijing] immediately, and also sent telegrams to leaders of the Fengtian warlords clique, including Yang Yuting, informing them of Zhang Zuolin's death.<sup>25</sup>

In turn, the Fengtian government kept Zhang Zuolin's death from the public because they knew that the bombing was a conspiracy of the Kwantung Army and they feared that if the Kwantung Army learned of his death, the army would attack Fengtian and take control of Manchuria. They only announced that Zhang was injured and even purchased medicine to treat the injury, in order to conceal his death. Kwantung Army personnel tried to confirm Zhang's death, but in vain, and lost the momentum to attack Fengtian. Meanwhile, the Japanese consul general to Fengtian, Hayashi Kyūjirō (October 1882–July 1964), who was against the Japanese military establishment, sent a telegram to Foreign Minister Shidehara Kijūrō (examined below), informing him that the incident was a conspiracy of the Kwantung Army, and tried for a peaceful settlement of the incident.<sup>26</sup>

Zhang was in Beijing on June 4 when his father's train was bombed, celebrating his 27th birthday. Aixinjueluo Pujie, who attended the birthday party, states: "Upon entering the banquet hall, I immediately noticed something unusual. I felt strange because dignitaries of the Fengtian warlord-clique, such as Yang Yuting, were there, but Zhang Xueliang acted as if nothing had happened. He told me that the Grand Marshall's train had been bombed but that he was safe....He did not tell me that Zhang Zuolin had died." Actually, Zhang Xueliang did not know at that time that his father had died. He was only told on June 4 that his father's train had been bombed. Zhang states:

I was not aware of my father's death for about a week. My subordinates hid it from me. I only knew then that my father was injured. Therefore I left Beijing and went to Luanzhou, Hebei province, and had my army retreat to Fengtian. Then, my subordinates told me that my father had died. I was very sad. At the same time, I felt that a huge responsibility had fallen on my shoulders. I was not well and was weak at that time [he suffered from opium and morphine addictions]....Everyone knew that the Kwantung Army had done it. It was an open secret. Other than Japanese military officers, who else could have had access to the South Manchuria Railway at that time? That's why I do not like Japanese military men. The Japanese stopped the operation of the railway in order to install the bombs. Who else could have stopped the operation of the railway? I was not happy with the Japanese. All the responsibilities fell on my shoulders. An ancient Chinese proverb says, "Revenge for a father is stronger than that for the emperor."<sup>27</sup>

Then, Zhang suddenly disappeared for several days afterward. His whereabouts at that time were unknown. Zhang states:

I knew that the area beyond Shanhaiguan would be filled with Japanese soldiers. I felt that they might kill me if they found me. Therefore I took a train to Fengtitan disguising myself as an army cook. Nobody noticed that it was me. When I returned to the Fengtian government office, not only my subordinates but also my family members did not recognize me. But my father was already gone. I was able to handwrite exactly the way my father did. Therefore, using his seal, I gave orders in his name. Only after resolving the outstanding issues in Heilongjiang and Fengtian, did we publicize my father's death.<sup>28</sup>

Thus, Zhang safely returned to Fengtian and successfully dealt with the urgent issues that had confronted him. The Kwantung Army learned of Zhang's return to Fengtian only on June 19 when Zhang publicized his father's death in his own name. That Zhang Zuolin's death was unconfirmed for two weeks foiled the Kwantung Army's plan to use this momentum to control southern Manchuria. Zhang states:

The day my father died happened to be my birthday [April 17 on lunar calendar]. As I have told you, my father and I had definitely something special. Each time my birthday comes, I think of my father and his death. I do not want my birthdays. I do not feel like celebrating my birthdays any more. My father was a kind person. His death was a blow to me. It is a very painful memory.<sup>29</sup>

Afterward Zhang changed his birthday to June 1. He could not celebrate his birthday on the day his father had died. This indicates the depth of the pain his father's assassination left him with.

### ZHANG'S ASSUMPTION OF POWER

On July 1, 1928, Zhang officially declared that he had become the commander-in-chief of the Three Eastern Provinces Security General Headquarters, succeeding his father as the Fengtian warlord-clique leader. He then held a grand funeral for his father in August. In May 1929, he began the construction of his father's grave called Yuanshuai-lin (*lit.*, "marshal's forest") in the suburb of Fushun at a cost of 14 million yuan. The grave still stands currently.<sup>30</sup>



## JAPANESE ATTEMPT TO MAKE ZHANG EMPEROR OF MANCHURIA

Meanwhile in Tokyo, Prime Minister Tanaka's fear grew that Zhang would turn against Japan and ally with the KMT government. In turn, while concealing the truth about the assassination of his father, the IJA tried to patronize Zhang through colonel Doihara Kenji (August 1883–December 1948; army general, executed), who was one of the Japanese military advisers to Zhang. Being fluent in Chinese, Doihara was a head of the intelligence operations in China and was dubbed “Lawrence of Manchuria.” Nevertheless, as Tanaka feared, Zhang (he knew that the Kwantung Army had killed his father) already leaned toward the KMT and refused to listen to his Japanese advisors. Zhang states:

Doihara behaved the worst. He behaved badly in general, but he behaved the worst when he gave me a report. It was entitled “Discourse on Royal Government,” and assumed that I was the emperor of Manchuria. I asked him, “What is this? What are you plotting? Are you trying to make me to betray my country? What kind of advisor are you?” It was a long, thick report. This occurred long before Japan made Puyi the emperor of Manchuria.... After this, I went to the Kwantung Army General Staff Office and asked Fengtian Intelligence Operations head Hata Shinji [IJA major general, April 1879–February 1950] to remove Doihara as one of my advisors. Then, Hata told me, “Your military advisors were sent by the Japanese government based on the treaty, which stipulates that you have two advisors. They were given to your position, not to you personally. Therefore, you have no power to remove them.” Thus, I could not dismiss Doihara, but I thought that I had the right not to see Doihara. I conveyed my thought to Hata and did not see Doihara afterwards when he visited me.<sup>31</sup>

This is a new revelation that has not been documented in any previous literature in English. Doihara's report was most likely based on the proposition of the Japanese thinker and pan-Asianist, Ōkawa Shūmei (December 1886–December 1957). Ōkawa met Zhang in September 1928. He was surprised to find Zhang well educated, as he had been known as an opium addict and a wrecked person. Ōkawa wrote, “I began to feel sympathy and affection for this young commander-in-chief. I began earnestly to want to help him establish a royal government in the Three Eastern provinces.” Ōkawa thus lectured Zhang: “The fundamental principle for China and Japan is royal government and therefore both nations must fight for

the common ideal.” Zhang concurred. To prove this, a thank-you letter Zhang sent to Ōkawa is kept in his hometown in Sakata, Yamagata prefecture. Ōkawa also met Doihara and told him that there was no other way but to negotiate with Zhang in order to resolve the issues of Manchuria. While Ōkawa’s idea to help Zhang might have been sincere, Doihara used it to advance the interests of the Japanese military. In any event, Zhang had the wisdom and courage to refuse Doihara’s proposal. Afterward, Doihara tried the same thing with Puyi and succeeded in the creation of the Japanese puppet state Manchukuo in March 1932 (Puyi became emperor of Manchuria in March 1934). In hindsight, had Zhang accepted Doihara’s proposal, Manchukuo might have been created earlier.<sup>32</sup>

### ZHANG’S FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION TO TOKONAMI TAKEJIRŌ

In turn, Zhang Xueliang made a financial contribution to the influential Japanese politician Tokonami Takejirō (January 1867–September 1935), which caused a scandal. Tokonami moved among political parties, going back and forth between the dominant Seiyūkai and the Minseitō, reflecting the formative years of the democratic political party system in modern Japan. Having an ambition to become prime minister, Tokonami became president of the Seiyūkai’s splinter, Seiyū-hontō, in 1924. He then met Zhang in December 1928 and received 500,000 yuan for his political campaign to run for the prime minister’s election. This fact became known after the Manchurian Incident of September 1931. The Kwantung Army seized the receipt for the financial contribution from Zhang’s safe. Tokonami’s political opponents found out about it and this became a political scandal in Japan in 1935. Seiyūkai secretary-general Yamaguchi Giichi (January 1888–April 1935) questioned Tokonami in the Imperial Japanese parliament as to whether he had promised Zhang that he would compromise the Japanese national interests in Manchuria–Mongolia, if not abandoning them, in exchange for the contribution. Yamaguchi argued that this was not only an issue of the political financial contribution, but also an act of treason. It was rumored that Tokonami had received 500,000 or even 20 million yuan, but the truth was unknown.<sup>33</sup>

Tokonami had actually created a new political party called the New Party Club, in order to obtain swing votes in the parliament dominated by the Seiyūkai and the Minseitō. His attempt did not work and he returned

to his initial home party Seiyūkai in July 1929 (he would leave the party again and was officially expelled from the party). Tokonami's own plan for China was to acknowledge Chiang Kai-shek's KMT government and to make Manchuria a truly independent country with Zhang as head of state. His intention was different from that of the Kwantung Army and might have meant well for Zhang. Tokonami was to propose his plan to Prime Minister Tanaka, but it did not materialize as the Tanaka cabinet resigned en masse in July 1929. At any rate, Zhang recalls Tokonami well and revealed the truth about his financial contribution to Tokonami for the first time more than 60 years later in 1990:

Mr. Tokonami told me, "I will resolve the issues between China and Japan if I become prime minister. For this I must run in the prime minister's election of the Seiyūkai, but I do not have the financial resources to do so." ...I asked him how much it would cost for the prime minister's election. He said, "It costs 20 million yuan." I said, "I will give you the money." Then he said, "You do not need to give me the money. You only need to lend it to me. I will pay you back when I can." We agreed. But before leaving, he said he needed 500,000 yuan urgently. Therefore I only sent him 500,000 yuan. Subsequently, I heard that he had lost in the election. Thus the 20 million yuan became unnecessary.<sup>34</sup>

### VICTORY FOR NORTHERN EXPEDITION AND NORTHEASTERN FLAG REPLACEMENT

Meanwhile, as Zhang Zuolin had withdrawn from Beijing, the Northern Expedition led by Chiang Kai-shek occupied Beijing bloodlessly on June 8, 1928. Thereby, the Beiyang military government that had been ruled by the powerful warlords since the establishment of the ROC in 1912 fell and China was almost unified by the KMT government. Chiang Kai-shek visited the grave of Sun Yat-sen in a suburb of Beijing (his mausoleum is in Nanjing) and reported the completion of the Northern Expedition. Chiang's next objective was to make Zhang Xueliang accept the reign of the KMT in Northeast China. Surprisingly, Zhang did so readily by the Northeastern Flag Replacement. This refers to changing the flag of the Beijing government of the ROC (the Five-Color Flag) to that of the KMT-Nanjing government of the ROC (the Blue Sky, White Sun, and Wholly Red Earth Flag) in Northeast China. Zhang Xueliang had already made up his mind on this. By rejecting incessant Japanese pressure and opposition within the Fengtian warlord clique, Zhang decided to accept the unification of China by the KMT government.<sup>35</sup>

Zhang's secretary Liu Mingjiu states, "Chiang Kai-shek sent his personnel to discuss the matter of the unification with Northeast China. The exchanges between Fengtian and Nanjing were very frequent. The Nanjing government requested that Zhang Xueliang change the flag soon in order to achieve national unification. However, we had not only pressure from the Japanese government but also opposition within, such as that by Yang Yuting (examined below), and it was difficult to work out a consensus opinion."<sup>36</sup>

On July 1, 1928, Zhang declared a ceasefire to the National Revolutionary Army and stated that he would not interfere with Chiang Kai-shek's Northern Expedition. On July 3, Chiang Kai-shek, backed by the American and British governments, visited Beijing and met Zhang's representative. Zhang's representative agreed to the unification of China, while Chiang promised to appoint Zhang commander-in-chief of the Northeastern Border Defense Army ("Northeastern Army" hereafter). In turn, Japanese Prime Minister Tanaka sent former Japanese minister to China (both to the Qing dynasty and to the ROC) Hayashi Gonsuke (March 1860–June 1939) as Japanese representative at the funeral of Zhang Zuolin in August 1928 and entrusted Hayashi with his written proposal for Zhang Xueliang. According to the Japanese official record, Japanese envoy Hayashi met Zhang on August 8, 9, and 12. Hayashi read Tanaka's proposal to Zhang and stated that his compromise with the KMT was unacceptable. Zhang replied that the situation made the collaboration with the KMT unavoidable and that he was in a difficult position. In the end, they agreed that Zhang would be given three months to consider the situation and then make his decision. Thus, while saving face for Hayashi, Zhang in effect had Japan accept his alliance with the KMT three months later. Zhang had grown to be a skillful politician. Zhang states:

Mr. Hayashi repeatedly told me not to ally with the KMT government. I did not give him a definite answer to the end. I avoided it. I invited him for dinner before his departure and had sake with him. He told me then, "Your father and I were long-time friends. I came to see you with the proposal of the Japanese government. Yet, you did not give me a definite answer." I said, "Master Hayashi, the agreement you came with for me was a better solution than mine." He was very pleased. I then added, "There is one thing that you did not think of." He asked me, "What is that?" I answered, "That I am Chinese."<sup>37</sup>

Meanwhile, Chiang Kai-shek officially declared the establishment of the second ROC–KMT government in Nanjing in October 1928 (the

first one was established in April 1927) and became its president. He also designated the Blue Sky, White Sun, and Wholly Red Earth Flag to be the official flag of the ROC. On December 28, 1928, Zhang Xueliang carried out an overall change of flags in Northeast China to the ROC flag. Chiang then declared that all the flags in Manchuria had changed and thereby Chinese unification was accomplished. This event is referred to as the Northeastern Flag Replacement (*Dongbei yizhi*). This meant Zhang's departure from his father's policy toward Japan and his severing of relations with Japan. Zhang states:

I carried out the Flag Replacement in three days. I ordered clothing factories to make the Blue Sky, White Sun, and Wholly Red Earth Flags.... The Japanese people seemed to have thought that they were superior to the Chinese, but they did not understand China at all. They did not notice that I was changing the national flag notwithstanding the fact that we were preparing for changing all the flags in the entire Northeast China, not just a single flag. The Japanese intelligence activities were poor and the money they spent on their intelligence operations at that time was as if throwing it in a trashcan....I would have done the same thing even if my father had not been killed by the Kwantung Army. I had argued for a national unification of China. I was very sad about the fact that China was weak and powerless. It was not my father's death that made me implement the Flag Replacement. That incident only made my commitment to the anti-Japanese movement stronger, more than ever.<sup>38</sup>

It was a difficult decision on Zhang's part. The Fengtian Army (Northeastern Army) was the strongest in China, with 300,000 men. Zhang also had the Navy and the Air Force. In contrast, Chiang Kai-shek's KMT Army had only 200,000 men and was without a navy and air force. Had Zhang Zuolin been alive at that time, he would never have agreed to the unification of China under the KMT terms. Zhang Xueliang on the other hand realized the need for national unification in order to confront foreign countries and made that decision.<sup>39</sup>

#### EXECUTION OF YANG YUTING AND CHANG YINHUI

Then, in order to end the internal conflict within the Fengtian warlord clique and consolidate power in Northeast China, Zhang executed his subordinates and rivals, Yang Yuting (1886–January 1929) and Chang Yinhuai (1876/1888?–January 1929) on January 10, 1929. With the

death of Zhang Zuolin, the Fengtian faction was split into two groups: the domestic Chinese Military Academy graduates group, led by Zhang, and the IJA Military Academy graduates group, led by Yang. Zhang Zuolin had close relations with Japan and the Fengtian warlord clique was pro-Japanese to begin with. The Kwantung Army even tried to have Yang succeed Zhang Zuolin. Accordingly, Yang often refused to follow Young Marshal Zhang's orders even after he had succeeded to his father's power and become commander-in-chief of the Three Eastern Provinces Security General Headquarters in July 1928. Yang's opposition to the Flag Replacement made their confrontation irreversible. Then, without Zhang's consent, Yang undertook the task of recovering the interests in the East China Railway (Dongqing Tielu) that had been seized by the Soviet Union with his colleague Chang Yinhuai, who wanted to grab the interests for himself, and tried to force Zhang to sign an order for this.<sup>40</sup>

Zhang's former secretary Liu Mingjiu states: "The way Yang Yuting and Chang Yinhuai behaved was terrible. They did not treat Zhang Xueliang as their superior. That's why Zhang decided to execute them....He summoned them to a conference room at night and executed them. Their bodies were covered with a carpet and were handed over to their families." Zhang himself states:

This had to do with the rebellion of Guo Songling [in 1925]. I had noticed the conspiracy of Yang Yuting and Chang Yinhuai. They were planning a rebellion and were trying to steal weapons and ammunition. I was confident that I would be able to quell their rebellion had they rebelled. But I thought it over and changed my mind. I did not want people to think that I was a cruel person. On the other hand, if I ignore their plot and they rebel, it would be a rehash of Guo Songling's rebellion and my subordinates and the people would suffer again. I therefore decided that I should execute them before they rebelled. Even if people criticize me as being cruel, I decided that it was necessary.<sup>41</sup>

## MODERNIZATION OF CHINA'S NORTHEAST

After consolidating his power, Zhang appointed as his secretaries a number of relatively young leaders from education and business circles in order to modernize Northeast China. His patriotic aides included Fengtian province Chamber of Agriculture president Gao Chongmin (1891–July 1971, from Fengtian province, graduated from Meiji University in Tokyo, joined Sun Yat-sen's Chinese Revolutionary Party in 1919 and the KMT in 1924/1925), Fengtian Chamber of Commerce president Du Zhongyuan

(1897–September 1943, executed; from Jilin province, studied at the Tokyo Higher School of Technology, became a successful entrepreneur), an educator turned Zhang's aide Lu Guangji (March 1894–August 1993; from Fengtian province, classmate of Zhou Enlai at the Fengtian Sixth Two-tier Elementary School, graduated from Fengtian Higher Normal School, became a schoolteacher and a principal), Fengtian Chamber of Education president Wang Huayi (June 1899–November 1965; from Fengtian province, graduated from the Fengtian Higher Normal School), and Wang Zhuoran (May 1893–1975, studied at the Fengtian Two-tier Normal School and the University of California), whom Zhang appointed Three Eastern Provinces Security General Headquarters adviser and his children's tutor. They belonged to the May Fourth generation and advocated anti-imperialism, egalitarianism, and nationalism. They constituted Zhang's brain trust and they would pave the way for the Xi'an Incident (see Chap. 6).<sup>42</sup>

Zhang first took up modernization of the Northeastern Army and the Navy and the Air Force by introducing European technology and then modernization of the education system by creating Northeastern (Dongbei) University in Fengtian and many middle schools (present-day high schools). Zhang appointed Wang Zhuoran, as well as Wu Hantao (Wu Dage, May 1894–December 1988), who had studied at several universities in the US (see Chap. 9), as faculty of the Northeastern University. Zhang heavily invested his own money in the university, made it a first-rate school, and became its president in 1928. The grand buildings of the Library and the Mathematics Department of Northeastern University have become the Liaoning-province People's Government offices at present. Zhang states:

I wanted to improve not only three provinces of Northeast China but also the entire China. My father left me a lot of money. I donated most of the money to create Northeastern University. I paid all the expenses for the university. I did not use government money at all. I was glad to do so. I felt that developing human resources was necessary to make China a great nation and that education was the foundation for the construction of the nation.<sup>43</sup>

## FRAGILE NATURE OF CHIANG KAI-SHEK'S UNIFICATION OF CHINA

Meanwhile, Chiang Kai-shek's unification of China turned out to be only pro forma. China was still divided among influential warlords, such as Feng Yuxiang (November 1882–September 1948, the Zhili warlord-

clique leader who rebelled against Zhang Zuolin with Guo Songling, ROC vice premier), Li Zongren (August 1890–January 1969; Guangxi clique, joined Sun Yat-sen’s KMT), and Yan Xishan (October 1883–May 1960; ruler of Shanxi, studied at Tokyo Shinbu School and the IJA Military Academy, joined Sun’s Chinese Revolutionary Alliance). Zhang Xueliang also still retained considerable independence from the ROC government, as the leader of the mighty Northeastern Army, while the CPC was building its liberation districts in rural areas.<sup>44</sup>

### GREAT BATTLE OF THE CENTRAL PLAINS

In this context, Yan Xishan, Feng Yuxiang, and Li Zongren, all of whom had cooperated with Chiang Kai-shek’s Northern Expedition, rebelled against Chiang, mostly separately, in March 1929 and onward, but each failed. Then in April/May 1930, the three formed an alliance and launched an anti-Chiang action, demanding Chiang’s resignation. Their armies clashed with the KMT Army in Henan, Anhui, and Shandong provinces, causing great damage to Chiang. This civil war is referred to as the “Great Battle of the Central Plains.” Chiang’s last recourse was Zhang Xueliang’s modernized Northeastern Army of 300,000 men. Chiang thus requested Zhang to dispatch his army in June 1930. Zhang did not respond to this request immediately, but decided to help Chiang on September 18, for the sake of ending the civil war, and sent 100,000 men to North China. Zhang’s “armed mediation” brought victory for Chiang. For this, Chiang appointed Zhang the ROC Army, Navy, and Air Force deputy commander-in-chief in October 1930. Zhang then established the Deputy Commander-in-Chief Field Headquarters in Beijing in December and thereby grasped military power in Northeast and North China. He was only 29.<sup>45</sup>

### ASCENSION TO POWER IN THE KMT GOVERNMENT

In November 1930, Zhang attended the Fourth Plenary Session of the Third National Congress of the KMT in Nanjing, where he received an enthusiastic welcome. Chiang and Zhang visited Sun Yat-sen’s mausoleum and together laid a flower wreath on Sun’s grave. Chiang then had Zhang stand next to him as he made a speech in front of high-ranking KMT officials and officers. Chiang also had Zhang hold a grand press conference and have his picture taken on a tank. Afterward Zhang took a cruise on



the Yangtze River, surrounded by KMT officials and reporters. This symbolizes the zenith of his political power. Ironically, as Zhang actually met high-ranking officials of the KMT government and learned of their realities, he began to feel strong dissatisfaction with the government. Zhang states:

I had initially thought that the KMT government was better than the warlord cliques, but I began to feel that it was worse than the warlord cliques. I had known that the KMT Army was old-fashioned, but I found that the politicians were more corrupt than in the past. Other areas were not that bad. As I visited Nanjing and faced more serious problems, I grew deeply dissatisfied. To put it simply, the KMT government at that time was preoccupied with internal power struggles.<sup>46</sup>

### CONFRONTATION WITH KWANTUNG ARMY

Meanwhile, as Zhang Xueliang had embarked on the modernization of Northeast China in earnest, his collision with the South Manchuria Railway loomed large. First, Zhang constructed two new local railroads in 1929: the Eastern Mainline and the Western Mainline. The Japanese government protested the construction, claiming it was a violation of the agreement between the Japanese government and the Qing government that prohibited the construction of railroads that parallel those of the South Manchuria Railway. The Japanese government established the South Manchuria Railway Company in order to operate the China East Railway that Japan had obtained from Russia as a result of victory in the Russo-Japanese War. The South Manchuria Railway managed not only railroads but also the whole economy of Northeast China, including coal mines in Fushun and iron mines in Anshan. As South Manchuria Railway vice president Matsuoka Yōsuke (1927–1930, examined below) famously said in the Imperial Japanese parliament in January 1931, “Manchuria–Mongolia is Japan’s lifeline.” Thus, the interests of the South Manchuria Railway inevitably collided with those of Zhang’s, who states:

I constructed the railroad that ran between Dahushan and Heilongjiang in order to ship soybeans in Heilongjiang, which were a major produce of Northeast China at that time. The South Manchuria Railway restricted our use of its railroads. The South Manchuria Railway also obstructed our shipments. In addition, the South Manchuria Railway’s trains only went to Dalian. Therefore, we decided to construct our own railroads. It caused a big

problem with Japan, but I did not think that our railroads paralleled those of the South Manchuria Railway. I did not intend to compete with the South Manchuria Railway. I constructed our own railroads only because we would have to use the South Manchuria Railway unless we had our own. I admit that the management of the South Manchuria Railway was affected by our railroads, but my father had already begun the railroad construction and I did not start it. I wanted to cooperate with the Japanese as much as possible, but they did not want to cooperate with us. They were only trying to control us.<sup>47</sup>

One of the former employees of the South Manchuria Railway, Moriyama Masayuki, states that “the profits of the South Manchuria Railway decreased in 1930 and 1931, because of the competition of the two parallel railroads that Zhang had constructed.” In turn, another employee states that “the profit declined not so much because of the two parallel railroads as because of the Great Depression. In fact, the Great Depression seriously affected Manchuria. The price of soybeans in the region nosedived, which reduced the demand for shipments and resulted in the profit decrease to the South Manchuria Railway, to the extent that the company withheld annual raises from the employees’ salaries in 1931. The Japanese in the region and the Kwantung Army officials feared that the poor business performance of the South Manchuria Railway would jeopardize the Japanese interests in Manchuria and blamed this on Zhang Xueliang.”<sup>48</sup>

Zhang also began construction of a sizable port in Huludao (in current Liaoning province) in 1930, with German capital. This would allow the export of the produce of the region, which would be shipped via the two railroad mainlines he had constructed to Huludao, to overseas directly. Zhang states: “The construction in Huludao also caused a problem with Japan. We needed our own port to export soybeans because the Japanese restricted our use of the port in Dalian. The Japanese seemed to have wanted to monopolize the economy of Northeast China, but we naturally wanted to develop our own economy in the region. The Japanese looked upon us as unequal and treated China as if it were their colony.”<sup>49</sup>

### MYSTERIOUS DEATH OF SABURI SADAŌ

There were some Japanese officials who pursued peaceful diplomacy with China, in the face of the military establishment that dominated the Japanese cabinet at that time. After the Tanaka cabinet resigned en masse in July 1929, the new foreign minister Shidehara Kijūrō (September 1872–March 1951, prime minister) in the Hamaguchi cabinet promoted

a conciliatory foreign policy toward China. Shidehara handpicked the veteran diplomat Saburi Sadao (January 1879–November 1929) as Japanese minister to China. Saburi had attended the Washington Naval Conference (1921–1922) and the Geneva Naval Conference (1927). He had also attended the Chinese Customs Conference in 1925 and was trusted by the Chinese. In 1929, Saburi was to become Japanese minister to the Soviet Union, but Shidehara persuaded him to accept the position in China. Thus, Saburi was sent to Nanjing in August 1929 and began preparations for negotiations for revising the unequal Sino-Japanese Treaty. Zhang Xueliang describes his meeting with Saburi:

I talked with Mr. Saburi at the Japanese consulate until late at night. There were many issues in Manchuria. Mr. Saburi said, “I will do my best even after I return to Japan.” I also said, “I will do my best. I will do everything I can. You would not have to tell me what to do. I can do it.” Mr. Saburi and I got along very well. He was a very good person.<sup>50</sup>

On November 21, 1929, Saburi temporarily returned to Tokyo in order to make preparations for the negotiations. Then, on November 29, his body was found in the Fujiya Hotel in Hakone-Miyanoshiba. He had been shot in the head and he was holding a pistol in his right hand. The police determined that he had committed suicide. However, Saburi was left-handed. It seems unlikely that he would use his right hand to shoot himself. Foreign Minister Shidehara states: “I saw the minister on November 27. He looked very fine. He did not appear to be depressed at all. I did not know that he had gone to Hakone, but judging from his healthy behavior and demeanor, I cannot imagine at all that he would commit suicide. Moreover, I cannot think of any reasons at all for him to commit suicide.” It was a blow to China to have lost a Japanese official who was trying earnestly to revise the unequal treaty. Many Japanese nationalist groups resented Shidehara’s “peace diplomacy.” Saburi might have been assassinated by one of these groups and his death remains a mystery to this day. Zhang states:

I think that Mr. Saburi was killed. He did not commit suicide. The Japanese military men at that time were insane. They not only assassinated political leaders in China but also their own. It was God’s blessing that Japan has survived despite the fact that its military men had lost their minds. Mr. Saburi’s death hurt me deeply. I felt that Japan was out of control. We lost a means to cooperate with Japan....I was willing to cooperate with Japan,

but the Japanese conditions for cooperation were unacceptable to us. They treated us as their slaves.<sup>51</sup>

### ESCALATING CONFRONTATION WITH JAPAN

In January 1931, Foreign Minister Shidehara stated at the Imperial Japanese parliament that he would pursue a policy of coexistence and co-prosperity with China. Matsuoka Yōsuke (March 1880–June 1946, foreign minister), then a parliamentarian from the Seiyūkai party, denounced the Shidehara diplomacy as “absolutely hands-off and cowardly.” Shidehara tried to dissuade Zhang Xueliang from constructing the railroads that would compete with the South Manchuria Railway, but Zhang’s negotiations with South Manchuria Railway officials in early 1931 failed. Matsuoka’s coinage “Manchuria–Mongolia is Japan’s lifeline” ignited Japanese nationalism, which in turn escalated Chinese nationalism. Chinese people called not only for the repeal of the unequal treaty, but also for the return of Lushun (Port Arthur) and Dalian, and even the South Manchuria Railway to China. Zhang states:

Japan’s policy toward China at that time was one of invasion. It was obvious to us. For instance, regarding Lushun and Dalian, we wanted the two ports returned to us, as the lease was due to expire. Given the fact that Japan had built Lushun and Dalian, however, I proposed a plan that also considered the Japanese interests: to make the two ports free ports and have a free election to choose the representatives of the residents there (the Japanese). In this way, China could regain jurisdiction over the two ports, but Japan could actually manage them. The Japanese response to my proposal made me sad: “We won them by war. If you want them back, you will have to win them back by war.”<sup>52</sup>

### WANBAOSHAN INCIDENT

The Japanese were unwilling to return Lushun and Dalian, because they had fought with a giant Russia, at great disadvantage and cost, and yet Russia refused to pay war reparations. The actual spoils of war did not measure up for the Japanese, so that this caused riots in Tokyo and elsewhere to the extent that the government declared martial law. Then in May 1931, local Chinese farmers protested against Korean settlers building irrigation ditches in Wanbaoshan in the suburbs of Changchun, Jilin province, and fought them with agricultural tools. Being concerned with

the Kwantung Army's aggressive policy in Manchuria, Japanese foreign minister Shidehara Kijūrō instructed the Japanese consul general to Fengtian, Hayashi Kyūjirō, to settle the matter peacefully. Nevertheless, the local Japanese police in July confronted the Chinese in order to protect the Koreans, who were considered subjects of Japan at that time. There were no casualties in this dispute itself, but it triggered massive anti-Chinese riots in Korea, with more than 100 deaths and 160 injuries: this was the Wanbaoshan Incident.<sup>53</sup>

### CAPTAIN NAKAMURA MURDER INCIDENT

Then, in August, the Kwantung Army released the news that IJA General Staff captain Nakamura Shintarō (1897–July 1931) and his company, which had infiltrated an off-limits area in Greater Khingan (Daxing'anling, a mountain range across Inner Mongolia and Manchuria), had been captured by the Northeastern Army Third Artillery Regiment on June 27 and shot to death on July 1. Since the Russo-Japanese War, the IJA had been trying to create an accurate map of the Manchuria–Mongolia region and had sent its military agents there disguised as inn/general-store managers or medicine peddlers. Nakamura disguised himself as a Mongolian agricultural specialist (he had a passport issued by the Chinese Northeastern Field Headquarters government) and claimed that he had come to study soil fertility. Thus, the group of four (two Japanese and two local Mongolians) entered the area that Zhang Xueliang had designated as off-limits to the Japanese. Nevertheless, when Nakamura's team underwent a second inspection, the local regiment deputy head, Dong Pingxing, noticed the disguise of Nakamura. Dong and Nakamura had been classmates at the IJA Military Academy. When the regiment head returned from Fengtian, they were executed. This was referred to as the Captain Nakamura Murder Incident. The series of unsettling incidents alarmed the Japanese residents in Manchuria.<sup>54</sup>

Former South Manchuria Railway employee Moriyama Masayuki states: “The Japanese residents in Manchuria felt that their lives were threatened. They wondered what the Kwantung Army was doing. Why was the army not responding?” The Kwantung Army was quick to capitalize on the sentiments of the Japanese residents, and its senior staff officers, such as lieutenant-colonel Ishiwara Kanji (January 1889–August 1949, lieutenant-general), argued that the Captain Nakamura Murder Incident should be used as a *casus belli* for establishing a Japanese enclave in Manchuria. This was the eve of the Manchurian Incident of September 18, 1931.<sup>55</sup>

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## Manchurian Incident and the Long March

On September 18, 1931, around 10:20 PM, the South Manchuria Railway was bombed near the Chinese National Revolutionary Army Northern Field Headquarters in Liutiaohu in the suburb of Fengtian (current Shenyang). This bombing triggered the Manchurian Incident, by which the Japanese Kwantung Army occupied China's Northeast (Manchuria). The bombing was a conspiracy of Kwantung Army staff officers, as in the case of the assassination of Zhang Zuolin on June 4, 1928. In fact, the site of the bombing was only a few miles away from that of the bombing of Zhang Zuolin three years earlier. The Manchurian Incident paved the way for the creation of the Japanese puppet state Manchukuo in March 1932. This chapter does not go into the details of the Manchurian Incident because the basic facts of the incident are already documented in English. This chapter instead highlights new facts about the incident that have never been documented in English through the oral history of the people who were directly involved in the incident.

\* \* \*

A Kwantung Army senior staff officer, lieutenant-colonel Ishiwara Kanji (January 1889–August 1949, lieutenant-general), masterminded the Manchurian Incident, in order to resolve the issues in Manchuria once and for all by a military intervention. He argued that Japan must make Manchuria–Mongolia its own territory in order to build up its national

power and to confront the USA. This would also resolve Japanese domestic issues such as the shortage of food and unemployment caused by the Great Depression: “to kill two birds with one stone.” This military action had to take place before the USA built up its Navy and the Soviet Union recovered from the chaos of the revolution. The Imperial Japanese Army (IJA) General Staff in Tokyo had a less aggressive plan for the annexation of Manchuria–Mongolia and instructed the Kwantung Army to act prudently and not to take any military action before the spring of 1932.<sup>1</sup>

Ignoring the instruction, Ishiwara went ahead with his plan along with another Kwantung Army senior staff officer, Colonel Itagaki Seishirō (January 1885–December 1948; army general, executed) and bombed the South Manchuria Railway. Former South Manchuria Railway Company director Kimura Eiichi—he was Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs Asian Bureau director general, was transferred to the South Manchuria Railway Company in order to negotiate with Zhang Xueliang on the railway issue, and became isolated in the company as he tried to cooperate with Zhang—states that “the damage from the bombing was minimal. In fact, only two railroad ties were damaged by the bombing so that the trains actually passed along the railroad right after the bombing.” However, the conspirators claimed that the Chinese National Revolutionary Army had bombed the railroad and used this as the pretext to attack that army without the approval of the IJA General Staff in Tokyo. Chinese National Revolutionary Army deputy commander Zhang Xueliang (second highest position after Chiang Kai-shek) was engaged in a task outside Northeast China when the incident took place. He had taken a major force of 110,000 men, out of his 440,000 men of the Northeastern Border Defense Army (“Northeastern Army” hereafter), with him. Ishiwara and Itagaki took advantage of Zhang’s absence from Fengtian and attacked the Chinese Army. Initially, the Northeastern Army in Fengtian in Zhang’s absence reacted to the attack and there was a skirmish between the two armies. Zhang states:

I was in Beiping at that time for medical treatment. I received the news of the incident as I was watching Mei Lanfang with the British ambassador. I immediately went home and ordered my men not to counterattack. I did not know the actual situation there and decided to assess the situation first.<sup>2</sup>

Beiping (*lit.*, “northern plain”) was the renaming of Beijing (“northern capital”) when Chiang Kai-shek established the KMT–Republic of China (ROC) government in Nanjing (“southern capital”) in 1928 (Beiping was renamed as Beijing during the Japanese occupation period of 1927–1945,

and then was again renamed as Beiping in 1945–1949 during the civil war). Mei Lanfang was the famed female-role actor of Peking Opera. The following day, Zhang held a General Staff conference at the Kyōwa (Concordia) Hospital, where he was receiving his medical treatment, and decided to take a nonresistance stance to the Japanese attack and to refer the incident to the judgment of international law, because the Japanese had violated international law. Then, Zhang sent his personal adviser William Henry Donald to the British minister and the American minister, to inform them of his decision. Zhang had also told Japanese reporters in Beijing: “I heard of the incident last night. I ordered my men not to counterattack because we did not have the force to fight back and also there was no reason to fight.”<sup>3</sup>

### W. H. DONALD

W. H. Donald (June 1875–November 1946) was an Australian reporter and had worked for *The China Mail* in Hong Kong and the *Far Eastern Economic Review* in Shanghai. He had come into contact with Zhang Xueliang before the Manchurian Incident (September 18, 1931), had become his personal adviser since the incident, and arranged medical treatment for his opium addiction. Zhang states that he did not have real friends whom he could trust but that he respected and trusted Donald. Donald also contacted Charlie Soong (Song Jiashu, February 1863–May 1918), the wealthy publisher and father of the “Soong sisters”—Ailing, Qingling, and Meiling—and befriended Sun Yat-sen. After Zhang was forced to go abroad in 1933, Donald became a personal adviser to Chiang Kai-shek and gained the full trust of Song Meiling (Soong May-ling). Donald lived in China for 20 or 30 years and is referred to as “Donald of China” for his role in the Chinese civil war. Zhang states: “Having lost power, I introduced Donald to the KMT government and sent him to Nanjing” (see Chap. 7).<sup>4</sup>

### AFTERMATH OF THE MANCHURIAN INCIDENT

Because of Zhang’s nonresistance, the Kwantung Army quickly occupied major cities along the South Manchuria Railway, such as Fengtian, Changchun, and Yingkou, in one day by the end of September 19. The Wakatsuki cabinet in Tokyo decided not to expand the occupation and conveyed its decision to the Kwantung Army commander, lieutenant-general Honjō Shigeru (examined below); however, Ishiwara and Itagaki

ignored the cabinet decision and had the Japanese Korean Army commander, lieutenant-general Hayashi Senjūrō (February 1876–February 1943; army general, prime minister), mobilize his army. Prime Minister Wakatsuki Reijirō approved their action as a *fait accompli* and Emperor Hirohito also approved it. The Kwantung Army then bribed high-ranking officials in Zhang’s government to rebel against him and expanded the occupation so that the army occupied almost all of Manchuria within five months of the incident. Consequently, Zhang’s Northeastern Army was forced out of its home territory. Zhang states:

I did not anticipate that the Kwantung Army would occupy Manchuria to that extent. I felt that it would be impossible. I thought that the army was merely trying to provoke us to attack them. Therefore I ordered my men not to counterattack. I was hoping for a peaceful settlement of the incident. I also thought that Japan would be censured internationally, but later the Chinese people criticized me for my nonresistance. I do not accept such criticism, but I admit my responsibility for having failed to see through the Japanese conspiracy. I did not think that Japan would invade China because I knew that it would not benefit Japan. The Japanese military action clearly violated international law and I did not think that Japan would expand the occupation. Had I known that Japan were serious about the war with China, I would have fought back. The war with China was wrong and unnecessary. Even if Japan had not occupied Manchuria by force, the Japanese would have accumulated its interests there. Because of the war, Japan ended up losing everything.<sup>5</sup>

Regarding the question of whether Chiang Kai-shek ordered Zhang to take the nonresistance stance after the incident, Zhang states:

It is true that the ROC government gave me its instructions, but they were not of nonresistance. It was “to take appropriate actions accordingly.” This meant that the ROC government would not assume any responsibility for my actions. Therefore, I cannot blame the ROC government for the nonresistance. I took the nonresistance stance because I did not want to aggravate the situation. I felt that I should not be provoked into military actions and make the situation worse. I did not think that the Japanese Army would launch an all-out war. Had I known the real intentions of the Japanese at that time, my reaction would have been very different.<sup>6</sup>

Here Zhang was defending his superior Chiang Kai-shek, who had ordered Zhang not to counterattack, and one would be hard-pressed to blame Zhang for his nonresistance. Zhang had actually been misled by Chiang even before the Manchurian Incident. When the Captain Nakamura

Murder Incident became public in August 1931 (see Chap. 4), Chiang sent a telegram to Zhang and instructed him “not to counterattack whatever provocative military actions the Japanese Army took in the Northeast China. You should not be swayed by temporary emotion and take actions that ignore Chinese [national interests].” Zhang’s former intelligence secretary, Guo Weicheng, also states:

Zhang called Chiang Kai-shek more than a dozen times on the night of the outbreak of the Manchurian Incident and requested his instructions. Nevertheless, Chiang acted as if nothing had happened and told Zhang that he would not allow Zhang to counterattack. He ordered Zhang to lay down the army’s arms on the wall, lock the weapon warehouses, and hand over all the arms to the Japanese Army.<sup>7</sup>

Chiang was preoccupied with the power struggle within the KMT in the south—his political opponent Wang Jingwei (real name Wang Zhaoming, May 1883–November 1944) established his own KMT government in Guangdong—while being confronted with warlord rebels in the north, such as Feng Yuxiang and Yan Xishan, and also fighting the CPC Red Army. Surrounded by Chinese enemies, to confront the Japanese Army was not Chiang’s priority. Chiang did not think that the Manchurian Incident would result in a total occupation of Manchuria, and merely called the incident the “Fengtian Incident” initially. The ROC government believed in Foreign Minister Shidehara’s non-expansion policy and hoped that the Japanese government could control the Kwantung Army. The ROC government also hoped that appealing the incident to the League of Nations would deter further Japanese military action, but the League of Nations did not have the power to enforce its decisions. After the Great Depression, England and the USA were creating their own bloc economies in the world and did not reach a consensus on sanctions against Japan.<sup>8</sup>

### FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN HONJŌ SHIGERU AND ZHANG XUELIANG

Surprisingly, the Japanese person Zhang remembered most favorably was Kwantung Army commander, lieutenant-general Honjō Shigeru (May 1876–November 1945, army general). Honjō, as a military man, appears not to have been as much a hardliner as some studies have suggested. Zhang states: “Mr. Honjō was very kind to me. I respected him. We liked each other very well. When I visited Japan [in 1921], he escorted me.” Zhang

met Honjō for the first time when he was a military adviser to Zhang Zuolin. Honjō was a China expert in the IJA and served Zhang Zuolin from 1921 to 1924. Zhang Zuolin liked Honjō so much that he tried to reappoint Honjō after his appointment had ended. Then on August 20, 1931, Honjō was appointed as Kwantung Army commander and arrived in Lushun (Port Arthur, then the seat of Kwantung Army headquarters). Within less than a month, the Manchurian Incident occurred. Honjō was not informed of the conspiracy of Ishiwara Kanji and Itagaki Seishirō in advance.<sup>9</sup>

Zhang Xueliang disclosed his communications with Honjō right after the incident for the first time in his interview:

Mr. Honjō contacted my subordinate Gu Weijun to inform me that he wanted to see me through an intermediary. He wanted to meet my intermediary at a restaurant called Ryokuzan, in Fengtian. Gu Weijun was a mutual friend of Honjō and me. I agreed and sent a VIP to the meeting. His name was Liu, who was then deputy foreign minister. Liu thus met Honjō on my behalf. Liu told me after the meeting, “Mr. Honjō told me that he did not know of the September 18 Incident in advance.” Mr. Honjō went to Fengtian two days before the incident and then returned to Lushun. Had he known of the incident in advance, he would not have returned to Lushun. On the night of September 18, Mr. Honjō was asleep, after attending a banquet. As soon as his subordinate reported the incident, he hurried to Fengtian. Mr. Honjō told Liu, “Had I known of the incident in advance, I would not have let it to happen. Upon arriving in Fengtian, the situation was already out of control. I did not know what to do for a few days and I only reported the incident to Tokyo.” I believe what Mr. Honjō had told Liu was true. In fact, for a few days after the incident, the Japanese military actions were not as aggressive as those that were taken later, and many Chinese people were able to leave Northeast China. Had Honjō ordered military actions during that time, the Japanese would have captured these Chinese. Therefore, I believe that Mr. Honjō told the truth.<sup>10</sup>

Gu Weijun (January 1888–November 1985), known as V. K. Wellington Koo in the west, was a renowned Chinese diplomat working for the ROC government under Yuan Shikai and afterward (also acting premier and interim president of the ROC), and fled to France and Canada when Chiang Kai-shek’s KMT government issued his arrest warrant in 1928. Gu returned to China in 1929 by the good offices of Zhang and became foreign minister in the KMT government in Nanjing in 1931. Gu continued to serve in the KMT government in Taiwan, was appointed a judge in the International Court of Justice in The Hague, and moved to New York upon retirement. One of the Kwantung Army staff mem-

bers, Captain Katakura Tadashi (May 1898–July 1991, major-general), endorses Zhang’s statement:

Mr. Honjō was not informed of the Manchurian Incident in advance. Ishiwara and Itagaki were the conspirators. Given the tension in the region, the newly arrived commander sensed that something might happen sooner or later, but he was not informed of the conspiracy. I was not informed in advance, either...Hearing of the bombing at Liutiaohu, I hurried to the Chief of General Staff office in Lushun on the night of September 18. There, General Staff members—Arai, Takeda, Nakano, and I—gathered under a willow tree in front of the office and discussed the matter. Arai said, “This appears to be a conspiracy.” We concurred. But we felt that if we did not cooperate with this conspiracy and did not take any military actions, it would be a second Kōmoto Incident. Therefore, we felt that we would have to cooperate with this conspiracy and resolve the issues of Manchuria-Mongolia once and for all.<sup>11</sup>

#### WHEN HONJŌ SHIGERU LEARNED OF THE CONSPIRACY OF KWANTUNG ARMY OFFICERS

The Kōmoto Incident refers to the assassination of Zhang Zuolin in June 1928, conspired by Kōmoto Daisaku (see Chap. 4). The Kwantung Army General Staff members felt that had the Kwantung Army not cooperated with Ishiwara and Itagaki and if their conspiracy were disclosed as the Kōmoto Incident was (which resulted in the resignation en masse of the Tanaka cabinet), Japan would be forced to withdraw from Manchuria totally this time. Thus, they agreed to take military action. The truth of the incident was kept secret and was not revealed until after World War II. As for Kwantung Army commander Honjō, he visited the oil painting exhibition of the artist Noda in Dalian on September 18 and returned home around 10:00 PM. Around 11:00 PM, Itagaki Seishirō informed Honjō of the military clash between China and Japan in Fengtian. Honjō arrived at the Kwantung Army General Headquarters in Lushun at 12:00 midnight and summoned his staff. Ishiwara Kanji, who had already made arrangements with Itagaki, recommended military action. Honjō’s own opinion was to gather a military force in Fengtian and demilitarize the area. With the news of injuries to a Japanese lieutenant and his company, however, Honjō was obliged to agree to take military action. Later, Ishiwara testified at the International Military Tribunal for the Far East: “Commander Honjō closed his eyes and meditated for about five minutes. He opened his eyes and said, ‘Very well. Take military action in my name.’”<sup>12</sup>

Honjō and his staff hurried to Fengtian, but things progressed as Ishiwa and Itagaki had planned, and Honjō ended up approving their actions as a fait accompli, albeit with reservations. Honjō, for instance, initially did not approve of the attack on Jilin and the discussion went on past midnight. Itagaki talked to Honjō until dawn when he finally obtained Honjō's approval. Thus, Honjō ended up endorsing the conspirators' actions and ordered military action as the supreme commander of the Kwantung Army. Yet, he still had a faint hope of a peaceful settlement. For this, he tried to have Zhang return to Fengtian for negotiations. Former Kwantung Army staff member Katakura states: "Mr. Honjō sent a telegram to Zhang Xueliang, asking him to return and settle the situation, but he did not hear from Zhang."<sup>13</sup>

On September 22, Kwantung Army senior officers gathered in Fengtian and had a meeting. There Ishiwa and Itagaki submitted their proposal to create a new state in Manchuria. According to Katakura, who was present at the meeting, the candidates for the head of state included Qing dynasty's last emperor Puyi, his brother Pujie, and a descendant of Confucius. This was the first meeting where the Kwantung Army decided to create the Japanese puppet state Manchukuo, with Puyi as the head of state. By this time, Honjō had realized that it was impossible to pursue a collaborative relationship between Japan and Manchuria through Zhang Xueliang, and submitted Ishiwa's plan as a consensus opinion of the Kwantung Army to the Japanese army minister and Chief of General Staff in Tokyo. By this, Zhang's rule in the Northeast was denied and the Kwantung Army proceeded with the creation of Manchukuo.<sup>14</sup>

The Kwantung Army intelligence operations head, colonel Doihara Kenji, who had unsuccessfully tried to make Zhang Manchuria's emperor (see Chap. 4), worked on making Puyi the head of state of Manchukuo at this time. On November 8, 1931, Doihara plotted for a riot in Tianjin in order to create confusion and "kidnapped" Puyi, who had been driven out of the Forbidden City (the Imperial Palace) by the coup d'état of Feng Yuxiang (the Beijing Coup of October 1924) and had been placed under house arrest in Tianjin since 1925. Puyi was then taken to Yingkou, where the enigmatic IJA captain Amakasu Masahiko (January 1891–August 1945, committed suicide) waited for Puyi. Amakasu was a principal staff member of the South Manchuria Railway East Asian Economy Research Bureau at that time and actively engaged in intelligence operations in Manchuria. Amakasu had Puyi disguised as "laundry" (and packed him in a wicker trunk) and then as a coolie (and put him on a third-class train), and secretly took him to Lushun.<sup>15</sup>



## BUSHIDŌ OF HONJŌ SHIGERU

Kwantung Army commander Honjō Shigeru was a man of honor. As a military man, he lived by the principles of bushidō (the way of the samurai), but he also respected the honor code for a human being as the most important principle. For example, after the Japanese occupation of Manchuria, Honjō went out of his way to ship Zhang's property in Fengtian on a special train and deliver it to Zhang in Beijing. Zhang remembers this well:

Mr. Honjō had my property shipped in two freight cars and sent it to Beijing. He also entrusted a letter to me with his messenger. I told his messenger, "I cannot accept this shipment. Mr. Honjō and I were friends, but now we have become enemies. This is as if to insult me." American general George Washington once said to his subordinates who had protected his house, "I am fighting the war as a military man. I am not fighting the war in order to protect my house. This is as if to insult me." I felt exactly the same as Washington. I therefore told Mr. Honjō's messenger, "Please take the shipment back and keep it in my house as it was. Otherwise, I will burn it all. But burning would insult him. Therefore, please take it back."<sup>16</sup>

## SUICIDE OF HONJŌ SHIGERU

According to a former Kwantung Army staff member, captain Katakura, the shipment was not returned to the Kwantung Army. It appears to have been lost in the chaos of the war. A year after the Manchurian Incident, Honjō was recalled home in September 1932. He was hailed as the "Father of Manchukuo" and received an enthusiastic welcome from the general public who filled the streets from Kobe to Tokyo to see the hero. Emperor Hirohito also met him and liked him so much that he was appointed grand aide-de-camp (military chamberlain) to the emperor (see Chap. 6). The diary that Honjō wrote during this appointment is a valuable record of modern Japanese history. With Japan's defeat in the war in August 1945, Honjō was to be tried at the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, as the supreme commander of the Kwantung Army during the Manchurian Incident. On November 20, 1945, Honjō committed suicide. He chose death in the way of the samurai and executed *harakiri* exactly as prescribed by this tradition. His body was facing the Imperial Palace to demonstrate his loyalty to the emperor. Having been dubbed the "virtuous general," many Japanese still respect him today and visit his temple in his hometown in Hyōgo prefecture (near Kobe) on his memorial anniversary day every year.<sup>17</sup>

His eldest son's wife, Honjō Tomiko, states: "Honjō considered the honor of a human being most important. He committed suicide to take the responsibility for the Manchurian Incident on himself so that the war responsibility would not fall on the emperor. He wrote in his will that he was solely responsible for the Manchurian Incident. He decided to take all the responsibility for the incident on himself by death." Honjō wrote a report entitled the "Essence of Manchurian Incident" a month before his death, which states that the Kwantung Army acted solely for the sake of self-defense. This statement appears to be intended to justify the Japanese position at the International Military Tribunal. In turn, he also wrote his candid views on Zhang Xueliang: "We had been good friends for a long-time. I know how bright he is. Had General Zhang been in Manchuria at that time...it might have been possible to prevent the expansion of the occupation and normalize relations between Japan and Manchuria. Failure to do so was unfortunate for Sino-Japanese relations." In turn, Zhang states: "I miss Mr. Honjō very much. If I were able to visit Japan again, I will visit his grave. When I talk about Mr. Honjō, I am filled with sadness."<sup>18</sup>

Thus, Zhang's interview in August 1990 revealed the unusual friendship between the Kwantung Army supreme commander and the Manchurian young marshal.

### FATE OF QING DYNASTY'S LAST EMPEROR PUYI

In November 1931, the head of the Kwantung Army intelligence operations Doihara Kenji took Puyi out of Tianjin, put him aboard a Japanese ship to Yingkou, and then took him to Lushun. The creation of Manchukuo was officially declared on March 1, 1932, with Puyi as consul (nominal head) of the Japanese puppet state and Zhang Jinghui (1871–November 1959, Manchukuo premier) as Northeastern Administration Committee chairman. Two years later in 1934, Manchukuo adopted an imperial system and Puyi became its emperor. Puyi's younger brother Pujie (April 1907–February 1994) was in Tokyo, studying at the Gakūshūin (the school for the Japanese Imperial family and peers) and the IJA Military Academy. He knew then that his brother would be used by Japan for its ambitions in China's Northeast. Pujie stated in an interview in Beijing in October 1990:

There was an IJA Military Academy instructor called Yoshioka Yasunao. He was only thinking about how to use my brother for the sake of Japan. He told me before the Manchurian Incident, "Zhang Xueliang does not listen to us. He lacks virtues. We must expel him from Manchuria. Then,

there will be a future for your brother. We would have to ask him to go to Manchuria.” It was at that time that I realized that Japan had ambitions for Manchuria. My brother might have wanted to unify China through Manchukuo, but in reality Japan ended up imposing demands on him and he succumbed to them.<sup>19</sup>

IJA lieutenant-colonel Yoshioka Yasunao (November 1890–November 1947, lieutenant-general) was appointed as a Kwantung Army staff officer in December 1932 and then as an IJA Military Academy instructor back home in August 1934. He was sent to Manchuria again in March 1935 as the Kwantung Army’s attendant for Emperor Puyi in Manchukuo’s capital Xinjing (current Changchun). On this Zhang states:

I personally knew Puyi and Pujie. One day when I was having breakfast in a hotel in Tianjin, I saw Puyi arriving alone. I told him, “Why don’t you dismiss your attendants who have served you since the time you were the emperor of China. They are only using you for their interests. I respect you for having managed to escape from them and for going out alone today. Why don’t you study at Nankai University? Or you could study in the United States?...You must forget your former status as emperor [of China] and become a commoner. Then, when the Chinese have a presidential election someday, you will be qualified as a candidate for the election. But if you keep retaining your attendants, they will use you and ruin you totally.”<sup>20</sup>

As for Zhang, his Northeastern Army was driven out of his home territory and was stationed in Beiping. Zhang resigned the post of the KMT National Army, Navy, and Air Force deputy commander in December 1931 and was appointed director of Beiping Pacification (*suijing*) Public Station. Intellectuals and students in Manchuria, as well as Northeastern Volunteer Army members, were also driven out of their homeland. As they were exiled to the west of Shanhaiguan (the border checkpoint between China’s Northeast and North), they sang the March of the Volunteers. Interestingly, the CPC adopted this song when it called for voluntary mobilization of all Chinese people into anti-Japanese resistance and the song became the national anthem of the People’s Republic of China (PRC).<sup>21</sup>

## LYTTON INVESTIGATION

The League of Nations denounced Japanese military actions after the Manchurian Incident and sent the Lytton Commission fact-finding mission to China in March 1932. Zhang hosted a banquet for the mission in

Beijing and appealed to it over the injustices committed in Manchuria. Gu Weijun (Wellington Koo), who had served as China's first ambassador to the League of Nations, represented China in this case. Zhang states: "As things went out of control, we had a faint hope in the League of Nations, but it only talked and could not exert any influence on Japan.... Consequently, the Manchurian Incident set the spark for World War II." The rest is history. Japanese ambassador to the League of Nations Matsuoka Yōsuke (March 1880–June 1946, foreign minister) rejected the Lytton Report in November 1932 and Japan withdrew from the international body in March 1933. Japan was isolated and would plunge into its fatal collision course with the USA. The long-awaited official history of the reign of Emperor Hirohito that was released by the Imperial Household Agency in September 2014, almost a quarter century after his death, reveals that, as the war with China escalated to an all-out war, Hirohito delivered, on July 5, 1939, his criticisms and dissatisfactions with the IJA to the then Army General Itagaki Seishirō, who was one of the conspirators for the Manchurian Incident. Nevertheless, the emperor did little to stop the war. Also, while Hirohito considered war with the USA as self-destructive, he allowed the IJA to go to war with the USA in his name.<sup>22</sup>

### WANG JINGWEI AND ZHANG XUELIANG

Meanwhile, as the Kwantung Army had destroyed Zhang's government in Fengtian, he established a provisional government in Jinzhou and tried to confront the Kwantung Army. In turn, as the anti-Japanese movement escalated in China, Chiang Kai-shek in December 1931 surrendered his power within the KMT to the Guangdong faction led by Wang Jingwei. This made Zhang's political standing in the KMT government unstable, obliging him to give up his anti-Japanese resistance and to withdraw from Jinzhou. Upon Zhang's withdrawal, the Kwantung Army occupied Jinzhou in January 1932. Having been driven out of his homeland and being unable to fight the Japanese, Zhang was in the depths of despair. Then, Wang Jingwei, who became premier of the KMT government in Nanjing in January 1932, visited him. Zhang states:

When Wang Jingwei was premier, he visited me in Beijing. He brought with him Chiang Kai-shek's letter to me. He told me that I must fight the Japanese. I asked him, "What kind of preparations did the ROC government

make for that? Is there any probability for us to win?" He said, "No." I asked, "Then why are you trying to make my Northeastern Army fight the Japanese?" Then he said, "The ROC government is being strongly pressured from abroad. If your army fought the Japanese, our government will have an excuse externally." Chiang's letter stated that Wang shall consult with me. Therefore I was entitled to state my own opinion. I said, "If the ROC government decides to fight, Chairman Chiang will give me orders. In that case, I will follow his orders. But, he did not order me to fight now." Wang said, "Then I will lose face as premier." I was not convinced and said, "I cannot fight. You are not prepared to fight, either. Do you have confidence in winning?" He answered, "We will lose for sure should we fight." I said, "You are telling me to sacrifice the lives of my men for your political life. I cannot do that."<sup>23</sup>

Their political confrontation deepened after that and has never been repaired. Yet, Zhang saved Wang's life when he was shot by the news agency reporter Sun Fengming, who was angry at Wang's compromising foreign policy toward Japan. In Beijing in November 1935, during a photo shoot at the opening ceremony of the Sixth Plenary Session of the Central Executive Committee of the Fourth National Congress of the KMT, Wang was shot and gravely injured. Zhang was also at the photo shoot and saved Wang's life. Zhang states: "I helped Wang Jingwei when he was shot. Someone asked me why I saved Wang. [The answer is simple.] Someone had tried to kill a person at that time. I saw a man shot near me. It did not matter who he was. As I saw a man fall near me, I immediately helped him....It was a natural reaction to help an injured person."<sup>24</sup>

Wang recovered from the injury, but some of the bullets that had remained in his body caused multiple myeloma and paralyzed his legs in 1944. He was treated at the Nagoya Imperial University Hospital in Japan, but died there in November 1944.

## BATTLE OF REHE

Having occupied all of Manchuria, the Kwantung Army advanced to the west to Rehe province (which was abolished and divided in 1955 among the current Hebei province, Liaoning province, and Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region) in 1933. Although Rehe did not geographically belong to China's Northeast, it was politically affiliated with the Northeast because Rehe had been under the jurisdiction of Zhang Zuolin. Therefore, even after Zhang Xueliang had surrendered his power to Chiang Kai-shek's

KMT government in 1928 through the Northeastern Flag Replacement and adopted a new province system, Fengtian (which was renamed as Liaoning), Jilin, and Heilongjiang provinces (formerly called the Three Eastern Provinces) and Rehe province were together referred to as the Four Northeastern Provinces. Taking advantage of this association of Rehe to Northeast China, the Kwantung Army invaded Rehe on February 23. Japan was interested in Rehe because it specialized in producing opium poppies. Zhang Xueliang sent his Northeastern Army to Rehe, but the local commander Tang Yulin was not prepared to confront the Japanese and some soldiers surrendered and others defected. The Kwantung Army occupied the province capital Chengde on March 4. Zhang states:

I was in a difficult position at that time. The Northeastern Army was under my command, but the local commander of Rehe province Tang Yulin and other officers were of the same generation as my father. Tang treated me as if I were a child and refused to listen to me. I ordered him to fight and tried to dismiss him when he refused to follow my orders, but it was too late.<sup>25</sup>

The Fall of Rehe shocked the Chinese. The KMT government sent only a limited armed force of its own and did not help Zhang's Northeastern Army. In fact, the government leaders had no intention of fighting the Japanese. They considered that the government could deflect the criticism from the Chinese insofar as Zhang kept fighting the Japanese. Yet, now that China had lost the Northeast and Rehe to Japan, the KMT government criticized Zhang harshly for not having fought enough. Wang Jingwei's faction especially denounced Zhang vehemently and dubbed him the "Nonresistance General." Zhang's secretary Liu Mingjiu states: "How must Zhang have felt at that time? He could not counterattack because he followed Chiang Kai-shek's order not to counterattack. Yet, all the failures were blamed on Zhang. The stigma of 'Nonresistance General' was unbearable to Zhang. He was a true patriot. Yet people criticized him. How painful must it have been for him?"<sup>26</sup>

In turn, Zhang states: "Chiang Kai-shek and Song Ziwen [Chiang's brother-in-law] visited me after the Fall of Rehe. Chiang said, 'With the loss of Rehe, China now is like a wrecked ship sailing in high waves. The ship will sink if three people are aboard. One must leave the ship.' I said, 'If one must leave, that is me,' and I resigned. I was prepared to be punished. But Chiang did not punish me and suggested that I go abroad on vacation, instead."<sup>27</sup>

## GOING TO EUROPE

Zhang decided to go to Europe and received medical treatment for opium and morphine addictions in Shanghai before the trip. His addictions had worsened as he was depressed by the series of events since the Manchurian Incident. Zhang states: “I had been dealing with extremely difficult work. I could not work without opium, but I decided to cure my addiction before going to Europe. The suffering of opium addiction is beyond anyone’s comprehension. It is truly miserable for a live person to become like a dead person because of opium. I concentrated on my treatment so that I could work on my mission, but it was not easy at all.” After the treatment, Zhang left for Europe in April 1933. He first visited Italy and stayed at the residence of the former Italian minister to China, Count Galeazzo Ciano (March 1903–January 1944, executed), who was married to the eldest daughter of Benito Mussolini, and Zhang often met Mussolini there. (There was a rumor that Zhang had had a dalliance with Ciano’s wife, Countess Edda Ciano in China, but Zhang denied this.) Zhang then visited Germany and met Hermann Göring, but did not meet Adolph Hitler because he was on vacation. Zhang states: “I was influenced by fascism in Europe. I was not sure fascism was applicable to China, but after the trip I began to believe that China needed a strong leader.”<sup>28</sup>

## CHIANG KAI-SHEK’S NEW ANTICOMMUNIST CAMPAIGN

Chiang Kai-shek recalled Zhang from Europe in January 1934, when the civil war between the KMT and CPC had reached a turning point. After the failures in military uprisings by workers in cities, such as the Nanchang Uprising of August 1927 (see Chap. 3), the CPC had retreated to rural areas and changed its strategy to expand its soviet (*lit.*, “council”) bases through the land reform of villages. Then the party established a provisional government of the Soviet Republic of China in Ruijin, Jiangxi province, in January 1931. To counter this, Chiang launched a new anti-communist campaign. His new strategy was not to use his own KMT Army, but to have Zhang’s Northeastern Border Defense Army fight the Red Army, along with the Northwestern Army, led by a local warlord, general Yang Hucheng (November 1893–September 1949; Shaanxi province president, 1930–1933), who had worked for Feng Yuxiang, the powerful Beiyang warlord turned KMT Revolutionary Army (Northwestern Army) leader (see Chap. 4). Therefore, although Zhang requested of

Chiang that he serve Chiang as his secretary (a civilian position) upon returning from Europe, Chiang appointed Zhang deputy commander-in-chief of the United Campaign to Suppress Bandits in Henan, Anhui, and Hubei Provinces in March 1934, instead (the “bandits” referred to communists).<sup>29</sup>

Zhang then settled in Shanghai. He stated in 1990: “After returning from Europe, I did not want to lead an army any more. I wanted to become a principal chamberlain for Master Chiang to make him a strong leader like Mussolini, but he did not approve my request. Master Chiang told me, ‘You must do a good job this time because people are not happy with you [over the Fall of Rehe].’ I asked, ‘What job is most difficult?’ He said, ‘Fighting the CPC is most difficult.’ Thus, I chose that mission. I actually did not want to fight the civil war. I did not want to fight the CPC, but I ended up doing so.”<sup>30</sup>

In total, Chiang mobilized two million men and launched relentless attacks on the Red Army, as well as using every measure to suppress the CPC, including economic blockade. His new anticommunist campaign worked and drove the CPC out of its headquarters in Jiangxi province in October 1934. Chiang incessantly attacked the communists in retreat to the western frontier so that the Red Army was reduced to 8,000 from 86,000 men, when it reached northern Shaanxi province (examined below). Nevertheless, Chiang still ordered Zhang to attack the CPC that had retreated to the western frontier so that Zhang moved part of his Northeastern Army to Xi’an, capital of Shaanxi province. Zhang went to Xi’an, flying an airplane by himself, and met Yang Hucheng in April 1935.<sup>31</sup>

### ESTABLISHMENT OF “SELF-GOVERNING” REGIMES IN NORTHERN CHINA

Meanwhile, after the Tanggu Truce agreement between the KMT Army and the Japanese China Garrison Army (generally known as the “Tianjin Garrison”) in May 1933 that ended the warfare following the Manchurian Incident, the Japanese moved on to control Northern China, including Hebei and Chahar (current eastern Inner Mongolia) provinces. Taking advantage of the demilitarized zone created by the truce and also concluding the Umezu Yoshijirō–He Yingqin agreement and the Doihara Kenji–Qin Dechun agreement in June 1935, the Japanese Army established a Chinese “self-governing” regime in Hebei with the local Chinese politician Yin Rugeng (1885–December 1947) as governor in November 1935: The East Hebei Anti-Communist Defense Self-Government. This



was part of the Japanese Army's plan to create a "second Manchukuo" in Northern China, the so-called Self-Governing Movement in Five Provinces of Northern China.<sup>32</sup>

The Umezu–He agreement was actually a conspiracy of the Japanese China Garrison Army chief of staff, Colonel Sakai Takashi (October 1887–September 1946; lieutenant-general, executed). His supervisor, the army commander, lieutenant-general Umezu Yoshijirō (January 1882–January 1949, army general), was not informed of this agreement in advance. Umezu was known to have been an atypical general. He was a moderate and anti-right-wing (his disposition was benevolent and thoughtful). In contrast to the Kwantung Army, the Japanese China Garrison Army usually did not take a hardline policy toward China and proactively worked out ceasefires and peaceful solutions with China until it was disbanded in 1937 with the outbreak of the Marco Polo Bridge Incident.<sup>33</sup>

### HIROTA THREE PRINCIPLES

Also, in October 1935, Japanese foreign minister Hirota Kōki presented a three-point demand to China: (1) to control anti-Japanese movements; (2) to de facto approve the independence of Manchukuo; and (3) to cooperate in eradicating the threat of communist forces (the so-called Hirota Three Principles). In order to avoid a head-on military collision with the Japanese Army, Chiang Kai-shek established a Chinese "self-governing" regime in Hebei and Chahar, with a local warlord Song Zheyuan (October 1885–April 1940, one of the Five Tigers of Feng Yuxiang, became KMT National Revolutionary Army general) as chairman, in December 1935: The Hebei-Chahar Political Committee. Accordingly, Chiang had the KMT Central Army withdraw from the self-governing region. Consequently, a power vacuum was created in Northern China, rendering the region vulnerable to Japanese occupation.<sup>34</sup>

Chiang Kai-shek summoned Zhang, who had been engaged in the anticommunist campaign in Wuhan, the capital of Hubei province, to Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan province, and explained that the KMT had lost control of Northern China (Hebei and Chahar) to Japan through the Umezu Yoshijirō–He Yingqin agreement and the Doihara Kenji–Qin Dechun agreement of June 1935. Then Zhang requested, as a demonstration of his opposition to the agreements, that he be discharged from active duty and sent abroad. Nevertheless, Chiang sent him to Xi'an, instead. Zhang wrote in his "Record of Repentance for the Xi'an Incident" ("Record of Repentance" hereafter): "As the CPC had retreated to

Shaanxi, I predicted that the campaign to suppress bandits would be over for a while. I thus remained in Hubei and was engaged in military training there. Then, unexpectedly, I was ordered to go to Shaanxi. I had just requested from Master Chiang in Emei [in Sichuan province] another trip aboard.”<sup>35</sup>

Chiang appointed Zhang deputy commander-in-chief and acting commander-in-chief of the Northwestern Campaign to Suppress Bandits in October 1935 and had him engage in the anticommunist campaign in Shaanxi, in collaboration with Yang Hucheng, who was appointed KMT Seventeenth Route Army commander and Northwestern Pacification Public Station director. Zhang transferred his headquarters to Xi’an (his Western-style public residence in Xi’an is currently open to the public as the Xi’an Incident Memorial Museum) and relocated his Northeastern Army in exile to the western frontier region of Shaanxi province. The army personnel included such young officers as Ying Detian, Sun Mingjiu, and Miao Jianqiu, who would play principal roles in the Xi’an Incident. Along with the army, Zhang’s brain trust—the intellectual and political leaders of the Northeastern People’s Association for Anti-Japanese National Salvation, such as Wang Zhuoran and Gao Chongmin who had based their activities in Beijing—also moved to Xi’an, making the capital of Shaanxi province a new stronghold of the anti-Japanese movement. In hindsight, Chiang was responsible for bringing Zhang closer to Yang Hucheng, which led to the Xi’an Incident.<sup>36</sup>

### CPC’S RETREAT TO SHAANXI: THE LONG MARCH

In turn, as the KMT Army had encircled the central district of the Soviet Republic of China in Ruijin, the Central Committee of the CPC (CCCPC) and the Red Army had set out for the frontier region in October 1934. This massive retreat, involving more than 86,000 men in total, marked the beginning of the Long March. The CPC was dominated by “internationalists” (the “Twenty-Eight Bolsheviks”) who had studied at the Moscow Sun Yat-sen University. The group was led by Wang Ming (real name, Chen Shaoyu; May 1904–March 1974; CCCPC acting general-secretary, 1931–1932), who was the Chinese representative to the Third Communist International (“Comintern” hereafter), controlled by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). Wang’s successor, Bo Gu (real name, Qin Bangxian; June 1907–April 1946; CCCPC

general-secretary, 1934–1935), initiated the Long March with Otto Braun (Chinese name, Li De; September 1900–August 1974; German communist, CPC military adviser sent by the Comintern), who had taken over the CPC Army command from Mao Zedong. At the departure of the Long March, the party organized a leadership team called the “three-person group,” made up of Bo Gu, Otto Braun, and Zhou Enlai. Bo made political decisions and Braun made military decisions, whereas Zhou made military preparations but could not participate in all the decision-making.<sup>37</sup>

### ZUNYI CONFERENCE

During the Long March, Zhou clashed with Braun on military strategies and their controversies continued until the CPC Army arrived at Zunyi, the second largest city in Guizhou province, in January 1935, and the party held an expanded conference of the Politburo there: The Zunyi Conference. The meeting disbanded the “three-person group,” elected Mao Zedong a member of the Standing Committee of the Politburo, and acknowledged Zhou and Zhu De (December 1886–July 1976; KMT Army commander turned CPC Army commander) as supreme military leaders, with Zhou being the final decision-maker. After the conference, the CCCPC made Mao Zhou’s military assistant and also established the troika leadership of Mao, Zhou, and Wang Jiaxiang (August 1906–January 1974; “Twenty-Eight Bolsheviks” member turned nationalist, PRC’s first ambassador to the Soviet Union). The Zunyi Conference marked a critical turning point in the history of the CPC, as nationalists—such as Mao, Zhou, and Zhu—won the power struggle within the CPC over the internationalists, who were labeled as “radical leftists.”<sup>38</sup>

With the new leadership, the CPC Army continued its Long March and arrived in Wuqi, in northern Shaanxi province, in October 1935, where the party declared the completion of the 8,000-mile Long March. The number for the army had been reduced to about 8,000 from 86,000 when they departed Guizhou. In November, the CCCPC held a Politburo meeting and established the Northeastern Revolutionary Military Affairs Committee with Mao Zedong as president and Zhou and Peng Dehuai (October 1898–November 1974, marshal) as vice presidents. This meeting established the leadership of Mao over Zhou. Then the CCCPC moved its headquarters to Wayaobao in northern Shaanxi in December.<sup>39</sup>

## CPC'S NEW PROPAGANDA STRATEGY: "AUGUST 1 DECLARATION"

During the Long March, the CPC launched a new strategy to strengthen its political propaganda. It invoked the sentiment of Chinese nationalism and disseminated slogans such as "Let the Chinese people not fight among themselves" and "Let the Chinese people unite and fight against Japan." As part of this propaganda offensive, on August 1, 1935, the CCCPC issued a statement, "To Inform Comrades in China of Anti-Japanese Resistance for National Salvation," calling for the KMT to suspend the civil war and engage in united action for anti-Japanese resistance. This statement, referred to as the "August 1 Declaration," marked a decisive change in the CPC policy from its soviet-stage revolution (creating local councils of workers) to the formation of a national front against Japan.<sup>40</sup>

Nevertheless, the August 1 Declaration was not issued by Mao Zedong (or other "nationalists" in the CPC), as has generally been thought. CPC representatives to the Comintern actually issued the declaration in the name of the Soviet Republic of China and the CCCPC. A leader of the "Twenty-Eight Bolsheviks," Wang Ming (Chen Shaoyu), submitted the draft declaration at the Seventh Congress of the Comintern in Moscow in July–August 1935. Then, with the consent of Joseph Stalin and Comintern general-secretary Georgi Dimitrov (June 1882–July 1949; first communist leader of Bulgaria), the draft was adopted by the Comintern Executive Committee. Mao Zedong and other CPC leaders were marching through northern Sichuan province at that time and were not aware of this declaration when it was announced. The CCCPC in northern Shaanxi province learned of the declaration in November 1935 from Zhang Hao (Lin Yuying), who had been sent from Moscow. This was the first communication between the CCCPC and the Comintern after it had been disrupted for a year.<sup>41</sup>

The KMT also acquired a copy of the declaration via Paris and Chiang Kai-shek distributed copies to officers of the Northeastern Army and the Northwestern Army (Seventeenth Route Army) to study. By this declaration, the Comintern intended to end the civil war and "pressure" Chiang Kai-shek to collaborate with the CPC as an integral part of the national government of China, rather than as a mere local regime. In turn, Mao Zedong could not accept the August 1 Declaration as it was, because Chiang Kai-shek was after all the CPC's archenemy, who had massacred communists and driven them to the western frontier. Thus, the CCCPC

issued a declaration in November, entitled “The annexation of Northern China by Japanese imperialists and the abandonment of Northern China and [the whole of] China by Chiang Kai-shek.” The declaration called Chiang a “traitor” and an “enemy of the people” and excluded him from the proposed national united front against Japan. Thus, while the Comintern took the position of “pressuring Chiang and anti-Japan” (to coerce Chiang to take an anti-Japan policy), the CPC’s position remained “anti-Chiang and anti-Japan.” As soon as Mao Zedong returned to the CPC’s headquarters in Wayaobao, northern Shaanxi (the location of the CCCPC at that time; it moved to Yan’an in January 1937), the party held an expanded conference of the Politburo in December and decided to launch its Eastern Expedition against the Japanese.<sup>42</sup>

### WAYAobao CONFERENCE

The Wayaobao Conference took place at a critical time when the CPC priority shifted from the internal revolutionary war to national resistance against Japan. With success in the Long March, the CPC’s declaration for anti-Japanese national salvation had a huge impact on the Chinese people at large and gained their support. This episode indicates how the internationalists (“radical leftists”) within the CPC, such as Wang Ming and Bo Gu, under the guidance of the Comintern, made policy for the party as of 1935. It also suggests that the Soviet Union was willing to make a deal with Chiang Kai-shek, who was secretly negotiating with Joseph Stalin to form a military alliance with the Soviet Union (see Chap. 6). A Japanese China specialist, Kishida Gorō, writes that, as Stalin would abandon the Communist Party of Spain to Francisco Franco at the end of the Spanish civil war and compromise with Nazi Germany, Stalin was willing to abandon the CPC for the sake of his world strategy. For Stalin, the legitimate Chinese government to negotiate with remained the KMT government, not the CPC. The disparate stances between the Comintern/the Soviet Union and the CPC on Chiang would gravely affect the outcome of the Xi’an Incident and the Chinese civil war, as well as the fate of China to the present.<sup>43</sup>

### DECEMBER 9 STUDENT MOVEMENT

Being upset with Chiang Kai-shek’s compromising stance toward Japan that acquiesced in Japan’s control over China’s North, including Hebei and Chahar, students at Tsinghua University and Yenching University

in Beijing organized a massive protest demonstration on December 9, 1935, opposing Chiang's "Quelling Internal Enemy Before Expelling External Enemy" policy and calling for a ceasefire in the civil war and united anti-Japanese resistance. They also demanded freedom of association and speech and suspension of the arrest of patriots: the "December 9 Student Movement." The student demonstrations spread throughout other cities and caused a public outcry. The KMT government suppressed the movement by force. The students sang the March of the Volunteers during the demonstrations, which would become the national anthem of the PRC. This student movement took place in response to the CPC call for a voluntary mobilization of all Chinese people into anti-Japanese resistance.<sup>44</sup>

### NORTHEASTERN ARMY AND THE RED ARMY

Unexpectedly, Zhang's Northeastern Army, relocated to Xi'an, the Shaanxi province capital, met with strong resistance from the Red Army and was defeated in local battles in September and November 1935, incurring the loss of two division heads and the capture of 3,700 men as prisoners of war. The CPC did not miss this chance and worked on the captives from the Northeastern Army. These soldiers had been driven out of Northeast China by the Kwantung Army in 1931. They wanted to go home and fight the Japanese rather than fighting the communists. The CPC appealed to the sentiments of these homesick soldiers and launched a campaign: "Let's return to the homeland." The party officers also lectured the Northeastern Army prisoners of war about the need for anti-Japanese resistance and sent them back to their military bases, providing them with travel expenses for their return. The CPC propaganda strategy worked and had significant impact on the Northeastern Army men so that they lost their will to fight against the CPC. On this, the educator turned Zhang's former Administrative Office head Lu Guangji states:

Chiang Kai-shek had told us that the CPC Army was no match for us and that it would take only three months or half a year to defeat the army. However, once we began fighting them, we realized that it was not that easy. The situation worsened when we transferred to Xi'an and we incurred sizable losses, including that of two division commanders. Some even feared that the Northeastern Army would be totally destroyed before being able to go home.<sup>45</sup>

Consequently, Northeastern Army officers began to criticize Zhang who had blindly obeyed Chiang's order to fight the communists. Zhang states: "My men wanted to go home, where they must fight the Japanese Army. Therefore, they did not want to fight the Red Army in Shaanxi and lose their forces there. I was in a very difficult position. My men vehemently criticized me, saying, 'You can simply obey Chiang Kai-shek, but what about us? We want to go home.' I was at a loss." Zhang also wrote in his Record of Repentance:

The Northeastern Army's defeat twice by the Red Army multiplied my psychological pains. This reinforced my concerns that superb officers had to be sacrificed for the civil war and that the military power of the communists should not be overlooked. This thought shook my heart. For this, I made up my mind that the matter of the CPC had to be settled in a peaceful manner....My men confronted me, saying, "You have forgotten the revenge for your father. You are ignoring our mission of anti-Japanese resistance and are blindly obeying your superior for the sake of your promotion. While our true mission is anti-Japanese resistance, you are not concerned about the sacrifice of our men and are driving people in the Northeast into destruction."<sup>46</sup>

Zhang began to grope for the possibility of a peaceful settlement of the civil war with the CPC. Zhang states: "The CPC was very good at capturing the hearts of the Chinese people. The mood for anti-Japanese resistance was ripe in China at that time, but the KMT government was still avoiding confrontation with Japan. The CPC capitalized on the situation and succeeded in grasping the hearts of the Chinese people."<sup>47</sup>

### CPC'S INFILTRATION IN NORTHEASTERN ARMY

Actually, CPC operations had infiltrated deep into the Northeastern Army. For instance, Zhang's secretary, Li Tiancai (1866–1927, official year of death), was a member of the CPC and had worked for CPC cofounder Li Dazhao. Li Tiancai was arrested by Zhang Zuolin in April 1927, along with Li Dazhao and others, and was considered to have been executed along with them. Actually, Li Tiancai alone escaped execution because he was born in Fengtian, the hometown of Zhang Zuolin. Afterward, Li Tiancai worked for Zhang Xueliang under his supervision, while the CPC worked on Zhang Xueliang through Li Tiancai. The CPC also sent a group of its elite members, led by the ingenious organizer Deng Fa (March 1906–April 1946), to the officer training school of Zhang

Xueliang. Consequently, the sentiment for anti-Japanese resistance rapidly spread among officers of the Northeastern Army and by the end of 1935 Zhang's close aides were dominated by progressive officers who advocated "anti-Japan and accept communists."<sup>48</sup>

### CPC'S INFILTRATION OF NORTHWESTERN ARMY

The CPC had also infiltrated the Northwestern Army and worked from within. While Yang Hucheng's Northwestern Army was inferior to the Northeastern Army in terms of equipment and training, his men had high morale and a strong sense of defense of their home territory. A native of Shaanxi, General Yang was no ordinary local warlord, but a shrewd politician. Having witnessed the outcry of the students and Chinese people during the December 9 Student Movement of 1935, General Yang began to doubt Chiang's anticommunist campaign and became more lenient with the CPC. In addition, although Yang did not believe in communism himself, he collaborated with the CPC, as a self-defense tactic not to deplete his army by engaging in Chiang Kai-shek's anticommunist campaign. Therefore, there were many communists within the Northwestern Army so that the CPC's negotiations with Yang proceeded along with those with Zhang Xueliang.<sup>49</sup>

For instance, Nan Hanchen (1895–January 1967), a CPC member since 1926 and a secret military agent of Zhou Enlai, had worked as Yang Hucheng's chief secretary in 1931. Nan engaged in "rear operations against the enemy" and excelled in these operations. With another CCCPC Northern Bureau agent, Wang Shiyong, Nan began negotiations with Yang Hucheng for united anti-Japanese resistance in November 1935. Through the good offices of Nan, Wang Shiyong met General Yang again in Xi'an in late December 1935 and agreed in principle on united anti-Japanese resistance. (Nan would become the first president of the People's Bank of China and played a significant role in building up post-war Sino-Japanese trade relations, only to be persecuted in 1966 at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution.) In addition, Mao Zedong and Peng Dehuai sent Wang Feng to Xi'an in early December and had him consult with General Yang on anti-Japanese resistance. Mao again sent his secretary, Zhang Wenbin, to Xi'an in September 1936 and had him stay there, as CPC Army representative, even after the agreement was confirmed. Zhang Wenbin's front position was Yang's Seventeenth Army General Headquarters Political Office chief secretary.<sup>50</sup>



The penetration of the CPC into the Northeastern Army as well as into the Seventeenth Route Army indicates that Zhou Enlai had skillfully coordinated the CPC's clandestine operations against both armies from the CPC headquarters in Wayaobao and elsewhere. Thus, while the ceasefire agreement was concluded between the Northwestern Army and the Red Army, Zhang Xueliang contacted the CPC in the fall of 1935 and began negotiations for a ceasefire between the Northeastern Army and the Red Army. A secret alliance between the Northeastern Army and the Northwestern Army concerning ending the civil war with the CPC was about to be formed. Thus, the die was cast for the Xi'an Incident.<sup>51</sup>

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## Eve of the Xi'an Incident: Zhou Enlai Meets Zhang Xueliang

Having been driven out of his homeland by the Japanese Kwantung Army, Zhang Xueliang, the young marshal of the Northeastern Army, surrendered his power to Chiang Kai-shek's Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) government in Nanjing and engaged in Chiang's Bandit (Communist) Suppression Campaign during the civil war between the KMT and the Communist Party of China (CPC). While Chiang was preoccupied with eradicating communists under the slogan of "Quelling Internal Enemy Before Expelling External Enemy," the CPC appealed to the nation to stop fighting the civil war and to form a united front for anti-Japanese resistance (August 1 Declaration). Chiang even banned the anti-Japanese movement, but intellectuals and student leaders in major cities launched massive demonstrations calling for united anti-Japanese resistance. China was in turmoil with contending factions and forces within and without the government. The KMT government had earlier formed a united front with the CPC against the Beiyang warlords in 1924 (the Northern Expedition); however, it collapsed in 1927 when Chiang implemented mass terror of communists and the civil war between the KMT and the CPC broke out. Zhang became convinced that the KMT government should end the civil war and form a united front with the CPC again, this time against the Japanese. This chapter examines how Zhang contacted the CPC and negotiated with Zhou Enlai for a ceasefire between his Northeastern Army and the Red Army, as the precursor to the Xi'an Incident.

## NORTHEASTERN PEOPLE'S ASSOCIATION FOR ANTI- JAPANESE NATIONAL SALVATION

Zhang's brain trust, such as the president of the Fengtian Chamber of Agriculture, Gao Chongmin, and the president of the Fengtian Chamber of Commerce, Du Zhongyuan (see Chap. 4), were patriotic activists. In July 1929 they founded the Northeastern People's Foreign Affairs Association in order to launch propaganda operations for the Great Alliance against Imperialism that was an outside organization affiliated with the CPC. Meanwhile, the president of the Fengtian Chamber of Education, Wang Huayi, had engaged in underground activities of the CPC and in April 1930 the CPC Manchuria-province Committee organized underground members for the Great Alliance against Imperialism. Then in September 1931, Gao, Du, and Wang, along with other close aides of Zhang, including Lu Guangji and Wang Zhuoran, founded the Northeastern People's Association for Anti-Japanese National Salvation, for which Zhang donated 300,000 yuan. Gao became Standing Committee member and General Affairs Department deputy director, while Du became Standing Committee member and Political Department deputy director, and Wang Huayi became Standing Committee member and Military Department director.<sup>1</sup>

In 1935 Gao Chongmin escaped the search by the KMT to the British concession in Shanghai, contacted the CPC there, and read Marxist literature. He then visited Zhang Xueliang in Xi'an in the winter of that year, advised him to collaborate with the CPC for the sake of anti-Japanese resistance, and also engaged in propaganda operations for anti-Japanese national salvation toward the Northeastern Army officers. Then in March/April 1936, Gao published a secret pamphlet entitled "*Huolu*" (A Way Out) with his colleagues, calling on people in the Northeast and the Northwest to unite in order to engage in anti-Japanese resistance together. In turn, Zhang visited Shanghai in the spring of 1936 and secretly met Du Zhongyan who had been arrested by the KMT in Shanghai. In their meeting, Du urged Zhang to cooperate with the CPC for practical reasons, not necessarily ideologically, for the sake of forming a united front against the Japanese, and also advised him to plead with Chiang Kai-shek to end the civil war against the communists for the sake of launching a national anti-Japanese resistance.<sup>2</sup>

## ZHANG'S INITIAL CONTACTS WITH THE CPC

Zhang described how he initiated contact with the CPC in the fall of 1935 in his “Record of Repentance for the Xi’an Incident” (“Record of Repentance” hereafter):

The CPC’s call for suspending the civil war and forming a united anti-Japanese resistance touched not only my heart deeply but also the hearts of most of the men in the Northeastern Army. The CPC’s slogan had especially deeply penetrated into the hearts of younger officers to the extent that the bandit suppression campaign became no longer feasible. Reflecting that the poor judgment on my part had caused the failure, I sought for advice from many people and was recommended to get in touch with the CPC, cooperate with Yang Hucheng...and launch anti-Japanese resistance together....But nobody in my army had associated with the party in the past. Then I remembered Li Du and sent a messenger to Shanghai and asked for his advice. Li in turn sent a party representative called Liu Ding. Liu said, “I once joined the CPC. I was arrested by the CPC and am now on parole. I can relay your message to the CPC Shanghai head but I am not a plenipotentiary of the party.” Then, the CPC notified me, “We would like to meet you, but we cannot go to Xi’an.” Thus I went to Shanghai and met a man at a restaurant in the western suburb. (He did not give his name, but Liu told me that it appeared to be Pan Hannian.) The meeting however did not achieve anything conclusive.<sup>3</sup>

Li Du was a Northeastern Army general, who had fought the Kwantung Army during the Manchurian Incident, and wanted to go back to Northern Manchuria in order to fight the Japanese. In the fall of 1935, Li was serving in the Northeastern Volunteer Army created by the CPC in Shanghai and organized the Chinese National Armed Self-Defense Committee with Sun Yat-sen’s widow, Song Qingling (January 1893–May 1981). In turn, Liu Ding (January 1902–July 1986, North China University president) was an underground member of the CPC in Shanghai. From this time, he became a de facto CPC principal representative at Zhang’s Northeastern Army Headquarters in Xi’an and worked closely with young officers there. Further, Pan Hannian (January 1906–April 1977) was another underground member of the CPC. Pan joined the CPC in 1927 and engaged in intelligence operations. He escaped the Shanghai Massacre of April 1927 to Wuhan, with Zhou Enlai. Meanwhile, Zhang also instructed his Northeastern Army (KMT 67th Army) combat commander Wang Yizhe (1896–February 1937), stationed in the army front headquarters

in Luochuan, located in between Xi'an and Yan'an (113 miles north of Xi'an and 75 miles south of Yan'an), to contact the CPC at the warfront.<sup>4</sup>

### CPC LAUNCHES EASTERN EXPEDITION AGAINST JAPANESE

Meanwhile, having established its headquarters in Wayaobao in northern Shaanxi at the end of 1935, the CPC launched its Eastern Expedition to drive out the Japanese, as well as operations vis-à-vis the Northeastern Army to form a united front for anti-Japanese resistance, at the beginning of 1936. The CPC drew up a new platform: (1) to declare war against Japan; (2) to repeal all of the unequal treaties between China and Japan; (3) to mobilize anti-Japanese resistance forces immediately, (4) to have all the Chinese people participate in the armed conflict against Japan; and (5) to establish a national defense government and a united army against Japan. Accordingly, the Red Army, led by Mao Zedong, set out on the Eastern Expedition and crossed the Yellow River and advanced to Shanxi province in February 1936.<sup>5</sup>

Hearing the news, Zhang flew to Taiyuan, capital of Shanxi province, for operational meetings with the Beiyang warlord turned KMT Shanxi Army general Yan Xishan (October 1883–May 1960; premier and defense minister of Taiwan) and KMT Central Army general Chen Cheng (January 1898–March 1965; Whampoa Military Academy graduate, premier and vice president of Taiwan), who was sent from Nanjing. Being the closest aide of Chiang Kai-shek, Chen urged Yan and Zhang to mobilize their armies to counterattack the Red Army. Nevertheless, Yan, who had excelled in fighting wars at the expense of other armies, was reluctant to mobilize his own army to fight the Red Army. Zhang was also not interested in fighting the CPC and stated his opinion to Yan and Chen:

Our government has had a wrong idea since 1918. We had thought that we could save our nation only if we appeal to the League of Nations or conclude peace treaties with imperial powers. Now it has become evident that such wishful thinking was a mere illusion. We must rely on ourselves in order to save our nation. We must not rely on other nations. I sincerely hope that General Yan will not repeat the failure of my army and will engage in anti-Japanese resistance, along with other patriotic armies in the country.<sup>6</sup>

### CPC APPROACHES ZHANG XUELIANG

Simultaneously, the CPC activated its move toward Zhang Xueliang through the Northeastern Army Operations Committee that was created at the Wayaobao Conference in December 1935 (see Chap. 4), with Zhou

Enlai as secretary and Ye Jianying (April 1897–October 1986; marshal, PRC defense minister) as deputy secretary. (Zhou and Ye had known each other from the time they taught at Whampoa Military Academy.) While the Politburo and the Red Army set out on the Eastern Expedition, the party left Zhou, Bo Gu (Qin Bangxian), and Deng Fa at Wayaobao and had them establish the Central Bureau (with Zhou as secretary) and take charge of the rear operations vis-à-vis the Northeastern Army. A breakthrough in the rear operations came in January 1936. Earlier in October 1935, the Red Army had captured the Northeastern Army 107th Division 619th Regiment commander, Gao Fuyuan (October 1900–February 1937), in northern Shaanxi in the Battle of Yulin. Gao received “education” at the Prisoners of War Training Center in Bao’an for about two months and then requested the Central Committee of the CPC (CCCPC) Liaison Bureau director, Li Kenong, that he be returned to his army so that he could persuade Zhang Xueliang to fight the Japanese along with the Red Army.<sup>7</sup>

Li Kenong (September 1899–February 1962, PRC’s first vice foreign minister) was Zhou Enlai’s secret intelligence agent and became CCCPC Liaison Bureau director at the end of the Long March. According to the official Chinese records, Li briefed Gao’s proposal to Zhou, who immediately consented to it. Thus, Gao left Wayaobao in early January 1936 and reported to Zhang Xueliang (or Wang Yizhe) in Luochuan. Zhang in turn instructed Gao to go back and ask the CPC to send its official representative for formal negotiations. Gao reported back to the Red Army, stationed in Ganquan, on January 16 and the CCCPC immediately decided to send Li Kenong to Luochuan. Thus, Gao worked as liaison between Zhang and the Red Army from that time on, but would be condemned to death and executed in February 1937 in the aftermath of the assassination of Wang Yizhe (see Chap. 8).<sup>8</sup>

### ZHANG XUELIANG MEETS LI KENONG

According to the official Chinese records, Li Kenong left for Luochuan on January 19, 1936, and talked with Zhang Xueliang for about three hours on January 20. At the meeting, Zhang offered to make every effort to establish a national defense government and also to restore trade with the Red Army. Li sent a telegram to Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, and Peng Dehuai (October 1898–November 1974; PRC marshal and defense minister, disagreed with Mao about the Great Leap Forward, lost power, and died from persecution) from Luochuan on January 21 and returned to a soviet district. The CCCPC sent Li again to Luochuan on February 10,



for negotiations with Wang Yizhe and Zhang. Before Li's departure, Zhou visited him, briefed him on his mission in Luochuan, and told him not to fail. The mission had two objectives: negotiations for anti-Japanese resistance and also for economic trade.<sup>9</sup>

### FIRST CEASEFIRE TALKS BETWEEN THE CPC AND THE NORTHEASTERN ARMY

On February 21, Zhou Enlai sent the first official CPC delegation to the Northeastern Army to Luochuan, consisting of Li Kenong, CCCPC Confiscation Committee group leader Qian Zhiguang (1904/1905–February 1994; Ministry of Economy Foreign Trade Bureau director in 1936), and others, accompanied by Gao Fuyuan. They arrived at Luochuan on February 25 and negotiated with Wang Yizhe first. Qian specifically requested provisions of food and goods for the Red Army and both sides reached a partial five-point verbal agreement. This marked the first ceasefire talks between the CPC and the Northeastern Army. Then, on March 4, Zhang Xueliang arrived at Luochuan and talked with Li Kenong at the dawn of March 5. Zhang stated his opinion candidly that national anti-Japanese resistance would require cooperation with Chiang Kai-shek because he mostly monopolized national power in China and that Chiang could decide for anti-Japanese resistance. Both sides agreed that the CPC would send its plenipotentiary, preferably Mao Zedong or Zhou Enlai, to Yan'an for a formal meeting with Zhang (Yan'an was under the control of Zhang Xueliang at that time).<sup>10</sup>

Zhang wrote about his meeting with Li Kenong in his Record of Repentance:

I received a telegram from Wang Yizhe that the CPC had sent a responsible representative to his division and that this representative wished to meet me.... I flew to Luochuan and met a man called Li Kenong. I did not know his position in the party at that time. The conditions Li presented was basically same as those that the CPC presented to me later. I told him, "If you are sincere, I will pass along your conditions to the KMT government." But I did not know whether he had the capacity to represent the CPC and suggested to him to send a party representative such as Mao Zedong or Zhou Enlai. Then, Li said, "The proposal I presented to you has already been approved by a plenary session of the CPC. If you are sincere, I will ask Mao Zedong or Zhou Enlai to meet you." Li immediately returned to Shaanxi and replied, "Zhou Enlai wishes to meet you. Please decide the date and

place.” Initially I did not know what to do because I was not sure if Zhou Enlai would really come to see me. I even thought of capturing him.... But, since the CPC had declared anti-Japanese resistance for the sake of China, I decided that I should welcome Zhou with fairness and sincerity.... Thus, I resolutely replied, “I promise to meet Zhou Enlai” and instructed army division head Zhou Fucheng to receive Zhou politely.<sup>11</sup>

Zhang requested a highest-ranking official of the CPC, such as Mao Zedong or Zhou Enlai, in order for his negotiations to be credible. Li sent a telegram to the CCCPC, which instructed him to report at the war-front in Shilou on March 16, because Zhou Enlai had headed to Shilou to join Mao Zedong and Luo Fu (real name, Zhang Wentian; August 1900–July 1976; one of the “Twenty-Eight Bolsheviks” turned nationalist, Propaganda Department head, 1937–1942, CCCPC head, 1935–1943) and to attend a CCCPC Politburo meeting there. The meeting immediately decided to send Zhou to Yan’an as CPC plenipotentiary to negotiate with Zhang. Thus, the secret meeting between Zhang and Zhou was arranged, which set the stage for the Xi’an Incident. Not only the accurate content of this meeting but also the date of the meeting were unknown previously, and some studies have suggested that it took place in February 1936. It was not until 1989 when the first edition of the Official Biography and the Chronology of Zhou Enlai were published that the correct date and the content become publicly known.<sup>12</sup>

### FIRST ZHOU–ZHANG MEETING

On April 7, Zhou Enlai, accompanied by Li Kenong, left Wayaobao and headed to Yan’an, carrying wireless devices. Zhou met Zhang Xueliang at the church in Yan’an on the evening of April 9. Zhang’s right-hand man in the Northeastern Army, Sun Mingjiu (1909–2000, see Chap. 7), accompanied Zhang and was present at the first Zhang–Zhou meeting. However, all of the documents and photographs from those days were confiscated during the Cultural Revolution—Sun was persecuted during the Cultural Revolution because he had worked for the Wang Jingwei regime of the KMT–Republic of China (ROC) government in Nanjing (see Chap. 8). The only thing Sun managed to keep was a pocket watch that Zhang had given him. Sun stated in his interview in Shanghai in 1990:

April 9, 1936 is a day I will never forget as long as I live. We departed Luochuan on April 8 and headed to Yan’an. Zhang Xueliang flew his airplane

himself. Zhang, Liu Ding, who was sent from the CPC, combat commander Wang Yizhe, and I were aboard the aircraft. We arrived in the afternoon on April 8 and stayed at a Catholic church in Yan'an. We then made preparations to receive CPC delegation. Next day, I received Zhou Enlai at the church gate....The main subject of the talk between Zhang Xueliang and Zhou Enlai was how to end the civil war. They agreed on this objective, but they differed on the method. The CPC's position at that time was "Anti-Chiang, Anti-Japan," whereas Zhang's was "Support Chiang, Anti-Japan." Zhang's ideas appeared to have a great impact on the CPC. Zhou said that he could not decide on this alone and that he must seek instructions from the CPC Politburo. He also said, "If you work from within and we work from without, it is possible to end [Chiang's] bandit suppression campaign, suspend the civil war, and launch united anti-Japanese resistance."<sup>13</sup>

At the meeting, Zhou told Zhang that he had attended the Yingang Academy in Yinzhou (current Tieling, Liaoning province) during his childhood and that he used to pass by the backyard of Zhang's residence in Fengtian (Shenyang) when he was attending the upper-level division of the Fengtian Sixth Two-tier Elementary School. Zhou then requested Zhang's assistance with equipment and clothes, while Zhang requested from Zhou a change in CPC's position to a more conciliating "pressuring Chiang, anti-Japan" from "anti-Chiang, anti-Japan." The church where the meeting was held was turned into the Lu Xun Institute of Performing Arts later.<sup>14</sup>

### ZHANG'S IMPRESSIONS OF ZHOU

On his first meeting with Zhou, Zhang states: "I had already known the name of Zhou Enlai since the time at Nankai University. I knew of him, not as a politician, but as a student actor of Peking Opera. He was a great female-role performer. I did not have any particular personal association with him at time and I had no idea that he would become a politician like that later.... During the first meeting in 1936, Zhou impressed me with a deep understanding of the situation and a quick response. His talk was to the point without many words. We hit a chord right away and talked as if we were old-time friends....We were alike....He was extremely capable and knowledgeable."<sup>15</sup>

Zhang's statement here gives the impression that both Zhang and Zhou were students at Nankai Middle School, but Zhang was not. Zhang's association with the school was that he had listened to a lecture of Nankai

Middle School principal Zhang Boling and was deeply influence by this Navy officer turned patriotic educator (see Chap. 4). On this, the Official Biography of Zhou Enlai reads thus:

As soon as Zhou met Zhang, he said to Zhang, “I grew up in the Northeast.” Then, Zhang said, “I know. Master Zhang Boling had told me.” Zhou felt very strange and asked Zhang, “Why is Zhang Boling your teacher?” Then, Zhang stated, “I used to inhale opium and inject morphine, but I quit them on the advice of Master Zhang Boling. I therefore respect Zhang Boling as my mentor. You and I have the same mentor.” Thus, they hit it off in a friendly and relaxed atmosphere. The two talked frankly and congenially.<sup>16</sup>

### ZHANG’S ACCOUNT OF THE MEETING

Zhang describes the meeting in his Record of Repentance:

One night, I met Zhou Enlai at a Catholic church in Yan’an and talked for a few hours. I told Zhou that the central government has already begun preparations for anti-Japanese resistance. Master Chiang is devoting himself to the nation. Our discussion did not end. Zhou asked me about the Hirota Three Principles (see Chap. 5). I told him that Master Chiang would never accept them....Zhou acknowledged that we must support Master Chiang’s leadership for the sake of anti-Japanese resistance, but he still questioned Chiang’s henchmen’s positions. I stressed, “They are long-time subordinates of Master Chiang. Once the central government decides for anti-Japanese resistance, how would they dare to destroy the CPC that...is most enthusiastic about anti-Japanese resistance?” Thus, the CPC agreed that under the umbrella of anti-Japanese the party shall restore the relationship with the KMT and accept Chiang’s leadership.<sup>17</sup>

“A summary of the concrete conditions we discussed is:

1. The CPC armed forces shall be incorporated into the KMT Army and receive joint military training and prepare for anti-Japanese resistance war;
2. The KMT shall guarantee that it will not violate this agreement and will not demobilize the CPC Army;
3. The CPC armed forces in Jiangxi province, Hainan Island, and Dabie Mountains shall also be incorporated into the KMT Army;
4. The KMT shall abolish the name of the Red Army and treat the army equally in the KMT Army;

5. The CPC shall not engage in propaganda operations in the army;
6. The CPC shall stop all of its conflicts;
7. The KMT shall release CPC members, shall not attack its leaders, and allow them free activities;
8. The KMT shall allow non-military CPC members to reside in northern Shaanxi province;
9. Upon the victory in the anti-Japanese resistance war, the KMT shall allow CPC Army veterans to go home, as it does for KMT Army veterans;
10. Upon the victory in the anti-Japanese resistance war, the KMT shall acknowledge the CPC as a legal political party, as in democratic countries such as England and the United States.”<sup>18</sup>

Zhang also writes:

Zhou also proposed to me, “If you doubt that we are faithful to our words, I would like you to direct and supervise us so that you can reprimand us at any time.” I readily accepted the conditions and told him, “I carry on my shoulders both my family’s revenge and our nation’s crisis. I am second to none when it comes to anti-Japanese resistance. Having a superior, I cannot make a decision myself, but I will advise Master Chiang for the realization of our plan. Let’s pledge that we will not break our promise.” After the meeting with Zhou, I was elated. I felt that peace would finally come to our country. We will only need to push forward for anti-Japanese resistance. To think back, my ideals were naïve, pitiful, childish, and laughable. I was a fanatic patriot and abhorred the invasion of my country. I did not care whether it was Japanese oppression or Russian oppression and disregarded my competence. I even challenged Russians in order to take back the interests in northern Manchuria....I was chasing an illusion. Reflecting on it, I am deeply ashamed of myself.<sup>19</sup>

### ZHOU’S REPORT ON THE MEETING

On April 10 Zhou sent a telegram to Mao Zedong, Peng Dehuai, and Luo Fu, reporting on his meeting with Zhang:

Zhang Xualing totally concurred with our policy to suspend the civil war and to form a united anti-Japanese resistance. However, before launching an anti-Japanese resistance publicly, he would have to follow Chiang Kai-shek’s order to advance into the soviet district, because Chiang has already reprimanded Zhang for having withheld his army and informed Yan Xishan [then KMT Shanxi Pacification (suijing) Station director] of Zhang’s inaction....We agreed that we shall dispatch a competent liaison

to each other, having him disguised as a spy. Also, the CPC shall send a politically capable but inconspicuous person to Zhang (Li Kenong is too conspicuous for this assignment).<sup>20</sup>

The Zhou–Zhang meeting lasted until dawn of the next day. In the meeting, Zhang recognized that the Red Army was truly anti-Japanese and that the KMT’s Bandit (Communist) Suppression Campaign and the CPC’s anti-Japanese resistance could not coexist. Zhang was hoping that Chiang Kai-shek would engage in anti-Japanese resistance, but also realized that Chiang could not make up his mind because there were many pro-Japanese people around him. Zhang thought that he would resign his position should Chiang surrender to Japan, but Zhang also felt that Chiang could decide for anti-Japanese resistance. Zhang stated that he would persuade Chiang from within, while the CPC would pressure him from without, so that Chiang would correct his wrong policy and launch anti-Japanese resistance. Zhou in turn stated that he would consider Zhang’s proposal carefully at the CCCPC and then reply. This became an important factor for the CPC’s decision four months later to change its policy to “pressure Chiang into anti-Japan” from “anti-Chiang, anti-Japan.” It should be noted that this description differs from that of Sun Mingjiu regarding who (Zhou or Zhang) said “Zhang will persuade Chiang from within and the CPC from without.”<sup>21</sup>

Zhou returned to Wayaobao on April 13, with Liu Ding, who had begun underground operations in Zhang Xueliang’s army. The CCCPC immediately heard Zhou’s report, concurred with it, and sent Liu back to Zhang. Mao Zedong and Peng Dehuai on the Eastern Expedition sent a telegram to Wayaobao on April 14 and assigned Zhou to the united warfront operations with Zhang Xueliang and Yang Hucheng. As a result of the Zhang–Zhou meeting at Yan’an, an informal and secret alliance concerning anti-Japanese resistance was formed among the CPC, the Northeastern Army, and the Seventeenth Route Army, and thus the seeds for the Xi’an Incident were sown. Consequently, by May 1936, both the Northeastern Army and the Northwestern Army in effect had stopped fighting the Red Army.<sup>22</sup>

### CPC GEARS UP PROPAGANDA OFFENSIVE

Meanwhile, the Red Army’s Eastern Expedition encountered a formidable challenge, as Chiang Kai-shek sent a massive army of 100,000 men to Shanxi province to support Yan Xishan’s army. Having observed that the defense in Taiyuan was strong, the Red Army decided to withdraw from

Shanxi and retreated to the west bank of the Yellow River in April 1936. Subsequently, on May 5, 1936, the CPC sent telegrams all over the country, stating, “Patriots in China, let’s unite and rise up for anti-Japanese resistance.” The party also sent a telegram to the KMT government in Nanjing, requesting that the civil war be suspended for the sake of united anti-Japanese resistance. Given that the Imperial Japanese Army’s (IJA’s) attacks in China had seriously jeopardized the interests of American and British imperialism in China, which supported Chiang Kai-shek, the CPC leadership considered it possible to change Chiang’s stance on Japan. In response, Guangdong warlord Chen Jitang and Guangxi warlords Li Zongren and Bai Chongxi organized the Anti-Japanese National Salvation Army and rebelled against Chiang Kai-shek in June 1936: the Liang-Guang (Guangdong and Guangxi) Incident.<sup>23</sup>

#### CHIANG KAI-SHEK’S SECRET NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION AND THE CPC

Meanwhile, Chiang Kai-shek tried to form a secret military alliance with the Soviet Union, as well as to resume communications with the CPC, while continuing his “encircling offensive” against the communists. Chiang first tried to send his close aide Chen Lifu (August 1901–February 2001) secretly to Moscow for negotiations to conclude a Sino-Soviet military alliance against Japan toward the end of 1935 and also sent a Chinese military attaché to the Soviet Union, Deng Wenyi (who had returned to China), back to Moscow in January 1936 for secret negotiations with the CPC representative to Comintern, Wang Ming. However, Wang suggested that the KMT negotiate with the CPC in China and appointed Pan Hannian (the CPC intelligence agent), who had a secret meeting with Deng Wenyi, as a liaison. (Pan was scheduled to return to China in May 1936.)<sup>24</sup>

Simultaneously, Chiang had tried to reestablish relations with the CPC and Chen Lifu charged his close aide, Zeng Yangfu, with this task. In November 1935, Zeng Yangfu told his subordinate Shen Xiaocen that he must make a breakthrough with the CPC. Shen had joined the Awakening Society during the May Fourth Movement in 1919 and knew Zhou Enlai and Deng Yingchao very well, as well as some progressive intellectuals. Shen tried two communication channels, but was only able to contact underground CPC agents, such as Zhang Zihua in Shanghai, who could not officially represent the CCCPC. In turn, Sun Yat-sen’s widow, Song Qingling, became the first person who directly informed the CCCPC

of the KMT's wish to negotiate with it. She entrusted the priest Dong Jianwu (1891–1970, referred to as the “mysterious red priest”), who was a communist in Shanghai, to deliver in person a letter addressed to Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai in Shaanxi in January 1936. For this, Song gave Dong a letter appointing him “Northwestern economic specialist,” signed by her brother-in-law, KMT–Nanjing government finance minister and vice premier Kong Xiangxi (H. H. Kung, September 1880–August 1967). The CPC underground organ in Shanghai also had Zhang Zihua accompany Dong.<sup>25</sup>

The KMT Army had heavily encircled the soviet district in Shaanxi province and Dong's party needed to obtain consent from Zhang Xueliang to enter the soviet district safely. From this, Zhang figured out KMT government's intentions. According to Liu Ding, after having sent for guards to escort Dong Jianwu and Zhang Zihua to Wayaobao, Zhang Xueliang often said: “If the central government can contact the CPC, so can we.” Zhang did just that. Owing to Zhang Xueliang, Dong's party arrived safely in Wayaobao on February 27. Bo Gu met Dong Jianwu and Zhang Zihua separately. Luo Fu (Zhang Wentian) and Mao Zedong were at the Shanxi front while Zhou Enlai was at the Shaanxi front, heading to Shanxi. Zhou suggested to the CCCPC at the Shanxi front that the CPC could send its official representatives to Nanjing on the condition that they shall negotiate for establishing a national defense government and forming a united army for anti-Japanese resistance based on the provisions stipulated in the already publicized “anti-Japanese resistance national salvation telegram” and “declaration.” Luo, Mao, and Peng Dehuai concurred with Zhou and sent a telegram back to Bo Gu on March 4, instructing him to convey to Dong Jianwu that the CPC would like to begin negotiations with Nanjing. Dong left Wayaobao the next day and brought a secret note to Song Qingling. Thus, through the good offices of Song, normal communications between the KMT and the CPC that had been disrupted for a decade were restored.<sup>26</sup>

After Dong Jianwu had left, Zhang Zihua accompanied Bo Gu to the Shanxi front and reported in person to the CCCPC his contacts with Zeng Yangfu. At the Politburo meeting on March 23, Zhou Enlai assessed the situation of the KMT–Nanjing government, observing that the margin for its choice between surrender to Japan and resistance to Japan had further narrowed. Zhou then wrote to Shen Xiaocen on May 15, inviting Zeng Yangfu and Shen to come to Shaanxi and plan a grand design. Pan Hannian also talked with Zeng Yangfu in Nanjing and actively worked as a



liaison between Chen Lifu and Zhou Enlai. Chiang Kai-shek was relatively positive about negotiations with the CPC while he was dealing with the Liang–Guang Incident of June 1936. However, after he had quelled the revolt by bribery and by splitting the rebels, he lost interest in the cease-fire negotiations with the CPC and reverted to the Bandit (Communist) Suppression Campaign and mobilized forces in Shaanxi and Gansu provinces again. Consequently, the negotiations between the KMT and the CPC during this period did not bear any concrete fruit, but these contacts laid some foundations for the second United Front that would be formed in the wake of the Xi’an Incident.<sup>27</sup>

### SECOND ZHOU–ZHANG MEETING

Meanwhile, Zhou and Zhang met for the second time sometime in mid-May, possibly on May 12, but the exact date is unknown. The Official Biography of Zhou Enlai does not have any description of the second meeting. The Official Chronology of Zhou Enlai also does not give a specific date for the second Zhang–Zhou meeting but records that “Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, and Peng Dehuai sent a telegram to Liu Ding on May 7, instructing him to convey to Zhang that a second meeting was necessary to discuss issues of action guidelines for the Northeastern Army and the Red Army, concrete measures for preparation for anti-Japanese resistance of the Northeastern Army, and.... Afterwards, Zhang and Zhou held a meeting.”<sup>28</sup>

Zhang then sought a chance to report to Chiang Kai-shek about the meetings with Zhou Enlai. He writes:

When I was in Nanjing, Chairman Chiang had me get in the same car to the Military Police Headquarters to attend a graduation ceremony. I took this opportunity to tell the chairman that the CPC was willing to subordinate itself to the KMT government. I was then going to tell him of my meetings with Zhou Enlai, but the car arrived at the gate of the headquarters before I had a chance to tell him. I was again going to tell him that night, but the chairman criticized me for having brought up the issue of the salaries of the Northeastern Army and urged me to return to Shaanxi. I therefore missed the chance to report on my meetings with Zhou Enlai.<sup>29</sup>

Zhang did not state exactly when he was in Nanjing, but it is known that he visited Nanjing in July 1936, in order to attend the Second Plenary Meeting of the Fifth KMT Central Committee and had dinner with Chiang. It is unclear whether this was the same visit to Nanjing or a

different one. In any event, it appears that Zhang could not bring up the subject of his meetings with Zhou Enlai at that time because Chiang was preoccupied with dealing with the Liang–Guang Incident that summer.<sup>30</sup>

### THIRD ZHOU–ZHANG MEETING

Zhou and Zhang had another official meeting in the summer of 1936. According to Zhao Tinghua, the CPC's position was still “Anti-Chiang, Anti-Japan” at that time. Zhang argued that it was necessary to take the position of “Support-Chiang,” in order for “Anti-Japan” to succeed. Zhang also explained to Zhou about Chiang's plans and preparations, which influenced Zhou. Zhou reported them to the CCCPC Politburo. After a great debate, the CPC recognized the need to proceed to “Support-Chiang, Anti-Japan.” In comparison, Miao Jianqiu (1902–1989, see Chap. 7) describes the meeting somewhat differently: “Zhang visited Fushi (near Yan'an) in June or July 1936 to see Zhou and was welcome by Zhou, Peng Dehuai, Bo Gu (Qin Bangxian), and others. Zhang wanted to ‘use Chiang to fight Japan’ while Zhou wanted to ‘overthrow Chiang to fight Japan.’ They talked for two hours:

Zhang asked Zhou, “Are you really going to fight the Japanese?”

Zhou: “Yes.”

Zhang: “Are you going to do this by “Anti-Chiang, Anti-Japan”?”

Zhou: “Yes.”

Zhang: “Then, please let me leave or kill me.”

Zhou: “Why?”

Zhang: “Neither your campaign (anti-Chiang) nor Chairman Chiang's campaign (anti-CPC) would work. The Japanese military will wait for neither campaign.” Zhang started to cry in distress.

Zhou in tears: “What should we do then?”

Zhang: “The best way is to form a national united front under ‘Support Chiang, Anti-Japan.’”

Then, the CPC leaders there showed displeasure with the exception of Zhou. Zhou stated in a calm fashion: “I do not feel like supporting Chiang.”

Zhang: “Then, will “Going along with Chiang” do?”

Zhou: “Alright.” Zhou answered without consulting with Mao Zedong.

With this consent from Zhou, Zhang returned to Xi'an.<sup>31</sup>

Thus, Zhang persuaded Zhou to try his way and Zhou and Zhang both wept. Zhou said: “We are patriots; we want to fight to save China.” Zhou was not dogmatic but was diplomatic. With such a judicious and sensible

representative as Zhou, the CPC's negotiations with Zhang succeeded. At that time, in June 1936, the American journalist Edgar Snow (July 1905–February 1972) visited Xi'an and met Zhou Enlai in his hideout in southwestern part of Shaanxi province for the first time. Despite the fact that Chiang Kai-shek had put a reward of 80,000 yuan on Zhou's head, there was only one sentry at his quarters. Snow reported his impression of Zhou in 1938 as "a cool, logical, and empirical mind. His mildly uttered statements made a singular contrast against the background of nine years of defamation of the Communists by Kuomintang propaganda describing them as 'ignorant bandits,' 'marauders,'...he did not seem to fit any of the well-worn descriptions of the Red-bandits....He seemed very much like that youth who used to take the feminine lead in the college plays at Nankai—because in those days Zhou was handsome and had a figure willowy as a girl's." Snow then revised his description 30 years later in 1968 as "a cool, logical, and empirical mind...Zhou had often taken feminine leads in school plays. There was nothing effeminate about the tough, bearded, unsentimental soldier I met in Pai Chia P'ing [Baijiaping, Shaanxi]. But there was charm—one quality in the mixed ingredients that were to make Zhou Red China's No. 1 diplomat."<sup>32</sup>

### CPC CHANGES ITS STANCE ON CHIANG KAI-SHEK

Thus, the CPC changed its position to "Pressure Chiang, Anti-Japan" from "Anti-Chiang, Anti-Japan" during the summer. The change became definite in August. On August 8, Pan Hannian visited Bao'an and reported to the CCCPC on his meeting with Zeng Yangfu in Nanjing, as well as on Comintern's proposal that the CPC abandon its "anti-Japan, anti-Chiang" slogan and negotiate with the KMT government. In the Politburo meeting on August 10, Mao Zedong stated: "We now must recognize Nanjing as a great force for the national movement. We shall continue our policy to negotiate with Nanjing." Zhou Enlai then clearly suggested that the CPC should abandon its slogan that "anti-Japan necessitates anti-Chiang." Mao concurred. On August 25, based on the meeting, the CPC publicized the "CPC's Letter to the KMT," which addressed Chiang Kai-shek as "Chairman" for the first time.<sup>33</sup>

On September 1, 1936, the CPC Central Secretariat presented to the party its "instruction concerning the issue of pressuring Chiang Kai-shek into anti-Japanese resistance," which states: "The main enemy of the Chinese people at present is Japanese imperialism. It is wrong to equate

Chiang Kai-shek with Japanese imperialism....Our general policy is to pressure Chiang into anti-Japanese resistance. When a national democratic republic is established, the soviet districts would be an integral part of the republic and representatives of the soviet districts shall participate in the national congress and the Red Army shall be under a united armed force.” This marked an important change in the CPC’s policy toward the KMT, which would make it possible for the CPC to settle the Xi’an Incident peacefully.<sup>34</sup>

### ZHANG PLEADS WITH CHIANG KAI-SHEK

The CPC also sent Ye Jianying to Zhang Xueliang. Zhang wrote in his Record of Repentance:

Ye Jianying brought a ceasefire plan and Mao Zedong’s proposal, which stated that the CPC Army shall be under my command if we formed a united front against Japan. I requested that they withdraw their army to the north for the time being in order to avoid military contact with our army because I needed time for preparations. Then, noting that the soil is infertile and the weather is cold in Ordos [in current Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region], they asked for provisions of cotton-padded clothes and food. I sent them an enormous amount of my own money so that they could procure for themselves the goods they needed. Thus, they withdrew from Wayaobao to the north. At that time, the CPC established its representative office in Xi’an and sent Deng Fa there. The Federation of Anti-Japanese National Salvation Associations and Federation of Student Associations also sent their representatives to Xi’an.<sup>35</sup>

In turn, having quelled the rebellion in the Liang–Guang Incident by mid-September, Chiang Kai-shek shifted his gears back to driving out the communists, the last remaining anti-Chiang force, which was active in Shaanxi and Gansu. Chiang and his entourage, including Song Meiling, visited Luoyang in Henan province and Xi’an in October 1936, in order to give a moral boost to the Northeastern Army and the Northwestern Army, because they were sabotaging the bandit suppression campaign. On October 31, Zhang accompanied Chiang to Luoyang and met Shanxi Army general Yan Xishan (whose army had been defeated by the CPC Army in February 1936) there. It was Chiang’s 49th birthday and there is a group photograph of Chiang, Song, Zhang, Yan, and others in front of a birthday cake, in Luoyang, dated October 31, 1936. There, Zhang and

Yan pleaded with Chiang to suspend the civil war and form a united front for anti-Japanese resistance. However, Chiang lost his temper and refused to listen to their plea. Zhang again tried to plead with Chiang the next day when Chiang gave a lecture at the Luoyang Military Academy.<sup>36</sup>

On this Zhang states:

I had a chance to accompany Master Chiang again when he met Master Yan Baichuan [courtesy name of Yan Xishan] in Luoyang. I felt that it was a great chance, but during his lecture at the military academy, he denounced communists as “big traitors” and those who advocated accepting the communists as worse than Yin Rugeng. While listening to this, I felt as if I had been poured with cold water. I realized that it was hopeless to plead with Master Chiang. Deeply disheartened, I went to my bedroom and deplored the situation.... Upon returning to Xi’an, I reported to the CPC, “I cannot ask Master Chiang to carry out our ceasefire plan at this moment, and I would like to discuss a local and provisional ceasefire between us for now. I will make sure to ask Master Chiang to accept our plan.”<sup>37</sup>

Yin Rugeng (1885–December 1947), a local politician in Hebei province, had acted as the interpreter for the meeting of Chiang and Japanese political leader Tokonami Takejirō in 1928, but he leaked the content of the meeting to Tokonami’s political opponent, Prime Minister Tanaka Giichi. In 1935, Yin became governor of the East Hebei Anti-Communist Defense Self-Government, a “self-governing” regime created by the Japanese government. Yin was arrested and executed in Nanjing in 1947 (see Chap. 5).<sup>38</sup>

### ZHANG’S PROPOSAL TO YANG HUCHENG

Meanwhile, in September 1936, as soon as Du Zhongyuan, one of Zhang’s brain trust, was released from prison in Shanghai, he headed to Xi’an in order to urge Zhang to form an alliance with the CPC against the Japanese. Facing the danger of surveillance by KMT intelligence agents, Du reached Xi’an in late November. Realizing the significance of Du’s arrival in Xi’an, Ye Jianying and Liu Ding sent a telegram on November 29 to Zhou and Luo Fu (Zhang Wentian), informing them of Du’s arrival.<sup>39</sup>

In the same month, Zhang talked about his meeting with Chiang Kai-shek in Luoyang to Northwestern Army general Yang Hucheng (November 1893–September 1949), whose army had been incorporated into the KMT Army as the National Revolutionary Army Seventeenth Route Army, and he was appointed Shaanxi Pacification Station director.

Zhang had earlier expressed to Yang his compassion for ending the civil war for the sake of a united anti-Japanese resistance. Zhang wrote in his Record of Repentance:

Around that time a secret booklet pamphlet entitled “*Huolu*” (A Way Out) was published, calling on people in the Northeast and Northwest to unite in order to engage in anti-Japanese resistance together. Gao Chongmin published it. I did not tell Yang Hucheng about my plan with the CPC, but he already knew about it. I do not know what kind of relationship he had with the CPC and how he had developed that relationship in detail, but in hindsight, one of his senior officers, Wang Bingnan, must have been a CPC member...Yang not only concurred with me about ending the KMT's Bandit Suppression Campaign and forming a united front with the CPC for anti-Japanese resistance, but also urged me to ask Master Chiang to carry it out early so as not to deplete our forces...I told him that it would be difficult to have Master Chiang accept my plan. I complained about Master Chiang to Yang and asked if he had any good ideas...Then, Yang said, “Next time Master Chiang visited Xi'an, carry out the ancient event of taking custody of the emperor and commanding the local rulers.” I was stunned and could not utter a word. Fear came over Yang's face. I consoled him by saying, “I am not a person who would seek his own promotion by selling his friend. Do not worry, but I cannot do this.” Then, Yang told me, “You are too sentimental. You are letting your personal feelings overlook the matter of the nation.” I told him, “Let me think about it. Do not worry. I will never tell your opinion to anyone.”<sup>40</sup>

Zhang adds: “Afterwards Master Chiang visited Xi'an from Luoyang and I always accompanied him lest someone cause him trouble. Little did I know then that I was the one who would cause him trouble.” Zhang was right about Wang Bingnan (1908–December 1988, from Shaanxi province). Edgar Snow writes that Wang was “a nephew or kind of adopted son” of Yang Hucheng. Wang joined the CPC in 1926, engaged in underground work in Yang's Northwestern Army and convinced Yang to form a united front with the CPC in April/May 1936. In December 1936, along with Luo Ruiqing and Lü Zhengcao, Wang accompanied Zhou Enlai to Xi'an for the peaceful settlement of the Xi'an Incident and the three wrote an eyewitness account of the incident in 1978. After 1949, Wang assisted Zhou in establishing the PRC's foreign ministry, became ambassador to Poland, engaged in negotiations with the USA, and then became the president of the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries.<sup>41</sup>

## THE ORIGIN OF ZHANG–YANG CONSPIRACY

The ancient event Yang referred to is called *bingjian* (*lit.*, “expostulation by force”), in which a subject attempted to impose his policy recommendation upon the emperor by force. This extraordinary measure was regarded as a legitimate action. As long as the plea was made in the accepted manner, the emperor must answer it and the action was not considered rebellion and did not carry death penalty. It occurred only once or twice in the long history of China. For instance, a rebel in the state of Chu during the Spring–Autumn Period in ancient China captured the emperor in order to correct his policy and then voluntarily punished himself by cutting his own legs.<sup>42</sup>

In addition, the February 26 Incident that shook the Japanese capital might have inspired Yang to suggest to Zhang to take such an extraordinary measure. On the freezing dawn on February 26, 1936, in Tokyo blanketed with snow, as many as 1,483 young officers of the ultraright faction within the IJA that promoted imperial dictatorship conspired to assassinate several political leaders, including Prime Minister Okada Keisuke, and attacked the prime minister’s public residence and other government officials’ residences. They ended up killing two former prime ministers, Saitō Makoto and Takahashi Korekiyo (who was trying to reduce military budget as finance minister), as well as army general and inspector general of military training Watanabe Jōtarō, and army colonel Matsuo Denzō, who was the younger brother-in-law of Prime Minister Okada, was mistakenly killed as Okada, along with five policemen. This startling news was also carried in the Chinese newspapers and Yang and his General Staff officers followed the development of this failed coup d’état with keen interest. Zhang notes: “Yang Hucheng was from a background like that of a bandit and was wild in nature, but he was in tune with the currents of the time. He did not have any particular political philosophy for himself, but there were many communists within his command and he was influenced by them.”<sup>43</sup>

Incidentally, the “Real Record of the Shōwa Emperor” compiled by the Imperial Household Agency and publicly released in September 2014 reveals how strongly Emperor Hirohito was angered by the February 26 Incident. His own grand chamberlain Suzuki Kantarō (January 1929–November 1936; prime minister, April 1945–August 1945) was also attacked and was almost fatally injured, but a doctor miraculously resusci-

tated his heart. Hirohito told his grand aide-de-camp (military chamberlain) Honjō Shigeru (April 1933–March 1936, see Chap. 5): “Killing the elder statesmen whom I have trusted most is an action equal to squeezing my neck with cotton....I will suppress the rebels myself.”<sup>44</sup>

Hirohito refused to listen to the opinion that defended the young rebels (they had taken the action in the name of the emperor) and repeatedly instructed Honjō to immediately quell the rebellion. Hirohito also decided to stop playing in the snow with his family afterward, as a way of assuming indirect responsibility for the incident. In later years, he told his chamberlain, Nakamura Kenjirō: “I used to ski on the lawn in the garden. I used to sleigh with the deceased Shigeko [eldest daughter] and Nagako [the empress]. I stopped doing these things because of the February 26 [Incident].”<sup>45</sup>

## SEVEN NATIONAL SALVATION INTELLECTUAL LEADERS INCIDENT

As if to blow up Zhang’s plan, Chiang Kai-shek arrested seven intellectual leaders (*lit.*, “*junzi*”) of the National Federation of Anti-Japanese National Salvation Associations in Various Circles, who were calling for the end of the civil war and the formation of a united front against Japan, in Shanghai on November 23, 1936. The seven intellectual leaders consisted of the prominent politician Shen Junru (January 1875–June 1963), Zou Taofen (real name, Zou Enlun; November 1895–July 1944; he was admitted to the CPC posthumously according to his will), Zhang Naiqi (March 1897–May 1977), a female lawyer Shi Liang (March 1900–September 1985), Li Gongpu (1902–July 1946), Sha Qianli (1901–1982), and Wang Zaoshi (September 1903–August/September 1971). In January 1936 the seven leaders, along with Sun Yat-sen’s widow Song Qingling, had organized the National Federation of Anti-Japanese National Salvation Associations in Various Circles in Shanghai. The seven leaders were the most popular intellectuals and scholars in China at that time, but none of them were members of the CPC. The federation disseminated leaflets to large cities, except for Nanjing, and specifically targeted Xi’an, the capital of Shaanxi. More than 60 associations joined the federation by May. This “Seven National Salvation Intellectual Leaders Incident” disappointed Zhang deeply to the extent that he would make their release as one of his conditions for releasing Chiang during the Xi’an Incident.<sup>46</sup>



Earlier, at the end of October, Chiang charged the commander of the KMT Central First Army (the best army of the KMT), lieutenant-general Hu Zongnan, with a secret mission to drive out bandits (communists) in Gansu province. However, the army encountered a strong offensive by the CPC Army in Shanchengbao on November 21 and was defeated on November 23. Alarmed by this loss, Chiang flew to Luoyang and convened on December 3 the Sixth Military Conference to Drive Out Bandits. There, Zhang again pleaded with Chiang to end the bandit suppression campaign and to form a national united front, but this only infuriated Chiang. The thoughts of Chiang and Zhang could not have been further apart.<sup>47</sup>

### CHIANG KAI-SHEK VISITS XI'AN

Frustrated with the slow progress in destroying the CPC headquarters (the Northeastern Army and the Northwestern Army were sabotaging the bandit suppression campaign), Chiang Kai-shek flew to Xi'an on December 4, accompanied by about 50 high-ranking KMT officials, including his senior military staff. Chiang's military police in Xi'an had not detected the covert operations of the CPC within the Northeastern Army and the Northwestern Army, but Chiang sensed that their soldiers were psychologically agitated. Thus, he decided to visit Xi'an in order to urge in person Zhang Xualiang and Yang Hucheng to proactively engage in a large-scale Sixth (and supposedly last) Bandit Suppression Campaign. Chiang stayed at Huaqing-chi in Lintong in the suburb of Xi'an (see Chap. 7) and declared that the mobilization order was to be issued on December 12. In the words of Chiang: "I perceived perverse ideas had already entered the mind of the Northeastern troops and that their conduct was rather wayward. Reports of a startling nature such as that the troops were in collusion with the bandits and that they had retreated from the front without orders repeatedly came to me....For these reasons I proceeded to Dongguan from Luoyang on December 4. There I sent for the commanders of the bandit suppression troops in Shaanxi and Gansu and received them one by one on a number of successive days....I told them that the bandit suppression campaign had been prosecuted to such a stage that it would require only the efforts of 'the last five minutes' to achieve final success."<sup>48</sup>

On December 5, Chiang made a speech at the Wangqu Military Academy and stressed the importance of the bandit suppression campaign to the

Northeastern Army and the Northwestern Army; however, the majority of the officers were not in favor of Chiang's position. On December 7, Zhang visited Chiang at Huaqing-chi and pleaded with him again, in tears, but Chiang refused to listen. They quarreled, but Chiang's priority remained in suppressing the communists. Their differences became irreconcilable. From Chiang's perspective, Zhang had become "as if a mummy hunter had turned into a mummy." Zhang's former Administrative Office head Lu Guangji (March 1894–August 1993) states: "Chiang Kai-shek lectured Northeastern Army officers at the Wangqu Military Academy. While stamping his feet on the stage, Chiang said, 'We must defeat the communists first, and then defeat the Japanese. Those who would say attacking the Japanese first before the communists would be opposing my policy of "quelling the internal enemy before expelling the external enemy.'" This would mean that they are opposing me and therefore must be arrested.' By so saying, Chiang intimidated Zhang Xueliang."<sup>49</sup>

#### FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF THE DECEMBER 9 STUDENT DEMONSTRATION

December 9, 1936, was the first anniversary of the December 9 Student Demonstration in Beijing (see Chap. 5). By this time, Xi'an had become a Mecca of the student movement for anti-Japanese resistance. Northeastern University (Zhang became president in 1928, heavily invested his own money in the university, and made it a first-rate school) students, who had been driven out of their homeland in Manchuria, launched a student movement in Xi'an along with students from Beijing and local students on this anniversary. Earlier in October 1936, two Northeastern University students were arrested by the KMT military police and detained at the KMT branch office in Xi'an. Zhang Xueliang requested their release. When his request was rejected, Zhang had his bodyguards rescue the students. Zhang's sympathetic stance toward the student movement, as demonstrated by this case, was the driving force for Xi'an becoming a stronghold for the national student movement.<sup>50</sup>

On December 9, 1936, students held a massive demonstration in Xi'an, calling for the end of the civil war and united anti-Japanese resistance, which was led by Li Liangbi (he would become the president of Shaanxi province and of Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries). Recalling that day, Li Liangbi states:

The KMT military police encircled schools in order to obstruct students from gathering for the demonstration.... We visited Zhang Xueliang's headquarters, Yang Hucheng's headquarters, the KMT province government office, and other places and petitioned there, but did not receive any satisfactory response. We then decided to go to Huaqing-chi in Lintong and to petition Chiang Kai-shek directly. We left Xi'an and arrived at the Ba Bridge where KMT military police with machine guns stopped us. They arrested about twenty students on bicycles, who were at the front of the demonstration, and told us that they would shoot us if we tried to cross the bridge. Just when we were at a standstill, General Zhang Xueliang arrived at the scene and stopped his car in front of us.<sup>51</sup>

As Chiang Kai-shek had already authorized the military police to shoot at students, massive bloodshed would have been unavoidable had the students tried to cross the bridge. Zhang meanwhile had also directed Sun Mingjiu to mobilize part of the Northeastern Army in order to protect the students. Sun states: "I was sent out with our soldiers on December 9. The nominal purpose was to control the student demonstration along with the KMT military police, but our real purpose was to protect the students. We were concerned that Chiang Kai-shek's military police and army might harm the students." In turn, Li Liangbi states: "At the scene, General Zhang Xueliang told us that he, as a patriotic military man, also wish to engage in anti-Japanese resistance.... He promised us that he would repeat our demands to Chairman Chiang Kai-shek and told us to return to Xi'an. But some students still shouted that we must go to Lintong and meet Chairman Chiang, and tried to proceed. Then, General Zhang said, 'Trust me. If you trust me, I will answer you in a week.' More than 10,000 students at the scene were touched by his speech.... Many were in tears. So was General Zhang."<sup>52</sup>

### ZHANG XUELIANG TAKES ACTION

The promise Zhang had made to the students propelled him to take drastic action. He decided that the only way out was to capture Chiang Kai-shek and force him to agree to the ceasefire in the civil war and the formation of a united anti-Japanese resistance. Zhang thus ordered Tang Junyao, Sun Mingjiu, and others to lead the Northeastern Army and capture Chiang Kai-shek. Sun states: "I participated in a Northeastern Army combat commanders meeting on the evening of December 11. Zhang Xueliang ordered us to carry out the *bingjian* [subordinate's expostulation to the

ruler by force]. Our mission was to go to the Huaqing-chi in Lintong and bring Chairman Chiang Kai-shek to Xi'an without any harm. He should never be injured or killed.”<sup>53</sup>

Zhang knew the consequences of taking such an extraordinary action. By that time, he had already made up his mind to sacrifice his own life for the sake of ending the civil war. At 1:00 AM on December 12, Zhang gathered the main officers of the Northeastern Army at his public residence and told of his decision. At 2:00 AM, he took his officers to Yang Hucheng's headquarters, Xincheng-dalou (currently used as a Shaanxi People's Government office). There, Zhang declared his decision in front of both Northeastern Army and Northwestern Army officers. Zhang's former aide Lu Guangji recalls: “Zhang Xueliang with a grave countenance told us, ‘Being driven into a corner, I came up with the *bingjian*. I have tried by various means to persuade Chiang Kai-shek but he rejected all. There is no other way left... I have asked you to come here today because I do not know if I will be alive tomorrow. If our plan succeeds, we might be alive tomorrow, but if it fails, we might not be alive. I have already told my men that if they fail to capture Chiang Kai-shek alive, they won't be alive.’”<sup>54</sup>

This was the dawn of the Xi'an Incident.

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33. Jin, 387–388; *Zhou Enlai nianpu*, 316–319.
34. Jin, 389.
35. Zhang (1992), 1199.
36. Jin, 390–391; Zhang (2004), 297–300; Kishida, 23–24; NHK and Usui, 180–182; Matsuno, 134. Kishida writes: “Yan Xishan visited Xi’an from Taiyuan, Shanxi, on October 31, in order to meet Chiang Kai-shek and Zhang Xueliang” (p. 24). Kishida does not provide any source for this.
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## Xi'an Incident: Secret Meeting Between Zhou Enlai and Chiang Kai-shek

With the expansion of the Japanese invasion in China's Northeast and elsewhere, Zhang Xueliang, the young marshal of the Northeastern Army, pleaded with the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT)–Republic of China (ROC) government leader, General Chiang Kai-shek, to end the civil war between the KMT and the Communist Party of China (CPC) and launch the united national anti-Japanese resistance. However, having being preoccupied with his anticommunist campaign, Chiang flatly refused. As a last resort, on December 12, 1936, Zhang took the extraordinary measure of capturing Chiang in order to coerce Chiang into accepting his policy recommendation, in collaboration with the Northwestern Army (Seventeenth Route Army) general, Yang Hucheng. This unprecedented coup d'état shook the world. This chapter revisits the events that spanned two weeks through new interviews with those who were directly involved in the incident, including Zhang Xueliang himself.

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Chiang Kai-shek flew to Xi'an, the capital of Shaanxi province, on December 4, 1936, and stayed at Huaqing-chi (“chi,” *lit.* “pond”; originally meant “hot spring”), in Lintong in the northeastern suburb of Xi'an. It was the imperial villa of the Tang dynasty emperor Xuanzong (September 685–May 762), known for his romance with Yang Guifei (June 719–July 756). The villa was named after the hot spring, where Yang Guifei bathed. Bai Juyi



(Bai Letian 772–846) wrote a famous, lengthy poem, *Changhenge* (The Song of Eternal Regret), a part of which read:

She bathes in the Huaqing hot spring in the cold spring

The smooth hot-spring water runs down the soft body<sup>1</sup>

This historic spot is the place where Zhang Xueliang captured Chiang Kai-shek and pleaded with him to suspend the civil war and form an anti-Japanese united front with the CPC. Zhang's action marked a decisive turning point for the Chinese civil war and left his name indelibly in modern Chinese history.

### ZHANG XUELIANG CAPTURES CHIANG KAI-SHEK

At 5:30 AM on December 12, 1936, about 100 men of Zhang Xueliang's Bodyguard Regiment, led by Sun Mingjiu (1909–April 2000), arrived at Lintong. At 6:00 AM, their trucks parked in front of the gate of Huaqing-chi. The gate guard asked for the password, but Sun could not answer it. Sun states:

Zhang Xueliang had instructed me not to fire unless provoked. But the gate guard fired on us and we took him down. Our original plan was to capture him, but this did not work. The guards in the compounds noticed this and shooting began. While being under fire, we had to go through many ponds and bridges to reach the Wujian office where Chiang Kai-shek was staying. When we reached his bedroom, there was no one there. But the bed was still warm. We searched for him. I captured one of his aides called Jiang Kaozhen at the foot of the mountain....Jiang said he did not know where Chiang was, but he slightly turned his head back at the mountain. This gave me a clue and we searched in the mountain and finally found Chiang there at 9:00 AM. He was frightened and cold...I told him, "I was ordered by the deputy commander to escort you to Xi'an."<sup>2</sup>

Caught off guard, Chiang had fled barefoot to Mount Li behind Huaqing-chi in his nightgown and without his artificial teeth. He fell on his back in a moat when he crossed the wall, but managed to climb the mountain. Chiang reached the mountaintop, realized that he was surrounded, and then walked down the mountain. Halfway down, he fell into a cave that was overgrown with horny shrubs. He was exhausted and stayed there to rest. This was the spot where Sun Minjiu found Chiang

in the middle of the mountainside about a half-hour walk up Mount Li. Sun knelt before Chiang with tears in his eyes, asked him to go down the mountain, and then escorted Chiang to Xi'an. In turn, Chiang writes: "I had not the slightest suspicion of their treachery. Unexpectedly a mutiny broke out, almost under the tip of my nose, and threatened my personal safety....If the rebels have any conscience someday they will realize that their unwarranted action should not be forgiven....At that time I was under the impression that the mutiny was local, that only a section of the troops at Lintung [Lintong] had mutinied, possibly at the instigation of the Communist bandits, and that it was not a preconceived plot planned by Hanqing [Zhang Xueliang's courtesy name]."<sup>3</sup>

### BINGJIAN PAVILION

Zhang's action is referred to as "*bingjian*" (*lit.*, "expostulation by force") after ancient events (see Chap. 6). He captured Chiang Kai-shek in order to force him to correct his "wrong" policy of "quelling the internal enemy before expelling the external enemy" for the sake of the formation of an anti-Japanese national salvation coalition. This was an almost unprecedented coup d'état in Chinese history in that it was not intended to take power from the ruler, but to coerce the ruler to change what rebels perceived to be a wrong policy of the ruler. Having exhausted alternatives, Zhang Xueliang found his answer in the ancient example of *bingjian*. The spot where Chiang was captured was turned into a gazebo called the Bingjian Pavilion. The KMT government originally built a pavilion on the spot and named it Minzu-fuxing (National Resurrection) Pavilion. Then the Whampoa Military Academy students renamed it Zhengqi (Right Mind) Pavilion. After 1949, it was renamed as Zhuo-Chiang (Seizing Chiang) Pavilion and then as the Bingjian Pavilion in the 1980s. It is one of the popular tourist sites in the Xi'an area, along with Huaqing Hot Spring (the office and bedroom that Chiang used, as well as the bullet marks on the windows, are kept as they were) and the nearby Terracotta Warriors and Horses at the Mausoleum of the First Qin Emperor.<sup>4</sup>

While Sun Mingjiu was attacking the Huaqing-chi, Yang Hucheng's Northwestern Army attacked KMT government offices in Xi'an. They attacked the Military Police headquarters and disarmed the police and security forces, and took over the airport and other facilities. Yang's special force attacked the Xi'an Guest House where Chiang's entourage of 49 people, including his military General Staff leaders such as Chen

Cheng (January 1897–March 1965, died in Taiwan) and Jiang Dingwen (December 1896–January 1974, died in Taiwan), were staying and captured all of them. Then, the rebels raised a large banner, “Support Anti-Japanese Allied Forces...! Victory for Allied Forces! Victory for Liberation of the Republic of China!” on the bell tower of the town.<sup>5</sup>

In turn, Chiang Kai-shek was taken to Yang Hucheng’s headquarters, Xincheng-dalou (current Shaanxi People’s Government office), in Xi’an and he met Zhang Xueliang at 10:30 AM. Zhang’s former Administrative Office head, Lu Guangji, recalls: “Zhang said to Chiang, ‘You must be surprised, Chairman.’ Chiang in a rage rebuked Zhang, saying, ‘If you are my subordinate, take me out of here immediately. If you are not my subordinate, shoot me now.’ It seems to me that Chiang still acted as if he were a hero even in captivity. Zhang in turn seems to have felt that he did not have to act in haste. Zhang then told Chiang, ‘I will render the validity of this incident to the judgment of the people. If they support our requests, it proves that we represent the people.’ Hearing the words ‘judgment of the people,’ Chiang was infuriated and refused to listen to Zhang afterwards. Zhang then said, ‘You are really stubborn’ and left.”<sup>6</sup>

#### DECLARATION OF EIGHT-POINT DEMANDS

Upon capturing Chiang Kai-shek, Zhang Xueliang and Yang Hucheng declared the establishment of the Provisional Anti-Japanese Allied Forces Northwestern Military Affairs Committee. They also sent telegrams to various places all over the nation, publicizing their eight-point demands to the KMT government in Nanjing, which was drafted by Zhang’s secretary Gao Chongmin and others:

1. To reorganize the Nanjing government so that all political parties and groups can take part in it and assume responsibility for national salvation;
2. To suspend the civil war all over the country and adopt a policy for united anti-Japanese resistance;
3. To immediately release the [Seven] National Salvation Intellectual Leaders who were arrested in Shanghai;
4. To release all the political prisoners in China;
5. To liberate people’s patriotic movements;
6. To guarantee all the political freedoms and rights of the people, as well as the freedom of assembly and association;

7. To ensure compliance with the will of Sun Yat-sen; and
8. To immediately convene a national salvation congress.<sup>7</sup>

### ZHANG SOLICITS CONSULTATION WITH THE CPC

Between 3 and 5 AM on December 12, Zhang Xueliang sent a telegram to the Central Committee of the CPC (CCCPC) in Bao'an (its location at that time, it moved to Yan'an, the cradle of the Chinese communist revolution, in January 1937), informing Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai of the coup d'état and asking for consultation. The news struck the CPC out of the blue. Contrary to the general belief that the CPC was part of the conspiracy, Zhang clarifies that the CPC had nothing to do with the coup. Zhang neither consulted with nor informed the CPC in advance. (Mao also attested to this to American journalist Agnes Smedley in 1937.) Mao and Zhou sent their reply at midnight on December 12, stating that Zhou would like to visit Xi'an and discuss the grand design with Zhang in person and requesting that Zhang send for an airplane to Yan'an (a closest airport from Bao'an) for Zhou's party. The next morning, the CCCPC held a Politburo meeting and decided to send Zhou, who was Central Military Affairs Committee vice president at that time, as well as Eastern Route Red Army chief of staff Ye Jianying (April 1897–October 1986) and Northwestern Soviet-district government president Bo Gu (Qin Bangxian; May 1907–April 1946; CCCPC third general secretary, 1932–1935). On the morning of December 15, Zhou headed to Yan'an that was still controlled by a pro-KMT local paramilitary group, riding a horse in heavy snow and accompanied by 18 people, including Luo Ruiqing and Zhang Zihua (who was an underground CPC agent in Shanghai).<sup>8</sup>

Thus, Zhou set out on an unprecedented mission to moderate negotiations between the KMT Nanjing government and Zhang Xueliang concerning what to do with Chiang Kai-shek in captivity. This was the first time since the CPC's setbacks in 1927 (such as the failed Nanchang Uprising) that its party members publicly appeared in a legal capacity outside the soviet districts. When Zhou's party arrived at the northern gate of Yan'an on the evening of December 16, the CPC guerrilla corps told Zhou that they had heard a roaring sound in the sky in the afternoon. That must have been the Boeing airplane that Zhang Xueliang had sent for Zhou. As the airplane did not find Zhou's party, it flew back. Zhou's party did not enter Yan'an that night as the paramilitary group guarded the city and was about to head to Xi'an by car early next morning. Then

a roaring sound vibrated high in the sky. Zhou immediately wrote a note, and his party entered Yan'an, disguising Zhang Zihua as a visitor from the Nanjing government to negotiate with the Yan'an prefecture. Then, the party hurried to the airport.<sup>9</sup>

The Boeing was Zhang Xueliang's own aircraft, with Liu Ding (the underground CPC agent in Shanghai, who had been sent to Zhang) aboard. Liu briefed Zhou during the flight to Xi'an that Zhang had instructed his men to capture Chiang Kai-shek alive and protect him in order to persuade him to end the civil war. Zhou understood Zhang's objective and told Liu: "The purpose of this coup is not to demobilize Chiang Kai-shek's military force. Chiang is neither Nicholas II of the October Revolution nor Napoleon Bonaparte of the Battle of Waterloo. We should not escalate the civil war. We only need to launch anti-Japanese resistance." They arrived in Xi'an on the night of December 17. (Ye Jianying and Bo Gu arrived several days later, on December 22.)<sup>10</sup>

#### DEBATE IN NANJING: CONSPIRACY OF HE YINGQIN

Meanwhile, on December 12, Zhang Xueliang sent telegrams to the Nanjing government finance minister and vice premier Kong Xiangxi (H. H. Kung, September 1880–August 1967) and Chiang Kai-shek's wife Song Meiling (Soong May-ling, March 1897–October 2003), asking for their understanding of his action. As a banker and politician, Kong built the Kong financial clique that constituted the financial backbone of the KMT and was the source of its corruption. He was married to the eldest of the three "Soong sisters": Song Ailing (July 1889–October 1973); Song Qingling (January 1893–May 1981), the third wife of Sun Yat-sen; and Song Meiling, the fourth wife of Chiang Kai-shek. The news of Chiang's capture reached the KMT leaders in Nanjing by 1:00 PM. They convened an emergency Party Central Committee Standing Committee meeting and discussed the issue past midnight. Among them, Senior General He Yingqin (April 1890–October 1987, fled to Taipei in 1949) and other hardliners advocated an immediate attack on the rebels in Xi'an, while moderates argued that they should negotiate with Zhang first. They could not reach a consensus. He Yingqin tried to take away the power from Chiang, taking advantage of the incident. He planned to form a troika leadership with Chiang's political rival Wang Jingwei (Wang Zhaoming; May 1883–November 1944), who was in Germany for medical treatment (he was shot during the KMT National Congress in November 1935), and Kong Xiangxi.<sup>11</sup>

He Yingqin had studied at the Tokyo Shinbu School (the military preparatory school for Chinese students), where he met Chiang Kai-shek, and also joined Sun Yat-sen's Chinese Revolutionary Alliance in Tokyo. After the failure of Sun's Second Revolution in 1913, He fled to Japan and graduated from the IJA Military Academy. Upon returning home, He contributed to the creation of the Whampoa Military Academy and the National Revolutionary Army, and then became the right-hand man of Chiang after Sun's death. In turn, Wang Jingwei had studied at the Japanese-French Law School Hōsei University, joined Sun Yat-sen's Chinese Revolutionary Alliance at its foundation, and worked on the editorial staff of its newsletter (he began to use his penname Jingwei at that time). Wang then wrote a draft of the declaration of the establishment of the Republic of China (ROC) in January 1912. He also drafted Sun's wills at his deathbed in March 1925 and made Sun's son, Sun Ke, forge Sun's signature and sign the wills. Wang had held various leadership positions in the ROC, including that of Nanjing government premier (January 1932–December 1935), when he severed his relationship with Chiang Kai-shek after the Zhongshan Warship Incident of March 1926.<sup>12</sup>

### MATSUMOTO SHIGEHARU SENDS A SHOCK WAVE THROUGH THE WORLD

Meanwhile, Matsumoto Shigeharu (October 1899–January 1989), the Japanese news agency Dōmei-tsūshin Shanghai Office director, heard about the incident from Kong Xiangxi's secretary, Qiao Fusan, and sent a telegram to Tokyo on the night of December 12. The news was published in all the major newspapers in Japan the next morning and reverberated all over the world. The news shook the world, but world leaders in the West were unable to fathom the significance of the incident. The fact that a Japanese broke this news had serious implications, causing misperceptions of the incident to leaders in the Soviet Union (examined below).<sup>13</sup>

### SONG MEILING'S REACTIONS

Chiang Kai-shek's wife, Song Meiling, heard the news in Shanghai at 8:00 PM on December 12 and headed to Nanjing with her brother-in-law Kong Xiangxi the next day. She was most concerned about the safety of Chiang Kai-shek and sought for a peaceful settlement of the incident. She wrote in her account of the Xi'an Incident: "There has been a mutiny, and

there's no news of the generalissimo." These words, falling from the lips of Dr. Kung [Kong Xiangxi], sound ominous...I, with Dr Kung and Mr W. H. Donald (whom I had asked to fly to Xi'an) hastened [to Nanjing]. I found that while official circles had been astounded by the unexpected nature of the coup and were wrought up to a state of high tension, members of the standing committee of the Central Executive Committee and the Central Political Council had met late on Saturday night and had taken action. They had deprived Zhang Xueliang, the leader of the mutiny, of his position as a member of the Military Affairs Commission and concurrently [as] acting commander-in-chief of the Northwestern Bandit Suppression Forces, and referred him to the Military Affairs Commission for severe punishment. In a mandate they denounced him bitterly.<sup>14</sup>

Song continues: "While expressing misgivings as to the wisdom of hastily penalizing Zhang Xueliang before the facts of the situation were known or before Dr Kung and I had arrived in Nanjing, I was faced with a much more serious problem; to wit, what looked to me like an unhealthy obsession on the part of the leading military officers who asserted that they felt it their inexorable duty to mobilize the military machine forthwith and launch an immediate punitive expedition to attack Xi'an. To my mind this was a point of view that was intolerable. It may be that military requirements necessitated such a thing and that the generalissimo expected it, but I was completely unable to reconcile myself to it. So, rightly or wrongly, I decided to fight it and strive for a quick and calm and bloodless settlement of the whole affair."<sup>15</sup>

Thus, Song decided to send W. H. Donald, a close friend of both Chiang and Zhang, to Xi'an. Donald had been Zhang's personal adviser and then became personal adviser to Sun Yat-sen and then to Chiang Kai-shek (see Chap. 4). Chiang writes: "People have often supposed Donald to be an engaged adviser of the government. The fact is that he is a personal friend and a frequent guest at my house....This time he is coming to Xi'an to see me at the request of my wife to see whether I am dead or alive. Zhang still urged me to move, but I did not want to speak much with him and merely said that that matter might be discussed after the arrival of Donald. Tears again ran down Zhang's face, and he stayed for a long while before he left." Song meanwhile entrusted her letter to Chiang with Donald, stating, "The scene in Nanjing is 'a play within a play,'" which would shock Chiang. Donald headed to Luoyang, Henan province, on the evening of December 13 and received a telegram from Zhang, inviting Donald to Xi'an. Donald flew to Xi'an on the morning of December 14.<sup>16</sup>

DECEMBER 14: KMT ENVOY W. H. DONALD ARRIVED  
IN XI'AN

Chiang Kai-shek wrote in his account of the Xi'an Incident: "At 5:30 P.M. Donald came to see me. I was very much moved by his loyal friendship, especially as he is a foreigner and yet was willing to come so far on such a dangerous mission. After having exchanged greetings, he gave me my wife's letter in her own handwriting and suggested that he live in the same house with me." Chiang appeared to be relieved somewhat with the arrival of Donald and consented to Zhang's request that Chiang be moved to Gao Guezi's public residence, which was a more comfortable and convenient place located next to Zhang's public residence. Gao Guezi (1891–January 1959, from Shaanxi province) had joined the Chinese Revolutionary Alliance in 1911 and then the KMT National Revolutionary Army, and engaged in Chiang's Bandit Suppression Campaign, but became a secret liaison with Mao Zedong. Having confirmed the safety of Chiang Kai-shek, Donald returned to Luoyang on December 15 and called Song Meiling. The news relieved Song and her elder brother Song Ziwen (T. V. Soong, December 1894–April 1971; graduated from Harvard University and then received a doctoral degree in economics from Columbia University), who was in the anti-Japanese faction within the KMT. Donald also said to Song: "Zhang Xueliang was willing to accompany Chairman Chiang to Nanjing. Zhang realizes that his action was wrong but believes that his motivation was pure. Zhang requested that Kong Xiangxi and Song Meiling come to Xi'an." Song replied to Donald in the evening, saying, "Kong cannot go to Xi'an because of his poor health and his position as acting premier, but Song Ziwen or Gu Zhutong could go."<sup>17</sup>

DECEMBER 16–DECEMBER 17

Zhang Xueliang meanwhile had appealed to the nation on a radio program at 8:00 PM on December 14, explaining the incident and stressing the safety of Chiang Kai-shek. Zhang also spoke at a meeting organized by the Northwestern Federation of Anti-Japanese National Salvation Associations in Various Circles at the Revolutionary Park in Xi'an on December 16, explaining in front of 100,000 people that his purpose was to persuade Chiang Kai-shek to agree to their demands while guaranteeing his safety. Nevertheless, on December 16, the KMT Central Political Committee issued an order to attack the rebels in Xi'an and appointed



He Yingqin Military Affairs Committee acting chairman against the opposition of Song Meiling, who was most concerned with Chiang's safety. Three KMT Army bombers flew from Luoyang in the afternoon and bombed the area occupied by the Northeastern Army. This could have triggered a new civil war between the KMT government and the Northeastern Army–Northwestern Army. In order to preempt such a crisis, Zhang asked one of the captured KMT government officials, general Jiang Fangzhen (1882–1938), to persuade Chiang Kai-shek to stop the attacks. On December 17, Chiang agreed to order He Yingqin to stop the military attacks for three days. Zhang sent another captive, general Jiang Dingwen, to Nanjing on December 18, as a messenger to deliver Chiang's hand-written note. He Yingqin was obliged to stop the attacks.<sup>18</sup>

#### DECEMBER 17: ARRIVAL OF ZHOU ENLAI IN XI'AN

Despite the three-day truce agreement, the KMT Army was still encircling Xi'an and a civil war between the KMT Army and the Northeastern Army–Northwestern Army alliance could have erupted at any moment. In the middle of this, Zhou Enlai's party arrived in Xi'an on the night of December 17. After some rest, Liu Ding escorted Zhou's party to the residence of Zhang Xueliang, who was anxiously waiting for Zhou's arrival. Zhang felt that Zhou would be able to find a way to resolve the issue. They discussed past midnight the urgent issue of what to do with Chiang Kai-shek. Concurring with Zhang's opinion, Zhou stated that insofar as Chiang agreed to suspend the civil war and form a united anti-Japanese resistance, they should release Chiang and make him the leader of a national anti-Japanese resistance because he after all controlled most of China. On the other hand, should they try Chiang and execute him, it would not only not end the civil war but also present advantages to the Japanese imperialists. Therefore, they should persuade Chiang to lead anti-Japanese resistance and support him as the head of an anti-Japanese national coalition. Zhou's endorsement reaffirmed Zhang's resolve to solve the incident peacefully.<sup>19</sup>

Zhou sent a telegram to the CCCPC that night, suggesting that the party declare that it would guarantee Chiang's safety insofar as Nanjing did not send troops to Xi'an and escalate the civil war. The CCCPC consented to his proposal, publicized its position on the incident for the first time on December 18, and sent a telegram to the KMT Central Committee, calling for a peaceful solution of the incident. On the night of December 17,

Zhou also drew up five demands to be presented to Song Ziwen upon his arrival to Xi'an: (1) to stop the civil war immediately and have the KMT Central Army withdraw to the east of Tongguan (eastern border of Shaanxi province); (2) to direct the nation to support anti-Japanese resistance in Suiyuan province; (3) to establish a provisional government in Nanjing and charge Song Ziwen to liquidate all the pro-Japanese cliques; (4) to organize a united army for anti-Japanese resistance; and (5) to release political prisoners, realize democracy, arm the general public, and hold a preparatory meeting in Xi'an in order to convene a national salvation congress. Zhang and Zhou also decided that the Red Army would move to the south in order to counterattack the KMT Army. Accordingly, the Red Army advanced to cities such as Yan'an, Wayaobao, Yanchuan, and Yanchang.<sup>20</sup>

### ZHANG ANXIOUSLY WAITS FOR ZHOU

Zhang had anxiously waited for Zhou's arrival because he had not carefully planned out the next step after capturing Chiang Kai-shek. He thought that he could consult about the matter with Zhou upon his arrival and that Zhou would find a clue to a solution. In turn, Zhou was determined to resolve the matter peacefully and end the civil war. In the Chinese TV drama about the Xi'an Incident, aired in 2010, there is a scene in which Zhou, who had been dubbed "Meizi-gong" ("handsome beard"; he did not have time to shave during the Long March), shaved off his beard before his meeting with Zhang in Xi'an, as a gesture of his determination and resolve. Zhang wrote about Zhou's arrival in Xi'an in his "Record of Repentance for the Xi'an Incident":

I had not consulted about my plan [of capturing Chiang Kai-shek] with the CPC at all. Aside from Yang, only a few people knew. After the incident I asked Zhou Enlai to come primarily because of the inability of my army and Yang's army and also because of the way the Nanjing government had reacted. I hoped that Zhou and I would find a solution together.... I immediately sent a telegram to Zhou, requesting that he come to Xi'an to discuss the solution. He arrived at Xi'an a few days later, accompanied by two people.... From this time on, Zhou acted as if he were a ringleader in Xi'an.<sup>21</sup>

Zhang continues: "Zhou told me that the news (of capturing Chiang) had startled him and explained that the CPC was split into two groups. A radical group, including Ye Jianying, was not in favor of supporting Chairman Chiang. A moderate group, including Zhou, favored a peace-

ful settlement and supporting Chairman Chiang. The proposal the CPC decided on was to support the leadership of Chairman Chiang for the sake of anti-Japanese resistance, to form a united front with the Northeastern Army and the Northwestern Army, to abide by the agreement of the Yan'an meeting [between Zhang and Zhou]...to share the same fate with us if a united front failed, and to put its armed forces under my command. Thus, Zhou and others joined the (Provisional Anti-Japanese Allied Forces Northwestern Military Affairs) Committee. The so-called 'Trinity' in Xi'an at that time refers to the Northeastern Army, the Northwestern Army, and the CPC. The committee decided to adhere to the Eight-point Demands, to seek a peaceful settlement in order not to expand the situation, and to support the release of Chairman Chiang to Nanjing. We also had the CPC Army move (southward) to Yaoxian and Sanyuan as a contingency measure."<sup>22</sup>

### ZHOU ENLAI MEETS YANG HUCHENG

Zhou then met Yang Hucheng on the morning of December 18. The CPC had maintained friendly relations with Yang for a long time and Zhou briefed Yang on his meeting with Zhang Xueliang of the previous night. Zhou's proposal for a peaceful settlement was beyond imagination on Yang's part. Yang had thought that the CPC would not readily agree to release Chiang—its archenemy for a decade—if not execute him immediately. Yang was also concerned that were Chiang released and betrayed them, he would punish Yang much more severely than would the CPC, because Yang was Chiang's subordinate whereas the CPC was an independent party to the case. Zhou understood Yang's concerns and explained the external situation that would compel Chiang to decide for anti-Japanese resistance. Impressed with Zhou's stance that the CPC set aside its historical animosity toward Chiang for the sake of the interest of the nation, Yang told Zhou: "I am with Deputy Commander Zhang.... Since the deputy commander is in agreement with the CPC, I would be happy to follow your decision." Despite Zhou's assurance, however, Yang could not overcome his reservations about Chiang, and what he feared most would come true.<sup>23</sup>

After the meeting with Yang, Zhou sent another telegram to the CCCPC on December 18, reporting as follows: "The purpose of the pro-Japanese faction in Nanjing was to escalate the civil war, not to rescue Chiang Kai-shek. Song Meiling wrote a letter to Chiang, pleading with

him that he should rather decide for anti-Japanese resistance rather than die in the enemy's hands. Kong Xiangxi is opting for a compromise plan and Song Ziwen is coming to Xi'an with a ceasefire as their conditions. Wang Jingwei is planning to return to China [from Germany]....Chiang's attitude was inflexible at the beginning, but he is now inclined to compromise and wants to regain his freedom." Upon receipt of the telegram, the CCCPC held a second Politburo meeting concerning the incident. Zhou also coordinated a transportation network between Xi'an and Yan'an so that the shipment time between the two locations that had taken from five to six days was shortened to two or three days. As a result, large quantities of grain, clothes, and medicine were transported to Yan'an. Zhou also sent many progressive young people to Yan'an through this network so that Yan'an became the seat of the CCCPC in January 1937.<sup>24</sup>

#### ZHANG XUELIANG AND COMINTERN/SOVIET UNION

In turn, Zhang carefully observed the response of the Comintern and the Soviet Union. Since the outbreak of the Xi'an Incident, the Soviet official newspapers *Pravda* and *Izvestia* had repeatedly and falsely condemned Zhang, saying that he and Yang Hucheng had plotted a political conspiracy with Wang Jingwei under Japanese influence. This was an unfounded accusation. Zhang asked for an explanation from Zhou, but Zhou could not answer. According to the Official Biography of Zhou Enlai, the CCCPC had reported the incident to the Comintern secretariat several times since the outbreak, but had heard nothing from Moscow before Zhou's departure to Xi'an. It received a telegram from the Comintern on December 16, but it was undecipherable. Mao Zedong stated at the Politburo meeting on December 19 that the CCCPC had not received the instruction from the Comintern. It then received a telegram from the Comintern on December 20 and Mao relayed it to Zhou. This telegram instructed the CPC to seek a peaceful settlement of the incident, to establish an alliance with countries that were sympathetic to the anti-Japanese resistance of the Chinese people, but not to include an alliance with the Soviet Union in its slogan.<sup>25</sup>

This official account of the communications between the Comintern and Mao Zedong seems rather strange. It neither mentions how the Comintern instructed the CPC regarding what to do with Chiang Kai-shek, the most cardinal issue at that time, nor does it clarify Mao's own stance regarding Chiang. In fact, other studies note that Joseph Stalin

sent a telegram to the CPC on December 14, via the Comintern, instructing the party to release Chiang. The American journalist Edgar Snow also writes that Sun Yat-sen's widow, Song Qingling, told him that she had relayed Stalin's telegram to Mao, which instructed the CPC to have Zhang Xueliang release Chiang. Thus, Mao, who had wished to have Chiang transferred to their base and tried (and executed), was infuriated. Snow writes of his interview with X in November 1937: "‘Mao Zedong,’ X said, ‘flew into a rage’ when the order came from Moscow to release Chiang. Mao swore and stamped his feet. Until then they had planned to give Chiang a public trial and to organize a Northwest anti-Japanese defense government."<sup>26</sup>

Stalin took a surprisingly lenient stance on Chiang Kai-shek for the sake of the national interests of the Soviet Union. That the Japanese news agency Dōmei-tsūshin Shanghai Office director, Matsumoto Shigeharu, broke the news to the world made Stalin suspect that the Xi'an Incident was a Japanese conspiracy to escalate the civil war in China. At that time, it was also reported that Wang Jingwei had met Adolf Hitler. (Wang was recuperating in Germany from the injury he had sustained from the shooting incident in Nanjing in November 1935; see Chap. 4.) Stalin therefore was concerned that were Chiang executed, Wang would assume power in China and China might join the Anti-Comintern Pact that had just been concluded between Germany and Japan in November 1936. Stalin wanted to avoid an all-out war with Japan so that he could send his best troops to the western war front to fight the German Army. (Only after the victory in the European theater did Stalin declare war against Japan in violation of the Neutrality Treaty between the Soviet Union and Japan, which was still in effect.) Stalin therefore instructed the CPC to release Chiang.<sup>27</sup>

Thus, contrary to the expectations on the part of Zhang, who had thought that Stalin would only praise his action (of capturing Chiang Kai-shek) and would provide military assistance, Stalin was infuriated. *Pravda* and *Izvestia* severely and repeatedly criticized Zhang and even "went so far in their official disclaimers of responsibility, denunciation of Zhang Xueliang, and hosannas to Chiang Kai-shek, that they invented a story that the Xi'an Incident was" a joint conspiracy of Wang Jingwei and the Japanese imperialists. In this context, Zhang had written to Zhou seeking to become a member of the CPC, most likely around July 1936, and Zhou tried to help him, but the Comintern rejected Zhang. Snow also interviewed Zhang's former military and political adviser Miao Jianqiu (see Chap. 8) in September 1938 and wrote: "I asked Miao whether Zhou

[Enlai] had advocated the release of Chiang Kai-shek from the moment he arrived in Xi'an, or whether he had changed his policy after receiving new directives. 'When Zhou first went to Xi'an,' Miao answered, 'he wanted to put Chiang on public trial. But Zhou got a telegram from Moscow and changed his mind. Sun and Ying told me Zhang Xueliang was very worried about the Red Army's change of attitude.'<sup>28</sup>

### ARRIVAL OF SONG ZIWEN

On December 19, Song Meiling, her brother-in-law Kong Xiangxi, and her brother Song Ziwen decided that Song Ziwen and Donald should go to Xi'an to negotiate a peaceful settlement. They flew to Xi'an on December 20. Upon arrival, Zhang Xueliang frankly told Song Ziwen that the three parties—the Northwestern Army, the Seventeenth Route Army, and the Red Army—had already agreed among themselves for a peaceful settlement: Insofar as Chiang Kai-shek accepts the “Eight-point Demands” of Zhang and Yang Hucheng, they would release Chiang. Then, Zhang took Song Ziwen to Chiang and Song handed his sister Meiling's letter to Chiang. He read it and cried aloud.<sup>29</sup>

On this Chiang Kai-shek wrote: “In the forenoon when I heard the buzzing of airplanes overhead, I naturally thought that, the three days [of truce] having expired, fighting must have been resumed at the front and the airplane I heard was probably reconnoitering. But soon afterwards, T. V. [Song Ziwen], accompanied by Zhang and Donald, entered my room. I realized then that the noise I [had] heard came from his plane and was much surprised. I shook hands with him with mingled joy and sorrow. I could hardly say a word. T. V. handed me a note from my wife. In it my wife wrote: ‘Should T. V. fail to return to Nanjing within three days, I will come to Shaanxi to live and die with you.’ My eyes got wet.”<sup>30</sup>

Song Ziwen had not known that Zhou Enlai was in Xi'an and felt that, with Zhou representing the CPC, negotiations would not be as easy as he had thought. Guo Zengkai, who had accompanied Song, argued that Song should meet Zhou because Zhou was a key person to resolve this issue. Song, however, did not want to meet Zhou himself and had Guo meet him instead. Zhou told Guo that the CPC had nothing to do with the incident and that the party sought a peaceful settlement. He also stated his wish that Song weigh various interests objectively and persuade Chiang to change his policy for the sake of the nation. Only if Chiang would decide for anti-Japanese resistance would the CPC support him

wholeheartedly and appeal to the nation to support the KMT government and form a united front for anti-Japanese resistance. Pleased with Zhou's positive stance, Song's party hurried back to Nanjing on December 21. Hearing the report, Song Meiling decided to go to Xi'an herself in order to persuade Chiang to accept Zhang Xueliang's demands. Her primary objective was to save Chiang's life.<sup>31</sup>

### ARRIVAL OF SONG MEILING

Song Meiling flew to Xi'an on December 22, with her brother Song Ziwen, General Jiang Dingwen, KMT military intelligence operations head Dai Li (May 1897–March 1946, dubbed “the Himmler of China” after Nazi Germany's secret police Gestapo leader Heinrich Himmler), and Donald. (Song Meiling did not want Dai Li to accompany them to Xi'an, because he was disliked by many people.) Song Meiling states: “When the plane came to a standstill, Hanqing [Zhang's courtesy name] came on board, looking very tired, very embarrassed and somewhat ashamed. I greeted him as I always have done, and as we left the plane asked him quite casually not to let any of his men search my baggage, as I disliked having my things messed up. ‘Oh, madame, I would never dare do that,’ he very apologetically replied. Just then Yang Hucheng (pacification commissioner at Xi'an), an associate of Hanqing in the mutiny, came up. I shook hands with him as though I were just arriving on a casual visit. Yang was obviously very nervous and just as obviously very relieved at my calm attitude.”<sup>32</sup>

At 4:00 PM, Zhang took the Song siblings to the public residence of Gao Guezi, where Chiang was detained. On this Chiang wrote: “My wife arrived at 4:00 PM. I was so surprised to see her that I felt as if I were in a dream. I had told T. V. [Song Ziwen] more than once the day before that my wife must not come to Xi'an, and when she braved all danger to come to the lion's den I was very much moved and almost wanted to cry. My wife tried her best to be cheerful when she saw me, but I was very much worried about her safety....She told me that Jiang Dingwen, Dai Li, Donald and T. V. had come with her and persuaded me, above everything else, to find some way to leave this place.”<sup>33</sup>

After meeting with the Song siblings, Chiang Kai-shek stated that he would agree to reshuffle the Nanjing government, to convene a national salvation congress within three months, to reorganize the KMT, and to ally with the Soviet Union and the communists. Simultaneously, Chiang

presented two conditions: (1) he himself would not participate in the negotiations, but the Song siblings would negotiate on his behalf; and (2) he would guarantee to abide by the agreement in his “capacity as the national leader,” but he would not sign any document. Considering the importance of a peaceful settlement to the nation, Zhang’s side consented to Chiang’s two conditions.<sup>34</sup>

### CONTENDING VIEWS IN NORTHEASTERN ARMY AND NORTHWESTERN ARMY

No sooner was the breakthrough for the peaceful settlement about to occur than Zhang and Zhou faced a new challenge. Yang Hucheng and his subordinates were not satisfied with the commitment of only the two Song siblings to the agreement. They demanded Chiang Kai-shek’s own signature on the agreement as the condition of his release, and their negotiations stalemated. The “rebels” who captured Chiang Kai-shek were not a monolithic group. The internal situation of the Northeastern Army was complicated. According to Japanese reporter Matsuno Tanio, they were divided into three groups. The main group was a moderate group, led by Zhang Xueliang and Wang Yizhe, which truly believed in forming a united front with the communists for the sake of anti-Japanese resistance. The second was a radical group led by Zhang’s Bodyguard Regiment commander Sun Mingjiu, who was a member of the CPC and the National United Front. This group also included warlords who tried to maintain their power by getting along with the main group. The third group was in favor of total subordination to the Nanjing government.<sup>35</sup>

Moreover, young officers of the Northeastern Army and the Northwestern Army were emotionally agitated and vehemently opposed the release of Chiang Kai-shek. They were distrustful of Chiang and did not believe in his verbal consent to Zhang’s conditions. They also feared Chiang’s reprisals were he to be released, and demanded a people’s trial of Chiang. They had thought that the CPC would demand the execution of Chiang, and were disappointed to learn that the CPC was seeking a peaceful settlement for the incident. Further, Stalin’s opponents, radical Trotskyists, had spread disinformation that the CPC had colluded with Chiang and betrayed the Northeastern Army and the Northwestern Army. This disinformation disturbed the young officers who had trusted the CPC. Zhou tried to persuade the young officers day and night. As Bo Gu and Ye Jianying did not arrive at Xi’an until December 22, Zhou had to



solve many urgent issues in this most complex and fluid situation alone, and he did not even have time to sleep or eat, but he kept his composure and dealt with them quickly.<sup>36</sup>

## FORMAL NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE KMT

With the arrival of Song Meiling and Song Ziwen, those concerned hoped that they could resolve the crisis fast. First, Song Ziwen, representing Chiang Kai-shek, and Zhang Xueliang, Yang Hucheng, and Zhou Enlai met on the morning of December 23 and thus began the official negotiations with the KMT Nanjing government. Zhou presented CPC's six-point conditions for a ceasefire and a united anti-Japanese resistance. Song Ziwen stated that he personally concurred with the CPC's proposal and that he would convey this to Chiang. Then, Song Meiling met Zhou in the afternoon.<sup>37</sup>

## ZHOU ENLAI–SONG MEILING MEETING

Zhang had Song Meiling meet Zhou on December 23. Strangely, she does not disclose Zhou's name in her account and states:

Every effort was being made by Hanqing [Zhang Xueliang] to break down the doubts of his associates. He brought to me one man said to have influence with them [but the generalissimo did not wish to see him]. I spent two hours discussing the whole situation with him, but much of the time he did the talking. He went into the whole problems of the Northwest to illustrate the grievances which led to the detention of the generalissimo....[He said that the CPC did not participate in the Xi'an Incident and that it had nothing whatsoever to do with capturing Chairman Chiang.] He seemed to find great relief in letting off steam and to be thoroughly in earnest in what he said. It interested me to hear him reiterate again and again that apart from the generalissimo there was no one capable of being the leader of the country at this period of its existence. When he referred to the grievance concerning the defense of the country he said, "We do not say that the generalissimo does not resist aggression, but we say he does not resist definitely enough or sufficiently fast."<sup>38</sup>

Song continues:

I very gently pointed out to him.... Above all he must not be too far ahead of the mass of the people in carrying out his ideas. I emphasized that the economic question was all important and must be considered in relation to

national defense and that if they really had faith in the generalissimo as the only leader they should abide by his policies....Once having faith in the sincerity and ability of the leader to achieve the ultimate goal, there was only one thing to do, and that was to follow him loyally. The man mentioned that the munity was the result of accident. This caused me to ask: "If those responsible could not stage a simple coup bloodlessly, how could they expect to dictate national policy, to say nothing of running the country?" He reiterated that they had the fullest respect for the generalissimo, but the generalissimo would not let them talk to him on questions of policy. The result of my conversation was that he promised to use his influence with Yang to secure the release of the generalissimo as soon as possible, and he left, asking to see me again.<sup>39</sup>

The person Song Meiling refers to was obviously Zhou Enlai. By concealing his name, Song betrayed herself—her pride that blocked her from acknowledging the influence Zhou and the CPC had on this critical matter—and paradoxically endorsed the importance of Zhou. Zhou was telling the truth when he told Song that the incident was unexpected and that the CPC had nothing to do with the capture of Chiang Kai-shek. Zhou was also sincere when he told Song that insofar as Chiang agreed to launch anti-Japanese resistance, the CPC would support Chiang as the national leader.<sup>40</sup>

They negotiations continued on the morning of December 24, in which Song Meiling expressed her clear support for the ceasefire. After lengthy discussions, the Song siblings consented to the CPC's proposal that Zhou had drawn up and gave their commitment to it. The content of their agreement was not publicized for nearly half a century until the CPC compiled it in the *Selected Writings of Zhou Enlai* (1980):

1. Kong Xingxi and Song Ziwen shall organize the Executive Yuan [branch of government] and Song shall assume all responsibilities for organizing a government that satisfies public opinion and also guarantees to eradicate pro-Japanese factions;
2. The Song siblings shall assume all responsibilities for withdrawing the KMT Central Army from the Northwest...;
3. Song Ziwen shall assume all the responsibilities for releasing the patriotic leaders upon Chiang Kai-shek's return to Nanjing...;
4. The status quo for the existing soviet districts and the Red Army shall be maintained. The Song siblings shall guarantee that Chiang suspend his campaign to suppress communists and will provide replenishment for the Red Army through Zhang Xieliang...the

- Red Army shall be renumbered and take joint action under a unified command upon the realization of an anti-Japanese resistance coalition;
5. Song Ziwen declared that he...and shall convene a national salvation congress made up of all the political parties and groups. Chiang Kai-shek declared that he would reshuffle the KMT three months later;
  6. Song Ziwen agreed to consult with Sun Yat-sen's widow, Song Qingling, on how to release all the political prisoners;
  7. The CPC shall be legalized upon the realization of anti-Japanese resistance;
  8. The foreign policy shall be to ally with the Soviet Union, as well as with England, France, and the United States;
  9. Chiang Kai-shek shall self-criticize upon returning to Nanjing through a telegram and resign the post of Executive Yuan premier; and
  10. Song Ziwen requested that the CPC become a backbone for anti-Japanese resistance and for countering pro-Japanese factions, and that the party send a liaison to Shanghai for secret communications with him.<sup>41</sup>

### YANG HUCHENG'S RESERVATIONS

Notwithstanding the formal agreement between Zhang and the KMT representatives, Yang Hucheng still had reservations about Chiang Kai-shek not signing the agreement and felt that the commitment of the two Songs was insufficient to guarantee the implementation of the agreement. Then, on December 25, some high-ranking officers in the Northwestern Military Affairs Committee presented their own seven-point demands to Song Ziwen, demanded that the agreed terms for a peaceful settlement be documented with signatures and that the KMT Central Committee be withdrawn to the east of Tongguan before Chiang could be released. They declared that otherwise they would firmly oppose the release of Chiang even if Generals Zhang and Yang agreed to it. Thus, things went back to a standstill, which made Zhang feel fretful and rushed.<sup>42</sup>

Zhang states: "Had I continued to detain General Chiang, a new civil war between the Nanjing government and us would have occurred. Since I initiated this incident in order to end the civil war, a new civil war was the last thing I wanted. This is the point where I disagreed with Yang

Hucheng. The leaders of the Nanjing government at that time took a hardline stance and were willing to take military action....Those who wanted a new civil war did not want Master Chiang to come back to Nanjing. Please do not ask me who advocated this. Therefore, I decided to resolve the incident peacefully by myself. This was how I felt, but Yang disagreed....This became a big controversy between us.”<sup>43</sup>

### ZHOU ENLAI MEDIATES ZHANG AND YANG

It was Zhou Enlai who saved the stalemate in the crisis between Zhang and Yang. Zhang wrote in his Record of Repentance:

Toward the final stage of the negotiations, Yang Hucheng and I disagreed on the release of Chiang Kai-shek. I argued that our original purpose was at all costs to urge Master Chiang to lead anti-Japanese resistance and that he would decide for anti-Japanese coalition....We should not be afraid of incurring losses or deaths for this. Why should we stick to the initial plan at this time as you do? I became agitated in the debate so that I was on the verge of breaking up with Yang. Then, Zhou Enlai, who was listening to our debate, defused the crisis. He suggested that we take a break. Subsequently, we resumed our discussions. With Zhou's help, I tried to convince Yang that insofar as we can achieve our goal of anti-Japanese resistance, we should not be concerned with other things and that if we delayed the settlement further, it would go counter to our purpose and ruin everything (we are opposed to the civil war, but it would start a larger civil war. We are anti-Japanese, but we would give an opportunity [for some KMT leaders] to ally with Japan, disgracing Chairman Chiang).<sup>44</sup>

On this, Yang Hucheng's eldest son, Yang Zhengmin (1922–1998; joined the CPC in 1938, escaped Chiang Kai-shek's summary execution of Yang Hucheng, his family, and his aides in 1949, became PRC Shaanxi- province vice president, Tianjin deputy mayor, People's Political Consultative Conference deputy general-secretary), states:

My father told me that he felt pained during the negotiations because Song Ziwen, Song Meiling, and Zhang Xueliang spoke English for the most part. Song Meiling did not speak Chinese well. Song Ziwen spoke Cantonese. Zhou Enlai could understand English. There was no interpreter in the meetings. My father could not join their conversations and felt uncomfortable. They had agreed on the basics, but my father believed that a peaceful solution of the incident required Chiang Kai-shek's signature to the agreement and opposed the release of Chiang before obtaining his signature. He also

opposed his early release. But Song Meiling and Zhang Xueliang were fretful....My father tried to have Chiang make a written commitment, but he refused. Zhang argued that they should consider Chiang's high moral stature as the national leader as his commitment. Zhang and my father differed on their views of Chiang. My father did not trust him.<sup>45</sup>

In this situation, Zhang felt that the only way to break this deadlock was for Zhou to meet Chiang Kai-shek. Thus, Zhang took Zhou to Gao Guezi's public residence and the historic meeting between Chiang and Zhou took place after 10:00 PM on December 24.<sup>46</sup>

### SECRET MEETING BETWEEN CHIANG KAI-SHEK AND ZHOU ENLAI

Zhou was finally to meet Chiang Kai-shek. Their personal relationship goes back to 1924 during the first KMT–CPC United Front against the Beiyang warlords. Whampoa Military Academy commandant Chiang had appointed Zhou Political Department deputy head in November 1924. Zhou was soon promoted as its head and then appointed Military Law Office director in 1925. When Chiang organized the National Revolutionary Army First Army, Zhou became its Political Department head. Nevertheless, Zhou ended up being arrested by Chiang during the Zhongshan Warship Incident of March 1926, but narrowly escaped execution. Zhou was then arrested by National Revolutionary Army General Bai Chongxi (March 1893–December 1966, of the Hui Moslem minority group) during Chiang's coup d'état on April 12, 1927 (the Shanghai Massacre), and was almost shot to death. Zhou then led the counterattack against Chiang's anticommunist purges in August 1927 (the Nanchang Uprising) and retreated to Guangzhou, ushering in the civil war between the KMT and the CPC. Chiang put out a reward of 80,000 yuan for capturing Zhou. Almost a decade had passed since then.<sup>47</sup>

With this background, the Chiang–Zhou meeting could not have been more dramatic. Nevertheless (or because of its significance), no minutes or first-person record of the meeting exists. Neither Chiang nor Zhou wrote about this meeting. Chiang's diary for December 24 read: "The leaders in Xi'an suddenly disagreed over what they had discussed with T. V. [Song Ziwen] yesterday. They indicated that they could not let me go until the Central government troops had withdrawn to Tungkwan [Tongguan]. T. V. is very much upset, but I am taking it quite calmly, as I have not been

expecting to leave this dangerous place.... There were many changes during the day, and in the evening it was said that Yang Hucheng was firmly against sending me back to Nanjing, and he and Zhang almost quarreled.”<sup>48</sup>

In turn, Zhang declined in his interviews to tell the content of the meeting. The only thing Zhang said about the meeting was, “I was not only present at the meeting but also I took Zhou Enlai to Chairman Chiang.” That’s all. Zhang states: “I cannot tell because telling would mean that I praise myself. I did not cause this incident in order to be praised by people. I do not want to defend myself, either. Second, telling would hurt many people.”<sup>49</sup>

### TRUTH ABOUT CHIANG–ZHOU SECRET MEETING

It has been believed that a secret document about the Chiang–Zhou meeting had been kept in a safe in the Bank of England. According to a Japanese study, an English art dealer accompanied Song Meiling’s party to Xi’an and acted strangely. This art dealer might have brought the document back to England and deposited it in the Bank of England. The core secret that Zhang could not disclose is considered to be Chiang’s “order of non-resistance” against Japan, which was supposed to have followed the spirit of Sun Yat-sen toward Japan. This position was also supposed to have been based on the understanding that should China and Japan fight, East Asia would not be resurrected regardless of which side won. As of the writing of this manuscript, the only credible primary source that tells of the content of the meeting is Zhou’s telegram to the CCCPC dated December 25, which matter-of-factly reports: “Chiang Kai-shek talked on three points: (1) to suspend the campaign to suppress communists and engage in anti-Japanese resistance in alliance with the Red Army, unify China, and follow Chiang’s command; (2) Song Ziwen, Song Meiling, and Zhang Xueliang shall be plenipotentiaries on Chiang’s behalf and resolve all the issues with me [Zhou]; and (3) I may go to Nanjing for direct negotiations with Chiang upon his return to the capital.”<sup>50</sup>

There are several third-person accounts on the Chiang–Zhou meeting. According to the Official Record of the Xi’an Incident, written by Yang Hucheng’s Political Department director, Shen Bochun, Zhou visited Chiang, accompanied by the Song siblings on the night of December 24. Although Chiang realized that he must give his commitment to some of Zhou’s demands in order to regain his freedom, he actually did not want to make any commitment to many points. Thus, the Song siblings

had earlier told Zhou that Chiang was not feeling well and that he would be unable to talk with Zhou for a long time. As Zhou entered Chiang's bedroom, he saw Chiang lying on the bed. Zhou said to Chiang, "Master Chiang, it has been ten years since we met last time. You have grown older." Nodding and sighing, Chiang said, "You are my subordinate and you should follow my order." Zhou replied, "Only if you change your policy of 'eradicating internal enemy must precede expelling external enemy,' not only will I listen to you but also the Red Army will follow your commands." After explaining the three points, Chiang, with an appearance of being tired, told the Song siblings to talk with Zhou further. Zhou said, "Please rest, Master Chiang. We shall talk on other occasions."<sup>51</sup>

### ZHANG GUOTAO'S ACCOUNT

Zhang Guotao (December 1897–December 1979), who was one of the student leaders at Peking University during the May Fourth Movement, as well as one of the original members of the CPC (he rebelled against Mao Zedong toward the end of the Long March, was expelled from the party in April 1938, and moved to Canada), wrote in his memoirs:

Zhang Xueliang said to Chiang Kai-shek, "The Chairman's former subordinate wishes to see you."...Zhou Enlai entered the room, bowed, and referred to him as "commandant" as he used to be during the Whampoa Military Academy period. Chiang was stunned at the beginning. Zhou explained that the CPC was not planning anything to jeopardize the interests of Chiang and the Nanjing government and that the party hoped for a peaceful solution of this incident. He also explained the changes in CPC policy and stressed the need for united action against Japan. Zhou did not mention anything about Chiang signing the Eight-point Demands, but talked about Chiang's personal life, including that his eldest son, Chiang Ching-kuo, was well treated in Moscow. In so doing, Zhou did not show any attitude that could be construed as threatening, but conveyed his wish to mark this meeting as a departure for peace from the ten-year civil war.<sup>52</sup>

### EDGAR SNOW'S ACCOUNT

The American journalist Edgar Snow also writes: "Shortly after his arrival, the head of the Communist delegation, Zhou Enlai, went to see Chiang Kai-shek. One could easily imagine the effect of this meeting on the

Generalissimo. Still physically weak and psychologically deeply shaken by his experience, Chiang was said to have turned pale with apprehension when Zhou Enlai—his former political attaché for whose head he had once offered \$80,000—entered the room and gave him a friendly greeting. He must have at once concluded that the Red Army had entered Xi'an, and that he was to be turned over to it as a captive....But the Generalissimo was relieved of this apprehension by Zhou and the Marshal, both of whom acknowledged him as commander-in-chief and sat down to explain the attitude of the Communists toward the national crisis. At first frigidly silent, Chiang gradually thawed as he listened, for the first time during his decade of war against the Communists, to their proposal for ending civil war.”<sup>53</sup>

### MATSUNO TANIO'S ACCOUNT

In turn, the Japanese reporter Matsuno Tanio writes: “Ignoring the past enmity, Zhou Enlai explained to his former boss of the need to form a united front for anti-Japanese resistance. With deference and sincerity, Zhou deftly asked for Chiang's commitment to the Eight-point Demands, but not for his signature. In this way, Zhou saved Chiang's face. Zhou was no longer the adolescent pale officer that he was when he served the general, but had become a full-fledged, confident politician through fighting the civil war against the KMT. Zhou faced Chiang as an equal this time.”<sup>54</sup>

After the Chiang–Zhou meeting, Song Ziwen urged Zhang to entrust him with carrying out the agreement on Chiang's behalf and to let Chiang and the Songs leave Xi'an the next day. Zhang agreed to this and even volunteered to accompany Chiang to Nanjing. Zhang was driven by a strong sense of patriotism and was emotional. Song Meiling states: “Christmas Eve was filled with beliefs and dashed hopes. I told Hanqing that he should get the generalissimo out on Christmas Day, that the truce was up on that day, and if an attack were launched we would surely be killed and he with us. Apart from that it would, as Dr Kung had said in Nanjing, be ‘a splendid Christmas gift to the nation.’ Hanqing looked baffled and bewildered but promised to try his best to fulfill my hopes.”<sup>55</sup>

In turn, Zhou felt that it was necessary to have the agreement turned into a formal document before Chiang's departure and therefore he was against releasing Chiang as early as December 25. Zhou was also against Zhang accompanying Chiang to Nanjing.<sup>56</sup>



## ZHANG ABRUPTLY RELEASES CHIANG KAI-SHEK

Several officers of the Northeastern Army and the Seventeenth Army, who heard of an imminent release of Chiang Kai-shek, delivered a letter to Song Ziwen on the morning of December 25, declaring that they would not release Chiang unless he signed the agreement and the KMT Central Army withdrew to the east of Tongguan. They declared that they opposed releasing Chiang even if Zhang Xueliang and Yang Hucheng agreed to it and that Chiang would be released over their dead bodies. Chiang was scared and had Song urge Zhang to release him as soon as possible. Cornered, Zhang felt that he had better release Chiang before things got out of hand. Just after 3:00 PM, Zhang had Yang accompany him and escorted Chiang and the Song siblings out of Gao Guezi's public residence and headed straight to the airport. It was done in complete secrecy. Zhang did not even tell Zhou. At the airport, Zhang requested that he accompany Chiang to Nanjing and wrote an instruction to Yang: "During my absence, the Northeastern Army shall be under the command of Yu Xuezhong, who shall be under the command of Northwestern Military Affairs Committee vice chairman Yang Hucheng." Northeastern Army commander Yu Xuezhong (November 1890–September 1964) was Gansu province president and was stationed in its capital Lanzhou at that time. As soon as the airplane carrying Chiang and the Song siblings took off, Zhang followed them in his own airplane. It was 4:00 PM.<sup>57</sup>

## ZHOU'S REACTION

At this juncture, Zhou was having a discussion with other members of the CPC delegation in his office. Then Sun Mingjiu hurried into Zhou's office and asked, "Do you know that General Zhang has left for the airport with General Chiang?" Zhou said, "No, I don't. When did they leave?" Sun answered, "About ten minutes ago." "Why didn't you come to tell me earlier?" "My men reported it to me just a moment ago." As soon as he heard this, Zhou hurried to the airport, but Zhang had already taken off. He said in lament, "Zhang Hanqing has been poisoned by watching too many old plays, such as *Lianhuantao*. He is sending Tianba off with an escort and is even voluntarily pleading guilty and seeking punishment for himself." *Lianhuantao* is a popular Peking Opera, in which the protagonist, Lianhuantao fortress leader Dou Erdun (a Robin Hood-like outlaw in Hebei province during the early Qing dynasty), decided to send his

archenemy's son, Imperial Guard head Huang Tianba, who had come to his fortress alone, back with an escort and then surrendered himself to be punished for having stolen the Emperor's steed in order to avenge Huang.<sup>58</sup>

Zhang thus acted alone in this abrupt release of Chiang Kai-shek. Zhang's former aide Lu Guangji states: "Before the departure, Zhang Xueliang told his officers, 'You still might not have agreed to releasing Chiang Kai-shek. You might still think that his written commitment is necessary.... But unless we return him to Nanjing now, a new civil war will occur. Therefore, I dare to risk my life for the sake of ending the civil war and confronting the foreign enemy with him.'" <sup>59</sup>

In turn, Yang Hucheng's eldest son Yang Zhengmin states: "Zhang Xueliang phoned my father, telling him to come to Gao Guezi's public residence where Chiang Kai-shek had been detained. Zhang then told my father, 'We will escort Chairman Chiang to the airport now.' My father asked, 'Right now?' Zhang said, 'We go right now.' Then Chiang showed up and they stopped arguing. I think that my father was not happy about this. When they arrived at the airport, Zhang told my father, 'I must send Chairman Chiang off to Nanjing myself.' He gave my father a note stating, 'I will leave the Northeastern Army under your command,' and left." <sup>60</sup>

### ZHANG AND SONG MEILING

Zhang's decision to release Chiang very quickly, before drawing up a formal agreement in writing, let alone before obtaining Chiang's signature on it, strikes one as very hasty, irrational, and even strange. But not so according to the street rumor in China and Taiwan. The popular perception of the Chinese regarding the reason why Zhang decided to release Chiang so quickly is simple: As with other men, Zhang had been attracted to Song Meiling and Song pressed Zhang to release Chiang immediately. (Zhang kept close contact with Song until his death in 2001. He stated that his true love lived in New York City, most likely referring to Song.) Chinese films and TV dramas about the Xi'an Incident portray Zhang and Song as having been lovers in the past. Zhang met Song in Shanghai for the first time in 1925 before she married Chiang Kai-shek in 1927 and Zhang had a residence in the French concession in Shanghai. A senior Chinese who knew well about the Xi'an Incident told a Japanese interviewer, "Zhang Xueliang was Song Meiling's boyfriend." An expatriate from Taiwan stated that "Zhang Xueliang released Chiang Kai-shek because Song Meiling had

asked Zhang to do so. Zhang loved her. Song in turn asked Chiang not to execute Zhang after he had become a prisoner in Nanjing.” True or not, this view appears to be prevalent in popular culture in China and Taiwan.<sup>61</sup>

Zhang’s decision to escort Chiang back to Nanjing and thereby to surrender himself into hostile hands in Nanjing strikes one as even more incomprehensible and strange. Chiang himself was surprised when Zhang proposed to escort him to Nanjing. Chiang wrote: “At the time of departure, Zhang insisted upon accompanying me to Nanjing. I told him several times to stay, as there would be no one to command the Northeast Army when he left. Besides, it might not be convenient for him to go to Nanjing at present. He said that he had asked Yang to look after his troops as well as instructed his subordinates to obey Yang’s orders. So we left by plane and arrived at Luoyang at 5:20 P.M.”<sup>62</sup>

Song Meiling wrote in her account of the Xi’an Incident:

Zhang Xueliang was determined to go to Nanjing with him. The generalissimo remonstrated; told him that there was no necessity for him to do so; that he should stay with his troops....Hanqing explained that he was under obligation to go to Nanjing. First, he had undertaken with his associates to take full responsibility for what had happened; and, second, it was his duty to show that what had been done was not with mutinous intent nor against the generalissimo, his position or power. Realizing that this request had in it new elements...the generalissimo withdrew his objection. He saw that the unusual request would set a precedent that any others, who might in the future contemplate using force to secure personal or political adjustments, would have seriously to consider. I wish specially to point out that this is the first time on record that any high officer responsible for mutinous conduct had shown eagerness to proceed to the capital to be tried for his misdeeds.<sup>63</sup>

On this, Zhang states:

As a military man, I take responsibility for my own action. I escorted Master Chiang to Nanjing in order to be punished there. In short, I went there to be executed. I had made preparations for this and gave my house to one of my men. I wanted to assume responsibility for my own actions as a military man. That was the only thing I had in mind. I was against the civil war. Had I not acted at that time, the civil war would have escalated. I decided to sacrifice myself in order to end the civil war...I did not consult with any one about going to Nanjing. Yang Hucheng tried to stop me. Having learned of my plan, Zhou Enlai also came to the airport in order to stop me, fearing that I would be executed in Nanjing. But I had already gone aboard the aircraft

by the time he arrived at the airport and I departed without seeing him. I thought, “My action equaled a rebellion. I must liquidate my crime for causing a rebellion. I was prepared to be executed.” When the airplane stopped at Luoyang, I did not get out of the aircraft. Chairman Chiang protected me. He paid special attention to me. He kept taking care of me afterward.<sup>64</sup>

### CHIANG KAI-SHEK RETURNS TO NANJING

The airplane carrying Chiang Kai-shek landed at Nanjing at 12:45 PM on December 26. Two hours later, Zhang Xueliang’s airplane also landed at Nanjing. It was his last flight with free will and his last freedom. Upon landing, he was taken to Song Ziwen’s public residence. Afterward, Zhang disappeared from the public scene. His Northeastern Army men, Yang Hucheng and his Northeastern Army men, and Zhou Enlai and his colleagues in the CPC never saw Zhang again. It appears that Chiang Kai-shek had suggested that Zhang take a separate airplane from the one he and his company were to board. His excuse was that had Zhang been aboard the same airplane, government officials in Nanjing would become suspicious. Zhang thus flew his own airplane, following the one that Chiang was aboard. That was how Zhang “escorted” Chiang. When Zhang’s airplane landed in Nanjing, he became a captive of Chiang and spent the rest of his life under house arrest in China and Taiwan for more than half a century until 1991, when he moved to Hawaii. The captor of Chiang became his captive.<sup>65</sup>

### NOTES

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2. NHK and Usui, 192–194.
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4. Sun, 112; NHK and Usui, 157–158.
  5. Sun, 113–115 and 225; NHK and Usui, 194.
  6. NHK and Usui, 194; Zhang Xueliang, *Zhang Xueliang koushu-zizhuan* (Oral Autobiography of Zhang Xueliang), edited by Wang Shujun, Elmhurst, NY: Xiangjiang shidai-chubanshe, 2004, 318–321.
  7. Zhang (2004), 322–329; Zhang Xueliang, *Zhang Xueliang wenji* (Writings of Zhang Xueliang), edited by Bi Wanwen (principal editor), Beijing: Xinhua-chubanshe, 1992, Vol. 2, 1055–1056.
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  9. Jin, 401–402.
  10. Ibid., 402.
  11. Zhang (1992), 1055–1058; Zhang (2004), 487–488; Matsuno, 145.
  12. Zhang (2004), 487–488; “Sokkin ga kataru Son Bun no ‘Tenka-ikō’” (Sun Yat-sen’s “Nation for the Public” as Told by his Aide), August 30, 2008, <http://blog.goo.ne.jp/greendoor-t/e/281a4316e9ab8eff55f386cc183c0106>.
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  16. Chiang Kai-shek, 146; Jin 405; Shen Bochun, *Xi’an-shibian jishi* (Chronicle of Xi’an Incident), Beijing: Renmin-chubanshe, 1979, 142.
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27. NHK and Usui, 202; Cao.
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30. Chiang Kai-shek, 164.
31. Jin, 412.
32. NHK and Usui, 204–205; Madame Chiang Kai-shek, 90–92.
33. Chiang Kai-shek, 168–169.
34. Zhang (2004), 338–339; Jin, 413; Shen, 154.
35. Matsuno, 145 and 148.
36. Ibid., 146; NHK and Usui, 205–106; Jin, 411.
37. Jin, 413.
38. Matsuno, 147–148; NHK and Usui, 205–206; Madame Chiang Kai-shek, 105–106. There are some discrepancies and omissions in Madame Chiang Kai-shek’s account, depending on the source.

39. Madame Chiang Kai-shek, 105–106; Matsuno, 147–148; NHK and Usui, 206–207.
40. Matsuno, 147–149; Jin, 413–414.
41. Jin, 414–415; Zhou Enlai, *Zhou Enlai xuanji* (Selected Works of Zhou Enlai), Beijing: Renmin-chubanshe, 1980, Vol. 1, 70–73.
42. Luo, Lü, and Wang, 57–58.
43. NHK and Usui, 207–208 and 212.
44. Zhang (1992), 11202–1203.
45. NHK and Usui, 209–210.
46. Ibid., 210; Zhang (2004), 339–340.
47. Matsuno, 142–143.
48. Chiang Kai-shek, 172–173.
49. NHK and Usui, 211–213; Zhang (2004), 451, 458, and 488.
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52. Zhang Guotao, *Wo de huiyi* (My Recollections), Beijing: Dongfang-chubanshe, 1991, Vol. 3, 337–338.
53. Snow (1968), 388.
54. Matsuno, 143–144.
55. Madame Chiang Kai-shek, 107–108.
56. Jin, 416.
57. Luo, Lü, and Wang, 57–58; Shen, 161.
58. Luo, Lü, and Wang, 58–59; Shen, 163.
59. NHK and Usui, 215–216.
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61. Zhang (2004), 488–490; Cao Changqing, “Chōsei hyōron hōyaku-shū: Chō Gakuryō-ron” (Collection of Translations of Writings of Cao Changqing: Discourse on Zhang Xueliang), November 1, 2001, <http://toueironsetsu.web.fc2.com/QCao/Zhang/zhang7.htm>; “Geki-teki na Chaina”; “Bibōroku: ‘Chō Gakuryō chinsu’”; an expatriate from Taiwan, author interview, June 24, 2014.
62. Chiang Kai-shek, 175.
63. Madame Chiang Kai-shek, 115–116.
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## Zhou Enlai Negotiates with Chiang Kai-shek for Peaceful Settlement

After the extraordinary development in the two weeks that followed the capture of the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) leader and the de facto head of state of the Republic of China (ROC), Chiang Kai-shek, on December 12, 1936, Zhang Xueliang, the young marshal of the Northeastern Army, abruptly released Chiang on December 25 without consulting anyone. Chiang and his entourage, including Song Meiling and Song Ziwen, returned to Nanjing in one piece. Zhang even followed their airplane in order to “escort” Chiang. Chiang’s safe return to the capital prevented the possible outbreak of a new round of civil war between the KMT and the Communist Party of China (CPC) and thereby the Xi’an Incident ended peacefully for the moment. However, the events that ensued were as unsettling as the Xi’an Incident itself. This chapter examines the aftermath of the incident based on interviews with those who were directly involved in it, juxtaposing contending views from opposing parties.

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The Chinese people rejoiced in the peaceful settlement of the Xi’an Incident and the truce in the decade-long civil war albeit the details of the terms for the ceasefire still had to be negotiated. Zhang Xueliang could not have accomplished this alone. He needed the collaboration of the CPC. As Zhang himself acknowledged, Zhou Enlai specifically played an indispensable role as the CPC representative in the negotiations with the KMT government and for saving Chiang kai-shek’s



life. Yet, Chiang neither mentions anything about the positive role that the CPC played in the Xi'an Incident nor makes any reference to Zhou in his account of the Xi'an Incident. Noting this point, the Japanese reporter Matsuno Tanio states: "Chiang might have been too proud to acknowledge the importance of his former-subordinate-turned-enemy leader....The fact that Chiang took Zhou out of the picture paradoxically reveals the significance of Zhou in the incident....The fact remains that Zhou not only succeeded in a peaceful settlement of the incident but also succeeded in elevating the status of the CPC, which thus far had been a mere insurgent group."<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, the aftermath of the incident was as tumultuous and unsettling as the incident itself. Many things had gone wrong. To begin with, Zhang did not carefully plan out the incident and did not deliberate the consequences. He took the action rather impulsively, as he stated in his "Record of Repentance for the Xi'an Incident" ("Record of Repentance" hereafter). He had been dissatisfied with Chiang Kai-shek's military policy, as well as with some of the officials in the KMT-ROC central government, for some time, but he did not think that *bingjian* ("expostulation by force") as suggested by Yang Hucheng was necessary (see Chap. 6). Zhang felt that he could verbally persuade Chiang to agree to his policy recommendations. However, Zhang states:

When Master Chiang was staying in Huangqing-chi, he reprimanded me twice [on December 7 and 9]. This had a serious impact on me....Moreover, whereas Master Chiang had convened several commanders meetings, he excluded me and Yang Hucheng from them. This made me and Yang suspicious and uneasy. Worse, I even felt that Master Chiang did not trust me and that he no longer regarded me as important. This was the reason that made me decide, in consultation with Yang, to take the action of *bingjian*. I had not consulted on my plan with the CPC at all.<sup>2</sup>

Zhang, Yang, and the junior officers of the Northeastern Army (examined below) and of the Northwestern Army (KMT Seventeenth Route Army) had thought that if only they captured Chiang Kai-shek, everything would lead toward the way they had wanted. Moreover, notwithstanding the fact that Zhang had the best card to play (Chiang Kai-shek as his hostage), he failed to use it in the right way and at the right moment and drove the situation into a deadlock. Insofar as Zhang deferred to Chiang's authority, Zhang could not use his card proactively. In this sense, Zhang's *bingjian* failed. Worse, he ended up being detained in Nanjing by Chiang and making his Northeastern Army divided and disintegrated.<sup>3</sup>

## CHIANG KAI-SHEK STRIKES BACK

As it turned out, no sooner did Chiang Kai-shek leave Xi'an than he revoked his verbal agreement. When his airplane landed at Luoyang for a stopover, he ordered Zhang Xueliang to release all of the 50 or so high-ranking KMT officers, including Chiang's military staff leaders Chen Cheng and Jiang Dingwen, who had been detained at the guesthouse in Xi'an. Zhang sent a telegram to Northwestern Army commander Yang Hucheng, whom Zhang had left in charge during his absence, to release them. Yang was thus obliged to do so. Luo Ruiqing, Lü Zhengcao, and Wang Bingnan write that although Chiang had told Zhang not to escort him to Nanjing, in his heart it was all he could wish for: Chiang plotted to punish Zhang after the release of his officials so that they would not be held as hostages. Chiang also demanded the return of the 50 military aircraft that had been detained in Xi'an. Then, upon arrival in Nanjing, Chiang arrested Zhang, forced him to write a statement, pleading guilty and asking for punishment, and then court-martialed him on December 31, 1936. Zhang was sentenced to 10 years of imprisonment and deprivation of civil rights for 5 years on the charge of being the chief culprit in the "*bingjian*." Then, on January 5, 1937, the KMT-Nanjing government granted pardon to Zhang and decided to keep him in custody under the strict surveillance of its Military Affairs Committee. Thus began Zhang's life in captivity for more than half a century.<sup>4</sup>

Chiang Kai-shek also issued a statement entitled "Generalissimo's Admonition to Zhang Xueliang and Yang Hucheng prior to his Departure from Xi'an" on December 26 and dismissed from active duty both Yang and the Northeastern Army commander in Lanzhou, Yu Xuezhong, on January 5, 1937. Chiang then sent KMT Central Army commander Gu Zhutong (January 1893–January 1987; Whampoa Military Academy inaugural instructor, general in 1954) to Xi'an as director of the KMT-Nanjing government Military Affairs Committee Xi'an Field Headquarters. Chiang then dispatched 37 divisions of the KMT Central Army and encircled Xi'an from five different directions, out of which 12 divisions crossed Tongguan and reached Xi'an. Thus, Chiang not only broke his promise to withdraw the KMT Central Army to the east of Tongguan but also struck back and began to suppress the Northeastern Army and the Seventeenth Route Army by force.<sup>5</sup>

In the face of the outright betrayal on Chiang Kai-shek's part, Zhou Enlai, Bo Gu (Qin Bangxian), and Ye Jianying discussed without sleep how

to deal with the crisis rationally. Then, in consultation with Yang Hucheng and officers in the Northeastern Army and the Seventeenth Route Army, Zhou disseminated a telegram on January 5, strongly protesting against Chiang for detaining Zhang Xueliang and escalating the civil war. With the endorsement of the Central Committee of the CPC (CCCPC), Zhou also had the Red Army move south to Luochuan. However, the CPC's basic policy remained "to pressure Chiang into anti-Japanese resistance" and a suspension of the civil war. Zhou then sent a letter to Zhang Xueliang on January 10, stating that insofar as the KMT Central Army did not attack the Red Army, it would not participate in the warfare. Zhou also sent a letter to Chiang the next day, demanding the withdrawal of the KMT Army and Zhang's release.<sup>6</sup>

### INTERNAL DIVISION IN THE NORTHEASTERN ARMY

The solidarity of the "Trinity in Xi'an"—the Northeastern Army, the Seventeenth Route Army, and the Red Army—was at issue at that time. Having lost its commander-in-chief, the internal divisions within the Northeastern Army, the major force of the "trinity," became pronounced. At the departure for Nanjing on December 25, 1936, Zhang Xueliang had appointed Yu Xuezhong commander of his army, but Yu was not in the direct line of command of the army (he had originally served the Zhili warlord-clique leader in the Beiyang government and then became an officer of the Fengtian clique) and was also away from Xi'an, being stationed in Lanzhou, the capital of Gansu province, at that time. In the absence of Zhang, the "old guard," such as the Northeastern Army (KMT 67th Army) Luochuan Front Headquarters commander Wang Yizhi (1896–February 1937), who had participated in the initial Zhang–Zhou meeting, and Zhang's Cavalry Force commander He Zhuguo (1897–1985), wielded the actual power in the Northeastern Army.<sup>7</sup>

### THREE MUSKETEERS OF NORTHEASTERN ARMY RADICALS

In contrast, the "young Turks" in the Northeastern Army, consisting of middle and low-echelon officers, were led by Zhang Xueliang's Bodyguard Regiment commander Sun Mingju (1909–April 2000), the Army Political Office director Ying Detian (1900–March 1980), and Zhang's secretary and military adviser Miao Jianqiu (1902–1989). After joining the Northeastern Army, Sun was sent to Japan to study at the

Imperial Japanese Army (IJA) Military Academy. Upon returning home, he became a tutor for Zhang's younger brother, Zhang Xueming, in Tianjin, then became a member of Zhang's bodyguard staff, and worked at the newly created Bodyguard General Staff Secretariat. In order to reform the Northeastern Army, Sun acquainted himself with many underground communists, including Liu Ding, Pan Hannian, and Ye Jianying (who introduced himself to Sun as Mr. Wu), and founded a secret political organization with the communists in July 1936: the Anti-Japanese Comrade Society. Sun became Action Department director. The Japanese reporter, Matsuno Tanino, states that Sun was a member of the CPC.<sup>8</sup>

As for Ying Detian, he graduated from the Northeastern University in 1929, as valedictorian in the first graduating class, and received a diploma from Zhang Xueliang in person. Zhang then sent Ying to the USA on a scholarship, and Ying studied political science at the University of Illinois and then studied municipal administration at the University of Michigan. With the outbreak of the Manchurian Incident (1931), Ying returned home, created a middle school in order to provide education for displaced students (due to the Japanese occupation of Manchuria), and joined the Great Alliance Against Imperialism that was an outside organization affiliated with the CPC. Ying also became a staff member in Zhang's Northeastern Army Headquarters in Hankou in the summer of 1934. Zhang ordered Ying to contact former Northeastern Army general Li Du, who had moved in Shanghai, in order to establish a liaison with the CPC for organizing united anti-Japanese resistance (see Chap. 5). In the summer of 1935, Zhang also instructed Ying to found the Northeastern University Alumni Association and Ying became its first president. Ying then worked at Zhang's Bodyguard General Staff Secretariat and also became Anti-Japanese Comrade Society secretary.<sup>9</sup>

In turn, Miao Jianqiu graduated from the Harbin Donghua School, founded by the renowned anti-Japanese patriot-businessman, Zhou Wengui, then went to Japan (with the financial assistance of Zhou Wengui and the support of Zhang Zuolin), graduated from both the prestigious First Higher School and Tokyo Imperial University, and even passed the Japanese senior-rank public servant exams. Miao was a follower of the Japanese Marxist Kawakami Hajime. Upon returning home, Miao became a finance officer for Zhang and also an irregular-recruit secretary at the Bodyguard General Staff Secretariat. As Northeastern Army adviser, Miao scolded Zhang Xueliang for becoming an opium addict and allowing

the army to become corrupt, and urged him to fight the Japanese. He asked Zhang, “Who killed your father? Whom are you going to fight?” Miao then became the director of the Anti-Japanese Comrade Society Theory Department. Thus, Sun, Ying, and Miao were all close aides to Zhang Xueliang and leaders of the Anti-Japanese Comrade Society, and were referred to as the “Three Musketeers” of the radical group in the Northeastern Army. They remained loyal to Zhang even in the aftermath of the Xi’an Incident. They wanted to fight the KMT Army, execute Chiang Kai-shek, and rescue Zhang.<sup>10</sup>

### DISINTEGRATION OF SOLIDARITY IN TRINITY FORCES

Moreover, although Zhang Xueliang had entrusted Yang Hucheng with the command of the Northeastern Army at his departure, he was only a nominal commander and none of the army officers listened to Yang, whose own army was much smaller than theirs. In turn, the CPC representatives were invited guests in Xi’an and could not intervene in the internal disputes in the two armies. Taking advantage of the internal divisions in the Xi’an forces, Chiang Kai-shek exerted military pressure, employed the political maneuver of “divide and conquer,” and presented two different ceasefire proposals to them. Chiang’s cunning tactics worked so that the internal split within the Northeastern Army reached a boiling point. The young Turks of the Northeastern Army insisted that their army would not withdraw unless Chiang released and returned Zhang Xueliang to Xi’an. They felt that the army’s elders had abandoned Zhang and that they were trying to take over the army from Zhang during his absence.<sup>11</sup>

According to the Official Biography of Zhou Enlai, about two dozen Young Turks visited Zhou on the night of January 27 and pleaded with him:

They declared that they would not withdraw unless General Zhang Xueliang returned. Zhou said, “We could demand his release even after we withdraw as long as we maintain the ‘trinity.’” But they did not agree. Ying Detian made a long speech in anger and excitement. Stressing the importance of maintaining the solidarity of the trinity forces, Zhou painstakingly tried to reason with them by stating, “This is not what Deputy Commander Zhang wanted.” “If the civil war between the KMT government and the trinity forces breaks out, the former will never release and return the Deputy Commander. It would not only be unfavorable to the future of the Northeastern Army and of the Deputy Commander, but also be counterproductive to the prospect

for anti-Japanese resistance and for the nation.” Yet, Miao Jianqiu said in tears, “If you do not help us fight, why did the Red Army come to Xi’an? Did you come to watch us being destroyed by Chiang Kai-shek? If you will not help us fight, we will cut off our relationship with you.” In turn, Sun Mingjiu knelt before Zhou and solicited in tears the dispatch of the Red Army. They discussed the situation past midnight until Zhou replied that he would consider this matter carefully and then respond.<sup>12</sup>

No sooner had the Young Turks left than Nan Hanchen (the CPC intelligence agent working at the Northwestern Army) rushed into Zhou’s office before dawn and reported that Yang Hucheng had come and woken him up at 3:00 AM. Yang told Nan, “You came to Xi’an and I have no objection to your taking the position of the CPC....The CPC can advocate peace and negotiate with the KMT and Chiang Kai-shek on an equal basis. In turn, I am his subordinate. He is the type of person who will take revenge on even small things. What do you think Chiang will do to me after the peaceful settlement? The prospect for peace means to sacrifice me. I cannot just watch myself going to be finished off.” Zhou told Nan, “Go back to Master Yang and tell him that I am going to attend a meeting in the Red Army Headquarters in Sanyuan today, but I will come back at night. Please do not worry. We value our friends and will never do things that will make us feel sorry for them.”<sup>13</sup>

### MIAO JIANQIU AND ZHOU ENLAI

In turn, contrary to the general belief, Miao Jianqiu was actually in Tianjin when the Xi’an Incident occurred. Miao told the American journalist Edgar Snow in 1938:

When I returned to Xi’an [on December 28, 1936] I found everything wrong. At first, Zhou Enlai welcomed me....Then I asked, “Can you be sure Zhang Xueliang will return?” He answered, “I am sure he will come back soon.” As days went on I knew Zhang would not return and I again discussed the question with Zhou on December 30. Colonel Sun Mingjiu and Mr. Ying also doubted that the Young Marshal would be released. From this time they did not believe Zhou Enlai. Zhou said that if they used force there would be a long civil war as in Spain. “You don’t want to make China into another Spain do you?”...I said: “If civil war (between Xi’an and Nanjing) breaks out it won’t be a long war. The Central Army won’t fight. Their anti-Japanese feeling is too strong.”...Zhou did not agree.<sup>14</sup>

Miao continues:

In the middle of January, Pan Hannian arrived in Xi'an from Nanjing (as an emissary). We suspected him and arrested him as an "unknown." On him we found documents concerning direct Kuomintang-Communist negotiations concerning the formation of the Red district into a special area, payment of Red soldiers, existence of the communist party....These letters and documents were from General Zhang Qun [May 1889–December 1990, went to Japan with Chiang Kai-shek and studied at the Tokyo Shinbu School and the IJA Military Academy] concerning negotiations with the Communist party. I confronted Zhou Enlai with this information and asked him why he was betraying our "Three-in-One" [Trinity] agreement.... "Why do you negotiate separately?" I asked him. Zhou turned pale when I told him what we had learned (from Pan)....I talked with Zhou for six hours (insisting that Zhang Xueliang must be released before any negotiations) but we did not agree....But on January 28, Zhou came and said I was right. He asked for four trucks. (Zhou and Bo Gu and the Red delegation were guests in Xi'an and dependent on the Northeastern Army for everything.) He and Bo Gu and Liu Ding went to Sanyuan (Peng Dehuai's headquarters, nearest Red outpost)....The next morning (January 30) I received a telegram from them at 4:00 A.M. It said: "We have decided. Live or die together."<sup>15</sup>

## EVE OF FEBRUARY 2 INCIDENT

On January 29, almost 50 officers above the rank of regimental commander of the Northeastern Army held a military conference in Weinan in the eastern part of Shaanxi province. The old-guard leader He Zhuguo stated that the army should adhere to the policy of peaceful settlement, but a great majority of the participants opposed this (another old-guard leader Wang Yizhe was sick and absent). A resolution was passed in the course of the meeting that the army shall not withdraw until Zhang Xueliang returned and that it would counterattack the KMT Central Army should it strike first. About 45 officers signed the resolution. Having failed to convince the officers, Wang and He sent for Yu Xuezhong, whom Zhang had entrusted with the army during his absence, by airplane from Lanzhou the next day. In turn, Zhou Enlai, Bo Gu, and Ye Jianying hurried to Sanyuan, Shaanxi province, where the Red Army was stationed, for a meeting with Luo Fu (Zhang Wentian), Peng Dehuai, and others. For the sake of solidarity within the trinity forces, they decided to shelve

the CPC's stance for a peaceful settlement for the moment and to help the Northeastern Army and the Seventeenth Route Army militarily if the two armies could reach a consensus and unite. Mao Zedong and Zhu De in Yan'an concurred.<sup>16</sup>

On this, Miao Jianqiu stated that the three generals of the Northeastern Army—Yu Xuezhong, Wang Yizhe, and He Zhuguo—did not really like the alliance with the Reds, that they had been pleased when they discovered that Zhou was negotiating separately with Nanjing, and that they did not support Miao's agreement with Zhou to call for insistence upon Zhang's release before negotiations with the KMT. Referring to December 31, Miao states:

Sun Mingjiu and Ying Detian sent a car for me and wanted me to attend the meeting. I refused to go; they planned to organize support for the elimination of Wang, He, and Yu. Because I did not attend they did not come to a decision. About fifty of the young officers were there. The next morning, Liu Ding came to see me and asked me to go with him to talk to Zhou Enlai. I went to see him—at Zhang Xueliang's home. He was alone, walking back and forth, excited. He said: "I am so worried, I am so worried. If this incident is resolved by surrender now, then all is lost. Everything you have said is correct." Zhou went to see Wang, He, and Yu, but he did not succeed in convincing them. Next morning Colonel Sun sent a car for me again to attend a meeting. They asked me to agree to the assassination of Generals Wang and He. I answered, "Before taking this action let me consult with Zhou." Ying said, "Don't talk to Zhou. If you do, he will tell Wang, and Wang will kill us first." I asked if they would let me talk directly to Wang once more. They said they would kill me if I did.<sup>17</sup>

Then, on January 31, a supreme conference of the trinity forces was held at Wang Yizhe's residence, which Yang Hucheng, Yu Xuezhong, Wang Yizhe, He Zhuguo, and Zhou Enlai attended. There Yu stated that they should still seek a peaceful settlement. Wang and He concurred. As the senior officers of the Northeastern Army had reached a consensus of opinion, Yang stated that he would agree with them. Then Zhou stated: "We only agreed to support you militarily because the majority of you were in favor of countering the KMT Army. Now that you two have reached a consensus for a peaceful settlement, we will naturally concur with it." He also stressed that officers should pay special attention to internal solidarity and the persuasion of their subordinates lest a problem occur. In the end, the supreme conference decided that Yang send peace



conference representative Li Zhigang to Tongguan in order to convey that they were willing to continue negotiations with the KMT and to sign a peace agreement.<sup>18</sup>

## FEBRUARY 2 INCIDENT

According to the official Chinese literature, the young Turks in the Northeastern Army led by the Three Musketeers, Sun Mingjiu, Ying Detian, and Miao Jianqiu, who had thought that General Yang would mobilize the trinity forces, could not accept the decision of the supreme conference. They felt that Wang Yizhe and He Zhuguo had betrayed them and decided to assassinate them. On the morning of February 2, Zhang's Bodyguard Corps members attacked Wang Yizhe's residence and shot Wang to death. He Zhuguo escaped death because he was hiding in the residence of Yang Hucheng. Then, several young officers stormed into Zhou Enlai's office. Looking at their bloodthirsty behavior, Zhou immediately realized their intention. He stood up and said aloud, "What are you trying to do? Do you think that you can get Deputy Commander Zhang back by doing this? No! This will kill him. You are destroying our solidarity and breaking up the Northeastern Army. You are achieving exactly what Chiang Kai-shek has been trying hard to achieve. You are committing a crime!" After calming them down, Zhou reasoned with them and had them admit their mistake. They knelt down before Zhou and apologized in tears.<sup>19</sup>

On this, Edgar Snow writes that Miao Jianqiu did not agree to the young officers' plan but he did not oppose it or expose it. Miao stated to Snow:

Ying then went to Northeastern Army headquarters to direct the "incident" and I went to see Zhou. After half an hour Liu Ding rushed in and told Zhou that Wang Yizhe had been killed, while He Zhuguo's headquarters had been surrounded. Zhou said, "This means there's only one way out."... Zhou declared that it was war now, and he moved from Zhang's home to the lower floor (of another building). The Red Army was already alerted for hostilities. When Zhou returned from Sanyuan he had shown me telegrams which he himself had sent to various Red Army units ordering them to prepare for war. "This is the first time I ever showed Red Army orders to any non-communist since I became a Red," he told me....It was decided to order the Red Army to remain in Weinan (south of the Wei River), but before the order was sent the telephone line was cut. Liu Duoquan (105th Northeastern Army Division) sent a report saying he was retreating, being

pursued. (He was a Northeastern Army commander who had been sympathetic with the “peace plan,” but also pro-Zhou Enlai. He was now being pursued by forces of General Yang Hucheng, acting in collusion with the young officers.) When Zhou heard Liu was retreating he again changed his mind. He now again advocated the peace plan. “Even if I jumped into the Yellow River I can never wipe it out. Everyone will blame me for (General) Wang’s death,” he said.<sup>20</sup>

Liu Duoquan (1897–July 1985; KMT general, PRC Liaoning province official) was the commander of the Northeastern Army Independent 105th Division. In turn, the official Chinese literature states, Xi’an was filled with fear. There was demagoguery to the effect that the CPC was manipulating the young officers and that the party was planning to raise red flags in the city. Yet, Zhou remained rational and, ignoring the danger to his own life, hurried to Wang Yizhe’s residence, accompanied by Li Kennong and Liu Ding. Wang was shot dead with nine bullets and lay in a sea of blood. Zhou consoled Wang’s family and helped them to set up an altar for Wang’s body. Zhou’s brave and humane action touched Northeastern Army officers and removed the misunderstanding about the CPC for some of them. The young radical officers had thought that only if they killed their pro-peace leaders, the Northeastern Army could confront the KMT Central Army and rescue Zhang Xueliang. Nevertheless, the murder of Wang Yizhe, an influential commander of the Northeastern Army, who had been the first senior officer in the Northeastern Army to get in touch with the CPC (he also accompanied Zhang Xueliang to the first secret meeting with Zhou Enlai), upset many soldiers within the army and turned them against Sun Mingjiu, Ying Detian, and Miao Jianqiu. Consequently, the soldiers demanded that these radical officers leave Xi’an.<sup>21</sup>

In this chaos and confusion, 105th Division commander Liu Duoquan “misunderstood” that the commander of the 107th Division 619th Regiment, Gao Fuyuan (October 1900–February 1937), who had been indoctrinated at the CPC Prisoners of War Training Center (see Chap. 6), had participated in the assassination of Wang Yizhe and had his men shoot Gao to death on February 5, 1937. Gao appeared to have become a scapegoat for the anger of Northeastern Army senior officers, who wanted to make peace with the KMT, because he was one of the first liaisons between Zhang Xueliang and the CPC. The killing of Gao contributed to a further disintegration of the Northeastern Army. More than four decades later in 1981, the Xi’an-city People’s government buried his remains in the Xi’an-city Revolutionary Martyrs

Cemetery and the PRC government recognized him as a revolutionary martyr.<sup>22</sup>

### PUNISHMENT OF THE THREE MUSKETEERS OF THE NORTHEASTERN ARMY

In consultation with Zhou Enlai, Yang Hucheng sent a person to ask the Three Musketeers how they would take the responsibility for their actions. They offered three options: (1) to commit suicide as their punishment; (2) to submit themselves to court-martial; or (3) to be sent to the Red Army. Disregarding the criticism that he was protecting the three young officers, Zhou decided to save their lives and send them to the Red Army stationed in Yunyang, and then to Beiping (Beijing) and to Tianjin (in the international concessions there), because they had committed a mistake for the sake of rescuing Zhang Xueliang. In turn, Yang Hucheng brought military pressure to bear on the Northeastern Army Bodyguard Regiment to leave Xi'an.<sup>23</sup>

On this, Snow writes:

The troops of Liu Duoqian and Yu Xuezhong were outside the city walls and were prepared to attack the city, held by pro-Miao and pro-Sun troops.... Miao said: "The only way is for me to leave the city with Sun and Ying. We can save Xi'an's people and leave the way open for a peaceful settlement between our army leaders....Zhou did not believe me. Sun was always obedient to me. I got hold of Ying and we three left the city and went to Yunyang, where we were met by General Peng Dehuai....Peng replied, 'My comrade, you are foolish. If a bad thing like this happens, even if it doesn't originate with Trotskyism we may consider it as objectively Trotskyism.'"... Sun rejoined the Northeastern Army, but Miao and Ying were kept in the Red areas for some weeks, for a time in Gansu, "where we were treated like prisoners," according to Miao. Later, on appeal to Peng, they were brought to the Yellow River and given \$700 for traveling expenses and released in Shanxi. From there they reached Beijing by air.<sup>24</sup>

Once the three were gone, those who wanted revenge for the death of Wang Yizhe lost their rationale and thus a massacre within the army was averted. Luo Ruiqing, Lü Zhengcao, and Wang Bingnan, who worked for Zhou in Xi'an at that time, recall that in the middle of the tinderbox Zhou dealt with the crisis rationally. "Zhou Enlai had the busiest time more than ever. He had no time to eat or sleep. His eyes were red, his body was thin,

and his throat was dried up....He treated the two factions equally, made the utmost effort to persuade them to unite, and earned their respect.”<sup>25</sup>

### LATER CAREERS OF THE THREE MUSKETEERS

It is interesting to inquire what happened to the Three Musketeers of the Northeastern Army radicals afterward. According to Wang Kan, after Sun Mingjiu, Ying Detian, and Miao Jianqiu had secretly been sent to Beiping, Sun and Miao went to Tianjin, but Ying remained in Beiping. Strangely, Miao then moved to Japan (examined below). When Chiang Kai-shek called to the nation for the formation of the second KMT–CPC United Front for anti-Japanese resistance at Mt. Lu in 1937, Sun and Ying did not come forward. However, when Wang Jingwei took power in the KMT–Nanjing government in March 1940 (president, November 1941–November 1944), Ying persuaded Sun (as well as Zhang Xueliang’s younger brother, Zhang Xueming) to surrender to the KMT government, along with him. Thus, Ying and Sun moved to Shanghai and then to Nanjing. Both became high-ranking officials in the KMT government. Ying was appointed Henan-province government Education Department director while Sun was appointed Shandong- province Security deputy commander.<sup>26</sup>

After the establishment of the PRC, Premier Zhou Enlai gathered those who had been involved in the Xi’an Incident and the February 2 Incident in order to find out the truth about them, but they criticized each other for the inaccuracy in their accounts. This started a new debate, which further intensified after the Cultural Revolution. When Ying Detian’s memoirs, *Zhang Xueliang yu Xi’an-shibian* (Zhang Xueliang and the Xi’an Incident) came out in Beijing in December 1980, Zhang Xueliang’s former Northeastern Army General Headquarters Fourth Office director, Lu Guangji, and Yang Hucheng’s former Political Department director, Shen Bochun, criticized Ying’s book and suspended the publication of the book. However, Ying had already died in Beijing in March 1980, at the age of 80, and missed participating in this round of debate. Meanwhile, Sun Mingjiu became a Shanghai city official in the PRC government, but was persecuted during the Cultural Revolution. After rehabilitation, Sun became a member of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference. Sun wrote his recollections of the Xi’an Incident, which were published in 1993. He died in Shanghai in April 2000 at the age of 91.<sup>27</sup>

In turn, Miao Jianqiu took a totally different path from the other two. After the February 2 Incident, Miao went to Tianjin and then moved to Japan and published a monthly journal called *Jiyū Chūgoku* (Free China) in Tokyo, continuing to advocate anti-Chiang positions. After that he did not have any contact or communication with Sun and Ying. With the outbreak of the Marco Polo Bridge Incident (1937), however, he returned to Hong Kong, became a publisher's editor writing anti-Japanese propaganda, and then joined the KMT-ROC's intelligence agency, the Military Affairs Committee Investigation and Statistics Bureau (known by its Chinese acronym "Juntong," predecessor of the Military Intelligence Bureau), and became a member of its Planning Committee. After the war, he became a member of the KMT-ROC Military Representative Mission stationed in Japan. Later Miao moved to Taiwan and died in Taipei in 1989, at the age of 87. This is Miao's official resume, but it is only a façade of his career. In fact, his career is shrouded with mystery.<sup>28</sup>

#### MYSTERIOUS LIFE OF MIAO JIANQIU

An anonymous Japanese researcher, who was a student of Satō Shin'ichirō (1905–2001), a China specialist at the Takushoku University (originally the Taiwan Association School, founded in 1900 for the colonization of Taiwan), visited Miao Jianqiu's residence in Taipei in December 1988. Satō was a nephew of Yamada Yoshimasa (January 1868–October 1900), who joined Sun Yat-sen's revolutionary movement. Yamada's younger brother, Yamada Junzaburō (May 1876–February 1960), was Sun Yat-sen's secretary and the only Japanese who was allowed to be present at Sun's deathbed. Satō was repatriated to Japan at the end of World War II and then provided secret "reports for the prime minister" on China for years through Yasuoka Masahiro (February 1898–December 1983), who was a scholar of a school of Neo-Confucianism called Yangmingism and a "grey eminence" for prewar and postwar Japanese political leaders. (Chiang Kai-shek also subscribed to Yangmingism and is said to have saved Yasuoka from being designated as a war criminal in 1945.) In Miao's house in Taipei, there were scrolls of calligraphy by Miao and Yasuoka hung in the living room, suggesting the strong ties between the two. Miao was in a nursing home and his wife stated, "Miao had nothing to do with the Xi'an Incident. He was in Tianjin on that day."<sup>29</sup>

## EDGAR SNOW INTERVIEWS MIAO JIANQIU

It was true that Mia Jianqiu was not in Xi'an when the incident occurred, but this does not disqualify Miao as one of the Three Musketeers of the Northeastern Army radicals. The American journalist Edgar Snow interviewed Miao in Hong Kong on September 13, 1938. Miao stated:

On October 22 [1936], the second day of Chiang's first visit to Xi'an... Chiang Kai-shek made a speech, saying: "Don't speak of fighting Japan. Don't talk about the Japanese menace now. Anybody who speaks of fighting Japan now and not the Communists is not a Chinese soldier. The Japanese are far away. The Communists are right here." That night I wrote my letter to Zhang [Xueliang] calling for Chiang's detention...for the purpose of organizing the nation to resist Japan, to bring about a cessation of civil war, and to form a United Front government. I thought that the expression "People's Front" was too bolshevist...Zhang Xueliang replied to me that he was (1) not strong enough to lead such an action, (2) not that ambitious, and (3) convinced he could persuade the Generalissimo to change by other methods...The next day, I made a speech at Wangqi (near Xi'an) before the students (Manchurian cadets) and asked them, "Why didn't you kill such a man (as Chiang)?...We are all from Northeast (Manchuria). We must go back to our homes...We must fight. We can fight anywhere we meet pro-Japanese forces. Why did we permit Marshal Zhang to come here and not kill him [Chiang]?"...After our discussion [with Zhang] I left Xi'an as a result of pressure from the Blue Shirts (Chiang Kai-shek's so-called Gestapo).<sup>30</sup>

Snow writes, "Miao was forced into exile after his speech before the students. He went to Japan in 1936—but when the Xi'an Incident occurred, he rushed back. He did not arrive until December 28, after Zhang Xueliang had flown to Nanjing and voluntarily submitted himself to Chiang Kai-shek for punishment." Snow also wrote of Miao as "a fanatical Manchurian patriot who was political advisor to Marshal Zhang Xueliang and was also his warm friend and admirer. He was a dominating influence on Sun Mingjiu, commander of the Young Marshal's bodyguard. It was Sun who actually carried out the arrest and bodily seizure of Chiang Kai-shek. Miao had intended this action to lead to still greater things... but the Communists did not fulfill their promises to him, he believed. Till today [1957] Miao remains loyal to Zhang; at last report he was living in exile in Tokyo. He was still trying to secure the Young Marshal's release in Formosa, where Chiang Kai-shek holds him prisoner."<sup>31</sup>

## SECRET CAREER OF MIAO JIANQIU

Miao Jianqiu became a member of the KMT–ROC Military Affairs Committee’s intelligence organ, the Institute of International Affairs, which Chiang Kai-shek trusted the most. It was officially controlled by the Blue Shirts Society (Chiang Kai-shek’s “Gestapo”) led by Dai Li, “the Himmler of China.” Nevertheless, the institute director Wang Dazhen (Wang Fasheng, March 1893–May 1946; studied at Tokyo Imperial University, later Republic of China’s minister to Japan) was actually a member of the Comintern. Both Wang and Miao were fluent in Japanese and Yasuoka Masahiro regarded Wang highly. (A study suggests that Yasuoka was *the* information source for Wang.) The institute was the “Sorge Machine” (of the Comintern agent Richard Sorge) in China, and Comintern agents had penetrated deep into Chiang’s intelligence network, sending disinformation on Japan to England and the USA for the sake of the Soviet Union. Institute member and *Asahi Shimbun* reporter Ozaki Hotsumi (April 1901–November 1944), who was in the brain trust of Prime Minister Konoe Fumimaro, leaked to the Soviet Union a shift in Japan’s policy toward fighting on the southern warfront (Southeast Asia and the Pacific) from fighting on the northern warfront (Manchuria–Mongolia). The latter option was sought by Japan’s ally, Nazi Germany. This information allowed the Soviet Union to send its best forces to the western front to fight Germany. For this, Ozaki was executed along with Sorge in Tokyo, on November 7, 1944, the anniversary of the Russian Revolution.<sup>32</sup>

After the February 2 Incident of 1937, Miao Jianqiu moved to Japan in exile, disguised as a Japanese merchant, and worked for the Sorge Machine, along with Japanese communists, such as Ozaki Hotsumi and Aoyama Kazuo (real name, Kuroda Zenji, December 1907–April 1997), who was in charge of printing forged money. However, after the war, Miao grew disappointed with the Japanese resumption of diplomatic relations with Communist China by “abandoning” its old friend—the Republic of China—and he moved to Taiwan. In Taipei in 1988, Miao’s wife said, “Miao was busy in search of himself all of his life.” Reflecting on the incident more than half a century later, she sighed deeply and said, “Mr. Zhang was a *o-botchan*” (a Japanese word referring to a naive silver spoon-fed scion).<sup>33</sup>

In summary, Wang Kan writes that no one would have thought that the “staunch advocate of anti-Japanese resistance” Sun Mingjiu and the

“deep thinker and careful planner” Ying Detian simply surrendered to the KMT’s Wang Jingwei regime, whereas the “trouble-prone” Miao Jianqiu landed in Japan as a victor. The fate was that none of the three ever saw the deputy commander again, to whom they had pledged their lives. It is intriguing to think about whether Miao had a chance to see Zhang Xueliang again secretly, if not publicly, who was transferred to Hsinchu on the northwestern coast in Taiwan in 1946 and then to Taipei in 1961. However, this might have been unlikely since Chiang Kai-shek’s son Chiang Ching-kuo (April 1910–January 1988) also kept Zhang under house arrest. Only after Chiang Ching-kuo’s death did the surveillance of Zhang begin to relax (see Chap. 10).<sup>34</sup>

### DISINTEGRATION OF THE NORTHEASTERN ARMY

In turn, the wound of the February 2 Incident never really healed. It jeopardized the solidarity of the trinity forces and weakened their relative power vis-à-vis the KMT Central Army. Many combat commanders of the Northeastern Army wanted to leave Shaanxi and go home, and withdrew to the north of the Wei River, giving way to the advance of the KMT Central Army. Taking advantage of this situation, Chiang sent new ceasefire proposals to the Northeastern Army and the Seventeenth Route Army, which were more disadvantageous to them than the earlier proposals. Accordingly, Yang Hucheng’s Seventeenth Route Army also left Xi’an and withdrew to Sanyuan on February 6. Concerned with the safety of Zhou Enlai, Bo Gu, and others, the CCCPC sent a telegram, instructing them to move to Sanyuan in case of emergency. In turn, Zhou realized that the more dangerous the situation in Xi’an became, the more difficult it would become for him to leave. Zhou had most of the Red Army personnel withdraw from Xi’an and had Bo Gu, Ye Jianying, Li Kenong, Liu Ding, and others move to Sanyuan, but he remained in Xi’an and officially established the Red Army Office there.<sup>35</sup>

### OCCUPATION OF XI’AN BY THE KMT CENTRAL ARMY

On February 8, a division of the KMT Central Army entered Xi’an. Another division led by Gu Zhutong, whom Chiang Kai-shek had appointed director of the KMT Military Affairs Committee Xi’an Field Headquarters, arrived in the city the next day. Soon KMT political special agents put up posters with Chiang’s slogan “Quelling Internal Enemy Before Expelling



External Enemy” on the streets. Terror haunted Xi’an once again. Zhou immediately went to see Gu Zhutong and protested against their reactionary action. Gu was obliged to reprimand the Political Training Office director and ordered him to remove all the posters, which was done the next day. Then, Yang Hucheng returned to Xi’an on February 14. Thus, the KMT Central Army was stationed in Xi’an peacefully and escalation of the civil war in Xi’an was averted. Luo Ruiqing, Lü Zhengcao, and Wang Bingnan, who had worked for Zhou during that time, state, “The courage and dignity of Zhou, who had remained in Xi’an alone in the midst of the utmost tension of receiving the KMT Central Army, demonstrated the CPC’s adherence to the peaceful settlement of the Xi’an Incident and its determination to form a united front with the KMT.”<sup>36</sup>

### ZHANG SENDS MILITARY INSTRUCTIONS FROM NANJING

Meanwhile, while in custody in Nanjing, Zhang Xueliang was allowed to send letters and telegrams occasionally to his commanders in Shaanxi, as Chiang Kai-shek saw that Zhang’s influence on his forces could be useful. For instance, Zhang wrote a lengthy New Year message to his Northeastern Army officers on January 1, 1937, and sent military instructions to his army commanders collectively on January 7, January 13, January 27, and January 29. He also sent a letter addressed to Northwestern Army general Yang Hucheng on January 7, January 19, and February 17, and to Northeastern Army general Yu Xuezhong on February 17. Further, Zhang also wrote to Chiang advising him on how to solve the issues in the Shaanxi–Gansu region on January 7. In these letters, Zhang demonstrated his sense of patriotism by encouraging his men to exert themselves to defeat the enemy for the nation, wipe out the humiliation of Northeast China, and recover the land. He also told them to put national interests first and not worry about him. He also asked Northeastern Army general He Zhuguo to convey his state of mind at that time to his commanders: Although in detention, Zhang felt happy to have made friends with the CPC. He wished that such friendship would forever be maintained. The next message Zhang wrote to one of his commanders was addressed to Liu Duoquan (105th Northeastern Army Division) dated April 5, 1939. This was the last letter he wrote to his commanders as far as the official record of his writings can attest.<sup>37</sup>

In the end, the Northeastern Army was divided and relocated to Hebei, Henan, and Anhui provinces, thereby the mighty Fengtian Army that had once ruled China's Northeast and North had disintegrated. In turn, the Northwestern Army (the KMT's Seventeenth Route Army) was reorganized and incorporated into the KMT Central Army. In a final assessment of the aftermath of the Xi'an Incident, it is fair to state that Zhou Enlai, in the absence of Zhang Xueliang, brought about the peaceful settlement of the Xi'an Incident, which ended the decade-long civil war and opened the way for the formation of the second KMT-CPC United Front against the Japanese. Luo Ruiqing, Lü Zhengcao, and Wang Bingnan give the CPC's politically correct assessment, writing, "Were it not for Zhou Enlai, it would have been difficult to carry out the policy of Mao Zedong and the CCCPC for peaceful settlement of the Xi'an Incident. Otherwise, the civil war would have resumed and the initial victory in the peaceful settlement of the incident would not have been accomplished."<sup>38</sup>

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## Formation of the Second KMT–CPC United Front Against Japan

In Xi'an in December 1936, no sooner did Zhou Enlai succeed in the peaceful settlement of the Xi'an Incident than he faced a new challenge. Zhou undertook the daunting task of negotiations between the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) Nanjing government and the Communist Party of China (CPC) for the formation of a national front against Japan. As the perpetrator of the Xi'an Incident, Zhang Xueliang, the young marshal of the Northeastern Army, was detained by Chiang Kai-shek in Nanjing. Zhou carried on the unfinished business of Zhang in his absence and became the principal negotiator on the “rebel” side. The Nanjing government was the legitimate government of the Republic of China (ROC), whereas the CPC was a mere insurgent group and an illegal organization at that time. Over the seven months from February to August 1937, Zhou participated in a total of five rounds of official negotiations with the Nanjing government, first in Xi'an (Shaanxi province capital), then in Hangzhou (Zhejiang province capital), Lushan (Jiangxi province, the location of Chiang Kai-shek's villa was the “summer capital” of the Nanjing government) twice, and Nanjing (the seat of the KMT government). Zhou directly negotiated with Chiang Kai-shek in three rounds out of the five. Zhou's arduous negotiations with his former superior turned archenemy bore fruit in the formation of the second KMT–CPC United Front, which elevated the status of the party to a legal organization in China and an equal partner with the KMT.

## NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE ROC–KMT GOVERNMENT

During the negotiations for settling the Xi'an Incident in December 1936, Chiang Kai-shek had told Zhou Enlai that he could come to Nanjing for further negotiations with Chiang upon his release and return to Nanjing (see Chap. 8). However, given what had happened to Zhang Xueliang, Mao Zedong sent telegrams to Xi'an on January 5 and 6, 1937, and warned Zhou that if he went to Nanjing, he might become the "second Zhang Xueliang." "Zhou should never leave Xi'an now. Zhou had better sent for Zhang Chong to come to Xi'an and negotiate with him." Zhang Chong (March 1904–August 1941) had escaped execution by Zhang Zuolin during Chiang Kai-shek's Northern Expedition and became Chiang's secret intelligence head. Zhang at this time became the KMT's principal negotiator with the CPC and would work closely with Zhou in 1937. (In 1941, Zhang brought on the anger of Chiang, suddenly fell ill, and died at the age of 37.)<sup>1</sup>

Chiang Kai-shek appointed KMT Central Army commander Gu Zhutong, who had arrived in Xi'an on February 9, 1937 as the director of Nanjing government Military Affairs Committee Xi'an Field Headquarters, now as the KMT representative for the negotiations with the CPC. Chiang then added Zhang Chong and He Zhenghan (January 1900–May 1972, Whampoa Military Academy inaugural class graduate) to the negotiation team. In turn, the CPC appointed Zhou Enlai as its representative for the negotiations and later added Ye Jianying (April 1897–October 1986) to its team. On February 10, the CPC sent a telegram to the KMT Fifth Central Committee Third Plenary Session, which was to begin in Nanjing on February 15, and presented its five-point demands for consideration at the session: (1) to suspend all the civil wars in China, gather national power, and face the foreign enemy together; (2) to guarantee freedoms of speech, assembly, and association, and to release all the political prisoners; (3) to convene a national congress representing all of the political parties and groups and armies, gather the manpower of the nation, and save the nation together; (4) to make preparations for anti-Japanese resistance immediately; and (5) to improve the life of the people.<sup>2</sup>

The CPC also offered four-point guarantees should the KMT agree to the five-point demands: (1) The CPC shall suspend armed riots to overthrow the KMT government all over the nation; (2) the CPC shall rename the worker–farmer government as the ROC special-district government, rename the Red Army as the National Revolutionary Army, and

place them under the supervision of the Nanjing central government and its Military Committee respectively; (3) the CPC shall implement strict democracy by universal elections for the special-district government; and (4) the CPC shall suspend the policy to take land away from landlords and implement joint platforms for the united front against the Japanese. This was the first time that the CPC publicized the conditions for the realization of the second KMT-CPC united front. These conditions became the CPC's basic guidelines for the negotiations.<sup>3</sup>

### FIRST ROUND OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE KMT

On February 10, Zhou Enlai held the first meeting with Gu Zhutong, the director of Nanjing government Military Affairs Committee Xi'an Field Headquarters. Their meeting continued on February 11 and 12. After the three-day negotiations, Gu consented to establishing a Red Army office in Xi'an and also guaranteed that the KMT would not suppress grass-roots organizations. After the three-day meeting, Gu agreed to the CPC's conditions overall, for the time being: to legalize the CPC at a proper time, to reorganize the soviet districts as special-district governments of the ROC, to incorporate the Red Army into the National Revolutionary Army, to expand democratic rights, and to release the imprisoned communists in stages.<sup>4</sup>

### MEETING WITH AN "OLD FRIEND"

The negotiation on February 10 was a politically and personally curious one for Zhou Enlai. Dick Wilson writes, "One of the Guomindang emissaries who walked into Zhou's office in Xi'an with a revised set of truce conditions was Zhou's old schoolfriend and student mentor, Wu, the tall Manchurian [Manchu] who had shared his desk with the new boy Zhou at the Nankai Middle School, protected him against bullies during his four years there, and later opened his house in Kyoto to Zhou when they were both studying in Japan." "Wu" refers to Wu Hantao (Wu Dage, courtesy name Diqian, May 1894–December 1988, from Jilin province). The last time they saw each other was April 1919 when Zhou left Japan after staying at Wu's boarding room in Kyoto. Thus, Zhou and Wu met for the first time after nearly two decades. While Zhou went to Europe and became a member of the CPC, Wu graduated from Tokyo Imperial University and then went to study in the USA and received a Ph.D. from the University



of Illinois in 1930. Upon returning home, Zhang Xueliang appointed Wu to various administrative and teaching positions and Wu became part of Zhang's brain trust. Wu also served on the League of Nations Lytton Commission when Zhang filed the case of the Manchurian Incident with the League in 1932. When Zhang resigned his position in the government and went to Europe, Wu served in the KMT–Nanjing government.<sup>5</sup>

The meeting of Wu and Zhou after 18 years was emotionally complex. Kai-yu Hsu and Wilson, who interviewed Wu in Taiwan (Hsu before 1968 and Wilson in 1980), describe the fateful encounter of the “blood brothers” of the Nankai Middle School: The first handshake was strained, and there was an awkward moment of silence. Neither quite knew whether the old first-name terms should be revived.

“It’s been many years,” Zhou began tentatively.

“Yes, we both are getting old.”

“Yes, we are.”

They sadly noted that three of the six “blood brothers” from their Nankai School gang were already dead.

Zhou fingered his beard, trying to think of the next gambit. “How is your wife?”

“She manages all right.”

“Any children?”

“Only one.”

“Still the same wife?” Although he said it with a twinkle, Zhou must have realized that this might be taken the wrong way, in the context of communist allegations about the corruption of Guomintang life. Wu proceeded coldly with the business in hand, and soon those 17 years rose again as a barrier between two men who, in their youth, could hardly have been closer.<sup>6</sup>

### KMT FIFTH CENTRAL COMMITTEE THIRD PLENARY SESSION

The KMT Fifth Central Committee Third Plenary Session was convened in Nanjing on February 15 and the anti-Japanese faction and the pro-Japanese faction hotly debated the CPC's proposal. The leftist faction leaders—Song Qiling (Sun Yat-sen's widow), He Xiangning (widow of Sun Yat-sen's right-hand man, Liao Zhongkai), Sun Ke (Sun Fo; Sun Yat-sen's eldest son), Feng Yuxiang (warlord turned ROC vice premier)—submitted a resolution to restore Sun Yat-sen's three cardinal policies of

“alliance with the Soviet Union, alliance with communists, and support for workers and farmers,” but it was not adopted. The plenary session fell short of establishing a clear policy for anti-Japanese resistance. Moreover, the meeting on February 21 adopted a resolution to “eradicate red evil,” which included removing the Red Army, removing the soviet districts, suspending the red propaganda, and suspending the class conflicts. These words were no different from the KMT’s policy in the past. The resolution revealed that Chiang Kai-shek was not willing to honor his promises in Xi’an.<sup>7</sup>

In order to counter the KMT’s resolution, Zhou Enlai drew up five principles for the negotiations on February 24:

1. The CPC would be willing to subscribe to [Sun Yat-sen’s] Three Democratic Principles but shall never abandon the creed of communism;
2. The CPC shall acknowledge the national leadership of the KMT, but shall never permit the KMT to deny [the existence of] the CPC. If the KMT could be reorganized into a national revolutionary federation, the CPC might join the federation, but it shall maintain its independence organization;
3. The Red Army could be reduced to 60,000–70,000 men, which would be divided into four divisions....The rest of the Red Army could be directly incorporated into the National Revolutionary Army;
4. Upon the reorganization of the Red Army, its CPC organization shall become a secret organization and receive political training only from the CPC...; and
5. The CPC shall rename the soviet districts as “special districts” and accept the KMT’s activities within the special districts when the CPC becomes a legal political party in the districts ruled by the KMT.<sup>8</sup>

### MARCH 8 AGREEMENT

After attending the KMT Fifth Central Committee Third Plenary Session in Nanjing, Zhang Chong returned to Xi’an on February 26. Before Zhang left Nanjing, Chiang Kai-shek gave Zhang his counter-proposal for the CPC that the KMT shall acknowledge the CPC upon the promulgation of the new constitution, that the special districts

would not fall under the laws of the central government, and that the Red Army would be reorganized into three divisions, consisting of nine regiments, but could not be expanded. In his meeting with Zhang, Zhou expressed his regret over some of the wordings of the KMT's resolution and declared that the CPC would retain the right to issue its own statements in the future. The two continued negotiations and narrowed the differences between the two parties' proposals so that the five representatives in the negotiations—Gu Zhutong, Zhang Chong, He Zhenghan, Zhou Enlai, and Ye Jianying—met on March 8. They decided that they would reach a conclusion in their one-month-long negotiations, that Zhou would draw up a draft of their agreement, and that they implement it upon Chiang Kai-shek's approval: the so-called March 8 Agreement.<sup>9</sup>

#### SETBACK IN MARCH 8 AGREEMENT

After having handed in his draft agreement to He Zhenghan, Zhou did not hear from the KMT representatives for two days. Then, on March 11, He suddenly presented Zhou with a revised agreement, in which He had made major changes. He's revised agreement stipulated that the Red Army would be reorganized into three divisions, with each division consisting of 10,000 men (the total number would not exceed 30,000 men), that the Red Army must follow "every order" of the Nanjing Military Affairs Committee and Chiang Kai-shek, that the Nanjing government would send political training personnel and appoint and send officers above the rank of regimental adjutant in stages, the "Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia administrative district" would be renamed and divided into three "local administrative districts" that would be directly administered by the respective province where each district is located, the words "democratic elections" would be removed, and the words "recommendations by democratic elections" would be changed to "recommendations by local governments." In short, the revised proposal placed the Red Army and the soviet districts under the direct and complete control of the Nanjing government. The content of the revised proposal violated the intent of the March 8 Agreement. This was unacceptable to the CPC.<sup>10</sup>

Zhou met Zhang Chong again and requested that Zhang send via telegram the original draft to Chiang Kai-shek or that Zhang return to Nanjing and talk with Chiang. It then became clear that KMT representatives could not solve the issues and that Zhou himself must negotiate

with Chiang in person. Thus, the first round of the KMT-CPC negotiations ended with minor progress, such as the agreement to establish a CPC office in Xi'an and to reorganize the Red Army into three divisions. The KMT also began providing military assistance to the Red Army.<sup>11</sup>

## SECOND ROUND OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE KMT

In late March, Zhou flew to Hangzhou, the Zhejiang province capital, to directly negotiate with Chiang Kai-shek. The day before the meeting with Chiang, Zhou delivered the five-point proposals of the CCCPC Politburo to Chiang in Shanghai, via Song Meiling. In the Chiang-Zhou meeting, Zhou first explained to Chiang that the CPC's position for the KMT-CPC united front was based on the platform that the two parties would strive together for national liberation, democratic freedom, and the improvement of the people's livelihood. Zhou then presented the CPC's essential conditions, which included that the Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia district must remain as one district and should not be divided, that the Red Army must have a total of more than 40,000 men, that the reorganized Red Army must have its own general headquarters over the three divisions, that the dispatch of the KMT's regimental adjutants and political training personnel to the Red Army would not be accepted, and that the area in which the Red Army would be stationed for defense would be expanded.<sup>12</sup>

In turn, Chiang stressed his point that there was no need for the CPC to unite with the KMT but that the CPC should unite only with Chiang himself. Chiang also stated that small details were unimportant and easy to solve, that he would have the CPC participate in the national congress and in the national defense conference within several months, that the Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia administrative district could remain as one district, but that the Nanjing government must designate its own governor in order to deal with various fronts. Chiang also stated that the CPC could spontaneously appoint the ranks below regimental adjutant in the Red Army, that the number of military men in the Red Army would not be questioned, that the Red Army could establish its own general headquarters, that he would not destroy the Red Army and would resolve the issue of military assistance to the army, and that he would not fight with the CPC even if both sides could not reach agreement on a permanent arrangement for the united front.<sup>13</sup>

Chiang then told Zhou to return to Yan'an and discuss the united front and its platform at the CCCPC. What Chiang stated sounded fine and good, but having known Chiang for a long time, Zhou felt that Chiang's points boiled down to the issue of leadership: Chiang must be the leader of the united front. Insofar as this issue was resolved, Chiang would make concessions on the detailed issues, but he would demand difficult conditions from the CPC otherwise. Zhou then returned to Shanghai and met a commander of the Northeastern Anti-Japanese Resistance Allied Forces Fourth Army and a leader of the Northeastern Anti-Japanese Resistance Movement, as well as several CPC underground officers. Zhou left Shanghai and flew to Xi'an on March 30.<sup>14</sup>

### ZHOU'S TRIUMPHANT RETURN TO YAN'AN

On April 2, 1937, Zhou Enlai flew back to Yan'an from Xi'an. After the successful negotiations with the KMT representatives, including his "blood brother" at Nankai Middle School, Zhou returned to Yan'an, which had become the site of the CPC headquarters in January 1937. Three and a half months had passed since Zhou had left Bo'an and flown to Xi'an from Yan'an in December 1936, in the wake of the Xi'an Incident. ROC Air Force pilot and the last surviving Flying Tiger, Lee Hsueh-yen (March 1913–February 2014), flew Zhou back to Yan'an from Xi'an. After graduating from the ROC National Military Academy Aviation Class in December 1934 at the age of 21 (he has a certificate of graduation signed by Chiang Kai-shek), Lee served in the ROC Air Force until retirement in Taiwan with the rank of air force general. He lost his hearing on duty because there was no equipment for controlling air pressure at that time. Among many missions, he led the first Bombardment Squadron of the Chinese–American Composite Wing for an air raid on a Japanese airfield in Hsinchu, on the northwestern coast of Taiwan, on November 25, 1943. He has numerous decorations including a US Silver Star Medal, and Taiwanese president Ma Ying-jeou attended his 102nd birthday party (according to the traditional age counting) in the USA. Regarding his flight with Zhou Enlai to Yan'an from Xi'an, Lee states that it was difficult to navigate the route and locate the CPC's hideout in Yan'an because there were few points of reference to navigate by—most of the terrain was desert and he could not even find a certain river on the map; the river had dried up.<sup>15</sup>

There is a photograph to prove this flight. Referring to the photograph, Dick Wilson wrote, "A photographer immortalized the splendid scene of Zhou's triumphal return to the Yan'an airstrip. Flanked by Mao and the other Red leaders, he leans proprietorially against his biplane, hands stuffed nonchalantly in the pockets of his padded flying overall, his white flying helmet on his head and goggles perched on his forehead—the hunter returned with his prey." The KMT Air Force pilot Lee Hsueh-yen flew the biplane. Lee would fly Zhou back to Yan'an from Xi'an again on June 19, 1937.<sup>16</sup>

### ZHOU DRAFTS THE UNITED FRONT

Upon Zhou's return to CPC headquarters, the CCCPC held an expanded Politburo meeting on April 5, and Zhou reported on his negotiations with Chiang Kai-shek in Hangzhou. The Politburo meeting decided that Zhou would write a draft platform for the united front and deliver it to Chiang Kai-shek. On the same day, Zhou wrote a report of the Politburo meeting for the Comintern on behalf of the CCCPC, which stated the following:

1. The CPC shall draft the platform for the national united front, seek the consent of Chiang Kai-shek, and establish a new national federation (or a political party). This organization comprises the KMT, the CPC, and all other political parties and groups that support this platform, and unanimously recommends Chiang as its leader;
2. The CPC shall submit revised drafts of organization rules for the national congress and election laws and seek Chiang's approval. If Chiang consents to the united platform and the revised drafts, the party could help Chiang to become president;
3. The CPC shall submit a revised draft of the constitution, engage in democratic movements at a national level, and exert influence on Chiang; and
4. The CPC shall negotiate with Chiang, adhering to its fundamental conditions that the united front shall not impede the implementation of democracy in the soviet districts and the party's independent leadership of the Red Army. Therefore, the party is willing to accept Chiang's proposal on the administrative districts. The Red

Army shall be reorganized with 45,000 men and an additional 10,000 shall be allocated for local forces.<sup>17</sup>

Zhou understood that the mobilization for the anti-Japanese resistance should embrace the democratic movement so that the anti-Japanese forces could form a national united front and the CPC would gain the leadership of the national united front, correct Chiang Kai-shek's dictatorial orientation and the dominating natures of local warlords, and lead the victory of the anti-Japanese resistance. Zhou also understood the three fundamental principles that the CPC must adhere to: (1) the principle of independence of the party in that it cannot be intermixed with any other organizations; (2) the principle of internationalism in that the CPC should not sever its relations with the Comintern; and (3) the principle of class, in that the CPC represented the proletariat. In consideration of the utmost importance of the independence of the CPC, Zhou felt that the "national united federation" was the most appropriate name for the new organization so that the party could maintain its independence and also retain the freedom to leave the federation.<sup>18</sup>

#### INTERIM NEGOTIATIONS IN XI'AN

Having spent three weeks in Yan'an, Zhou headed to Xi'an on a truck on April 25, on his way to meet Chiang Kai-shek again in June. The truck carrying Zhou was attacked by local bandits and about 15 members of his party, including his bodyguard leader, were killed. Zhou escaped the attack and returned to Yan'an. Then, Gu Zhutong sent an airplane for Zhou to fly to Xi'an from Yan'an on April 26. Zhou met Gu and Zhang Chong and exchanged opinions on the matters to be discussed with Chiang. Zhou also discussed with Gu the military expenses and winter clothes for the Red Army, as well as other issues including dispatching KMT personnel to the Hubei-Henan-Anhui soviet district. In late May, Zhou flew to Shanghai, stayed in Shanghai and Nanjing, and made preparations for obtaining the status for the CPC of an official and legal political party and for publishing public newsletters.<sup>19</sup>

## THIRD ROUND OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE KMT

On June 4, Zhou arrived at Lushan, the “summer capital” of the Nanjing government, and had several talks with Chiang, in which Song Meiling, Song Ziwen, and Zhang Chong participated. Zhou handed over to Chiang the draft for the united front against Japan that Chiang had told Zhou to draw up at the last meeting in Hangzhou in March. Instead of reading the draft, entitled “Platform for National Unity (Draft),” Chiang presented his proposal to establish a national revolutionary alliance:

1. A new national revolutionary alliance shall be organized by KMT officers appointed by Chiang and the same number of officers elected by the CPC. Chiang would become president and has final decision-making power;
2. The alliance shall decide and implement all of the external actions and propaganda of both parties...;
3. If the alliance were managed smoothly, both parties could establish a joint political party in the future;
4. If the alliance were managed smoothly, it shall establish a relationship with the Comintern, in lieu of the CPC, and thereby determine the policy toward the Soviet Union and form alliances among nation states.<sup>20</sup>

Chiang reneged on many of the agreements he had made with Zhou at the previous meeting in Hangzhou. For instance, Chiang had agreed to the CPC’s proposal to establish its own general headquarters over the three divisions of the Red Army, but this time he stated that the KMT shall create a political training office for the three divisions of the Red Army to supervise them. Also, he publicly stated to have Mao Zedong and Zhu De travel abroad on vacation (dismissal from active duty in effect); to reorganize the frontier forces of the Red Army and dismiss its regimental leaders; and to have the KMT send a governor for the Shaanxi–Gansu–Ningxia district and recommend a deputy governor for the frontier district; Chinese Soviet Republic Northwestern Office Finance Department director-general Lin Boqu (March 1886–May 1960) could be the deputy governor. Further, Chiang did not discuss the matter of the “legalization of the CPC at an appropriate time” and instead stated that the CPC shall not participate in the national congress under that name. He also stated that there was no need to discuss the matter of the united front with other



political parties because they would be merged into the KMT Central Committee as much as possible. It was obvious that Chiang's proposal was intended to have the CPC dissolve into the KMT in the name of the "national revolutionary alliance."<sup>21</sup>

Zhou was prepared for abrupt changes in Chiang's attitude and stated that he must consult on the matter of organizing a new national revolutionary alliance with the CCCPC. He also stated that he could not consent to Chiang's change in the command system of the Red Army and the dispatch of KMT personnel to the frontier forces and flatly rejected Chiang's idea to have Mao and Zhu travel abroad on vacation. Chiang and Zhou did not yield on these points. The Song siblings and Zhang Chong acted as intermediaries between the two, but they could not reach an agreement.<sup>22</sup>

### ZHOU RETURNS TO YAN'AN

On June 18, Zhou returned to Yan'an. The last surviving Flying Tiger, Lee Hsueh-yen, again flew Zhou to Yan'an from Xi'an. CPC leaders, including Mao Zedong, Lin Biao, Lin Boqu, and Fourth Front Army commander-in-chief Xu Xiangqian (November 1901–September 1990, marshal), as well as Zhou Enlai, each wrote a thank-you note to Lee, which is dated June 19, 1937. For instance, Zhou wrote, "The mission to achieve the Chinese people's independence and liberation is a struggle. The mission to achieve a democratic nation and improve the life of all the people is a struggle." Mao wrote, "Make an effort to develop the Air Force to expel Japanese imperialism from China," while Lin Biao wrote, "Drive away Japanese demons."<sup>23</sup>

Upon Zhou's return, the CCCPC Politburo discussed Chiang Kai-shek's ideas and decided to make a considerable concession to Chiang for the sake of a larger cause. After all, the CPC had to consider its lesser military power vis-à-vis the KMT. The new draft stated the following: the CPC shall in principle agree to organize a national revolutionary alliance, but a joint platform must be decided first; then organization rules for the alliance must be established based on the joint platform; the CPC shall acknowledge that a supreme congress will consist of the same number of officers elected by both parties and that Chiang will become president, who has final decision-making power based on the joint platform. The CPC also decided that if Chiang would agree to establish its own general headquarters for the Red Army, it would reorganize the army into three

regular divisions with a total of 45,000 men; it would conduct democratic elections in the Shaanxi–Gansu–Ningxia district in July, as scheduled, and recommend KMT–ROC government Legislative Yuan president-elect Zhang Ji (August 1882–December 1947), Song Ziwen (T. V. Soong), or Control Yuan president Yu Youren (April 1879–November 1964) as frontier administrative governor, and appoint Lin Boqu as deputy governor.<sup>24</sup>

This new counterproposal contained considerable concessions on the CPC's part that took Chiang's conditions into consideration as much as possible, but also rejected or restricted his extremely unreasonable conditions. In addition, the CPC could not accept the idea that the KMT would control the command system of the Red Army because the CPC wanted Zhu De to become commanding officer of the three divisions of a newly reorganized Red Army. Zhou took Zhu under his wing in Berlin (see Chap. 3) and Zhu had become a major leader of the Red Army (he excelled in guerrilla warfare). Nevertheless, Chiang stuck to his original proposal. Given the growing importance of the anti-Japanese resistance, the CPC decided to make another concession that it would agree to reorganize the Red Army as a political organization (to demote its status in effect) and make Zhu De its political director. This was the utmost concession that the CPC could make. The party also decided that it would go ahead to declare a reorganization of the Red Army on August 1 by itself should Chiang reject its counterproposal.<sup>25</sup>

### OUTBREAK OF THE MARCO POLO BRIDGE INCIDENT

On June 26, the Nanjing government sent a telegram to Zhou, requesting that he visit Lushan again for further negotiations. Zhou drafted the CCCPC's declaration to announce a KMT–CPC united front in early July and then, accompanied by Bo Gu (Qin Bangxian; June 1907–April 1946) and Lin Boqu, arrived in Xi'an on July 4 and then in Shanghai on July 7. On this day, the Marco Polo Bridge Incident occurred, which ushered in the second Sino-Japanese War. The CPC sent telegrams to the nation on July 8, calling for the nation to form an anti-Japanese national united front and fight the Japanese invasion in earnest. While in Shanghai, Zhou, Bo, and Lin met the intelligence liaison for the CCCPC, Pan Hannian, and Liu Xiao, who was appointed to be Jiangsu Committee secretary. Zhou told them to beware of a union of clandestine operations and public activities at this volatile time so that their operations to mobilize the general public and intellectuals into a popular movement had to remain

clandestine, while they deployed the legal and popular movement for the anti-Japanese resistance publicly. Zhou also met a democratic leader and a united front movement official at the Golden Grand Theater, pretending to see a play. Then, Zhou, Bo, and Lin headed to Lushan on July 13 (or 14).<sup>26</sup>

#### FOURTH ROUND OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE KMT

At that time, Chiang Kai-shek and Wang Jingwei had invited influential people in various circles to Lushan for a discussion meeting to hear their opinions on the matter of the nation in response to the outbreak of the Marco Polo Bridge Incident. However, it was not like a normal round-table conference in which the participants discussed issues on an equal basis, but one in which the KMT, as the host, chose specific participants to talk. The CPC was disqualified from participating in an official status. Zhou Enlai, Bo Gu (Qin Bangxian), and Lin Boqu were not even allowed to appear at the meeting, but only to participate in it secretly. On July 17, Chiang Kai-shek, as the ROC–Nanjing government Military Affairs Committee chairman, addressed the nation from Lushan, stating that he would fight the Japanese in earnest depending on the Japanese moves (“Chiang Kai-shek’s Address at Lushan”).<sup>27</sup>

Nevertheless, the fourth round of negotiations for the formation of the united front did not fare well. The major participants from the KMT were Chiang Kai-shek, Zhang Chong, and Shao Lizi (December 1882–December 1967; a founding member of the CPC, switched to the KMT, and assumed positions in the ROC government, including National Revolutionary Army General Headquarters general-secretary, Gansu province president, Shaanxi province president, Propaganda Department director-general, and ambassador to the Soviet Union). Zhou, Bo Gu (Qin Bangxian), and Lin Boqu represented the CPC. Zhou delivered to Chiang the draft of the “CCCPC Declaration to Announce the KMT–CPC United Front,” but Chiang’s attitude was indifferent. He wanted to remove the phrase “to legalize the CPC” from the draft. He also reneged on his prior statement on the command system of the reorganized Red Army and its personnel. Chiang had stated in the previous negotiations in Lushan that a political organization that was to be created over the three divisions of the reorganized Red Army could exercise its authority to command the army. At that time Chiang said, “I want you to command it. You can actually command it. I have no problem

with this.” At this time, however, Chiang indicated to Zhou, through Zhang Chong, that all the divisions of the reorganized Red Army would directly belong to KMT Army Field Headquarters and that the new political organization would only administer liaison matters and have no power to command the army.<sup>28</sup>

### CHIANG STALLS NEGOTIATION

Zhou wrote a letter to Chiang the next day, noting, “This is very different from what I heard in Lushan previously and what I reported to my comrades in Shaanxi. This is not only un-operational but also could make me lose the trust of my comrades and lead to various impediments in the future.” Luo Fu (Zhang Wentian, August 1900–July 1976; a “Twenty-Eight Bolsheviks” turned nationalist, Propaganda Department director, 1931–1934, CCCPC general-secretary, 1935–1943) and Mao Zedong instructed Zhou via telegram to demand from Chiang that the command and personnel selection of the new political organization above the reorganized Red Army shall be the same as the Political Office in times of peace, that the new political organization shall have a director and a deputy director, with Zhu De becoming director and Peng Dehuai becoming deputy director, and that the political organization shall establish its own headquarters in times of war for the sake of commanding the army. Based on this instruction, Zhou drew up a 12-point list of issues and presented it to Chiang via his wife Song Meiling. Yet, Chiang insisted that the three divisions of the reorganized Red Army would not have their own unified military command system and that they would directly belong to KMT Army Field Headquarters. He also stated that chiefs of staff for the three divisions would be sent from Nanjing, that the political director (director of the new political organization) would only convey personnel and command matters, and that Zhou would become director and Mao become deputy director. Zhou flatly rejected Chiang’s counterproposal.<sup>29</sup>

The negotiations deadlocked and Zhou’s party left Lushan and flew to Shanghai. Luo Fu and Mao Zedong sent a telegram to Zhou’s party on July 20: “The IJA is advancing and the anti-Japanese resistance war is becoming a reality.” “Should Chiang Kai-shek not make concessions, we shall suspend the negotiations.” Zhou then sent a telegram to Zhu De and Peng Dehuai on July 21, reporting that should China and Japan plunge into a total war, the CPC would issue its declaration of anti-Japanese resistance by itself (without the KMT) and that the Red Army

would be immediately reorganized into three front divisions under a unified command, with each division consisting of 15,000 men. Then, on July 27, KMT Army Anti-Communist Campaign Northwestern Enemy Front commander-in-chief Jiang Dingwen (December 1896–January 1974) conveyed to Zhou Chiang Kai-shek’s order “to reorganize the Red Army immediately and engage in anti-Japanese resistance.” Zhou’s party returned to Yan’an on July 28 and the CCCPC decided to station the main force of the Red Army in Sanyuan and to reorganize the army into three divisions, consisting of a total of 45,000 men, and to establish its own general headquarters with Zhu De as commander-in-chief and Peng Dehuai as deputy commander-in-chief.<sup>30</sup>

### FIFTH ROUND OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE KMT

On August 1, Zhou received an urgent telegram from Zhang Chong, which stated that Chiang Kai-shek had secretly requested Mao, Zhu De, and Zhou to fly to Nanjing immediately to discuss defense issues. Zhou replied that Zhou, Zhu De, and Ye Jianying would go if Chiang were convening a national defense conference (with decision-making power). In turn, Zhou, Bo Gu (Qin Bangxian), Lin Boqu, and Ye Jianying would go if it were a meeting (only for negotiations). Zhang Chong replied on August 4 that it was a national defense conference. Accordingly, Zhou and Zhu De headed to Xi’an on August 6, picked up Ye Jianying there, and flew to Nanjing on August 10. At the national defense conference, Zhou’s party also talked with several local military leaders, including Feng Yuxiang and Bai Chongxi (March 1893–December 1966; a Hui Muslim, KMT National Revolutionary Army chief of staff during the Northern Expedition). The CPC thereby de facto obtained the status of an official and legal political party in Nanjing.<sup>31</sup>

The Red Army was ready for mobilization in the united anti-Japanese resistance, but negotiations with the Nanjing government were not progressing in spite of the Japanese invasion. As late as August 12, Chiang Kai-shek sent one of his secret intelligence agents Kang Ze (1904–1967) to Zhou and had him negotiate with Zhou. Chiang still demanded many unreasonable changes in the wordings in the CCCPC’s declaration for the united front. For instance, Chiang objected to the reference to the word “democracy” and demanded removing the CPC’s interpretations of the words “nation, people’s rights, and people’s livelihood.” Zhou replied

that he would consider some of the proposed changes but that he could not agree with others. Then, on August 13, the IJA launched a massive attack on Shanghai and the fighting reached the core area of control of the Nanjing government. This finally convinced Chiang of the urgent need to form the united front. On August 18, Chiang agreed to announce that he would reorganize the Red Army into the National Revolutionary Army Eighth Route Army and appoint Zhu De as commander-in-chief and Peng Dehuai as deputy commander-in-chief. The official announcement was made on August 22. Thus, the issues of the command and personnel selection of the reorganized Red Army were finally solved.<sup>32</sup>

Regarding the actual deployment of the Red Army in the anti-Japanese resistance war, the CCCPC sent to Zhu, Zhou, and Ye its proposal that the army take charge of strategic guerilla forces and carry out its own independent guerilla warfare (because the Red Army excelled at it). Zhou negotiated with Chiang Kai-shek and He Yingqin repeatedly and had them agree that the Red Army would only engage in support operations, as strategic guerilla forces, and not in face-to-face frontal operations. With this agreement, a major force of the Red Army, consisting of three divisions, crossed the Yellow River and headed to the anti-Japanese warfront. Zhou also negotiated with He Yingqin on the reorganization of Red Army guerrilla forces in the southern region and succeeded in incorporating local guerrilla forces in Hubei, Henan, Anhui, Hunan, and Jiangxi provinces into the National Revolutionary Army Newly Organized Fourth Army (the New Fourth Army).<sup>33</sup>

### CCCPC DECLARES THE KMT–CPC UNITED FRONT

On August 22, the KMT Central News Agency distributed the CCCPC's Declaration to Announce the KMT–CPC United Front. Chiang also issued a statement on the same day, in which he publicly acknowledged the CPC de facto as a legal political party. Now that the CPC had obtained legal status, the party undertook the task of establishing its own official representative offices in various locales in the area controlled by the KMT. Gu Zhutong had earlier agreed to establish a representative office in Xi'an. After the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, Yan Xishan approved the establishment of a CPC office in Taiyuan. The KMT also consented to the establishment of CPC offices in Nanjing, Shanghai, and elsewhere. CPC local offices expanded to other cities as the anti-Japanese resistance

war developed. While in Nanjing, Zhou also undertook another task difficult to accomplish in the area controlled by the KMT—preparations for the publication of the official gazettes of the CPC: the *New China Daily* and *Qunzhong* (“crowd”) *Weekly*. Further, Zhou demanded the release of political prisoners, visited communists and revolutionaries detained in the Capital Repentance Institute in Nanjing on August 18, and rescued three of them that day (more were released later).<sup>34</sup>

Zhou also met in Shanghai KMT National Revolutionary Army Fourth Army General Staff Office director Ye Ting (September 1896–April 1946), who had just returned from Germany. Zhou asked him to take charge of the reorganization of Red Army guerrilla forces in the southern region. The result was the National Revolutionary Army New Fourth Army. Ye effectively commanded the army during the second Sino-Japanese War, but was killed in the airplane accident on April 8, 1946. The US military airplane from Chongqing to Yan’an crashed and all 4 American pilots and 17 passengers aboard were killed—including Ye Ting, his wife, his daughter, his small son, and his nanny, as well as such CPC leaders as Bo Gu (Qin Bangxian), Deng Fa (March 1906–April 1946), and Wang Ruofei (who worked with Zhou in creating the Chinese Youth Communist Party in Europe): this was the April 8 Incident.<sup>35</sup>

One of Zhou’s protégés, Liao Chengzhi (September 1906–June 1983, Liao Zhongkai’s son), and his wife, Jing Puchun, were also scheduled to take the same flight to Yan’an. Liao writes in his memoirs that he received a last-minute instruction from Zhou to go to Guangdong instead of Yan’an. This sudden change in Liao’s assignment might suggest that Zhou had learned something about the flight or sensed something. Zhou had earlier saved Liao’s life twice at least. In turn, Liao mourned the death of Ye Ting and his family deeply so that he wrote a poem in memory of Ye’s daughter, Ye Yangmei. Liao then looked after Ye’s younger daughter, Ye Jianmei, who had been orphaned.<sup>36</sup>

As the anti-Japanese resistance war developed rapidly, first Zhu De returned to Shaanxi and then Zhou returned on August 21. Zhou had taken part in the negotiations in Nanjing for more than 10 days from August 10, but there were still unresolved issues, such as the demarcation of the frontier districts and the mode of their political organizations, as well as the dispatch of the KMT’s politico-military officials to the Eighth Route Army. Zhou had Ye Jianying remain in Nanjing and work out the details of the unsolved issues, in which Bo Gu (Qin Bangxian) joined in mid-September. Thus, after the arduous five rounds of negotiation with the Nanjing government

over seven months, the second KMT–CPC United Front became a reality. Built up on the successful negotiations for the peaceful settlement of the Xi'an Incident, Zhou painstakingly worked out the differences between the two parties, while adhering to the CPC's principles and without hesitating to confront his former superior, Chiang Kai-shek, and cleared the way for the realization of the second United Front.<sup>37</sup>

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The formation of the second CPC and the KMT United Front Against Japan contributed to the defeat of Japan. China “won” the second Sino-Japanese War in August 1945, only to break the united front between the KMT and the CPC. After another round of civil war, the CPC won and established the People's Republic of China (PRC) in October 1949. Zhou became premier and foreign minister of the PRC, the second-highest official after only Chairman Mao Zedong, whereas Chiang fled to Taiwan and established the ROC government in Taipei.

## NOTES

1. Jin Chongji, ed. (principal editor), *Zhou Enlai zhuan* (Biography of Zhou Enlai), edited by Zhonggong-zhongyang wenxian-yanjiushi, Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian-chubanshe, 1998, Vol. 1, 432; Ye Deying, “Jiang Jieshi's [Chiang Kai-shek] Secret Envoy Zhang Chong,” <http://www.yiqitoys.cn/Biography/Political-figures/TCHLR98.html>, accessed April 24, 2014. Zhang Chong should not be mistaken for another person named Zhang Chong (January 1901–October 1980), a KMT officer turned CPC military/political leader.
2. Jin, 432–434.
3. *Ibid.*, 434.
4. *Ibid.*, 435.
5. Dick Wilson, *Zhou Enlai: A Biography*, New York: Viking, 1984, 139–140; Kai-yu Hsu, *Chou En-lai: China's Gray Eminence*, Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1968, 137–138; Liu Guomin, ed. (principal editor), *Zhongguo guomindang bainian renwu quanshu* (Complete Book of One Hundred People of the Chinese Nationalist Party), Beijing: Tuanjie-chubanshe, 2005, Vol. 1, 1071–1072.
6. Wilson, 139–140; Hsu, 137–138.



7. Jin, 435.
8. Ibid., 432–433.
9. Ibid., 435–436.
10. Ibid., 436.
11. Ibid., 437.
12. Ibid., 438.
13. Ibid., 438–439.
14. Ibid., 439.
15. Lee Hsueh-yen and his eldest son Wei-li Lee, interview with author, July 8, 2013; Lee Hsueh-yen, *Lantian Feihu: 90 Huiyi* (Flying Tigers in the Blue Sky: Memoirs at Ninety), Self-publication, 2002, 28–35 and 83–89. The photograph (unnumbered photograph on the second page before the text) of his certificate of graduation from the ROC Air Force dated December 30, 1934, states that he was 21 years old at that time. This determines that he was born in 1913.
16. Ibid.; Wilson, 140.
17. Jin, 439–440.
18. Ibid., 441–442.
19. Ibid., 442.
20. Ibid., 443.
21. Ibid., 443–444.
22. Ibid., 444.
23. Ibid.; Lee, unnumbered photograph pages. The Official Biography of Zhou Enlai (p. 444) states that he returned to Yan'an on June 18, 1937, but the thank-you notes that Zhou and others wrote to Lee are dated June 19, 1937.
24. Jin, 444–445.
25. Ibid., 445.
26. Ibid., 445–447.
27. Ibid., 447; Luo Ruiqing, Lü Zhengcao, and Wang Bingnan, *Xi'an-shibian he Zhou Enlai-tongzhi* (Xi'an Incident and Comrade Zhou Enlai), Beijing: Renmin-chubanshe, 1978, 78–79.
28. Jin, 448. Luo, Lü, and Wang, 78–79.
29. Jin, 448–449.
30. Ibid., 449.
31. Ibid., 450.
32. Ibid., 450–451.
33. Ibid., 451–452.

34. Ibid., 451–453.
35. Ibid., 395–396 and 453.
36. Liao Chengzhi, “Wode leixia shengya” (My Life as a Prisoner), in Liao Chengzhi-wenji (Writings of Liao Chengzhi), Liao Chengzhi-wenji bianji-bangongshi, ed., Vol. 2, Hong Kong: Sanlian-shudian, 1990, 479–502; Jing Puchun, “Shōshi to watashi” (Chengzhi and I), in Shashinshū: Ryō Shōshi no shogai (Photo Collection: Life of Liao Chengzhi), Shinka-tsūjinsha (not tsūshinsha) shashinbu, ed., Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1984, 10–11.
37. Jin, 453–454.

## Conclusion

The Xi'an Incident in which Zhang Xueliang captured Chiang Kai-shek out of the blue on the morning of December 10, 1936, was significant in many ways. It was an earth-shattering event, in that the deputy commander-in-chief of the National Revolutionary Army of the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) kidnapped its commander-in-chief, who was the virtual head of state of the Republic of China (ROC). The coup d'état was also unprecedented because Zhang did so not as a means to take power from Chiang, but as an act of *bingjian* (expostulation by force)—a subordinate's attempt to coerce his superior to agree to what the former believes to be a right policy option. The incident was important, in that it paved the way for the formation of the second KMT–CPC United Front against Japan. The united front in turn was a critical achievement for the Communist Party of China (CPC) because this quasi-alliance elevated its status, gave the CPC Army a much needed reprieve from the civil war, and positioned it to resume the civil war with the KMT in 1946, after the Anti-Japanese Resistance War (the second Sino-Japanese War). It was in this sense that Mao Zedong paradoxically said that the CPC owed much to Japanese imperialism for its victory in the revolutionary war: the Japanese acts of aggression brought the KMT and the CPC together, which in turn led to the CPC's victory in the civil war and to the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949.

## CONSEQUENCES FOR CULPRITS OF THE XI'AN INCIDENT

Regarding the fate of the two perpetrators of the Xi'an Incident, Zhang Xueliang was detained upon his arrival in Nanjing after he had "escorted" Chiang Kai-shek and his company to the ROC capital, court-martialed on December 31, 1936, and sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment and deprivation of civil rights for 5 years on the charge of being the chief culprit in the "*bingjian*." On January 5, 1937, he was granted a pardon and was kept in custody under the strict surveillance of its Military Affairs Committee and under the supervision of Chiang Kai-shek's intelligence machine (the Blue Shirts Society) director Dai Li, "the Himmler of China" (see Chap. 7). In turn, Yang Hucheng was discharged from active duty and was sent abroad in April 1937, which was effectively a conventional measure of dismissal from a government position. With the outbreak of the second Sino-Japanese War in July 1937, Yang volunteered to come home in order to join the war. Upon returning, he and his family and his aides were captured by Dai Li. They were sent to various places afterward, and his wife suffered from interrogations and died in 1947. Yang, his two daughters, and his aides were then transferred to a prison for political prisoners established by the KMT and US governments in Chongqing (Chiang Kai-shek moved the ROC's capital there in 1938) and were executed in September 1949 just before the Fall of Chongqing. The punishment of Yang was harsh and brutal because Chiang knew that Yang was opposed to releasing him and wanted to execute him during the Xi'an Incident.<sup>1</sup>

## LIFELONG HOUSE ARREST FOR ZHANG XUELIANG

In contrast, Zhang Xueliang ultimately escaped execution because Zhang single-handedly released Chiang Kai-shek and voluntarily surrendered himself to be punished for the rebellion. According to Zhang's diary, which he wrote during his house arrest in Nanjing, he appeared to have been keeping abreast with the development in Xi'an. For instance, it records that on January 10, 1937, Zhang was gravely concerned about Wang Huayi and Wu Hantao (his two aides), whose whereabouts in Xi'an were unknown, and Zhang feared that something might have happened in Xi'an. Then, on January 11, Zhou Weilong forwarded to Zhang a telegram from Wang Huayi and Wu Hantao in Xi'an, reporting that they had met the Northeastern Army combat commander Wang Yizhe. Further, on January 13, Zhao Yidi (May 1912–June 2000, Zhang's mistress) arrived in Nanjing and cried when she met Zhang. Song Ziwen (Song Meiling's brother) also

came to see Zhang on that day. Thus, Zhang was allowed to live with his wife and mistress. Arrangements were made so that he lived alternately with his wife, Yu Fengzi (June 1897–March 1990, they were married in April 1916 when Zhang was 14 years old), and with his mistress, Zhao Yidi (they would be legally married in 1964), month by month. Also on January 13, 1937, Chiang ordered Zhang to be transferred to Xuedou-shan, a scenic area in Xikou, Zhejiang province (which was near Chang Kai-shek's hometown, Fenghua), and be secretly placed under house arrest.<sup>2</sup>

With the formation of the second KMT–CPC United Front in September 1937 (which Zhang had been hoping for), Zhang repeatedly requested to Chiang to be sent to the war front of the anti-Japanese resistance war, but was denied. Chiang might have feared that Zhang, who still had significant influence in the Northeast, might regain power in the region had he joined the war. As the Imperial Japanese Army's (IJA's) occupation of China spread, Zhang was transferred to various places during the war. Dai Li administered the relocations of Zhang. Then, when the civil war between the KMT and the CPC resumed after the anti-Japanese resistance war and the united front collapsed in July 1946, Zhang was transferred to Hsinchu (Xinzhū) on the northwestern coast of Taiwan from Chongqing in November 1946. Strangely this occurred when the KMT was effectively attacking CPC bases and was also occupying major cities in China's Northeast, such as Shenyang and Changchun. It is considered that Chiang transferred Zhang to Taiwan at that time (three years before Chiang was defeated in the civil war and fled to Taiwan) because he feared that Zhang might regain power in the Northeast.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, in November 1946, Zhang was relocated to the suburb of Hsinchu, which was a hot-spring resort called Inoue-onsen made by the Japanese who had annexed Taiwan, and he spent his time playing tennis and fishing. Then he was transferred to a suburb of Taipei in August 1961, which was also a hot spring resort. His house in a large compound was under surveillance by the ROC Special Intelligence Agency. He was allowed to go out almost freely, but any meetings with people required the prior permission of Chiang Kai-shek. Zhang and Zhao Yidi formally married in July 1964, when his first wife Yu Fengzi agreed to a divorce. Zhao Yidi (also known as Edith Chao), born in Hong Kong, was a devout Christian and Zhang became a proselyte in Protestantism in 1955. They attended church services with Chiang Kai-shek, who had also converted to Protestantism, and Song Meiling in the Shilin district in Taipei. A native Cantonese turned Chinese-American, whose father worked for the ROC government in Nanjing after studying at Kyūshū Imperial University in Japan, moved to Chongqing when it became the provisional capital of the Nanjing government, fled to

Hong Kong, and then moved to Taipei around 1951, when she was about seven years old. As she and her family lived in the Shilin district, they used to see Zhang Xueliang and Zhao Yidi strolling on the streets in the 1960s, without any security guard around them.<sup>4</sup>

Overall, the life of house arrest for Zhang was not as tragic as one would imagine. With the devotion of his second wife, Zhang lived a comfortable life under house arrest, and spent his time reading the Bible, studying Chinese history and theology, and playing tennis or fishing. He also wrote prolifically about the history of the Ming dynasty, but later threw out all that he had written. It is said that Zhang had made a proposal to teach the history of the Ming dynasty at National Taiwan University, but his request was rejected. Afterward, he concentrated on the study of theology and received a degree via a correspondence course from a seminary in the USA. On this Zhang stated:

I am very satisfied with the life I had had during this period. I studied the history of the Ming dynasty because President Chiang had asked me to do so. He liked neo-Confucianism [*lijiao*, specifically Yangmingism], and in order to study this, it is necessary to study the Ming history. The Ming history written by government officials is fraught with mistakes. I found this from the literature on Korean history. But I am not going to tell you everything now. I am leaving the pleasure of discovering it to future scholars.<sup>5</sup>

### REHABILITATION OF ZHANG XUELIANG

After the death of Chiang Kai-shek in April 1975, Zhang gradually began to regain his freedom; however, his freedom was limited as Chiang's son, Chiang Ching-kuo (April 1910–January 1988), continued to keep him under house arrest and he was not allowed to speak in public. A definite turning point came in 1990. A Taiwanese newspaper in May 1990 reported that a ninetieth birthday party for Zhang (according to the traditional Chinese age-counting system) was to be held in Taipei on June 1, 1990. The host was the elderly KMT supreme leader Zhang Qun (Chang Chun, May 1889–December 1990). Zhang Qun had studied at the Tokyo Shinbu School, a preparatory school of Chinese students for the IJA Military Academy, along with Chiang Kai-shek, and then at the IJA Military Academy after the failure of the Second Revolution of Sun Yat-sen in 1913. Zhang Qun served under Sun and then Chiang in the KMT government. It was Zhang Qun who had persuaded young Zhang Xueliang to accept a ceasefire in

Chiang's Northern Expedition and surrender power to Chiang through the "Northeastern Flag Replacement" in 1928. Zhang Qun became foreign minister in the ROC government in 1935–1937 and negotiated with Japan at a most difficult time as Chiang's right-hand man. He continued to serve Chiang in Taiwan as chief secretary in the President's Office.<sup>6</sup>

On June 1, 1990, several hundred reporters gathered at the banquet hall to welcome the "tragic hero." The banquet hall was decorated with a congratulatory telegram from Deng Yingchao in Beijing, a flower wreath from Song Meiling in New York City, as well as framed calligraphy of ROC president Lee Teng-hui. Participants included high-ranking ROC government officials, including premier (president of the Executive Yuan) Hao Baicun (Hau Pei-tsun). No sooner had Zhang Xueliang and his wife Zhao Yidi arrived, escorted by the host Zhang Qun in a wheelchair, than they were surrounded by reporters. Zhang Qun opened the banquet by stating: "We have celebrated birthdays for Master Zhang Xueliang every year privately for many years, but this year we decided to make it public to commemorate his ninetieth birthday. He has been my friend for sixty years. We have fought together in the anti-Japanese resistance war and the anti-communist war."<sup>7</sup>

In response, Zhang Xueliang stated: "I am full of remorse for such a grand party being given for a prisoner like me. Now I live a life being guided by Christ. At age ninety, my eyesight and hearing have deteriorated, but I have not yet become senile. If the government and the nation need me, I would like to devote myself even more than I did during my youth."<sup>8</sup>

His speech with a clear and firm voice received resounding applause from the audience. Thus, Zhang made a public appearance after more than half a century. This marked the *de facto* rehabilitation of Zhang by the KMT–ROC government. Zhang Qun, who had helped Zhang Xueliang physically and psychologically throughout these years, died in December 1990, as if he were relieved of the duty after having overseen the rehabilitation of Zhang Xueliang. The rehabilitation of Zhang Xueliang reflected the change in the political situation in Taiwan. The death of Chiang Kai-shek's son Chiang Qing-kuo (April 1910–January 1988) and the assumption of the presidency by the native Taiwanese (not from mainland China) Lee Teng-hui (b. January 1923) in January 1988 made this possible. The new government also abolished martial law, implemented a series of democratic reforms, and softened its policy toward the PRC. In this context, Zhang's rehabilitation could be even considered a signal by the KMT–ROC government toward the PRC for a possible formation of a third United Front. Following the rehabilitation, Zhang accepted interviews by the Japanese public broadcast station, NHK, in Taipei on June 17 and

August 3–5, 1990. These interviews received worldwide attention and a Chinese translation of the transcription of these interviews was published in China.<sup>9</sup>

As the perpetrator of the Xi'an Incident, Zhang voluntarily submitted himself to Chiang Kai-shek, was tried by the KMT government, and was placed under house arrest for the rest of his life. Consequently, he spent a life of confinement first on mainland China and then on Taiwan for more than half a century. Nevertheless, Zhang had never spoken ill of his superior turned persecutor, Chiang Kai-shek. Zhang only blamed himself for the Xi'an Incident and its aftermath, but he stated that he had no regrets for his action. He was the last survivor and living witness of the incident; however, he refused to tell the whole truth about the incident. By so doing, he appeared to have been trying to protect Chiang. In turn, as the Xi'an Incident paved the way for the second KMT–CPC United Front against the Japanese, which eventually brought victory to the CPC in the civil war with the KMT, Zhang became a hero in the PRC. Yet, he had remained a distant figure for the Chinese on the mainland as he lived under house arrest in Taiwan. In 1990 when Zhang was asked whether his life was a success or a failure, he stated, “A failure...I have lost the heart to be a hero.”<sup>10</sup>

### ASSESSMENT OF THE XI'AN INCIDENT

The culprit of the Xi'an Incident, Zhang Xueliang, was born as the heir to the warlord Zhang Zuolin, who ruled China's Northeast. Unlike his father, he received a Western-style education and developed a strong sense of nationalism for China. After the assassination of his father by the Japanese Kwantung Army, Zhang succeeded to his father's position and was referred to as the “young marshal.” In the face of the Kwantung Army that had tried to co-opt Zhang, he submitted his domain to the authority of the KMT–ROC government through the “Northeastern Flag Replacement” for the sake of China's reunification. For this, Chiang Kai-shek appointed Zhang deputy commander-in-chief of the Chinese National Revolutionary Army, Air Force, and Navy. The young marshal wanted to fight the Japanese, whereas Chiang was preoccupied with eradicating communists and condoned the Japanese invasion of China. With the outbreak of the Manchurian Incident and the creation of Manchukuo, Zhang was driven out of his home territory and lived in exile in other parts of China with his Northeastern Army and was ridiculed as the “nonresistance general”; however, he was simply following Chiang's order not to fight the Japanese.<sup>11</sup>



Zhang's conviction about the need to end the civil war and to form a united national front against the Japanese culminated in the Xi'an Incident. It was an unprecedented coup d'état, driven by a strong sense of nationalism. Zhang took this extraordinary measure of *bingjian* based on his convictions as a military man and as a Chinese. As a military man, he was told that he should not fear losing his life. He wanted to be an honorable military man and he was ready to be executed for his action. His conscience was clear. Then, one cannot help but think that, insofar as Zhang took so drastic a measure as to capture Chiang in the way he did, he should have followed through with what he had intended to do. He had the best card to play and yet abandoned it too easily. He gave in to the pressures of Chiang and Song Meiling easily. Granted that he decided to release Chiang, he should at least have obtained their agreement in writing and had Chiang sign it before releasing him. Failing to do so made the process of negotiations for the united front much more difficult.<sup>12</sup>

In this regard, a Chinese dissident living in New York since 1988, Cao Changqing (b.1953 in Heilongjiang province, a former deputy editor-in-chief of *Shenzhen Youth News*, lost his job in 1987 after publishing an article calling on Deng Xiaoping to retire), writes that both Chiang Kai-shek and Zhang Xueliang were fools: Chiang kept mistreating Zhang, who was his KMT National Revolutionary Army deputy commander-in-chief. Although Chiang ordered Zhang not to fight the Japanese, he left Zhang to carry the disgraceful label of "nonresistance general" alone, and did nothing to help out in his predicaments. Moreover, Chiang mobilized Zhang's Northeastern Army in his Bandit (Communist) Suppression Campaign, whose men had been driven out of their homeland and were dying to go home. Chiang did not even replenish the support when the army incurred losses. Worse, when Zhang pleaded with Chiang to launch the anti-Japanese resistance, Chiang kept ignoring him by saying, "Do so after I die" and "Do not disturb my reading." This indifference of Chiang compelled Zhang to take the extraordinary action of *bingjian*.<sup>13</sup>

Further, Cao writes, "Chiang Kai-shek ignored his subordinates' warnings during his stay in Xi'an that he should leave Xi'an immediately as they sensed a possibility for a rebellion. Chiang was overconfident and did not take Zhang seriously. In turn, Zhang was naïve, impulsive, and reckless. He indulged in opium and morphine addiction and womanizing. Chiang was right in evaluating Zhang as useless at a time of crisis." In fact, Zhang himself stated in his interview with Cao, "I am a *bai-maozi* of the Northeast." The word "*bai-maozi*" (*lit.*, white hat) refers to a fool

in a dialect of China's Northeast. Cao writes that "if China again had a leader like Zhang, China will certainly be ruined" and "having such fools as commander-in-chief and deputy commander, it was inevitable for the KMT National Revolutionary Army to be defeated by the Red Army."<sup>14</sup>

In hindsight, had Zhang tried and sentenced Chiang, Zhang might have become a national hero and a high-ranking military leader in the PRC with a stature equivalent to Zhu De or Ye Jianying. Zhang instead ended up being court-martialed in Nanjing and serving a sentence of house arrest for life: the captor had become the captive. For a military man, execution would have been a more honorable punishment than confinement for life. In China, for a fallen ruler, living as a prisoner in infamy was considered a more cruel punishment than death. Zhang states that he has no regrets for his action and punishment because he felt he should do penance for having challenged his superior. Yet, as the Japanese journalist Kataoka Shigeo, who interviewed Zhang at his residence in a suburb of Taipei in January 1993, notes, the more Zhang insists that he has no regrets and no vengefulness (against Chiang), the more he betrays himself. His denial instead reminds observers more of the injustice he has been subjected to. Zhang stated that he had only two superiors in his life—his father and Chiang. Zhang also stated that his relationship with Chiang was a paradoxical one: "Chiang was my political enemy but also a father figure." In essence, Zhang was misled by his loyalty to Chiang.<sup>15</sup>

In addition, Zhang took the *bingjian* action rather impulsively without careful planning. When one of his Northeastern Army combat commanders Wang Yizhe asked Zhang on the eve of the incident, "What are you going to do after capturing Chiang Kai-shek?" Zhang said, "I will think about that after capturing him." Also, when his subordinates tried to stop Zhang from escorting Chiang to Nanjing, he said, "I will think about it after sending him off." As Zhou Enlai apprehensively and poignantly noted when he learned that Zhang had gone to escort Chiang to Nanjing, Zhang appeared to have been projecting the romantic image of a hero, as portrayed in the Peking Opera *Lianhuantao*, into the real world, and played such a hero himself. Zhang knew the consequences of playing such a hero and paid the price. While Zhang correctly perceived the currents of the domestic situation and what China needed at that time, he misjudged his superior Chiang. In short, Zhang remained a naive young marshal. He was swayed by unwarranted loyalty to his superior, who was pursuing the wrong policy for China, being preoccupied with his internal enemy and neglecting the Japanese invasion of China. The romanticism of the naive, idealistic young marshal succumbed to the realism of the devious and ruthless generalissimo.<sup>16</sup>

## LESSONS FOR THE CPC

In turn, the CPC was ill-guided by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) via the Third International (Comintern), which misunderstood that the Xi'an Incident was a conspiracy by the Japanese in order to escalate the civil war between the KMT and the CPC. Worse, the Comintern/CPSU vehemently denounced Zhang Xueliang, saying that his rebellion would only benefit Japan, whereas Zhang had thought that Moscow would praise him for having captured Chiang Kai-shek. The Comintern also directed the CPC to save Chiang's life and release him, whereas Mao Zedong and other leaders in the party had wanted to try Chiang and execute him. Thus, as Zhang's former military and political adviser, Miao Jianqiu, stated in his interview with Edgar Snow, Zhou Enlai had come to Xi'an with the intention of transferring Chiang to CPC headquarters and putting him on public trial, but Zhou changed his position in favor of releasing Chiang after he received a telegram from Moscow (see Chap. 7). It would have been impossible for any Chinese communist leader to disobey the directive of the Comintern/CPSU at that time.<sup>17</sup>

The CPSU opted for Chiang over a more pro-Japanese faction in the KMT government, led by Wang Jingwei (Zhaoming), who received medical treatment in Germany in 1936 for an injury sustained in the shooting incident in Nanjing in 1935. The CPSU was concerned that Wang might conclude an anti-Soviet alliance with Japan, which was allied with Germany. Joseph Stalin wanted to avoid war with the Japanese so that he could concentrate on the war with Germany in the European war theater. For this, the Comintern instructed the CPC to spare Chiang's life and had the CPC abandon its nationalistic, overtly anti-Japanese policy. As Stalin would sacrifice the Communist Party of Spain to Francisco Franco toward the end of the Spanish civil war and compromise with Nazi Germany, Stalin was willing to abandon the CPC for the sake of his world strategy. The legitimate Chinese government for Stalin to negotiate with remained the KMT government, not the CPC.<sup>18</sup>

Had the CPC tried Chiang and had him serve time (if not execute him), as the hardliners in the party advocated, the politics of China, as well as that of the world, would have taken a very different path. For one thing, the civil war might not have resumed after the anti-Japanese resistance war, or at least the resumed civil war might not have been as protracted as it was: the KMT leadership would have been weakened without Chiang. Also, Chiang's political rival in the KMT, Wang Jingwei, was sick. He died

in Nagoya in November 1944, after he had received treatment at Nagoya Imperial University Hospital. Moreover, the ROC government on Taiwan and the “Two China” issue, which has impeded international politics in the post-World War II period until today, might not have occurred in the way we know them now. Nevertheless, the CPC was following the guidance of the CPSU/Comintern in those days, and the Sino-Soviet rift did not surface until 1960.<sup>19</sup>

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Overall, while the Xi’an Incident was an unprecedented and shocking incident in itself, its significance to the formation of the second KMT–CPC United Front may have been exaggerated. In hindsight, the united front would have been formed regardless of the incident. It was a matter of time. The second United Front was bound to be formed with the outbreak of the Marco Polo Bridge Incident on July 7, 1937. In fact, the negotiations for the united front between Chiang Kai-shek and Zhou Enlai, which took place after the Xi’an Incident, had stalemated and did not materialize. It was the Marco Polo Bridge Incident and the IJA’s attack of Shanghai that compelled Chiang to change his mind and decide to proceed with the anti-Japanese resistance war (see Chap. 9).

In this regard, the anonymous Japanese researcher, who visited the residence of Zhang’s former military and political adviser, Miao Jianqiu, in Taipei in December 1988, argues that “the Xi’an Incident should be viewed from the larger perspective of international politics: the Soviet Union wanted Japan to shift its focus to the southern war front from the northern front (Manchuria) so that the Soviets could send their best forces on the Manchurian border to the western front to fight Germany. Simultaneously, the Soviets tried to destroy the KMT by inducing Japan to invade China and by exhausting the KMT. They also planned to strengthen the CPC by forming a second KMT–CPC united front against Japan, while at the same time having the CPC and the Japanese forces attack the KMT from both sides. In this overall picture, the Xi’an Incident was not a mere accident, but Comintern’s plot to create the PRC. It worked. The Soviet Union did this by having the Comintern intelligence agent Wang Dazhen work as Chiang Kai-shek’s intelligence agency head and the Asahi Shimbun reporter Ozaki Hotsumi as a brain trust for Prime Minister Konoe Fumimaro, and had them collaborate with Richard Sorge” (see Chap. 8).<sup>20</sup>

Although this assessment of the overall Soviet strategy is of some interest, the fact remains that the Comintern had no part in the Xi’an Incident

itself. The Comintern also totally misconstrued the Xi'an Incident as a conspiracy by the Japanese, whereas the Japanese thought that it was a conspiracy by the Comintern. The Comintern then wrongly denounced Zhang Xueliang and directed the CPC to release Chiang Kai-shek.

The way the Xi'an Incident took place and the way it ended were unprecedented. The whole truth is still unknown. All those who were directly involved were sworn to secrecy and died without telling the truth. Chiang Kai-shek did not even mention Zhou Enlai in his record of the incident. Chiang might have been too proud to acknowledge that his former subordinate had become his equal in the negotiations. In turn, Zhang Xueliang, who was the last living witness to the incident, refused to talk about it even more than 50 years after the incident. When the Japanese reporter Kataoka Shigeo asked Zhang in January 1993 about the Xi'an Incident in general and the Chiang-Zhou meeting in particular, the content of which still remains secret, Zhang declined to answer and changed the subject, just as he did during his interview with the Japanese public TV station NHK in August 1990 (and with his interviews with Chinese writers afterward). He has neither written nor said anything critical of Chiang, who had put him under house arrest for life. Zhang's "Record of Repentance for the Xi'an Incident" was written at the command of Chiang and the content should be taken accordingly.<sup>21</sup>

The only remark Zhang made to Kataoka in 1993 that could be construed as a mild criticism of Chiang was about the Yangmingism (a school of neo-Confucianism) that Chiang subscribed to: "Wang Yangming taught, 'I see a flower, therefore, the flower exists. I do not see a flower, therefore, the flower does not exist.' I would dare to say a flower exists regardless of whether one sees it or not. This applies not just to a flower but to other things." By so stating, Zhang appeared to have been referring to the subjective mind of Chiang, who was blind to the objective fact of the surge of anti-Japanese resistance in China, being preoccupied with the suppression of communists. Other than this, Zhang kept silent about the inside story of the Xi'an Incident.<sup>22</sup>

### LATER LIFE OF ZHANG XUELIANG

As of January 1993, Zhang enjoyed writing about the Bible for children for church services. His desk was filled with stacks of books on religion, but one book stood out. This was the "Annotated Collection of Sun Tzu," who taught the art of war, "winning a war without waging a war." Zhang also distrusted the official record of history, as he had learned from

his own study of the history of China (specifically of the Ming dynasty) that the official record was distorted and fraught with errors. Therefore, he neither denied nor cared to correct the official record of the Xi'an Incident. He just kept silent about it. Perhaps, not justifying himself might have been Zhang's way of vengeance. By not disclosing the content of the Chiang-Zhou meeting, one of the focal points of the Xi'an Incident, and thereby protecting the honor of Chiang, Zhang might have been trying to be the moral superior of Chiang in the end. Zhang might also have been trying to sublimate his vengeance against his ruthless superior by forgiving him according to the Chinese axiom of "repaying vengeance with gratitude."<sup>23</sup>

Zhang wrote on his feelings about Chiang in his Record of Repentance for the Xi'an Incident, as well as in the poem he wrote on Chiang's death (Song Meiling made special arrangements for Zhang so that he could see Chiang's body before it was placed in the coffin): "How delicate my relationship with Master Chiang has been. He took good care of me as if we were real family members, but we were like enemies in political disputes. I have never experienced this kind of relationship before. I will never forget this episode of my life as long as I live."<sup>24</sup>

#### CONTINUING CONTACTS BETWEEN ZHOU AND ZHANG

In turn, Zhang remained grateful and respectful to Zhou Enlai for the rest of his life. Zhou had continued to be concerned with Zhang under house arrest until his own death in January 1976. For instance, Zhou entrusted his letter to Zhang, dated January 10, 1937, to Northeastern Army Nanjing Office director Li Zhijian to be delivered to Song Ziwen's public residence where Zhang was kept. Zhang wrote a reply from Xuedou-shan, Xikou, on February 17, 1937, and also wrote to Zhou from Tianmen-dong, Guizhou province, on April 19, 1946, the 10-year anniversary of their first meeting. Zhou meanwhile tried to rescue Zhang through Northeastern Army officers stationed in various places, as well as through Zhang's younger brother Zhang Xuesi. In December 1956 when Zhou hosted a twentieth-anniversary discussion meeting of the Xi'an Incident, he shed tears, thinking of the hardships Zhang had been going through. Then, on December 12, 1961, Zhou held a banquet at the Great Hall of the People to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Xi'an Incident, inviting former subordinates, relatives, and friends of Zhang and Yang Hucheng, and sent a secret letter to Zhang, consisting of 16 characters, which read:

For the sake of the nation, be good to yourself and take it easy; the future is promising; we may meet again.<sup>25</sup>

Further, in December 1975, when Zhou was in a critical condition and only CCCPC Politburo members were allowed to see him, he was still concerned with the condition of Zhang, who had just had eye surgery and was in danger of losing his eyesight. On December 20, Zhou summoned CCCPC Taiwan Affairs Office director Luo Qingchang (1918–April 2014, CCCPC Investigation Department director) and told him in a feeble voice (Zhou was so weak that he needed to take a break and rest during the meeting) not to forget the “old comrades” in Taiwan who had contributed to the revolution and also instructed him to keep abreast of how Chiang Qing-kuo was treating Zhang as Chiang had succeeded to his father in April 1975.<sup>26</sup>

### ZHOU PROTECTS ZHANG’S BROTHERS

Zhou also protected Zhang’s younger brothers. Zhang Xueming (1908–April 1983, second son of Zhang Zuolin) studied at the Imperial Japanese Army Infantry Academy, worked for Zhang’s Northeastern Army, became Tianjin mayor, and then served in the KMT–ROC government. In 1949, Zhang Xueming met Zhou Enlai, converted to the CPC, and obtained the position of People’s Park director. Zhang was persecuted during the Cultural Revolution, but was rehabilitated in 1973. In turn, Zhang Xuesi (1916–May 1970, fourth son of Zhang Zuolin) studied at the Whampoa Military Academy, joined the CPC in 1933, and was arrested by the KMT in December 1936 soon after the Xi’an Incident. Zhou managed to release him and sent him to Yan’an for safety. Zhou then helped Zhang to become People’s Liberation Army Dalian Naval Academy vice principal and eventually to become Navy chief of staff (there is a photograph of Zhang Xuesi in a Navy uniform with Zhou Enlai and Deng Yingchao from June 1951). However, as Lin Biao became national defense minister, Zhang’s career was threatened. Zhou tried to save Zhang, but he was brutally persecuted by Lin Biao during the Cultural Revolution. When Zhang became gravely ill, Zhou ordered immediate hospitalization, but Lin Biao’s protégé Li Zuopeng obstructed this. Zhang died in May 1970. Zhou rehabilitated him posthumously.<sup>27</sup>

In turn, Zhou’s widow Deng Yingchao, who was Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference chairperson (1983–1988), wrote to

Zhang twice in May 1991 on behalf of Deng Xiaoping, congratulating him on his ninetieth birthday and also urged him to come to visit the mainland and even settle there. Zhang was deeply touched by the invitation, realizing that Zhou's widow and other Chinese officials had maintained Zhou's efforts to help Zhang as much as possible, but gracefully declined it. When Deng Yingchao died in July 1992, Zhang had his niece in Hong Kong send a flower wreath for Deng's funeral in Beijing.<sup>28</sup>

### ZHANG MOVES TO HAWAII

In March 1991, Zhang was allowed to travel to the USA, and visited his children and friends there. In New York City, he gave a speech at Columbia University in April and celebrated his 90th birthday (it is uncertain whether he met Song Meiling there), and then returned to Taipei in June 1991. Then in April 1994, Zhang and Zhao Yidi decided to move to Hawaii and settle down in Honolulu. Following the death of Zhao Yidi in June 2000, Zhang died of pneumonia on October 14, 2001, at the age of 100. Subsequently, a travel agency manager in Beijing by the name of Wang Qi flew to Hawaii in order to collect Zhang's remains. Wang was the granddaughter of Wang Xitian (from Jilin province, September 1896–September 1923 official death, actually died in 1986), who was one of the schoolmates of Zhou Enlai at Nankai Middle School and the student movement leader at the First Higher School in Tokyo. Zhou and Wang became close friends in Tokyo through their mutual friends, Wang Pushan and Wu Hantao (Diqian). When Wang Xitian went missing in the aftermath of the Great Kantō Earthquake of September 1923, Zhang Xueliang made an official inquiry at the Japanese consulate general, but to no avail. In July 1962, Zhou and Deng Yingchao visited Changchun, Jilin province, and met Wang Xitian's daughter, Wang Zhenqi (Wang Qi's mother), and encouraged her to study hard to become a doctor. Zhou also saved her from being persecuted during the Cultural Revolution by recognizing Wang Xitian as a revolutionary martyr. These episodes suggest strong and lasting ties between the Zhang and Wang families, as well as among Zhou and his friends at Nankai Middle School.<sup>29</sup>

In retrospect, the three principal players in the Xi'an Incident met on December 24, 1937. It was a truly historic meeting. Zhang, the subordinate of Chiang Kai-shek, rebelled against him. Zhou, the former subordinate of Chiang (Zhou had worked at the Whampoa Military Academy where Chiang Kai-shek was commandant), met him as his equal, as the



mediator of the incident. However, Chiang died on April 5, 1975, and Zhou died on January 8, 1976, without revealing the content of the secret meeting (Chiang even did not recognize the fact that Zhou had attended the meeting). A quarter century later, Zhang, the last living witness to the historic meeting, died keeping the entire truth to himself.

### ZHOU ENLAI AND THE XI'AN INCIDENT

In a final assessment, the role Zhang Xueliang played in the whole episode of the Xi'an Incident might have been exaggerated despite the fact that Zhang (and Yang Hucheng) has been hailed as a revolutionary hero in the PRC. It was Zhou Enlai who carried on Zhang's unfinished task after his capture and covered up his failures. As the principal actor representing the "trinity forces" of Zhang Xueliang's Northeastern Army, Yang Hucheng's Northwestern Army (KMT's Seventeenth Route Army), and the CPC Army, Zhou painstakingly and persistently negotiated with Chiang Kai-shek. Zhang himself highly evaluates Zhou's competence as a superb negotiator and states:

Zhou immediately grasped the impossibly uncontrollable situation, analyzed it, and responded to it. Zhou excelled in persuading people according to the situation at a given time. The quickness of his response and the boldness by which he came to Xi'an fearlessly, risking his life, was impressive. We were alike. He was "right on target" and straightforward. We developed a high degree of camaraderie.<sup>30</sup>

Zhou perfected his skills as a competent negotiator and superb politician through the civil wars with the KMT and the anti-Japanese resistance war. In a larger perspective, the CPC developed its unique strategy of forming a united front with groups that had different views from the party. It was imperative for the CPC (that was in an inferior position to the KMT in many respects) to form a united front with various groups and gain the support of the general public in order to win the civil war with the KMT. The strategy of forming a united front was therefore a product of necessity. The CPC succeeded in the formation of the united front against the Japanese and won the war with Japan and then the civil war with the KMT, and founded the PRC. Afterward, the CPC applied this strategy to foreign policy-making and developed various principles in order to coordinate and settle contradictions among nations. In many ways, Chinese foreign policy is an international version of the strategy of

forming a united front. Zhou used this strategy effectively and skillfully applied it to Chinese operations vis-à-vis Japan in the postwar years. In this sense, the formation of the anti-Japanese resistance was an integral part of the making of contemporary Sino-Japanese relations.<sup>31</sup>

## NOTES

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## APPENDIX

**Table A.1** Founding members of Awakening Society (1919)

<i>ID number*</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>School attended</i>
1	Deng Yingchao (Feb. 1904–July 1992)	F	Tianjin Zhili First Women’s Normal School
3	Zhou Zhilian (1902–June 1956)	F	Tianjin Zhili First Women’s Normal School
5	Zhou Enlai (Mar. 1898–Jan. 1976)	M	Nankai University
9	Zhao Guangchen (1902–1965)	M	Nankai Middle School
11	Xue Hanyue (unknown–unknown)	M	Nankai Middle School (and Jinling University, 1917–1919?)
13	Guo Longzhen (Mar. 1984–Apr. 1931)	F	Tianjin Zhili First Women’s Normal School
18	Guan Xibin (Yiwen, Aug. 1896–Dec. 1995)	M	Tianjin Zhili First Normal School
19	Pan Shilun (Feb, 1898–Jan. 1983)	M	Nankai Middle School and Jinling University
20	Hu Weixian (unknown–unknown)	M	Nankai University
25	Liu Qingyang (Feb. 1894–July 1977)	F	Tianjin Zhili First Women’s Normal School
26	Wu Ruiyan (1904–1981)	F	Tianjin Zhili First Women’s Normal School

*(continued)*

**Table A.1** (continued)

<i>ID number*</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>School attended</i>
28	Li Baosen (Aug. 1900–May 1938)	M	Nankai University
29	Ma Jun (1895–Feb. 1928)	M	Nankai University
31	Li Xijin (1892–1979)	F	Tianjin Zhongxi Women’s School
34	Zheng Jiqing (1897–1962)	F	Tianjin Zhili First Women’s Normal School
36	Zhang Ruoming (Feb. 1902–June 1958)	F	Tianjin Zhili First Women’s Normal School
37	Zhang Siqing (1901–1922)	F	Tianjin Zhili First Women’s Normal School
41	Chen Xiaochen (Feb. 1897–Nov. 1992)	M	Peiyang School of Law and Politics
43	Li Yitao (unknown–July 1939)	F	Tianjin Zhili First Women’s Normal School
50	Chen Zhidu (1896–1975)	M	Tianjin Higher Technology School
**	Zhou Ying (1909–Jan. 1991)	F	Tianjin Zhili First Women’s Normal School
**	Li Yuru (1902–July 1980)	F	Tianjin Zhili First Women’s Normal School
**	Tao Shangzhao (1903/1907–1922)	M	Nankai Middle School
**	Huang Zhengpin (1897–Jan. 1922)	M	Tianjin Zhili Higher Technology School

Sources: “*Juewushe quanti chengyuan de jinli jianjie*” (Brief Resume of All Members of Awakening Society), No. 1, [cpc.people.com.cn/GB/64162/64172/85037/85038/7039049.html](http://cpc.people.com.cn/GB/64162/64172/85037/85038/7039049.html) and No. 2–No. 6, <http://cpc.people.com.cn/GB/64093/67507/7039155-7039159.html>, accessed August 3, 2014

\*The ID numbers denote their pseudonyms for writing in *Juewu* (Awakening)

\*\*Denotes “friends” of the society. Five other “friends” are hardly known even in China

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